

# POPULAR COMMENTARY

ON THE

# GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE.

BY

ALFRED NEVIN, D.D.



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## PREFACE.

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THIS Commentary, though intended mainly for Bible-Classes and Sabbath-Schools, will, it is hoped, also prove acceptable and useful to Ministers, Theological Students, and private Christians. In the preparation of it, the Author, with a view to its usefulness, very freely availed himself of all the reliable aid within his reach, without deeming it important to indicate the numerous sources from which it was derived. Instead of encumbering the volume with a mass of authorities, or the history and comparison of conflicting opinions, which, for the ordinary reader, tend rather to obscure than to elucidate, he has endeavored merely to present the last and best results of Biblical research bearing upon the portion of Scripture expounded, and to mingle with them practical reflections: and this he aimed to do in such method, spirit and style, as he trusted would combine attraction, instruction and impression. In the full notation of parallel passages, the insertion of Questions at the end of each Lesson, and the more extended explanation in the Appendix, of persons, places and things, than would have been proper where they severally and repeatedly occur in the text, reference was had not only to the convenience of the student, but also to his economy of time and means. As far as was practicable, the exposition of the Gospel was so directed, as to be free from any offensive denominational bias, and to rest upon the common faith of all Evangelical Christians. It may be followed with Notes on the remaining Gospels, and on the other portions of the New Testament. The blessing of God is earnestly implored upon it, whenever and by whomsoever it may be read.

PHILADELPHIA, *November 1, 1868.*

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# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### LESSON I.

#### INTRODUCTION.

vs. 1-4.

FORASMUCH as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

2. "Even as they delivered them unto us, which <sup>b</sup>from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word ;

<sup>a</sup> Heb. ii. 3 ; 1 Pet. v. 1 ; 2 Pet. xi. 16 ; 1 John i. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Mark i. 1 ; John xv. 27.

3. "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee <sup>in</sup> order, <sup>most</sup> excellent Theophilus,

<sup>c</sup> Acts xv. 19, 25, 28 ; 1 Cor. vii. 40.

<sup>d</sup> Acts xi. 4.

<sup>e</sup> Acts i. 1

4. "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

<sup>f</sup> John xx. 31.

It is not easy to determine *when* or *where* this Gospel was written. There is a tradition that it was published in Achaia, whither it had been transmitted from Caesarea. All that can satisfactorily be ascertained as to its date is, that it was written shortly before the death of Paul, A. D. 65.

The Evangelist by whom it was written also wrote the *Acts of the Apostles*. Both books are properly successive parts of one Christian history. Considering that we owe to the pen of Luke so large a portion of the New Testament, the source of our hope and instruction in all truth, our information concerning him, apart from the uncertain traditions preserved by the early Christian writers, is exceedingly small. His Greek name, *Loukas*, is a familiar contraction of a fuller form, either Lucilius or Lucanus. He is recorded by the best ecclesiastical historians to have been a Syrian, born at Antioch, a city at the time of his birth the third among the most renowned of the civilized world, and afterwards remarkable as the second centre of Christian organization after Jerusalem, and the first locality to give the name to the new religion, (Acts xi. 26.) He has been supposed, and not without reason, to

have been the brother "whose praise was in the gospel throughout all the churches," and of whom it is said (2 Cor. viii. 18) that he was sent to Corinth with Titus to make the collection there for the poor saints at Jerusalem. By some it has been maintained, with confidence, that the unnamed disciple from Ennauas, (Luke xxiv. 18,) to whom the risen Jesus appeared, was the modest Luke himself. There is reason to suppose that he was not a Jew, but a converted Gentile; and if this be so, unless we except the book of Job, he is the only Gentile who has been permitted to contribute a book to the Bible.

Luke was Paul's companion in his travels. This he indicates by the employment of the first person plural in his narrative. We trace their course together from Alexandria Troas, through Samothrace, to Philippi; then back again to Troas, down the coast of Asia Minor to Tyre, Casarea, and Jerusalem. When Paul, appealing to Caesar, departed to Rome, through voyage, shipwreck, and journey, Luke was his companion. And when the Apostle, just before his martyrdom, writes from his Roman prison to Timothy—"only Luke is with me" is his touching testimony to our faithful Evangelist.

Luke was by profession a physician. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians, (iv. 14,) alludes to him as "the beloved physician." We recognize the physician by the minute accuracy with which he describes certain diseases. It would seem as if he had felt the necessity of transferring to his Master the very calling to which his own life had been hitherto devoted, while depicting to us, far oftener than the other Evangelists, the great Physician who came not only to "minister," (Matt. xx. 28,) but "who went about doing good," (Acts x. 38,) who felt compassion for all diseases both of mind and body, and whose power was present to heal, (Luke v. 17.)

The literary character of Luke is evinced not only by his profession, but by his style of composition. He seems to have had more learning than any other of the Evangelists, and his language is more varied, copious, and pure. His Greek education is apparent from the philological excellence of his writings, which present the purest Greek in the whole New Testament. On account of the simplicity of his manner, and his artlessness and power of fixing attention and exciting the affections, many have thought him, as a writer, capable of standing the competition with the most celebrated historians of Greece itself.

The Gospel of Luke has indubitable evidences of genuineness. It was certainly extant at an early period, and from the first received by the Church as of Divine authority. *Lardner* thinks that there are a few allusions to it in some of the Apostolical fathers, especially in *Hermas* and *Polycarp*, and in *Justin Martyr* there are passages evidently taken from it, but the earliest author, who actually mentions Luke's Gospel, is *Irenæus*, and he cites so many peculiarities in it, all agreeing with the Gospel which we now have, that he alone is sufficient to prove its genuineness. His testimony, however, is supported by *Clement of Alexandria*, *Tertullian*, *Origen*, *Eusebius*, *Jerome*, *Chrysostom*, and many others.

Luke's Gospel has the following, among other distinctive peculiarities: 1. While *Matthew* and *Mark* narrate with the authority of original witnesses their own collection of evangelic facts, and *John* furnishes his own individual reminiscences, Luke, as his preface shows, is the critical historian, who, having examined original witnesses and documents, discriminates, selects, and arranges them in historic form. 2. Whilst *Matthew* relates his history according to *chronological order*, Luke relates his according to a *classification* of events—a fact which accounts for the diversity in the order of time noticeable in these two Evangelists. 3. Luke's Gospel has the predominant feature of *universality*; for whilst *Matthew* presents Christ to us as the Messiah of Israel, and *Mark* announces the Gospel of the Son of God, Luke represents the Son of man appearing indeed in Israel, but for the

benefit of the whole race of man. 4. Matthew and Mark show us who Jesus *was*, Luke informs us *how he became what he was*, pointing us successively to the unborn, (ii. 22,) the infant, (iii. 16,) the child, (ii. 27,) the boy, (ii. 40,) and the man, (iii. 22.) 5. This Gospel contains many things which are not found in the other Gospels, the principal among which are the following :

1. The vision of Zacharias, and conception of Elizabeth, . . . . .	i. 5-25
2. The salutation of the Virgin Mary, . . . . .	26-33
3. Mary's visit to Elizabeth, . . . . .	39-56
4. The birth of John the Baptist, and hymn of Zacharias, . . . . .	57-80
5. The decree of Cæsar Augustus, . . . . .	ii. 1- 3
6. The birth of Christ at Bethlehem, . . . . .	4- 7
7. The appearance of angels to the shepherds, . . . . .	8-20
8. The circumcision of Christ, . . . . .	21-
9. The presentation of Christ in the temple, . . . . .	22- 4
10. The account of Simeon and Anna, . . . . .	25-38
11. Christ found among the doctors, . . . . .	41-52
12. Date of beginning of John's ministry, . . . . .	iii. 1- 2
13. Success of John's ministry, . . . . .	10-15
14. Genealogy of Mary, . . . . .	23-38
15. Christ preaching and rejected at Nazareth, . . . . .	iv. 15-30
16. Particulars in the call of Simon, James, and John, . . . . .	v. 1-10
17. Christ's discourse in the plain, . . . . .	vi. 17-49
18. Raising of the widow's son at Nain, . . . . .	vii. 11-17
19. Woman in Simon's house, . . . . .	36-50
20. Women who ministered to Christ, . . . . .	viii. 1- 3
21. James and John desiring fire to come down, . . . . .	ix. 51-56
22. Mission of seventy disciples, . . . . .	x. 1-16
23. Return of seventy disciples, . . . . .	17-24
24. Parable of the Good Samaritan, . . . . .	25-37
25. Christ in the house of Martha and Mary, . . . . .	38-42
26. Parable of friend at midnight, . . . . .	xi. 5- 8
27. Christ dining in a Pharisee's house, . . . . .	37-54
28. Discourse to an innumerable multitude, . . . . .	xii. 1-53
29. Murder of the Galileans, . . . . .	xiii. 1- 5
30. Parable of the barren fig-tree, . . . . .	6- 9
31. Case of the woman diseased eighteen years, . . . . .	10-20
32. Question on the few that be saved, . . . . .	22-30
33. Reply to the Pharisee's warning about Herod, . . . . .	31-33
34. Case of a dropsical man, . . . . .	xiv. 1- 6
35. Parable of the lowest room, . . . . .	7-14
36. Parable of the great supper, . . . . .	15-24
37. Difficulties of Christ's service, . . . . .	25-35
38. Parables of the lost sheep and piece of money, . . . . .	xv. 1-10
39. Parable of the prodigal son, . . . . .	11-22
40. Parable of the unjust steward, . . . . .	xvi. 1-18
41. Parable of the rich man and Lazarus, . . . . .	19-31
42. Instruction to disciples, . . . . .	xvii. 1-10
43. Healing of ten lepers, . . . . .	12-19
44. Question and answer about coming of God's kingdom, . . . . .	20-37
45. Parable of the importunate widow, . . . . .	xviii. 1- 8
46. Parable of the Pharisee and Publican, . . . . .	9-14
47. Calling of Zaccheus, . . . . .	xix. 2-10
48. Parable of the pounds, . . . . .	11-28
49. Christ weeping over Jerusalem, . . . . .	41-44
50. Special warning to Peter, . . . . .	xxii. 31-32
51. Direction to buy sword, . . . . .	35-38
52. Appearance of an angel, and bloody sweat in garden, . . . . .	43-44

53. Pilate sends Christ to Herod, . . . . .	xxiii. 6-16
54. Women deplore Christ's sufferings, . . . . .	27-32
55. The penitent thief, . . . . .	39-43
56. The appearance of Christ to two disciples going to Emmaus, . . . . .	xxiv. 13-35
57. Circumstances attending Christ's appearance to the eleven, . . . . .	37-49
58. Christ's departure in the act of blessing, . . . . .	50-53

The Gospel of Luke has a complete beginning, middle, and end. The beginning, i—iv. 13. The middle, iv. 13—xxii. 1. The end, xxii. 1—xxiv. 53.

I. The *Beginning* embraces the prelude to the ministry. 1. The birth of the forerunner, and of the Messiah. The Messiah's childhood and growth. 2. The forerunner's announcement and ministry until his imprisonment. 3. The Messiah's baptism, genealogy, and temptation.

II. The *Middle* embraces the Messiah's ministry. 1. His Galilean ministry (mainly) iv. 14—ix. 51. 2. His Perea ministry, ix. 51—xviii. 30. 3. His last journey to Jerusalem, and closing ministry there, xviii. 31—xxi. 38.

III. The *End* embraces the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, xxii. 1—xxiv. 53.

The phrase, "The Gospel according to Luke," here signifies the unwritten, oral, Christ-history possessed by the Church, as shaped and recorded by Luke. The ancient titles do not say the Gospel *by* Luke, or Matthew, for that would obscure the fact that the body of Gospel facts was accumulated before the Gospel books were written.

Luke dedicated his Gospel, as he did also the Acts of the Apostles, to *Theophilus*, (v. 3.) This name signifies a *lover of God*. Some take it not for a proper, but a common name, denoting every one that loves God. It is strongly probable, however, that it designated a particular person, of rank and distinction, perhaps a governor. Some indications are given in the Gospel about him. He was not an inhabitant of Palestine, for the Evangelist minutely describes the position of places which to such an one would be well known. It is so with Capernaum, (iv. 31,) Nazareth, (i. 26,) Arimathea, (xxiii. 51,) the country of the Gadarenes, (viii. 26,) the distance of Mount Olivet and Emmaus from Jerusalem, (xxiv. 13; Acts i. 12.) By the same test he probably was not a Macedonian, (Acts xvi. 12,) nor an Athenian, nor a Cretan, (Acts xxvii. 8, 12.) The strong probability is, that he was a native of Italy, and perhaps an inhabitant of Rome. He had become a convert to Christianity. The words *most excellent* ordinarily indicated respect for official dignity, but in this instance they expressed as well regard for elevated moral character. Theophilus, though a nobleman, had been *instructed*, v. 4, (the same word in the Greek from which *catechumen* and *catechize* are derived,) in religion by some of God's servants; probably orally, as this was then the principal means of disseminating truth, inasmuch as written books were then few and expensive, but Luke wished him to know the history of the Lord still more perfectly. Not for Theophilus alone, however, was this Gospel written; he was a representative man for ever Christian reader. Neither the Gospel nor the Acts can be viewed as a private letter to him. In a similar way, Cicero addressed his treatises on Old Age and Friendship to Atticus; Horace addressed his Art of Poetry to the Pisces, and Plutarch addressed his treatise on Divine Delay to Cynius.

Different persons in that age, some perhaps with good intent, others imprudently and inconsiderately, had undertaken to write histories of Jesus. But as these persons had not been directed by the Spirit of God, neither had witnessed the events they had related, but had written from "report," their accounts contained errors which required correction by a true narrative. Such disjointed and fragmentary accounts would not supply the wants of the Church, and especially of such persons as *Theophilus*, who, living at a distance from the scene of the events, would be more likely to be imposed upon by fallacious or erroneous statements, or confused and perplexed by

contradictions and inconsistencies, than others having better opportunities for arriving at the truth, by their intimacy with those who had themselves seen our Lord, or had become well acquainted with the facts of his history, from persons who had enjoyed that privilege. It therefore *seemed good* to Luke to furnish a more extended, complete, and accurate narrative, which he felt himself able to do, not only because *he had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*, or from the earliest part of our Saviour's life, partly from his familiarity with Paul, and partly from his conversation with the other Apostles, who were eye and ear witnesses of the things he was about to relate—but also, and mainly, because he was under the directing influence of the Holy Spirit. Without this inspiration, indeed, his history would never have been reckoned a part of the Bible. He well knew the weakness of man's memory, and the readiness with which a history alters its shape both by additions and alterations, when it depends only on word of mouth and report, and therefore, as if to rebuke all trust in unwritten traditions, he takes care to *write*. It is evident that the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, even if written previous to the publication of that of Luke, were not included in the many defective sketches or summaries to which Luke refers—not only because the former was written by one who was an eye-witness, and Mark drew his materials directly from Peter, if even he did not write, as it is quite probable he did, under his immediate supervision, but also because Matthew's Gospel as yet was in the Hebrew language, and Mark's was published in distant Italy, so that neither probably was yet in circulation in the locality where Luke was conversant. It has been remarked that Luke did not *take in hand*, nor Matthew, nor Mark, nor John, but the Divine Spirit supplying them with abundance of all words and matter, they accomplished what they began without any effort.

The words *in order* (v. 3) may refer to the order of time, or of things, or of both. They probably denote the arrangement of the facts of the history in a connected form, not so much chronologically, however, as in reference to the general plan or outline of the work. Luke, like the other Evangelists, often disregards the order of time, and groups together his incidents from their general resemblance, or to produce a given effect on the mind of his reader.

It is evidence at once of the wisdom and the goodness of God, that, in order to confirm our faith in the Gospel, He raised up a sufficient number of witnesses to attest the infallible certainty of all that it contains. The Evangelists did not write any thing but what they either heard or saw themselves, or received from those who had seen or heard it. To be "witnesses chosen before of God" of the doings and sayings of Jesus was the very essence and object of the Apostolic office. (Acts x. 41; i. 8, 22; xxvi. 16.) They were to be eye-witnesses of the facts, in order to be *ministers*, or official rehearsers of the history. In accordance with this is the bold declaration of Peter at a later day: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables . . . but were eye-witnesses." (2 Peter i. 16.) On equally strong ground does John, near the close of the first century, later, in fact, than the publication of this Gospel, place his own testimony: "That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen with our eyes*, which we have *looked upon*, and our *hands have handled* . . . declare we unto you." (1 John i. 1.) Such declarations afford no room, no interval of time, no chance for the intervention of fabricators for forming traditions, legends, or myths. Our Gospels are the plain records of the statements of actual spectators, and well would it be for infidels to reflect that they cannot now possibly be as good judges in the matter as those who lived at the time, and who were thus competent to determine whether the things *which were most surely believed among them* were true or false.

It is important, also, that all should remember that Christianity came before mankind in the shape of *facts*. The first preachers did not go up

and down the world, proclaiming an elaborate, artificial system of abstruse doctrines and deep principles. They made it their first business to tell men great plain facts. They went about, telling a sin-laden world that the Son of God had come down to earth, and lived for us, and died for us, and risen again.

How should we value every thing that concerns the Lord Jesus! With Him none of our earthly friends can be compared, and therefore we should desire to know every thing about Him that we can. It is affecting to hear how the poor heathen, when first converted, value the Word of God. Before the missionaries in the South Sea islands could print the Bible in the language of the people, the poor natives eagerly listened to all that was read aloud on the Sabbath, and many wrote down upon the leaves of the trees the texts they had heard, and studied them wherever they went, till they knew them by heart. We are without excuse if we remain ignorant of the history of our Lord. Let us not forget, however, for what purpose we read: that we may learn to love Jesus.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Is it known when or where this Gospel was written?
2. Who was its author, and what else did he write?
3. What is said about his Greek name?
4. Where is he supposed to have been born?
5. What is said of Antioch?
6. What else has been supposed about Luke?
7. Was he a Jew or Gentile?
8. In what relation did he stand to Paul?
9. Where did he travel with Paul?
10. What advantage did he enjoy at Jerusalem?
11. What was Luke's profession?
12. What evidence is there that he was a physician?
13. What was Luke's literary character?
14. What are some of the distinctive peculiarities of his Gospel? State them in the order in which they are given.
15. To whom was this Gospel dedicated?
16. What does the word Theophilus mean?
17. Who was Theophilus?
18. How had he been instructed, or catechized?
19. Was this Gospel intended for all men?
20. What was Luke's main reason for writing this Gospel?
21. What was his chief qualification for doing so?
22. How does it appear that the Gospels of Matthew and Mark were not included in the many sketches to which reference is made?
23. What is meant by the words *in order*?
24. How has God shown his wisdom and goodness in confirming our faith in the gospel?
25. Did the Evangelists hear or see themselves all that they wrote or receive it from those who had seen or heard it?
26. What was the essence and object of the Apostolic office?
27. What are the declarations of Peter and John on this point?
28. What would it be well for infidels to do?
29. How did Christianity come before mankind?
30. What did the first preachers do?
31. What is said about the Lord Jesus?
32. What is said about the poor heathen?
33. What did the South Sea Islanders do before the missionaries could print the Bible in their language?
34. For what purpose should we read the Scriptures?

## LESSON II.

vs. 5-14.

5. ¶ There was in the days of <sup>a</sup>Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, <sup>b</sup>of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was *Elizabeth*.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. ii. 1.<sup>b</sup> 1 Chron. xxiv. 10, 19; Neh. xii. 4, 17.

Here properly commences Luke's Gospel, the preceding verses constituting what may be called the preface. The reader will perceive at once an alteration in the style, the construction being more simple, and abounding to a greater or less extent in Hebraisms. As it is gratifying to know something of the extraction and early days of those who afterwards prove great men, the Evangelist, desiring to give a particular account of our Saviour's conception and birth, does this also of John the Baptist, His forerunner. Eras in the Old and New Testament are marked by the life or times of some principal man; hence the expression, *in the days of Herod, &c. Herod*, surnamed "the Great." As the old canon closed four hundred years before, with the prediction of Malachi, that the coming of Elijah should precede the advent of the Messiah, so the first action of the new is to announce the true Elijah's birth. John is described first by his parentage, being the son of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, the first of which names signifies *whom Jehovah remembers*, and the second, *God her oath, or my God hath sworn*. Zacharias was an aged priest of the course of *Abia*, which is the same as the Abijah of the Old Testament, and had a right to officiate in the temple when it became his turn, for we read in Chron. xxiv. 10, that David appointed the priests, the sons of Aaron, to minister by turns, and divided them into four and twenty courses. Each of these courses had a chief, or president, which are called in Ezra the "princes," or "chiefs of the priests," and which are probably the same as "the chief-priests" so often mentioned in the New Testament. The priests were so numerous that they could not all live at Jerusalem; hence their division into courses. Each course came up to Jerusalem in its turn, to serve for one week in the temple.

Zacharias, though a priest, was married, having one of the daughters of Aaron as his wife, according to the command of God: Lev. xxi. 14. If marriage was not improper for the priest under the law, neither is it for the minister of Christ under the gospel. The doctrine *which forbids to marry*, Paul calls a *doctrine of devils*. 1 Tim. iv. 1-3. Zacharias and Elizabeth were pious, as it is eminently desirable in all cases husband and wife should be.

6. And they were both <sup>1</sup>righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vii. 1; xvii. 1; 1 Kin. ix. 4; 2 Kin. xx. 3; Job i. 1; Acts xxiii. 1; Phil. iii. 6.

*Commandments* mean the moral law, and *ordinances*, the ritual. They were *righteous*, both as being justified by the righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to all believers, and as having the righteousness which is wrought inwardly in believers by the Holy Ghost for their sanctification. These two sorts of righteousness are never disjoined. This aged couple believed in the *promise* of a Saviour, and thus became partakers of His righteousness. They were pardoned and sanctified. Though still subject to sin, they indulged in

no sinful *habits*. They made conscience of every known duty, and endeavored to obey every divine precept. They were strict, exact, punctual. Their obedience was marked by *universality*. They were not satisfied (as hypocrites are) with observing those commandments which it is convenient to obey, whilst neglecting those that are more difficult, but they *walked in*, that is, kept, or obeyed, *all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord*—all the duties of religion which were made known to them. Their obedience was also characterized by *blamelessness*. That they were still subject to sin, we shall soon find proof, as we read how Zacharias was overtaken by unbelief, but they did not voluntarily indulge in any gross or known sin. They had real love to God, and sincere regard for His law. “Many sins,” says an old writer, “may be in him that has true grace; but he that has truth of grace, cannot allow himself in any sin.” The sincere, consistent, and devout obedience and life of this holy pair, furnish a pattern for the imitation of all, particularly ministers of the gospel and their wives.

7. And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years.

Barrenness was thought a very heavy affliction by the Jews, yet Zacharias gave no countenance to the practice of polygamy or divorce, by taking another wife, the latter of which especially was common at that time, though by the pious Jews generally disapproved.



HIGH-PRIEST.

The foundation of the feeling that the want of children was a calamity lay, perhaps, in the hope which each married couple may have entertained of being the progenitors of the expected Messiah. In ancient times, when God delayed to give the blessing of children to holy women, he rewarded their expectation with the birth of some eminent and extraordinary person. Thus Sarah, after long barrenness, brought forth an Isaac, Rebecca a Jacob, Rachel a Joseph, Hannah a Samuel, and Elizabeth John the Baptist. When God makes His people wait long for any particular mercy, if He sees it good for them, He bestows it at last with double reward for their patience and expectation.

8. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before <sup>h</sup>God in the order of his course,

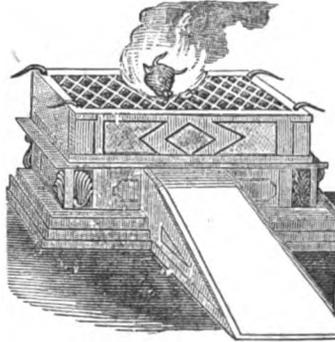
9. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was <sup>to</sup> burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

\* 1 Chron. xxiv. 19; 2 Chron. viii. 14; xxxi. 2

† Ex. xxx. 7, 8; 1 Sam. ii. 28; 1 Chron. xxiii. 13; 2 Chron. xxix. 11

When “a course” came up to relieve the one that had served the preceding week, the particular services of the priests were determined by lot.

Certain services were accounted more honorable than the others, and in this way all contention respecting them was avoided. The most honorable of all was that of going *into* the holy place to offer incense upon the golden altar. And on the occasion before us, when God purposed to speak to Zacharias, He caused this distinguished office to devolve upon him. The fact that Zacharias was chosen by lot to burn incense, shows that he was not, as some have imagined, high-priest, for the high-priest did this by the right of succession. The most minute circumstances are under the Lord's control, and are often the beginnings of very great events. The service of offering the incense was performed twice every day, just before the morning and evening sacrifice, that is, at nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, and the time of offering the incense was also the time of prayer—sweet fumes of the ascending incense being indeed representative of the prayers of the people ascending to God. That incense also represents our prayers offered to God under the gospel. The ejaculatory elevations of our hearts should be perpetual, but twice a day, at least, we should send up our solemn invocations to God, unless His claims are to be regarded as weaker under the gospel than they were under the law.

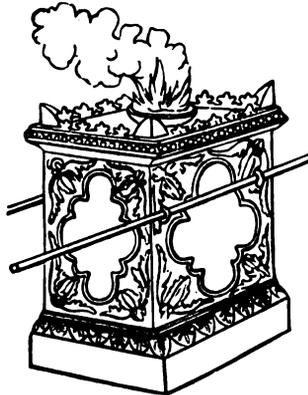


ALTAR OF BURNT-OFFERINGS.

10. "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

■ Lev. xvi. 17; Heb. iv. 14-16; Rev. viii. 3, 4.

When the priest entered the holy place to offer the incense, a service which was performed by placing incense in a vase or cup, called the *censer*, upon the golden altar, with burning coals beneath, producing by its smoke a powerful perfume, filling the temple with its fragrance, the sound of a small bell notified the assembled people that the time of prayer was come. When this was heard, the Priests and Levites, who had not taken their stations, hastened to do so; the space in the court between the great altar of burnt-offerings and the porch of the Lord's house was cleared, and the people, in the different courts of the temple, "stood and prayed." It is a blessed thing when ministers and people jointly offer up their prayers for each other at the same Throne of Grace. Though under the law the people would not have been permitted to enter the holy place to present their supplications, under the gospel every man is a priest to God, and may enter the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus. What a precious privilege!



ALTAR OF INCENSE.

11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

• Ex. xxx. 1; Lev. xvi. 13; Rev. viii. 3; ix. 13.

The altar of incense stood close by the veil which divided the holy place from the most holy; on the north stood the table of shew-bread; on the south the golden candlestick; and as the priest entered with his face to the west, the angel must have stood to the north, or near the table of shew-bread. Whether the angel was already visible when Zacharias came in, or afterwards suddenly appeared, has been questioned. It seems to us likely that the angel did not appear until after the priest had performed his usual sacerdotal duties: 1. Because the prior appearance of the angel would have discomposed the aged priest, if not disabled him for the discharge of his duties; 2. Because the angel distinctly announced his appearance to be an answer to prayer, which declaration would have come with tenfold emphasis *after* the incense embodying the prayers of the people had been offered. When we are nearest God the good angels are nearest us. They are always with us, even though our senses cannot discern them. Especially are they present with us in our private devotion and public worship.

12. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

• Ver. 20; II. 9, 10; Jud. vi. 22; Job iv. 14, 15; Dan. x. 7; Acts x. 4; Rev. i. 17.

We always find that men are troubled at the appearance of angels. It is not difficult to conceive why Zacharias was terrified when he beheld the angel. The idea of an angelic visitant, so familiar to his people in their early history, had from disuse become a strange matter to them. In the *presence* of angels they believed in the fullest extent; but of their *manifested* presence there had long ceased to be any authentic examples. The experience of this righteous man here tallies exactly with that of other saints under similar circumstances—Moses at the burning bush, and Daniel at the river of Hiddekel; the women at the Sepulchre, and John at the isle of Patmos. How are we to account for this fear in seeing visions of things belonging to another world? To this question there is only one answer. It arises from our inward sense of weakness, guilt, and corruption. The vision of an inhabitant of heaven reminds us forcibly of our imperfection, and of our natural unfitnes to stand before God.

13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

• Ver. 60, 63.

The angel attests his supernatural character by showing that he knew what Zacharias' prayer had long been. The attempt to calm the trepidation of Zacharias shows us that holy angels really pity our frailties, and suggest comfort to us. To what *prayer* did the angel refer? Was it the prayer which Zacharias, probably offered frequently, that he might not go down childless to the grave? or was it, as some suppose, the national prayer offered by him in his ministerial capacity for the appearance of the Messiah? It will be observed that the angel afterwards goes on to explain that this son was to be Christ's appointed harbinger, thus laying the stress rather upon the fact of Messiah's coming than of a son being born to Zacharias. Both these blessings were soon to be bestowed. A son was to be born to the aged priest, to prepare the way for the Saviour that was to be given to men.

14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

¶ Ver. 68.

Well might a father rejoice at the birth of such a son! His very name, *John*, signifying "the grace or favor of God," showed that God would bless him, and make him a blessing. The giving of significant names to children has been an ancient and pious practice: names which carried a remembrance either of duty or of mercy in them. When a child has been born, it has very seldom been known whether it would become a curse or a blessing. There has often been great joy at the birth of children, who have lived to do great harm, and even to break their parents' hearts. When Cain was born Eve rejoiced, saying, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," little knowing or thinking how wicked a man he would be. Other children who have excited little interest at their birth, or even in their boyhood, have lived not only to rejoice their parents, but to save souls from eternal death. Philip Doddridge, who learned the alphabet by the light of the chimney-fire, from his pious mother, afterwards became the author of a valuable commentary on the New Testament, and of other standard religious works, the salutary influence of which is felt throughout the world. Isaac Watts, who with his hand stroked the cheek of his mother when a babe in her arms, as she sat at the door of the prison in which his father was suffering for conscience's sake, afterwards, with that same hand, as the Psalmist of the Christian Israel, held the pen that should instruct and edify myriads to the end of time. Martin Luther, who played around the miner's cabin in Mansfield, and begged his bread in the streets of Magdeburg, became the instrument in God's hand for dragging forth the Church from the corruptions which for ages and centuries had been gathering upon it. Moses, who as a boy sported about the Egyptian palace, afterwards became the scholar learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, the scourge of Pharaoh, the deliverer of the Hebrews, the king in Jeshurun, the lawgiver and prophet of the Lord, with whom he would speak face to face. We cannot tell when we look upon young children what they will become, but we may offer up our earnest prayer that they may be a comfort and not a sorrow, a blessing and not a curse. A child of prayer and faith is likely to be a source of comfort to his parents. Were proper attention paid to this point, there would be fewer *disobedient* children in the world, and the number of *broken-hearted* parents would be lessened. But what can be expected from the majority of matrimonial connections, begun without the *fear* of God, and carried on without *His love*?

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Where does Luke's Gospel properly commence?
2. What did the preceding verses constitute?
3. Whose birth is noticed in connection with that of Christ?
4. By what are eras in the Old and New Testament marked?
5. What was Herod surnamed?
6. What is said about the close of the Old Testament and the first action of the New?
7. How is John described?
8. What do the names Zacharias and Elizabeth signify?
9. Who was Zacharias?
10. Of what "course" was he?
11. How and by whom were the priests appointed to minister?
12. Into how many courses were they divided?
13. Who were the chiefs of these courses?
14. Why were the priests divided into courses?

15. Whose daughter was Zacharias' wife?
16. According to what command was this?
17. What is said about marriage?
18. What is said about the piety of husband and wife?
19. What is meant by "commandments?" and what by "ordinances?"
20. How were Zacharias and Elizabeth righteous?
21. By what was their obedience marked?
22. In what sense were they blameless?
23. How was barrenness regarded among the Jews?
24. Did Zacharias countenance polygamy or divorce?
25. Why did the Jews consider the want of children a calamity?
26. What is said of the delay of God in ancient times to give children to holy women?
27. How were the services of the priests determined?
28. What was the most honorable service?
29. Who caused this service to fall to Zacharias at this time?
30. Was Zacharias high-priest?
31. How often, and when, was incense offered?
32. Were these also the times of prayer?
33. What did that incense represent?
34. How was incense offered?
35. What notified the people that the time of prayer had come?
36. What took place when this bell was heard?
37. Is every Christian, under the gospel, a priest to God?
38. Where did the altar of incense stand?
39. Did the angel appear before Zacharias performed his sacerdotal duties?
40. What is said about angels?
41. Why was Zacharias terrified when he saw the angel?
42. Why are we afraid when we see visions of things of another world?
43. How did the angel attest his supernatural character?
44. What did he do?
45. To what prayer did he refer?
46. What did he go on to explain?
47. What did he say about joy at John's birth?
48. What is said about giving names to children?

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### LESSON III.

vs. 15-25.

15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

† Num. vi. 3; Judges xiii. 4; Ch. vii. 33.

• Jer. 1. 5; Gal. 1. 15.

16. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

† Mal. iv. 5, 6.

17. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the

disobedient "to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Mal. iv. 5; Matt. xi. 14; Mark ix. 12.

The angel tells Zacharias that the son to be born unto him should be one of eminent endowments, and designed for extraordinary services. 1. *That he should be great in the sight of the Lord*, that is, really or truly great, God would regard him as such. They are *little men* in the sight of the Lord, whatever importance their riches and reputation may give them in the sight of men, who live in the world to little purpose, render little service to God, and bring little glory to His name. Just what a man is in God's eyes, that is he indeed, neither more nor less. 2. *That he should drink neither wine nor strong drink*. Wine was the juice of the grape. The kind of wine commonly used in Judea was a light wine, often not stronger than cider in this country. It was the common drink of all classes of the people. Why then was John to drink no wine? Because he was a Nazarite. See Numb. vi. A Nazarite was a person separated unto the Lord in a very singular manner. Sometimes the Israelites made vows thus to separate themselves, for a week, a month, or a longer space of time. Acts xxi. 24. During that time they tasted neither wine nor grapes, and they suffered the locks of hair on their heads to grow long. Some children were made Nazarites from their birth. Samuel was thus devoted to the Lord by his praying mother, and Samson by the appointment of an angel. John the Baptist was also a Nazarite from his birth. Jewish ceremonies have ceased since the Lord Jesus has made known to us the gospel, yet it is our duty in all things to be devoted to the service of God, and separated from the sinful pleasures of an ungodly world. Our modern temperance societies are properly a Christian Nazaritism. They are a moral *enterprise*, aiming to raise the public practice to a standard of temperance by exhibiting an abstinence from even an otherwise innocent measure of indulgence. *Strong drink*, among the Jews, (as distilled spirits were not then known,) was probably nothing more than fermented liquors, or a drink obtained from fermented dates, figs, and the juice of the palm, or the lees of wine, mingled with sugar, and having the property of intoxicating. The words denote all exhilarating liquors besides wine. 3. *That he should be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb*; that is, before his birth, or from his very birth, the plenary influence of the Holy Spirit should be upon and in his spirit. There is no Scripture ground for supposing that a child, even before birth, is no possible subject of sanctifying power. 4. *That he should turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God*. The Jewish people at this time were sunk in formalism and sin. We are not told how many were *turned* or converted under John's preaching, from this low and cold formalism, or more open vice, but that the number was great is evident, not only from this passage, but from Matt. iii. 5, 6, Mark i. 5, Luke iii. 7, and other places where his ministry and baptism are referred to. 5. *That he should go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias*. *Him*, that is, before the Lord their God. An evident reference to the last of the prophets—Mal. iii. 1; iv. 5, 6—whose words are thus indorsed by the angel. This seems to be a clear ascription of the Divine title to the Messiah before whom John was to go. There was a great resemblance between John the Baptist and the prophet Elijah, under whose name he was predicted by Malachi; iv. 5. *In spirit*. Both were clothed in hair-cloth, with leathern girdles around their loins, and dwelt much in the wilderness. Both were faithful and courageous in times of universal corruption. Elijah prophesied in the court of the wicked king Ahab, and his more wicked queen, and by his boldness endangered his life. John reproved king Herod so faithfully for his sins, that he was imprisoned, and at length murdered, at the request of the cruel Herodias. John came also in the *power* of the great prophet,

denouncing speedy vengeance from heaven unless men repented. 6. *That he should turn the hearts of the fathers to their children.* The fathers here are the holy ancestry of degenerate Israel, who had, as it were, been offended with the apostasy of their descendants. John would so infuse a better spirit into this generation that a reconciliation should take place between the holy *olden time* and the fallen *present*;—and the *disobedient to the wisdom of the just*,—the unbelieving, the persons who would no longer credit the predictions of the prophets relative to the manifestation of the Messiah. *Unbelief* and *disobedience* are so intimately connected, that the same word in the sacred writings often serves for both. *To the wisdom of the just*, the original preposition implies not only the entering upon, but continuance in the state of wisdom, or true religion, (in distinction from the wisdom of this world,) here predicated of the just: *to make ready a people for the Lord*, by fitting men to receive Christ upon His own terms and conditions.

Those whom God designs for eminent usefulness in His church, He furnishes with corresponding endowments. As John was extraordinarily called, so was he extraordinarily furnished for his office and ministry. Though the Son of God was coming into the world to shed His blood to save sinners, yet it was necessary that one should go before Him to *turn* the hearts of men towards Him. What a proof this of the wickedness of the human heart! Every one is an enemy of God until he is converted. Have not some faithful preachers tried to persuade *us* to turn to the Lord? Have they succeeded? If not, what is the reason? True godliness tends to the removal of contention, and *nominal* Christians in general need conversion as much as the heathen, even as the Israelites by birth did of old.

18. And Zacharias said unto the angel, \*Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

\* Gen. xvii. 17.

19. And the angel answering said unto him, I am †Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.

† Dan. viii. 16, and ix. 21, 22, 23; Matt. xviii. 10; Heb. i. 14.

20. And, behold, \*thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

\* Ezek. iii. 26, and xxiv. 27.

Zacharias was so much astonished at the message of the angel, that he asked of him by what sign he should know that this thing, so far above the ordinary course of nature, should come to pass. *And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel*—*The might of the strong God*, a name peculiarly appropriate now, as pointing out that *all-prevalent power* by which the *strong God* could accomplish every purpose, and *subdue* all things to Himself. *Stand in the presence of God*. To stand or dwell in the presence of a sovereign is an oriental idiom, importing the most eminent and dignified station at court. Why was it wrong in him to desire a sign? Because he had already had one. It was sinful in Zacharias not to believe after he had seen the glorious angel. Unbelief is a great sin, for it is an insult to the truth of God. It was, therefore, both a sign and a judgment that Zacharias was told he should be dumb. This gentle chastisement would at once remove

his doubts and remind him of his sin. In this way God deals with His own people when they forget what a great God He is. He speaks only what is for our good, and it is right that we should suffer if we do not credit what He says. The word of God in the mouth of his messengers is God's own word, and not to believe it is a sin which He will severely punish.

21. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

22. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

23. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Kings xi. 5; 1 Chron. ix. 25.

24. And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

25. Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

<sup>b</sup> Gen. xxx. 23; Is. lv. 1; and liv. 1, 4.

The priest, it is said, was not accustomed to remain in the temple more than half an hour commonly. On this occasion, as Zacharias remained longer than usual, the people wondered why he was detained. When he came out, it was expected that, according to the custom of the priest after the service of the temple was finished, he would dismiss the people with those beautiful words recorded in Numbers vi. 24-7, beginning, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee," but he could not speak. His excited aspect showed that something had happened to him in the sacred place, and the people suspecting that he had seen an appearance or spectre, he made signs to show them what he had seen in the temple. Zacharias, though he ceased to speak, did not cease to minister in the temple. He continued at his post through the eight days of his course, knowing that the service of his heart and hand would be accepted of God who had silenced his tongue. Those powers which we have, we must make use of in the public service of God, who expects from us only according to what we have, pardoning our infirmity, and rewarding our sincerity. It is the duty of ministers of the gospel to remain at their work until they are entirely unfitted for it.

The priests, during the time of their ministration, had their lodgings in buildings appertaining to the temple. Zacharias having accomplished his course of eight days, returned to his usual abode in the southern part ("hill-country") of Judea. This is generally thought to have been Hebron. What a history he had to unfold to Elizabeth! For he was able to inform her in writing. What a proof she beheld of the power of God in the dumbness of her husband! We should take notice of God's dealings with others. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." Ps. cviii. 48. *Hide herself five months, saying, &c.* How humbly and gratefully Elizabeth behaved on this occasion! She acknowledged the goodness of the Lord in having condescended to look upon her affliction, for she had been exposed to much reproach on account of having no child. The Jews looked upon it as a singular happiness to be instrumental in *multiplying the holy seed*, and the hope of giving birth to the Messiah rendered the Jewish women extremely anxious for children. When

troubles are removed we are apt to overlook the Lord's merciful hand. Perhaps we have been suffering under some trial, the unkindness of a relation, the dread of sickness, or the pressure of poverty. God removes the trial, and we forget how much it weighed us down before, and so we omit to thank the Lord heartily. A holy minister named *Rutherford*, in one of his letters, written two hundred years ago, says, that one of the things which most showed him his own wickedness by nature, was his feeling more disposed to call upon the Lord in trouble, than to thank him when delivered. Let us think over the things that troubled us a few years ago, and bless the hand which has lightened our load.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What did the angel first tell Zacharias of the child to be born?
2. Who are little men in the sight of the Lord?
3. What was the ancient wine?
4. What was the kind of wine commonly used in Judea?
5. Why was John to drink no wine?
6. Who was a Nazarite?
7. What is said about children being made Nazarites?
8. What is said about modern temperance societies?
9. What was strong drink among the Jews?
10. What did the angel next say concerning John?
11. How was he to be filled with the Holy Ghost?
12. May a child before birth be a subject of sanctifying power?
13. How was John to turn many of the children of Israel, &c.?
14. Prove that many were converted under his preaching.
15. Whom was John to go before?
16. To what is there a reference in these words?
17. Is there an ascription of the Divine title to the Messiah here?
18. State the points of resemblance between John the Baptist and Elijah.
19. How was John to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children?
20. How, the disobedient to the obedience of the just?
21. What is said about unbelief and disobedience?
22. What is said about the phrase, "to the wisdom of the just?"
23. How was John to make ready a people for the Lord?
24. What does God do to those He designs for eminent usefulness?
25. What does the fact that Christ required a forerunner show?
26. What is true of all men before conversion?
27. What do nominal Christians need?
28. What did Zacharias ask of the angel?
29. Why was it wrong in him to desire a sign?
30. What is said of unbelief?
31. What answer did Zacharias receive?
32. What effect would this have upon him?
33. How long was the priest accustomed to remain in the temple?
34. Why did the people wonder at this time?
35. What did they expect?
36. What did his excited appearance show?
37. How did he show the people what he had seen?
38. Did Zacharias, when dumb, cease to minister in the temple?
39. What does his example teach?
40. Where had the priests their lodgings during their ministrations?
41. Where did Zacharias go after completing his course?
42. What is the hill-country thought to have been?
43. How did he inform Elizabeth of what had happened?
44. How did Elizabeth behave on this occasion?
45. What are we apt to do when troubles are removed?
46. What does the disposition to do this prove?

LESSON IV.

vs. 26-38.

26. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27. To a virgin <sup>e</sup>espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name *was* Mary.

<sup>e</sup> Matt. i. 18; Ch. ii. 4, 5.

28. And the angel came in unto her, and said, <sup>4</sup>Hail, *thou that art* <sup>3</sup>highly favoured, <sup>4</sup>the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

<sup>4</sup> Dan. ix. 23; x. 19. <sup>3</sup> or *graciously accepted, or much graced*: see ver. xxx. <sup>4</sup> Judges vi. 12.

29. And when she saw *him*, <sup>4</sup>she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

<sup>4</sup> Ver. 12.

30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God.

31. <sup>4</sup>And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and <sup>5</sup>shalt call his name JESUS.

<sup>4</sup> Is. vii. 14; Matt. i. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Ch. ii. 21.

32. He shall be great, <sup>4</sup>and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and <sup>4</sup>the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

<sup>4</sup> Mark v. 7. <sup>4</sup> 2 Sam. vii. 11, 12; Ps. cxxxii. 11; Is. ix. 6, 7; xvi. 5; Jer. xxxiii. 5; Rev. iii. 7.

33. <sup>4</sup>And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

<sup>4</sup> Dan. ii. 44; vii. 14, 27; Obad. xxi.; Mic. iv. 7; John xii. 34; Heb. i. 8.

34. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35. And the angel answered and said unto her, <sup>4</sup>The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called <sup>4</sup>the Son of God.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. i. 20. <sup>4</sup> Matt. xiv. 33; xxvi. 63, 64; Mark i. 1; John i. 34; xx. 36; Acts viii. 37, Rom. i. 4.

36. And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also con-

ceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

87. For °with God nothing shall be impossible.

° Gen. xviii. 14; Jer. xxxii. 17; Zech. viii. 6; Matt. xix. 26; Mark x. 27; Ch. xviii. 27; Rom. iv. 21.

38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

*The angel Gabriel.* God appointed that his Son should be born six months after John. An evil angel was the first author of our ruin; a good angel, though he could not be the author of our restoration, yet was made the joyful reporter of it. It was the same angel who had, many hundred years before, declared to the prophet Daniel the coming of the Messiah, (Dan. ix. 21-7,) that now came to Mary. This being the case, we at once see the special and emphatic *fitness* that the same angel should be employed to announce the accomplishment of that which he had so long ago predicted. *A city of Galilee.* As Joseph and Mary were both of the family of David, the patrimonial estate of which lay in Bethlehem, it seems as if the family residence should have been in that city and not in Nazareth, for we find that even after the return from the captivity the several families went to reside in those cities to which they originally belonged. See Neh. ii. 3. But it is probable that the holy family removed to Galilee, for fear of exciting the jealousy of Herod, who had usurped that throne to which they had an indisputable right. Thus by keeping out of the way, they avoided the effects of his jealousy. *To a virgin espoused, &c.* At length the moment is come which is to give a *son* to a *virgin*, a *Saviour* to the world, a *pattern* to mankind, a *sacrifice* to sinners, a *temple* to the Divinity, and a *new principle* to the new world. The Son of God comes to humble the *proud* and to honor *poverty, weakness and contempt*. He chooses an *obscure* place for the mystery which is most glorious to his humanity, its union with the Divinity; and for that which is most *degrading*, (his sufferings and death,) he will choose the greatest city. How far are men from such a conduct as this! *Of the house of David.* Mary was a poor woman of a low, mean city in Galilee, called Nazareth. She was, indeed, descended from King David, who had lived more than a thousand years before, and she was engaged to be married to a man called Joseph, also descended from King David. It had been prophesied that the Son of God should be born among David's family. Isaiah calls the Saviour "A rod out of the stem of Jesse," (Is. ix. 1,) for Jesse was the father of David. Jesse was like a tree, of which Jesus was a rod or branch.

It seems probable that the angel visited Mary when she was alone. The import of his message to her was as follows: *Hail!*—a word of salutation, equivalent to *Peace be with thee*, or, *Joy be with thee, thou art highly favored*, thou that are designated as the happy individual to whom the great honor is to pertain of giving birth to the world's Redeemer—the *Lord is with thee*—as the word "*is*" is not in the original, this passage may be rendered either "the Lord is with thee," or "the Lord *be* with thee," implying the prayer of the angel that all blessings from God might descend and rest upon her—*blessed art thou among women*, not *above* women, but *among* women, that is, "thou art the most happy of women." The Roman Catholics allege that the words "highly favored" mean "full of grace," and say, that Mary can now impart grace, and that the angel worshipped her. The original word, however, does not signify *full of grace*, but *freely beloved*, and it is perfectly plain that the angel's address was a salutation and not a prayer. Besides,

we know that Mary was but a creature, and even a sinful creature, and hence, however great the distinction she enjoyed in being selected to be the mother of the Messiah, it is idolatry to treat her as the Lord.

Mary was afraid and perplexed at the speech of the angel, it was so unexpected and extraordinary, and, with her sense of humility, the honor was so undeserved. All passions, but particularly that of fear, disquiet the heart, and make it unfit to receive the messages of God. The angel therefore desired her not to fear, and then informed her of the wonderful event about to happen. The Saviour, so long expected, was to be her son. He was to be called "Jesus," which signifies Saviour, and is the same name as Joshua. He was to be "great," distinguished, or illustrious, great in respect to His person and His offices; he was to be called the son of the highest, that is, he was to be the son of the infinitely exalted God; he was to receive from the Lord God the throne of his father David, that is, God would settle upon him a spiritual kingdom, of which the earthly one of David, from whom he was lineally descended, was a type; he was to reign over the house of Jacob forever: as this was the name by which the ancient people of God were known, this was in effect saying that he should reign over his own Church and people forever, and of his kingdom there was to be no end—he should reign among his people on earth until the end of time, and still be their King in heaven. He should be the only King that shall never lay aside his diadem and robes, and that shall never die.

*How shall this be?* Some would render this as if she would be resolved whether this birth were to be produced in a common or a miraculous manner. But we think it is more natural to suppose that she understood the former words as an intimation that the effect was immediately to take place, to which her present circumstances seemed, humanly speaking, an invincible objection.

*That holy thing which shall be born of thee.* The angel had told Mary of the great power and glory of the son she should have. He next told her of the holiness of his nature. As the Messiah came to redeem sinners—to make atonement for others, and not for Himself—it was necessary that His human nature should be pure, and freed from the corruption of the fall. Hence a body was to be prepared for Him, not by ordinary generation, but by the direct power of God. His body was to be miraculously formed by the power of the Holy Ghost, though born of a human mother. The phrase, *that holy thing*, shows the purity and immaculateness of Christ's human nature. Jesus had flesh and blood like ourselves, (Heb. ii. 14,) and He was subject to all our bodily weaknesses; He needed food and sleep; He suffered pain; He shed tears, and sweat drops of blood; but He was *without sin*, (Heb. iv. 15.) He was "holy, harmless, undefiled." (Heb. vii. 26.)

*Shall be called the Son of God.* The angel did not give the appellation *Son of God* to the *Divine nature of Christ*, but to that *holy person* or *thing* which was to be born of the virgin, by the energy of the Holy Spirit. The *Divine nature could not* be born of the virgin, the human nature *was* born of her. The phrase does not mean constituted and made, but evidenced and declared. Christ was God before He assumed flesh, even from eternity; but His taking flesh in this manner would evidence Him to be the Son of God.

Such was the child of whom Mary was to be the mother. Never were such wonderful things delivered to any human being as were then spoken to her. To confirm her confidence in what he had told her, the angel mentioned the wonderful conception of her cousin Elizabeth, and reminded her of the almighty power of God. The result was, that she was willing to bear the trial. She knew that many would disbelieve her story, and treat her with contempt; nevertheless, in expression of her resignation to the will of God, and of her faith in the promise, she said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." All disputations with God, after His will is made known and understood, arise from infidelity and

unbelief. God often makes those suffer most deeply whom He designs to honor most highly. When he intends that persons should do much good to souls, (and this is one of the highest honors,) He often permits suspicion to be cast upon their character, but at length He establishes their innocence.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. When did God appoint that His son should be born?
2. Who was the reporter of our salvation?
3. What angel was this?
4. Who was Mary?
5. Of what city was she?
6. What kind of a city was this?
7. Was she descended from David?
8. How long before had David lived?
9. To whom was she engaged to be married?
10. Was Joseph also descended from King David?
11. Had it been prophesied that the Son of God should be born among Dav.d's family?
12. What does Isaiah call the Saviour?
13. Why does he call him so?
14. Did the angel visit Mary when alone?
15. What is meant by "Hail?"
16. What, by "thou that art highly favored?"
17. What, by "the Lord is with thee?"
18. Is this expression a prayer?
19. If so, what did it import?
20. What is said about "blessed art thou among women?"
21. What do the Roman Catholics allege?
22. What does the original, rendered "full of grace," mean?
23. Was Mary a sinful creature?
24. Is it idolatry to treat her as the Lord?
25. Why was Mary afraid and perplexed?
26. What effect have passions on the heart?
27. What did the angel desire Mary not to do?
28. Of what did he inform her?
29. What was the Saviour to be called?
30. What does the name Jesus signify?
31. How was He to be great?
32. Whose son was He to be?
33. Whose throne was He to receive from the Lord God?
34. What kind of a kingdom was to be settled upon Him?
35. What is meant by His reigning over the house of Jacob forever?
36. In what sense was His kingdom to have no end?
37. Was it necessary that Christ's human nature should be pure?
38. How was this accomplished?
39. Was Jesus a partaker of our nature?
40. Yet was He not without sin?
41. What is meant by "called the Son of God?"
42. What did Mary say after the announcement?
43. What is said about all disputations with God, after His will is made known?

## LESSON V.

vs. 39-48.

39. And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Judah.

p Josh. xxi. 9, 10, 11.

*Mary arose in those days*, that is, soon after she had received the extraordinary message from the angel, before mentioned, as soon as she could conveniently fit herself out for the journey. *Went into the hill-country*. The portion of Palestine originally allotted to the tribe of Judah was divided in accordance with its natural features into the southern district, or the plain bordering on the Mediterranean sea; the hill-country of Judah, running through the centre from north to south; and the district of Judah. The *city of Judah* is supposed by some to have been *Hebron*. *With haste*, such as results from zeal and eager desire. The intimation which the angel had given respecting Elizabeth greatly impressed the mind of Mary, and created a strong desire to visit and confer with that aged relative, under the very peculiar circumstances in which she was placed. There were grounds on which she might suspect the actual relation between these extraordinary circumstances. She could not but know what had happened to Zacharias at the temple, and if, as would seem from her not being already apprised of the fact, the particulars of the vision had not yet become equally notorious, the information given by the angel pointed, as coming from him, a connecting link which she would be anxious to trace more fully. If we may suppose Hebron to have been Elizabeth's residence, Mary's journey would be about one hundred miles. Dr. Robinson journeyed with camels from Hebron to Jerusalem, in an hour and fifteen minutes, and from thence to Nazareth with mules, in nearly thirty hours. A camel travels about ten miles an hour, a mule three. It may have been that Mary went, in a party of friends and neighbors, to one of the festivals at Jerusalem, of which party Joseph, as well as her own immediate relatives, may have been. At Jerusalem, she would meet Zacharias, who, as a priest, would certainly attend the festival, even if not on actual duty, and having made known her wish to him, would accompany him when he returned to his home. *Into a city of Judah*; probably Hebron, the city of the priests, Josh. xxi. 14, situated in the tribe of Judah. This was the chief city in that part of Judea, as may be gathered from 2 Sam. ii.

It is well for those who have a work of grace begun in their souls, to communicate experiences one to another, and they will find that, as in water, face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man—of Christian to Christian.

40. And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth.

Here were the two wonders of the world met under one roof, to communicate their joys to each other, and to strengthen each other's faith. How interesting that interview between those two holy women! There was a great difference between their ages. Elizabeth was very old; Mary was not old; it is probable she was quite young. Yet she was far more highly honored than her aged relative. The old are often envious of the young, but the pious Elizabeth was ready to do honor to Mary. *Saluted Elizabeth*. The

salutations of the Jews were usually of a religious character, at least in form, and were attended with much ceremony. They were various, such as, "Be thou blessed of Jehovah," "God be with you," "Peace be with you." See Ruth ii. 4; Judges xix. 20; 2 Sam. xx. 9; Ps. cxxix. 8. To the last mentioned form, which was the most common, striking allusion is made by our Saviour, John xiv. 27.

41. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

No sooner had Mary spoken than the child in the womb of Elizabeth leaped, as if transported with joy, or sensible of the approach of Him whose forerunner he was appointed to be, and already offering Him involuntary homage. The reference to the movement of the child by Luke, in connection with the words of Elizabeth, v. 44, shows that it was attributed to a secret and powerful spiritual influence. The expression, *Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost*, seems to have been the accomplishment of the promise made by the angel, v. 15. This expression attaches the weight of inspiration to the words Elizabeth uttered in reply to Mary's salutation.

If Elizabeth and her babe thus rejoiced, when Christ came under their roof, how should our hearts leap within us, when the Son of God vouchsafes to come into the secret of our souls, not to visit us for an hour, but to dwell with us, yea, to dwell in us, and that forever?

42. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

q Jud. v. 24; ver. 28.

*And she spake out with a loud voice*, such as testified the greatness of the emotion of her mind, *Blessed art thou among women*, repeating the words of the angel, v. 28, of which she had probably been informed by Mary, in the present interview, esteeming it the highest honor among mothers to be the mother of the Messiah. Both had been highly favored—but Mary most. Mary was *blessed*, not so much for carrying Christ in her womb by sense, as for bearing Him in her heart by faith. Afterwards, John, in obedience to the requirements of the ceremonial law, baptized Jesus, although so much his inferior. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Elizabeth, while extolling the blessedness of Mary on account of her faith and obedience, was undoubtedly reflecting with compassion on the condition of Zacharias, whose unbelief had been reproved with loss of speech, while the believing Mary was entering her house with joyful salutations. *And blessed is the fruit of thy womb*, alluding, probably, to the child's being the promised seed in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and who for that reason was blessed Himself, Ps. lxxii. 17. A light from heaven convinced her, that she whose womb contained the Mighty One stood there before her. The song of Elizabeth is a counterpart of the song of Hannah, as related in 1 Sam. ii. 1-10.

While we cannot but own that we are more *favoured* of God than we deserve, let us by no means envy others who are *more highly* favored than we are.

43. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

If Elizabeth had not been extraordinarily inspired, she could not so much as have suspected that Mary was to be the mother of the Messiah, but this

being revealed to her, she was greatly struck with the honor that was done her, and expressed her sense thereof by asking, in a rapture of astonishment, how it came to be conferred on her. As if she had said, "How have I deserved this honor, that the mother of the Messiah, my Lord and Saviour, should deign to visit me?" Those that are filled with the Holy Ghost have low thoughts of their own merits, and high thoughts of God's favors. Her son, the Baptist, used the same language of humility, Matt. iii. 14. Elizabeth seems to have been the first one who employed this title, *My Lord*, of such common use among Christians.

44. For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

"Thou certainly bringest some extraordinary tidings, some extraordinary blessings, with thee, for *as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, not only my heart leaped for joy, but the babe in my womb did so too.*" The reference is to v. 41, where the verb used denotes something more than the natural movements of the unborn child. It seems most plainly accordant with the mind of the inspired writer, that upon this occasion, the unborn harbinger salutes with *joy* the unborn Messiah at his first approach. This would serve very much to strengthen Mary's faith, and would be in part the fulfilment of the prediction, Ps. xcvi. 8, 9.

45. And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

<sup>4</sup> Or, *which believed that there.*

The language of Elizabeth here passes from the second to the third person, but the expression, although in form indefinite, was designed to apply directly to Mary, and commended her for her faith and humility when she received the message from *the Lord*, by His angel. Mary's faith is made to stand in contrast with Zacharias's unbelief, but this is done in such a manner as to show the great decorum which the Spirit of God, as well as the rules of modesty and piety, taught Elizabeth to observe, when the faults of a husband were in question. *For there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.* The invariable certainty of God's promises is the true ground of faith, and the source of happiness to those who build upon them. *Blessed* is every one that *believes*. God has promised to cast out none that come to Him, but to give them everlasting life. If we believe this promise, we shall come to Him. If we *have* come to Him, how *many* precious promises belong to us! God has promised to hear our prayers, to make all things work together for our good, to deliver us out of every temptation, and to give us, even in this life, peace which passeth all understanding. Those who trust in these promises find there is a performance of the things that were told them. It was a good answer that was once given by a poor woman, when, to a minister who asked her, "What is faith?" she replied, "I am ignorant; I cannot answer well; but I think faith is taking God at his word."

46. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

<sup>r</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 1; Ps. xxxiv. 2, 3, and xxxv. 9; Hab. iii. 18.

The Hebrews were accustomed to express their joy or affliction in irregular hymns without metre. Though there was much to try Mary in her present

circumstances, for many people would not believe her account of the angel's visit, and would treat her with scorn, yet she was filled with joy, because she enjoyed the favor of the Lord, thus showing us how faith can enable us to rejoice in the midst of trials. Having heard Elizabeth speak, she likewise was filled with the Holy Ghost, and under His influence uttered extempore this hymn, remarkable for the beauty of its style, the sublimity of its sentiments, and the spirit of piety which runs through the whole of it; and manifesting the deep sense she had of her own unworthiness, and the goodness of God in choosing her to the high honor of being the Messiah's mother. Most of the phrases in the hymn are borrowed from the Old Testament, with which the pious virgin seems to have been very conversant, especially from the song of Hannah, in which there were so many passages remarkably suitable to her case. Compare 1 Sam. ii. 1-10; Gen. xxx. 13; Ps. ciii. 17; xcviii. 10; cvii. 9; Mic. vii. 20; also several passages in Ps. cxiii. and cxvii. This song properly consists of three parts: 1. In vs. 49-50, Mary praises God for what He had done for *herself*. 2. In vs. 51-3, she praises Him for what He had done, and would do, against the oppressors of *his people*, and that He *exalts the humble* and brings low the proud. 3. In vs. 53-56, she praises Him for what He had done, and would do, for His *Church*. The song may also be regarded as an animated doxology, for in it are celebrated the grace of God, v. 48, His omnipotence, vs. 49-51, His holiness, vs. 49, 51, 54, His justice, vs. 52 and 53, and especially His faithfulness, vs. 54 and 55. *My soul doth magnify the Lord*. True praise comes from the *soul*. Mary begins this song like that, 1 Sam. ii. 1. She does not *magnify*, that is, extol or praise, *herself*, but *the Lord*. The more honor God in any way confers upon us, the more honor we must aim to give to Him.

#### 47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

She seems to turn her thoughts here to Christ himself, who was to be born of her, as the angel had told her He should be the Son of the Highest, whose name should be called *Jesus*, the Saviour. And she rejoiced in hope of salvation through faith in Him, which is a blessing common to all true believers, more than in being His mother in the flesh, which was an honor peculiar to her. See Matt. xii. 50; Luke xi. 27, 28. She exulted in *God her Saviour*, not only in view of civil and political blessings that were looked for through the birth of the Messiah, but mainly in the high spiritual sense of bringing to her salvation, which she desired above all things. In this language Mary confesses herself a sinner, for none but sinners need a *Saviour*. Those that have Jesus for their God and Saviour, have great reason to rejoice—to *rejoice in spirit*, that is, to rejoice as Christ did, with spiritual joy. Luke x. 21.

48. For 'he hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden: for, behold, from henceforth 'all generations shall call me blessed.

\* 1 Sam. i. 11; Ps. cxxxviii. 6.

† Mal. iii. 12; Ch. xi. 27.

Remembering that though poor, and in an humble condition, God had looked upon her with peculiar regard, she ascribed all honor and glory to Him. Though a virtuous and pious woman, endowed with that lowliness of mind which God delights to honor, she thought not, nor did the angel think, nor did Elizabeth think, that on this account she had been chosen to honor. All the blessedness she had, she felt she could claim only on a different basis from that of personal merit:—it was because the Lord had *regarded her low estate*; in the most tender and compassionate manner visiting

her in her humiliation, in which, besides her poor outward condition, she was also conscious of inward poverty, which could discover no pre-eminence in herself, in virtue of which such happiness should have fallen to her lot. Some ten years before Mary uttered this hymn, Virgil, the Roman poet, had in one of his finest strains predicted the birth of a noble babe, under whose sway a new order of things should commence, and the renovation of the world be accomplished. It was suggested, doubtless, by the prevalent sentiment that a great deliverer was soon to be born, arising from the prophecies of the Messiah. But the worldly poet preferred to find his mother for the Messiah in the wife of a Roman consul. So differs the wisdom of God from the folly of man, in finding this mother in a poor virgin, who, though she was a daughter of the noblest line of Israel or the world, yet for ages that royal line had been in a low estate. *For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.* There are several other passages in the Scriptures in which the word here rendered *blessed* should rather be rendered *happy* than *blessed*. See Prov. xxxi. 28; Mal. iii. 12; 1 Tim. i. 11; vi. 15; James v. 11; Rom. xx. 6. This utterance of exuberant joy was first used by Leah on the birth of Asher, Gen. xxx. 13. Mary knew that whatever men thought of her *then*, that *all generations* would "call her blessed," as the mother of the Saviour, thus invested by Heaven with a high and lasting honor above all her sex. Do *we* not think her blessed? Surely we do. Nor should we forget that *we* may be blessed also. Matt. xii. 50; Luke xi. 28. *The blessed or happy virgin* was the character by which alone Mary wished to be known. It is sad to think what a wrong use the Romanists have made of this passage. On it they rest their *Ave Marias* and other religious addresses to "our Lady." They not only call Mary "blessed," (and she is blessed,) but they worship her, as if she were equal to Him "who is over all, God blessed forever." Rom. ix. 5. No: Mary was but a creature like ourselves, though she was made, by the grace of God, a holy creature, and was honored in so remarkable a manner. It is worthy of note, that she is invariably called in the sacred narrative *Mary*, without any of those titles of reverence or superstition, such as *Queen of Heaven, Mother of God, &c.*, by which men, trying to adorn her incomparable dignity, have sown the seeds of Mariolatry. The words of Mary show that she regarded the blessings of the Messiah's advent, as reaching to the end of time.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by *those days*?
2. Where was the hill-country?
3. Why did Mary go in haste?
4. What was the length of Mary's journey?
5. Had she companions on the way?
6. What is said about those who have a work of grace begun in their souls?
7. What is said about the interview between Mary and Elizabeth?
8. What did Mary do to Elizabeth?
9. What is said of the salutations of the Jews?
10. What did the child in the womb of Elizabeth do?
11. What is said of Elizabeth being filled with the Holy Ghost?
12. What does this fact attach to her words of reply?
13. What is meant by Elizabeth's speaking with a loud voice?
14. What was Mary principally blessed for?
15. How are we to understand—*blessed is the fruit of thy womb*?
16. What is said of the song of Elizabeth and that of Hannah?
17. How did Elizabeth know that Mary was to be the mother of the Messiah?
18. How did she receive Mary's visit?

19. What is said of the words—*my Lord*?
20. Why did Elizabeth think Mary had brought extraordinary tidings?
21. What effect would the leaping of the unborn harbinger have on Mary?
22. To whom is reference made in v. 45?
23. For what was Mary here commended?
24. What is said of the unavoidable certainty of God's promises?
25. How did the Hebrews express joy or affliction?
26. Why was Mary filled with joy?
27. How did Mary utter her hymn?
28. What is said about this hymn?
29. From what sources was most of the hymn borrowed?
30. Of how many parts does it consist?
31. What did Mary do in the first part?
32. What in the second part?
33. What in the third?
34. To whom did her thoughts turn in v. 47?
35. Why did she rejoice in God her Saviour?
36. Did Mary confess herself a sinner?
37. To whom did she ascribe all honor and glory?
38. Did she claim her blessedness on personal merit?
39. What is said of the Roman poet?
40. What is meant by—*all generations shall call me blessed*?
41. In what character did Mary wish to be known?
42. What sad use do the Romanists make of v. 48?
43. What name is invariably given to Mary in the sacred narrative?
44. What do the words of Mary show?

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## LESSON VI.

vs. 49-56.

49. For He that is mighty hath "done to me great things; and holy is His name.

\* Ps. lxxi. 19; cxv. 2, 3; Ps. cxl. 9.

*He that is mighty*, beyond all our conceptions, even the Almighty God, to whom this strange event is not only possible, but easy. *Hath done to me great things*, probably having especially now in her eye her miraculous conception of the Messiah, it is the *power of the Highest* that appears in this. The original rendered here *great things*, often signifies in the Old Testament, *miracles*, being applied by the LXX. to the miracles wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness. As God has honored her with His goodness, she honors Him with her praises, sinking into her own nothingness, she confesses that God alone is all in all. *Holy*, i. e., revered, *is his name*: personal blessings are here lost sight of in the Divine glory and goodness which they serve to reveal to her view. Hannah said in her song, *There is none holy as the Lord*, which she explains in the next words, *for there is none beside thee*, 1 Sam. ii. 2. Glorious things may be expected from Him who is both *mighty* and *holy*, who can do every thing, and will do every thing well and for the best.

50. "And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.

† Gen. xvii. 7; Ex. xx. 6; Ps. ciii. 17, 18.

From a contemplation of God's goodness to her, Mary's mind reaches forth to a grateful recognition of the Divine mercy to others. God's exuberant kindness has ever manifested itself in acts of mercy to all those who feared or revered His name. He has regarded them with peculiar favor. But He manifested His mercy, as He had never done before, in that event with which Mary knew her name would be perpetually connected—in sending His Son to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and work out an everlasting salvation for them that look up to Him with an eye of filial fear; and this *from generation to generation*, literally *for generations of generations*, that is, throughout all time. Gospel privileges are intended for perpetuity. In Christ God *keepeth mercy for thousands*. The character here given of God is befitting Him who delights in the salvation of His creatures that look to Him through Christ the Mediator and Advocate—whose name is mercy, and whose nature is love.

51. <sup>a</sup>He hath showed strength with his arm; <sup>b</sup>He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

<sup>a</sup> Ps. xcviil. 1; cxviii. 16; Is. xl. 10; II. ix; lli. 10.

<sup>b</sup> Ps. xxxviii. 10; 1 Pet. v. 5.

*With His arm.* He hath shown the greatness of His power. It has been well observed that God's great power is represented by his *finger*, his greater power by his *hand*, and his omnipotence by his *arm*. The plague of lice was the *finger* of God, Exod. vii. 18. The plagues in general were wrought by His *hand*, Exod. iii. 20. And the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea was brought to pass by His *arm*, Exod. xv. 16. *He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.* Here the proud and haughty persecutors of God's people are especially referred to, such as Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Antiochus Epiphanes and others, whose cruelties were a matter of historical record, but all are meant who are puffed up with pride, who wish to be noticed in preference to all others, and feel sovereign contempt for all but themselves. Such men are *scattered*, like a defeated army, or like the chaff which the wind blows away. Proud men expect with ease to effect their purposes, and carry all before them, but God *scatters* them in the *imagination of their hearts*, breaks their measures, blasts their prospects, nay, and brings them low by those very counsels with which they thought to advance and establish themselves. This is peculiarly applicable to the gospel, in which God does not only *cast down imaginations and every high thing*, &c., 2 Cor. x. 5, by the humbling scheme of His recovering grace, but has remarkably confounded His most insolent enemies in their own most elaborate projects, and established his sacred cause by the violent attempts to suppress it: compare Ps. ii. 1-3, a triumph of Divine wisdom, of which succeeding ages furnish memorable and frequent instances. The enemies of Jesus hoped by crucifixion to arrest His progress, and exterminate His cause, but in putting Him to death, they fulfilled the foreordination of God, and opened the fountain for sin and uncleanness.

52. <sup>b</sup>He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 6, &c.; Job v. 11; Ps. cxlii. 6.

*Seats*, literally, *thrones*, persons of regal dignity being especially referred to. The kings who sprang from David had, no doubt, one after another expected to be the parents of the Messiah, and when the kingdom was taken from them, such of the royal progeny as were in the highest station would reckon this their certain and high privilege. But now their hope was wholly overthrown. They were brought down by God from that height of dignity to which, in their own imagination, they had exalted

themselves, and a person in the meanest condition of all the royal seed was raised to it. There is probably an allusion to the removal of *Saul* from the throne of Israel, and the establishment of the kingdom in the person and family of David. But as Mary spoke *prophetically*, this saying may also allude to future events. *And exalted them of low degree.* In the revolutions and overturnings by which the proud and mighty were brought low, persons of obscure condition were raised up to the occupancy of their thrones and seats of power. See 2 Sam. vii. 8, 1 Chron. xvii. 7, Ps. lxxviii. 70, Neh. xxi. 7. The grace of humility is excellent and advantageous; how good it is to be meek and lowly in heart! This will render us lovely in God's eye, and though the world trample upon us, He will exalt us when and in such a way as will be for His glory and our good.

53. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

c 1 Sam. ii. 5; Ps. xxxiv. 10.

*He hath filled the hungry with good things, &c.* He hath fed the poor and needy, who came to Him with humble hearts, and not unfrequently withholden from those who came to Him with lofty hearts, and insatiable desires, what they asked, or taken away their riches by fire or flood, thus *sending them away empty.* The original word strictly signifies, *hath sent or turned them out of doors*, and very beautifully represents God as the great Proprietor of all, and the greatest of men as His tenants at will, whom He can strip and turn out whenever He pleases. The language is to be understood mainly in a spiritual sense. Poverty and hunger are here opposed to wealth and fulness, just as dominion and power, in the preceding context, were contrasted with lowliness of birth and condition. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." Such hungry souls shall never be sent empty away. If a beggar is sent empty away from *one* house, he can go to another, but if God were to send us empty away, there is no other being to whom we could go. This He will not do, however, if we feel our need of pardon. But if we fancy ourselves *rich* in goodness, and, like the Laodiceans, Rev. iii. 17, 18, think we have *need of nothing*, are full of ourselves and our own righteousness, He will *send us empty away.* Thus did He with the proud Pharisee, but the penitent publican He "filled with good things."

54. He hath holpen his servant Israel, "in remembrance of his mercy;

d Ps. xcvi. 3; Jer. xxxi. 3, 20.

The word rendered *he hath holpen*, which is an old English form for *hath helped*, properly signifies, to interpose in favor of a person in great necessity or extreme danger, and also to hold by the hand, to sustain from falling, or to lift up when fallen, and so to afford aid or help. Sad had been the humiliation of Israel, God's covenant people, from a high to a low estate had he been brought, but the time of his exaltation has now arrived. God has blessed them with a Saviour, who lived in the faith, hope and expectation of the promised Messiah. Those that were sunk under the burdens of a broken covenant of innocence, are *helped up* by the blessings of a renewed covenant of grace. The Messiah was also to be a great blessing to all who should become the seed of Abraham by faith, Gal. iii. 7. God is said signally to remember His people, when, after a long oppression, in which He seemed to have forgotten them, He works a mighty salvation for them. See Ps. cxxxvi. 23. *In remembrance of his mercy*, that is, that He might show Himself mindful of the mercy promised to Israel. See v. 72.

55. \*As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

\* Gen. xvii. 19; Ps. cxxxii. 11; Rom. iv. 28; Gal. iii. 16.

This is a reference to the covenant God made with Abraham, Gen. xv. 18, which covenant proceeded from God's eternal mercy, and in which salvation was promised to all the nations of the earth. Gen. xii. 3; xxii. 18. This covenant was in one form or other given to *all the fathers*. We have here a remarkable proof that Mary's expectations concerning the Messiah's appearance were not of an exclusive, but of a universal, nature. It was designed that in Him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The closing words *for ever*, are to be joined in sense with *his seed*, being equivalent to *throughout all generations*. What God hath spoken to the fathers, he will make good to their seed, even their seed's seed forever.

56. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

This must have been a few days before the birth of John. See v. 86. Having, to her unspeakable satisfaction and great comfort, found all things as the angel had told her, Mary returned to Nazareth, to keep silence before Joseph, as she had broken silence before Elizabeth. She still wished retirement, and therefore did not remain at the home of her relative, when the birth of her child of promise would draw a great deal of company to the house. After Mary's return home, those events seem to have occurred, concerning the difficulties and conduct of Joseph in respect of her, which are recorded in Matt. i. 18, 19. *Her own house*. If the supposition just referred to be correct, the house here spoken of must have been her own, as she was yet unmarried.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Who is meant by *He that is mighty*?
2. To what did *great things* specially refer?
3. What does the original, thus rendered, often signify in the Old Testament?
4. In what did Mary lose sight of her personal blessings?
5. What does Hannah say in her song?
6. Did Mary confine her contemplation to God's goodness to herself?
7. How did God manifest His mercy as never before?
8. What is said of those who look up to God with filial fear?
9. What is meant by *from generation to generation*?
10. What is said of the character here given of God?
11. How is God's great power represented?
12. How his greater power?
13. How his omnipotence?
14. Give illustrations of these.
15. Who are meant by *the proud, &c.*?
16. How are they scattered?
17. How does God "cast down imaginations," &c., in the gospel?
18. What is said of the enemies of Jesus?
19. What is meant by *seats*?
20. What is said of the kings who sprang from David?
21. Did Mary speak *prophetically*?
22. How were those of low degree exalted?
23. What is said of the grace of humility?
24. How did God fill the hungry?
25. Who are meant by the rich?

26. What was done to them?
27. How does the original word, rendered *sent empty away*, represent God?
28. How are the words *hungry* and *rich* mainly to be understood?
29. How will God deal with the hungry and the rich?
30. What is said about *he hath holpen*?
31. What does the phrase signify?
32. What is said about Israel?
33. Explain the words, *in remembrance of his mercy*.
34. To what is there a reference in v. 55?
35. What is said about this covenant?
36. What is said about Mary's expectations concerning the Messiah?
37. What is said about the closing words, *for ever*?
38. When did Mary return to her own house?
39. Why did she return?
40. What events occurred after her return?
41. Was the house she returned to her own?
42. What proof is there of this?

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## LESSON VII.

vs. 57-66.

57. Now Elizabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

This birth was six months previous to that of the Messiah. *Full time came*, exactly according to the prediction of the angel: *that she should be delivered*, though this child was conceived in the womb by a miracle, he continued in the womb according to the ordinary course of nature, as did our Saviour also. Promised mercies are to be expected when the full time for them is come, and not before. How great an event is the birth of a child! It exceeds in importance the creation of the sun. The sun sees not its own light, feels not its own heat, and is destined to be extinguished; but the little babe that has just been brought into the world, has a rational soul which must live in rapture or in woe, when the heavens pass away and the elements melt with fervent heat.

58. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

( Ver. 14.

Her kinsfolk and relations having heard that the Lord, in so illustrious and remarkable a manner had magnified His mercy to her, came together to testify their joy, and sincerely congratulate her on the happy occasion. Many things concurred to make the mercy *great*: Elizabeth had long been barren, was now old, had safely passed through the perils of child-birth, and the child was destined to be *great in the sight of the Lord*. Too little on such occasions are the power and goodness of God gratefully recognized. To rejoice with those whom God has favored, and to congratulate them on the advantages which He has granted to them, is a duty which humanity, charity, and religion call upon us to fulfil.

59. And it came to pass, <sup>5</sup>that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. xvii. 12; Lev. xii. 3.

*On the eighth day*, (from the birth of the child inclusive,) which was the day, in the patriarchal and Mosaic law, see Gen. xvii. 12; Lev. xii. 3, for the circumcision of the male offspring. This day was fixed because the mother was considered as unclean seven days, Lev. xii. 1, 2, and until that time the child was too weak to endure the pain of circumcision. *They came*, probably to the house of Zacharias, for no particular place was prescribed, and no particular person as performer of the rite. We learn from Exod. iv., that the wife of Moses *circumcised the child, and that in an inn. To circumcise the child*. Circumcision, as a rite of the Jewish religion, consisted in cutting around the flesh of the foreskin of all males. The instrument used was a knife, a razor, or even a sharp stone. Exod. iv. 25; Josh. v. 3. This rite was established as the token of God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. 9-14, who immediately subjected himself and all his family to its observance. By this rite all the natural male descendants of Abraham were separated from all the rest of the world. The precept of circumcision was renewed to Moses, Exod. xii. 44; Lev. xii. 3; John vii. 22, 23, requiring that all should submit to it who would partake of the paschal sacrifice. Exod. xii. 43-48. This was enjoined with great solemnity. The Jews have always been very scrupulous in the observance of this rite or ceremony, though it was omitted in their journey through the wilderness for obvious reasons. Many other nations have adopted this rite, and it is the chief ceremony of initiation into the religion of Mohammed, though it is regarded only as a traditional precept, and is not performed till the child is five or six years old.

*They called*, were then naming, were about to name, or *would have named*. This is frequently the sense of the imperfect tense here used. There is no direction that the child should be named on the day of its circumcision, but this was always done, (though in some instances the name was given at its birth,) probably because God changed the names of Abraham and Sarah when the rite was instituted. Girls were not named until they were weaned. It is remarkable that among the Romans girls received their names on the eighth day, and boys on the ninth, when they respectively underwent the ceremony of lustration. It is remarkable, also, how much the custom of giving the name on the *seventh* or on the *eighth* day, after a child's birth, has been practised in various portions of the East, even where the rite of circumcision has been unknown. The first of these practices is found to exist among the Khandi in India, and the second among the Negroes. Perhaps these practices may be connected with the ancient sacred division of time into weeks. *Zacharias, after the name of his father. Zacharius*, signifying *the remembrance of God*, pointed at God's mercy in remembering him, and his duty in remembering God. The Jews frequently imposed on their children the names of relatives and of persons they wished to honor; but it is evident from Scripture that the name of the father was almost never given to the son. This was proposed to be done in the present case, either because of the singularity of the event, or because the people wished to do honor to the father, who may have had no other son; at any rate was not likely to have another child, or because, not knowing what name Zacharias might wish the child to bear, they thought they should be most likely to avoid mistake by giving him his father's name.

60. And his mother answered and said, <sup>b</sup>Not so; but he shall be called John.

<sup>b</sup> Ver. 13.

The answer of Elizabeth was decided and emphatic. In determining that the child should be called *John*, as this was the name which the angel desired should be given him, ver. 13, she might have been influenced by revelation, or Zacharias might have explained the whole affair to her in writing. There is something very remarkable in the names of this family. *Zacharias*, as we have seen, ver. 59, means *the remembrance of Jehovah*, *Elizabeth* means the *Sabbath*, or *rest of my strong God*, names possibly given them by their parents, to point out some remarkable circumstance in their conception or birth. And *John*, signifying *the grace or mercy of Jehovah*, was given, because he to whom it was given was to go before and proclaim the *God of all grace*, and the *mercy* granted through him to a lost world. See John i. 29, also iii. 16, and Mark i. 4. The Jews made it a part of religion to give suitable and significant names to their children.

61. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

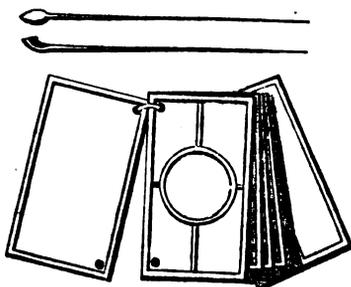
As the Jewish tribes and families were kept sacredly *distinct*, it appears the very names of the ancestors were continued among their descendants, partly through reverence for them, and partly to avoid confusion in the genealogical tables, which, for the sake of distinguishing the inheritances, were carefully preserved in each of the families. It seems to be on this account that the neighbors and relatives objected to a name which had not before existed in any branch of the family. It is wise in parents to give significant names to their children, and for children to have a holy ambition to make good the signification of their names.

62. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

Wishing to know the mind of Zacharias in the matter, whose office it properly was to name the child, they *made signs* to him—literally, *nodded*, or *winked with the eye*. From this kind of inquiry we may conclude with certainty he was deaf as well as dumb, otherwise they might have *asked* him, and obtained his answer in this way.

63. And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, 'His name is John. And they marvelled all.

† Ver. 13.



WRITING-TABLET.

The *writing-tablet*, or tablet, was used much like a slate, for temporary use. Sometimes it was of lead, the writing on which was formed with a bodkin and stylus, and could be beaten out when no longer needed. Sometimes it was composed of a thin board covered with wax, on which, also, the characters were traced with a metal stylus, and often it was merely a small clean board, on which the writing was formed with chalk. Such boards are to this day used instead of slates in the common schools of Greece, the writing being washed or scraped off, that the board may receive a succession of fresh lessons. This kind of tablet is called by the very same name that the evangelist here gives to the writing-tablet for which Zacharias called. Sometimes these tablets were made up into books

of three or four leaves, like our slate books. Tablets covered with wax, or otherwise prepared to be written upon, were used in England as lately as the year 1300. *And wrote, saying, His name is John*: Not, "it shall be so," or, "I would have it so," but "it is so"—*his name is John*. The matter is determined already, the *angel* had given him that name. v. 18. *John* was a very appropriate name for him who was to be the first preacher of the kingdom of grace, and who was to point out Him *from whose fulness* we receive *grace for grace*. John i. 16. As Zacharias, when he could not *speake*, *wrote*, so ministers, who are prevented by disease or persecution, from preaching, may yet be doing good so long as they have strength to write. Many of the martyrs in prison wrote letters to their friends, which were of great use. Paul himself did so. Bunyan wrote his "Pilgrim's Progress" when shut up in Bedford jail, for righteousness sake. Our religious literature has been greatly enriched by contributions from good men in their affliction. *And they marvelled all*: they wondered, were amazed. Had not Zacharias been deaf as well as dumb, and heard the previous conversation, there would have been nothing strange in this coincidence with the name given by his wife.

64. <sup>†</sup>And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.

<sup>†</sup> Ver. 20.

His mouth was opened, not by the force of joyful emotion, nor by his breaking a voluntary silence, but by a miracle, whereby the prediction of the angel, v. 20, was fulfilled at exactly the right time. No sooner had he recovered his speech, than, with an audible, articulate voice, he praised God in holy raptures, before even addressing his friends or his wife, although he had not interchanged a word with them from the time he returned from Jerusalem, v. 23, nine months before. He probably returned thanks for God's goodness and faithfulness in the birth of his son, acknowledging the righteousness of the rebuke under which he had lain, and praising the mercy of God in restoring to him the use of his tongue. As the want of faith had produced the dumbness, so the act of faith reproduced the speech. His first use of his recovered faculty was not to utter a complaint, but a doxology: a proof that the cure had taken place in his soul also. When God *opens our lips*, our mouths must *show forth His praise*. We might as well be without speech as not use it in *praising God*, for our tongue is most *our glory* when it is employed for *God's glory*.

65. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea.

<sup>†</sup> Or, things.

Ver. 39.

In view of the miraculous operations which had been witnessed, a feeling, partaking of religious awe and veneration, pervaded all the inhabitants of Hebron and its environs; *and all these sayings*, or, things, which must have produced a deep sensation, were everywhere talked about. The inhabitants of this *hill-country*, see note on v. 39, seem to have been an open, honest-hearted, generous people, who were easily led to acknowledge the interposition of God, and to rejoice in the comfort and welfare of each other. The *fear*, which now spread only through the hill-country of Judea, afterwards filled the heart of all Jerusalem. It was undoubtedly kept up, as well as the expectation of some greater thing to follow, by the unusual manner in which the child John was brought up. We perceive in this event how God can bring good out of evil: Zacharias by unbelief had become dumb, but his gaining his speech again must have helped others to believe.

66. And all they that heard *them* "laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And "the hand of the Lord was with him.

= Ch. ii. 19, 51.

= Gen. xxxix. 2; Ps. lxxx. 17; and lxxxix. 21; Acts xi. 21.

The extraordinary circumstances connected with the birth of John were all ordered by Providence, that he, who was the Messiah's forerunner, might not seem an obscure and ordinary man, but one that was the peculiar object of the decrees and counsels of heaven, and that the attention of his countrymen being awakened by this magnificent manner of his introduction into the world, he might execute the duties of his ministry with greater advantage, and effectually prepare the people for receiving the Messiah, who was soon to appear in person. And this effect *was* produced. The people began to wonder and conjecture, saying, "What manner of child shall this be?" "As there have been so many extraordinary things in his conception and birth, surely God has designed him for some extraordinary purpose." *Laid them up in their hearts*, i. e., pondered over them, and sought their import. It argues a vain spirit and temper of mind when we pass over the observation of God's wonderful acts with a slight regard. The true reason why we so little admire the wonderful works of God is, that we so little consider them. Ps. xxviii. 5. *And the hand of the Lord was with him*, that is, the help of God, the love and favor of God to support him, the power and providence of God to protect, preserve, and prosper him. When our hearts are with the Lord, then His heart and His helping hand will be with us.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. How long did the birth of John precede that of the Messiah?
2. What is said about the birth of a child?
3. What did Elizabeth's relatives do?
4. What things made the mercy the Lord had shown her great?
5. On what day was the child circumcised?
6. Why was the eighth day chosen?
7. Where did they come to circumcise the child?
8. In what did the rite of circumcision consist?
9. Why was it instituted?
10. What did the precept of circumcision, as renewed to Moses, require?
11. Have any other nations adopted the rite?
12. Why was a child named on the day of its circumcision?
13. What is said about the custom of giving the name to a child on the *seventh* or *eighth* day after its birth?
14. What does the name Zacharias signify?
15. What names did the Jews frequently give to their children?
16. Why was it proposed to call the child of Elizabeth, Zacharias?
17. What was substituted for circumcision?
18. What did Elizabeth say about naming the child?
19. Why did she say so?
20. What does the name Elizabeth mean?
21. What does the name John signify?
22. Why was this name given to the child?
23. Why among the Jews were the names of their ancestors continued among their descendants?
24. What is said about giving significant names to children?
25. What is inferable from the making of signs to Zacharias?
26. Describe the ancient writing-table.
27. What did Zacharias write on the table?

28. What is said about ministers who are prevented from preaching?
29. How was the mouth of Zacharias opened?
30. What did he do as soon as he recovered his speech?
31. What does this use of his faculty of speech prove?
32. What should we do when God opens our lips?
33. What was the effect upon the people from the miraculous operations they had witnessed?
34. What do we learn from this event?
35. How were the circumstances all ordered?
36. Why were they so ordered?
37. What did the people say concerning the child?
38. What is meant by "laid them up in their hearts?"
39. What, by "the hand of the Lord was with him?"

LESSON VIII.

vs. 67-75.

67. And his father, Zacharias, was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

o Joel ii. 28.

The expression, *Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost*, means that he was brought under the influence of Divine inspiration. God not only forgave him his unbelief and distrust, but as a *specimen of abounding grace* toward believers, He endued him with a more than ordinary measure of the Holy Spirit, supernaturally enlightening his mind in the knowledge of Divine things, and even of future events. *And prophesied*. This word is to be taken here in its proper acceptation, for the *predicting or foretelling future events*, for Zacharias speaks not only of what God had already *done*, but also of what He was *about to do*, in order to save a lost world. As Zacharias, as soon as he had recovered his speech, sang the praises of his Redeemer, and offered up a thanksgiving to God, so the best return we can make to God for the use of our tongue, for the giving or restoring of our speech, is to publish our Creator's praise, to plead His cause, and vindicate His honor. The prophetic hymn consists of two parts. Part first, 68-75, predicts under Jewish images, the power and safety of Messiah's kingdom. Part second, 76-79, in an address to the infant John, predicts his preparatory office as herald of the Messiah's manifestation, and His glorious kingdom of human salvation on earth and in heaven. The hymn, besides its own immediate interest to every Christian, serves to show us the exact religious view under which John was educated by his father.

68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.

p 1 Kings i. 49; Ps. xlii. 13; lxxii. 18; cvi. 48. q Exod. iii. 16; lv. 31; Ps. cxi. 9; Ch. vii. 16.

It will be observed that it is not for his own particular and private mercy, namely, the recovery of his speech, that Zacharias blessed God, though for that blessing he was undoubtedly very thankful, but for universal mercies bestowed upon His Church and people. *The Lord God of Israel*—who is also the God of the spirits of all flesh. Jehovah was in a peculiar sense the God of Israel. There were "the adoption and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises," Rom. ix. 4. But this did not forbid the induction of other nations into like relation-

ship and privileges. Zacharias here calls Him only the God of Israel, because to Israel the prophecies, promises, and types of redemption, had hitherto been given, and to them the first offers and proposals of it were now to be made. Israel, as a chosen people, was a type of the people of God, to be called out of all nations and ages, whom God had a particular eye to in sending the Saviour. God is praised for two grand benefits, He had granted to His people. 1. He has *visited* them. 2. He has *ransomed* them. He speaks by the spirit of prophecy, which calls things that *are not*, as though they *were*, because they are absolutely determined by the Most High, and shall be all fulfilled in their season. God is said to have *visited* His people in bondage, when He delivered them, Exod. iii. 16; iv. 34; and in famine, when He gave them bread, Ruth i. 6. He had often sent to them by His prophets, and had still kept up a correspondence with them, but now He himself made them a visit, for Christ was *Immanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh*. This incarnation of Jesus Christ was a visit which men and angels admired, and will admire throughout eternity. God has *redeemed* his people. Doubtless Zacharias discerned much of the true nature and glory of the Messiah's kingdom. The object of Christ's visit was the redemption of a lost world. This implies that miserable thralldom and bondage which we were under to sin and Satan, and expresses the stupendous love of Jesus, in ransoming us by His precious blood, and both by price and power rescuing us out of the hands of our spiritual enemies. *His people*, refers primarily to the Jews, and then to all the spiritual seed of Abraham, Gal. iii. 7. In Christ, according to promise, all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Gen. xii. 3; xxii. 18.

69. 'And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

† Ps. cxxxii. 17.

*Horn of salvation* is a metaphorical expression, taken from beasts, whose strength, defence, and victory over other animals, lies chiefly in their horns, as also the beauty and glory of several of them, the property likewise of the ancients consisting chiefly in their flocks and herds. Accordingly, the word *horn* is used in Scripture emblematically, to denote strength or power; Amos vi. 13; Jer. xlvi. 25; Lam. ii. 3, 17; Ezek. xxix. 21; also honor and triumph, as when the *horn is exalted*, Ps. lxxv. 10. "I will make the *horn* of David to bud," Ps. cxxxii. 17. From the union of these qualities, *horn* signifies the power of a king or kingdom, Rev. xiii. 1; xvii. 12. The chief import of the words *horn of salvation*, in which the abstract is put for the concrete, is, that Christ is a great, glorious, and powerful Saviour to His church and people. *In the house of his servant David*, or, in the family lineage: as we say, the house of Bourbon, or of Brunswick. In ver. 32, the angel stated that Mary was of the *family of David*, and Zacharias, who, from the nature of his office, must have been well acquainted with the public genealogical tables, attests the same thing. This is a matter of considerable importance, because it shows forth the truth of all the prophetic declarations, which uniformly state that the Messiah should come from the *family* and sit on the *throne* of DAVID.

70. 'As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

• Jer. xxiii. 5, 6; and xxx. 10; Dan. ix. 24; Acts iii. 21; Rom. i. 2

There is here the same reference as by Mary, ver. 55. *As he spake*, i. e., as he promised. *By the mouth*. It was God that spake by His servants. "Holy

men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. i. 21. *Holy prophets.* Those by whom the prophecies of salvation by Christ were uttered were persons who dared not deceive, and who aimed at promoting holiness among men. They were all *holy*, so far as this term is applicable to frail and erring man. Balaam, who was a very bad man, does not constitute an exception to this remark, for, as it was against his will he was forced to bless Israel, Num. xxiii. 8-10, 19-24; xxiv. 3-9, and utter a remarkable Messianic prediction, Num. xxiv. 17, he cannot properly be regarded as a prophet in the sense here meant. The words rendered, *since the world began*, literally mean, *from the beginning of ages*, the promise being made to Adam, Gen. iii. 15, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, and to Abraham and the other patriarchs, that in their *seed all nations of the earth should be blessed*. The Messiah was the theme of prophecy and the antitype of the types *since the world began*. It cannot, however, certainly be inferred from hence, that every individual prophet spoke of the coming of the Messiah. The words of Zacharias only amount to this, that the generality of the prophecies, in all ages, refer to this great event. See Acts x. 43.

71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

*That we*, the true Church of God, consisting of all faithful believers, whether of the old or new dispensation, *should be saved*; literally, *salvation* (i. e., the means of salvation) *from our enemies*, the construction being continued from ver. 69, the intermediate verse being parenthetical. *From our enemies*, spiritual as well as temporal, invisible as well as visible, *and from the hand of all that hate us*, from sin, Satan and his angels, all adverse power, and death. This undoubtedly was the mind of the Spirit that now inspired Zacharias, as appears by the whole tenor of Scripture, but whether he fully understood his own words is impossible for us to say. It is certain the older prophets, in some cases, did not fully understand the prophecies which they themselves uttered. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. Collectively, the Church shall be preserved in the midst of its wrathful foes, and finally obtain complete victory and triumphant security. *Sin* is the most dangerous of all our enemies. *Satan* is without us, and can have no power over us, but what he gets through *sin*. From these foes Jesus saves, and will save his people, Matt. i. 21; 1 John iii. 8; also from *death*, which is only in their *feet*, and shall be destroyed (as it affects them) on the morning of the resurrection.

72. "To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

! Lev. xxvi. 42; Ps. xcvi. 3; and cv. 8, 9; and cvi. 45; Ezek. xvi. 60, ver. 54.

73. "The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,

= Gen. xii. 3; xvii. 4; xxii. 16, 17; Heb. vi. 13, 17.

*To perform the mercy*, is to be referred to v. 69, on which this phrase depends. *The mercy*, the Lord Jesus Christ, the mercy of mercies, is a free, full, suitable, reasonable, and satisfying mercy. The origin of our salvation was God's free, undeserved compassion and goodness. The word *promised* in our common version is unnecessarily supplied. *The mercy to our fathers*. The fulfilment of the promises concerning Messiah is not only a matter of rejoicing for the present, and a source of hope for the future, but also a healing balm for past sorrows. The fathers had, for generations, wept over the

decay of their nation, and were now living with God to look down from heaven upon the fullness of the time. Luke xx. 37, 38; John viii. 56. *His holy covenant* is explained in ver. 73, which is put with it in explanatory opposition. *The oath* is the object of *remember*. *The oath which He swore to our father Abraham*—by which oath He confirmed the covenant before mentioned, that, as the Apostle observes, Heb. vi. 17, 18, by two immutable things, God's promise given in the covenant, and oath, in either of which, much more in both, *it was impossible for God to lie*, all that should truly embrace the covenant, by complying with the conditions of it, in repentance, faith, and new obedience, might have strong consolation in life, in death, and forever.

74. That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might <sup>\*</sup>serve him without fear,

\* Rom. vi. 18, 22; Heb. ix. 14.

By the words, *that he would grant us*, we are not to understand the *matter* of the oath, but the *purpose* for which God once swore it, and was now about to fulfil it. *Being delivered out of the hands of our enemies*, especially our spiritual enemies—the devil, the world, and the flesh—the guilt, power, and consequences of our sins, *might serve him*, might worship and glorify him, in and with our body and spirit which are His, *without fear*, that is, in a state of holy safety, with holy security and serenity of mind, as those that are *quiet from the fears of evil*. God must be served with a *filial* fear, a reverent, obedient, awakening, quickening fear, but not with a *slavish* fear, like that of the slothful servant—not with a fear that has torment in it, not with the fear of a legal spirit, a *spirit of bondage*, but with the boldness of an evangelical spirit, a *spirit of adoption*.

75. <sup>†</sup>In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

† Jer. xxxii. 39, 40; Eph. iv. 24; 2 Thess. xxiii. 13; 2 Tim. i. 9; Tit. ii. 12; 1 Pet. i. 15; 2 Pet. i. 4.

It was the very end of Christ's coming, to redeem us, that we might serve Him in holiness and righteousness. *In holiness*—toward God, in devotedness to His glory, conformity to His image, subjection to His authority, and obedience to His will; *and righteousness*—toward our fellow-creatures, that is, in the continual exercise of truth, justice, mercy, and charity. As they stand here, the one is made the proof of the other, righteousness of holiness. The two tables of the law, love to God, and love to man, cannot be divorced. He that *talks of holiness*, and *does unjustly* the while, is but a hypocrite. It is both the intention and tendency of the gospel, to renew in us that image of God, in which man was at first made, which consisted in *righteousness and true holiness*, Eph. iv. 24. *Before him*, conscious we are in His presence, and under the continual notice of His eye, setting Him always before us, and aiming to please Him in every thing. This verse shows that Zacharias in ver. 74, referred to deliverance from sin, or, as another has expressed it, *justification* from sin. The result was to be a state of holiness or sanctification, in which God's people would continue to the end of life.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. In what sense was Zacharias filled with the Holy Ghost?
2. How is the word "prophesied" to be understood?
3. Of how many parts does the prophetic hymn consist?

4. How far does the first part extend ?
5. What does it predict ?
6. What bearing has it upon the education of John ?
7. For what does Zacharias, in it, bless God ?
8. In what peculiar sense was Jehovah the God of Israel ?
9. What is the first grand benefit toward His people for which God is praised ?
10. What is the second ?
11. Why are things future spoken of as though they had occurred ?
12. What is meant by God having visited His people ?
13. What was the object of Christ's manifestation in the flesh ?
14. What does His redeeming purpose imply ?
15. Whom do the words "His people" designate ?
16. What is said about the words "horn of salvation" ?
17. Explain the words, "the house of his servant David" ?
18. Why is the use of this expression by Zacharias important ?
19. Who spake by the mouth of the prophets ?
20. What proof is there that God did so ?
21. Why were the prophets called "holy" ?
22. What is said about Balaam ?
23. What is said about the phrase, "since the world began" ?
24. Are we to infer from it, that every individual prophet spoke of the coming of the Messiah ?
25. To whom do the words, "that we should be saved from our enemies," apply ?
26. What enemies are referred to ?
27. To whom do the words, "all that hate us," refer ?
28. Did the older prophets, in all cases, understand their own prophecies ?
29. Will the Church be preserved from all its foes ?
30. To what is the phrase "to perform the mercy" to be referred ?
31. What is said of the Lord Jesus Christ ?
32. What was the origin of our salvation ?
33. What is said about the word "promised" in our common version ?
34. What is meant by "the mercy to our fathers" ?
35. Where are the words "his holy covenant" explained ?
36. What is the object of "remember" ?
37. How did God confirm the covenant here referred to ?
38. Read what the Apostle says of this, in Hebrews vi. 17, 18.
39. How are we to understand the words "that he would grant" ?
40. To deliverance from what enemies is reference made ?
41. What is meant by serving God ?
42. Explain what is meant by serving Him "without fear" ?
43. What does the word "holiness" import ?
44. What the word "righteousness" ?
45. Must holiness and righteousness coexist in Christian character ?
46. What do the words "before him" teach us ?

## LESSON IX.

vs. 76-80.

76. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for \*thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways:

\* Is. xl. 3; Mal. iii. 1; Iv. 5; Matt. xi. 10; ver. 17

Zacharias, as a prophet of God, now proclaims the dignity, employment, doctrine, and success of his son, and the ruin and recovery of the Jews and the Gentiles. He addresses the child in language of great beauty and spiritual richness. He always places the Messiah in a more prominent position than His forerunner. *Shalt be called*, refers not only to the reality, but universal acknowledgment of his high prophetic character. *The prophet of the Highest*, or Most High. *Prophet* has two acceptations: 1. A person who foretells future events; and, 2. A teacher of men in the things of God. 1 Cor. xiv. 8. John was a prophet in both senses; he proclaimed the mercy which should be communicated, announced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and taught men how to leave their sins, and how to find the salvation of God. See Ch. iii. 5-14. He had the honor of being the *last* and *clearest* prophet of the old covenant, and the *first* of the new. *For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways*; thou shalt be an herald and harbinger to the Most High; thou shalt go before the face of the Messiah, and by thy severe reproofs and powerful exhortations, shalt prepare His way before Him, and make men fit and ready to receive this mighty Saviour. Thou, child, shalt be as the morning star, to foretell the glorious rising of the Sun of Righteousness. The reason why John was to be called the prophet of the Highest was, that he was to precede and prepare the way for the Son of the Highest. ver. 32. Every thing that may obstruct Christ's progress, or embarrass it, or hinder people from coming to Him, must be taken away. Is. xl. 3, 4. The valleys are to be filled, and the hills to be brought low.

77. To give knowledge of salvation unto his people<sup>a</sup> by the remission of their sins,

<sup>a</sup> Mark I. 4; Ch. iii. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Or, for.

The teaching of John was to be the science of salvation. Men are ignorant, and they must be instructed. Human science may be profitable in *earthly* matters, but cannot profit the *soul*. No science but that which comes from God can ever save a soul from the power, guilt, and pollution of sin. The foundation of the salvation which John was to proclaim is forgiveness; and the indispensable condition of this salvation is the *knowledge of salvation*. Heb. viii. 11, 12. Those who are sent by God to preach His truth, shall always be successful in their work. *By the remission of their sins*. Remission of sins is the doctrine in which the Christian religion justly glories, as that most necessary and fundamental point in which every other religion fails. The heathen here confesses himself to be in the dark. The blood of bulls and goats cannot wash away the sins of the Jew; and his oblations, since the truth is come which they were intended to prefigure, are preposterous and impious. The doctrine of salvation by the remission of sins, through faith in a Redeemer, was, from the beginning, the sum and substance of true religion, which subsisted in promise, prophecy, and figure, till John preached their accomplishment in the person of Jesus.

78. Through 'the 'tender mercy of our God; whereby the  
 'Day-spring from on high hath visited us,

<sup>c</sup> Num. xxiv. 17; Is. xi. 1; Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12; Mal. iv. 2.

<sup>e</sup> Or, bowels of the mercy.

<sup>f</sup> Or, sun-rising, or, branch.

*Through the tender mercy of our God, literally, the bowels of mercy, a strong Hebraism, implying God's tender compassions for mankind, immersed as they are in sins and miseries. See Is. lxiii. 15; Phil. ii. 1; Col. iii. 12, in which this expression is used. Day-spring.* The dawning of the celestial day hath visited us from on high. Here is doubtless a reference to such texts as Mal. iv. 2, and Is. lx. 1-3, and possibly to Jer. xxiii. 5, and Zech. iii. 8. The original Hebrew word in these passages signifies that part of the heavens where the light begins to rise. Compare Rev. vii. 2. *The dawning of the day* seems therefore a very literal version, and we apprehend more beautifully describes the state of things just at this interval, than if the sun had been represented as actually risen. The dawning day of morning light, that is, the gospel dispensation which dawned in the ministry of John the Baptist, was as superior to the patriarchal or Mosaic, with their types and shadows, as the light of the rising sun is superior to that of the moon and stars. The day-break *seems* to arise from on high, especially to any who are situated in a valley or dell, as *the valley of the shadow of death*. The words, *from on high*, are very significant. The heavenly bodies rise from the depths of the horizon, but this spiritual *day-spring* is revealed *from on high*, as it were from a distant and glorious system, and descending to our view from the very zenith of the heavens. *Hath visited us*. See note on ver. 68. Jesus Christ is the true Sun of Righteousness. And most striking and beautiful is the figure by which He is here represented as the *rising sun*. His doctrine is to the souls of men what *light* is to their bodies. It is altogether necessary for directing our steps in the paths of truth and righteousness, it is exceedingly sweet to the spiritual taste, by discovering the most important and delightful truths, and, like the light, it throws a beauty and pleasantness upon every thing in this lower world, which, without the assurance of God's reconcilableness, would be but a dark and dreary scene to sinners, however noble and beautiful in itself.

79. 'To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in the shadow of death*, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

<sup>d</sup> Is. ix. 2; xlii. 7; Matt. iv. 16; Acts xxvi. 18.

*In darkness and in the shadow of death.* Such phrase describes with peculiar propriety the ignorant and miserable state of the Gentile world, and perhaps the former part of the verse may refer to them; but as Christ's preaching to the Jews in Galilee is said, Matt. iv. 14-16, to be an accomplishment of Is. ix. 1, 2, to which Zacharias here seems to refer, we must not confine the sense of it merely to the Gentiles, for indeed the sad character and circumstances of the Jews at this time too well suited the representation here made. The people are sitting in sullen *darkness*, and in *the shadow of death*, as travellers, who being overtaken by night, and not knowing where they are, sit down in the darkness and wait for the morning light, or, as condemned prisoners in the dungeon; but the prophet sees in spirit the Sun of Righteousness rising upon them all, to bring them the tidings of a pardon and opportunity of procuring it. Is. ix. 2; lx. 1. *To guide our feet into the way of peace.* The light of the day-spring is also *directing*, it is to guide our feet into that way which will bring us to peace at last. It is not only a light to *our eyes*, but a light to *our feet*, Ps. cxix. 105; it guides us into the way of making our peace with God, of keeping up a comfortable communion, that *way of peace* from which as sinners we have wandered, and *have not known*, Rom. iii. 17, nor could ever have known of ourselves.

80. And 'the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and 'was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

• Ch. II. 40.

† Matt. III. 1; xi. 7.

As John grew in bodily stature, he also waxed strong in spirit, in courage, understanding, and purposes of good, in the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; his judgment matured, and he gave indications not only of superior natural abilities and energy of mind, but also of strong faith, vigorous holy affections, great fortitude and resolution in the cause of God, a superiority to grovelling desires and pursuits, and a victory over the fear and love of the world. All this was doubtless the result of secret prayer and meditation. And was in the deserts, not strictly deserts, but the rural region, little inhabited, of his native hill-country. He did not live like a hermit, shut out from all social intercourse, but was content to remain in obscure privacy, preparing for his mission; like his prototype, Elijah, by solitary communion with God. Such retirement naturally prevented any such intimacy with Christ, in their childhood and youth, as might possibly have occasioned some suspicion as to the impartiality of the testimony which John afterwards bore Him. See John i. 81. The representation here made compels us to abandon all the fancies of the great painters, whose "Holy Families" exhibit John in familiar intercourse with Jesus, whom, as the verse just referred to shows, he did not know when He came to him for baptism. On temporary retirement Bishop Horne (*On the Life and Death of John the Baptist*) remarks: "He who desires to undertake the office of guiding others in the ways of wisdom and holiness, will best qualify himself for that purpose by first passing some time in a state of sequestration from the world, where every anxious cares and delusive pleasures may not break in upon him, to dissipate his attention, where no skeptical nor sectarian spirit may blind his understanding, and nothing may obstruct the illumination from above; where every vicious inclination may be mortified through grace, by a prudent application of the proper means, and every fresh bud of virtue, sheltered from noxious blasts, may gradually be reared up into strength, beauty and fragrance; where, in a word, he may grow and wax strong in spirit until the day of his showing unto Israel. Exod. iii. 1; Ezek. i. 1-3; Dan. ix. ; iii. 23; Rev. i. 9; Acts vii. 23." Till the day of his showing unto Israel. Till the time of his manifestation—till he was thirty years of age, before which time the law did not permit a man to enter into the public ministry. Num. iv. 3. See also Ch. iii. 23. The day was the time referred to in Matt. iii. 1; Luke iii. 2. John was content to remain in retirement till called forth to preach the gospel, and when that time came, he left his chosen seclusion and entered upon his public ministry, with a resolution and unwearied diligence, thus teaching, by his example, that when we are qualified for public service, we should no less willingly leave our retired position than we took the benefit of it for our preparation. Many a one is qualified for great usefulness who yet is buried alive, and many are long so buried who are designed, and are thereby being prepared, for so much greater usefulness at last.

What a magnificent preparation was that which we have just contemplated for the great Founder of our religion! What an exalted idea must it give us of His dignity and importance to have a forerunner and a harbinger such as John to proclaim His approach to the world, and call upon all mankind to attend to Him! It was a distinction peculiar and appropriate to Him. Neither Moses nor any of the prophets could boast of this mark of honor. It was reserved for the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer of Mankind, and was well suited to the transcendent dignity of His person, and the grandeur of His design.

The fact that John was holy from his birth is suggestive of the importance of early piety. How acceptable to God is the offering up of our early years!

"A flower, when offered in the bud,  
Is no mean sacrifice."

How bitter is the remembrance of a childhood and youth of wickedness! Let not those who are young imagine that if they are at *length* converted, the long resistance of the gracious offers of God will be of no consequence. It is delightful to be able to sing with David, "Thou art my trust from my youth." Those who have in early life received Christ as their Saviour, may expect, as their years advance, to grow in holiness, by faith in God's word, secret prayer and meditation, and resisting in God's strength the temptations of Satan. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." 1 John ii. 14. The history of the Church shows that the very large majority of those who die Christians were converted in their youth.

QUESTIONS.

1. Whom does Zacharias here address?
2. What does he proclaim?
3. In what character does he do this?
4. What do the words "shall be called" refer to?
5. How many meanings has the word prophet?
6. State what they are.
7. Why was John a prophet in both senses?
8. What peculiar honor had John as a prophet?
9. What is predicted of John?
10. Why was he to be called the prophet of the Highest?
11. What was John to teach?
12. What science alone can save a soul?
13. What is said about the foundation of the salvation John was to preach?
14. What is said of the remission of sins?
15. What do the words "the tender mercy of our God" teach?
16. What is meant by the "day-spring"?
17. Why are the words "from on high" very significant?
18. Why is Christ the true Sun of Righteousness?
19. To whom did the words "in darkness and in the shadow of death" apply?
20. What is affirmed of the light of the day-spring?
21. How does it guide our feet into the way of peace?
22. What is meant by John's waxing strong in spirit?
23. From what did this spiritual invigoration result?
24. What are we to understand by John being "in the deserts"?
25. Did this retirement prevent intimacy with Christ in their childhood and youth?
26. What does Bishop Horne say on temporary retirement?
27. What was the time of John's showing unto Israel?
28. Why did he not manifest himself until he was thirty years of age?
29. What does John's contentment to remain in retirement teach?
30. What is said of the magnificent preparation made for the great Founder of our religion?
31. Was this distinction peculiar to Jesus?
32. Was it appropriate to Him?
33. What does the fact that John was holy from his birth suggest?
34. Is not early piety peculiarly acceptable to God?
35. Is it right or safe for the young to say that it is of no consequence how they *now* live, if they are *at length* converted?
36. What did David say of himself?
37. What may those who in early life receive Christ as their Saviour expect?
38. Repeat the passage referred to in 1 John ii. 14.
39. What does the history of the Church show?

## CHAPTER II.

## LESSON X.

vs. 1-7.

THE *fulness of time* was now come, when God would send forth His Son *made of a woman*, and *made under the law*, and it was foretold that He should be born at Bethlehem. We have here an account of the time, place, and manner of it.

1. And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be <sup>9</sup>taxed.

<sup>9</sup> Or, enrolled.

*In those days*, that is, about the time in which John was born and Christ conceived, in the manner as related in the preceding chapter, *went out a decree*, was issued an edict, *from Cæsar Augustus*. "Cæsar" was the family name of the then reigning master of the Roman empire, and "Augustus" the name which he assumed at his accession. But as both names are frequently applied in Scripture, as well as in profane history, to subsequent emperors whose proper names were different, it may be useful to explain how this happened. The name of Cæsar was the family name of the famous Julius Cæsar, from whom it was transmitted by adoption to his nephew Octavianus (afterwards Augustus); who, after the destruction of his coadjutor and rival, Antony, became the sole lord of the Roman world. By this name were called, first, all those of the family of Augustus, afterwards, the heirs of the empire, and finally, the emperors themselves, so that it became just such a standing titular denomination as "Pharaoh" in Egypt. The other name, that of "Augustus," was assumed by Octavianus, when he became emperor, by the advice of Munatius Plancus, to express his grandeur and majesty. The name was taken by subsequent emperors in addition to their proper names, along with that of Cæsar, and in the same form as here, "Cæsar Augustus." Both were titles of honor, properly, and were used together, or separately, or interchangeably, in speaking or writing of or to the emperors. *Cæsar Augustus*, or Cæsar Octavianus Augustus, by whom the ordinance here mentioned was promulgated, was proclaimed emperor of Rome in the twenty-ninth year before our Lord, and died A. D. 14, at the age of seventy-six. During his reign the temple of Janus was shut, in token of universal peace, and the Prince of peace made His advent. *All the world*, denotes not merely the country of the Jews, but the whole Roman empire. *Should be taxed*, that is, enrolled, or a census of them taken, probably also a registry of their property made, whether for the purpose of levying a poll-tax, or of recruiting the army.

2 (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*)

<sup>a</sup> Acts v. 37.

*Cyrenius* is a Greek form of the Roman name Quirinus, whose full name is *Publius Sulpicius Quirinus*.

It has long been objected that the *taxing* (or census, registration, or enrolment) under *Cyrenius*, here said to have taken place at the time of our Lord's birth, and in the reign of Herod, did not really occur till ten years later, in the time of his son Archelaus, and that this is the only census taken by the Romans in Judea of which we have any information. Various explanations of the difficulty have been made with a greater or less degree of satisfactoriness. As this census, says one, was notorious, being the same to the results of which indirect allusion is made in the Gospels, for the "tribute money" (Matt. xxii. 19; Mark xii. 14; Luke xx. 22) rendered to Cæsar was that which was imposed in connection therewith, and as Luke himself, in Acts v. 37, records an allusion to this census as an event from which men dated—Gamaliel being represented as speaking of "Judas of Galilee," who "rose up" in "*the days of the taxing*," it is certainly incredible, at the first view, that one who speaks in such accurate conformity with the history of this event, should commit in another book so grievous an error in reference to it as the objection presumes. If the fact were so notorious as this second reference implies, it is morally impossible that he could have anywhere said that it took place in the days of Herod, when everybody knew when, and under what circumstances, and with what results, it actually did take place. If we look closely, then, we shall see that in connecting the name of Cyrenius with a transaction that took place ten years before, Luke is so far from committing here the blunder which has been imputed to him, that the imputation itself grows out of the care which he took to prevent any such misconception. What he positively affirms is, that, in or about the time of our Lord's birth, a decree for a general registration was issued by Augustus, in consequence of which Joseph went, accompanied by Mary, to Bethlehem, to be registered there. In recording this, it seems to have occurred to the Evangelist that, in order to prevent confusion, he should specify that the registration, though then decreed, was not executed, or not carried out to its full results till some years later when *Cyrenius* was president, and therefore he interposes parenthetically the information, that this registration, though decreed, was not fully made until "*Cyrenius* was governor of Syria."

A still more satisfactory explanation, one, indeed, which, as we believe, clears away the difficulty and vindicates the accuracy of Luke, has been given by a distinguished German scholar, Professor A. W. Zumpt, of Berlin, who has assigned good reasons, based on combining a great number of passages from the Roman literature of those times, for believing that Cyrenius was twice governor of Syria, and that the enrolment question was made in his first governorship, which dates from B. C. 4 to B. C. 1, when he was succeeded by M. Lollius. Professor Zumpt proves that Cyrenius was honored with a triumph for subduing a tribe of Cilicians, by another train of passages he shows that Cilicia belonged under the governorship of Syria, so that Cyrenius must have then been governor of Syria, and by another series of deductions he shows that this triumph must have taken place before A. D. 1 or 2.

### 3. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

*Into his own city.* When the census was made in any country, the inhabitants were obliged to attend in the cities to which they belonged. The reason was, without a precaution of this kind, the census would have been excessively tedious, and people who were abroad might have been omitted, or registered among the inhabitants of other cities, where they would not have been found afterward, or they might have been enrolled twice, which would have produced confusion in the registers. The Jews, however, in the carrying out of the edict, were left to their own peculiar customs and usages. The policy of Rome, as well as the religious scruples of the Jews, demanded this. For this reason, instead of appearing in the cities where they resided,

or to whose jurisdiction the places of their abode belonged, they appeared according to their families, every one in his native city, or the place where his paternal inheritance lay, to be there enrolled. The reason of this probably was, that as the census among the Jews was made by tribes, clans, and families, this, after the many separations of the Jews, was impracticable, unless each betook themselves to those places which formerly had fallen to the lot of their clan, or family, all which could be known from the genealogical tables, kept by the Jews with such remarkable exactness. *All went to be taxed.* The obedience of the Jews to this decree is a plain proof, that they were now dependent on the Romans, and the *sceptre was departing from Judah.*

4. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

b 1 Sam. xvi. 1, 4; John vii. 42. c Matt. 1. 16; Ch. 1. 27.

5. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

d Matt. 1. 18; Ch. 1. 27.

*And Joseph also went up.* Bethlehem was indeed high ground, but anciently any going from an inferior province or city to one of greater or of more political importance, was going up. *From Galilee.* In the time of our Lord all Palestine was divided into three provinces, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Acts ix. 31; Luke xvii. 11. The last included the whole northern section of the country, namely, the ancient territories of Issachar, Zebulon, Asher, and Naphtali. It was divided into two sections, "upper" and "lower." The former embraced the whole mountain-range lying between the upper Jordan and Phœnicia, and it was inhabited partly by Syrians, Phœnicians, and Arabians, whence it was called *Galilee of the Gentiles*, Is. ix. 1, or nations, Matt. iv. 15. *Lower Galilee* included the great plain of Esdraelon with its offshoots, which ran down to the Jordan and the lake of Tiberias, and the whole of the hill-country adjoining it on the north, to the foot of the mountain-range. *Out of the city of Nazareth.* Nazareth was a very obscure place. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but occurs first in Matt. ii. 23. It is situated among the hills which constitute the south ridges of Lebanon, just before they sink down into the plain of Esdraelon. Among those hills is a valley which runs in a waving line nearly east and west, about a mile long, and, on the average, a quarter of a mile broad, but which at a certain point enlarges itself considerably so as to form a sort of basin. In this basin, or enclosure, along the lower edge of the hill-side, lies the quiet, secluded village from which Joseph and Mary went up, and in which the Saviour of men spent the greater part of His earthly existence. Its name is supposed by some to be derived from the Hebrew word *Netzer*, signifying a *branch*, or rather *sprout* or *germ*, the place being so called from its insignificance. Its fame has solely risen from the residence of the Saviour there. Indeed the place is a fit emblem of Him. Beginning from a germ, it has risen to a tree in fame, and will fill the earth. *Unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David.)* The city of David, the place where the royal David was born and had spent his boyhood. The words *house and lineage* are designed to give full and emphatic expression to Joseph's real descent from David. The name *Bethlehem* anciently signified the *town* or *house of bread*; in modern Arabic it seems to signify the *house* or *place of flesh*. It was an ancient town belonging to the tribe of Judah, and as such distinguished from another of the same name in the tribe of Zebulon. Josh.

xix. 15. Its earliest name was *Ephrath* or *Ephratah*. See Gen. xxxv. 16; xlviii. 7; Josh. xv. 59. And it is not till long after the occupation of the country by the Israelites that we meet with it under its new name of Bethlehem. Bethlehem is still in existence, about six miles south or southwest of Jerusalem, on the road toward Hebron. It commands an extensive prospect eastward toward Jordan, and westward toward the Mediterranean. Its inhabitants are at present about four thousand in number, and are almost all of Christian denominations—chiefly Greeks and Roman Catholics, in nearly equal numbers, and a few Armenians. There are no Jews, and the Moslems are very few. This is the result of the severe measures of Ibrahim Pasha, who drove out the Moslem inhabitants and demolished their houses during the insurrection of 1834. Hence many of the houses are seen in ruins, and the streets in parts encumbered with rubbish. *To be taxed, to enroll himself, with Mary*: these words are not to be joined in sense with *to be taxed*, but simply denote accompaniment. *His espoused wife*; the propriety of this expression appears from Matt. i. 25, where we are told that Joseph knew not his wife till she had brought forth her first-born son—they did not enter upon the full relations and duties of man and wife until after the birth of Jesus. *Being great with child*; it may seem strange that Mary, in this condition, should undertake such a journey—about sixty miles. Perhaps, the persons to be registered being classed in the roll, according to their lineage, Mary might judge it proper on this occasion to claim her descent from David, in order to her being publicly acknowledged as one of his posterity, and the rather as she knew in what relation she stood to the yet unborn Messiah. Perhaps a reason why she accompanied Joseph is to be found in her condition, which would not justify him in leaving her behind. Possibly, though, according to the Roman custom, women could be enrolled without their personal appearance, the emperor may have given particular and exact orders with regard to the *family of David*, as it had been the royal family, and was still talked of as designed to be so, that he might know its number and strength. But even if no edict obliged Mary to travel to Bethlehem, neither did any forbid her accompanying her husband, and her love for the city of David seems to have overcome all difficulties. At all events, by this visit, various ends of Providence were in a most remarkable manner served: 1. Jesus, instead of being brought forth in Nazareth, as seemed likely, was born in Bethlehem, thus fulfilling the ancient and important prophecy, Micah v. 2, “But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall He come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.” May not Mary have perceived that the decree of Cæsar Augustus was but an instrument, in the hand of Providence, to fulfil this prophecy, and now that all was cleared up between her and Joseph, not have been willing to await the hour of her delivery in Galilee, while he was obliged to travel into Judea? 2. By the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, He was proved to be of the *seed of David*. And this was a material thing, requiring such an authentic proof as this. Justin Martyr and Tertullian, two of the earliest advocates of the Christian religion, appeal to these *rolls or records of the Roman empire*, for the proof of Christ’s being born of the house of David. 3. It also thus appeared that Christ was made *under the law*, for He became a subject of the Roman empire as soon as He was born, a *servant of rulers*, Is. xlix. 7.

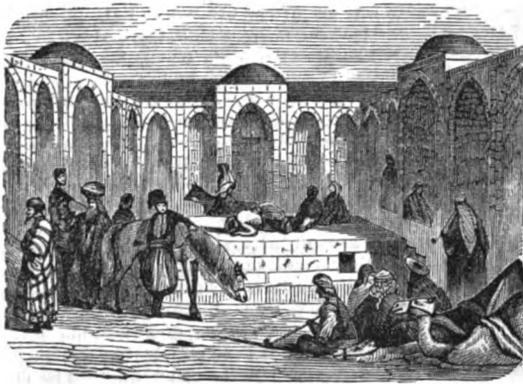
Thus we see, as we look at the edict of the emperor, and these results from it, how *man proposes and God disposes*, and how Providence orders all things for the fulfilling of the Scriptures, and makes use of the projects men have for the serving their own purposes, quite beyond their intention, to serve His own. Any thing we can desire, God could easily cause to happen, and if He does not bring it to pass, it is because the thing we desire does not agree with His own wise and gracious designs.

6. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

We are not informed how long they had been in Bethlehem before Mary's delivery. Perhaps a short time only elapsed between their arrival and the event alluded to.

7. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

• Matt. i. 25.



CARAVANSERAI OR KHAN.

When Joseph and Mary arrived at Bethlehem, they found the place so full of people assembled to be enrolled, that it was difficult for them to obtain any accommodation—especially such accommodation as it now appeared that Mary's condition might presently require. There were no "inns" in our sense of the word, nor did bills stuck up in the windows of "apartments to let" apprise them where they might find a room during their necessary stay in the place. What could they do? In the East there is built, in or near to a town, generally with a stable attached, a *caravanserai* or *khan*, in which a person who comes to the town and has no friends to receive him into their houses, may seek accommodation, stay as long as he pleases, generally without payment, but is only provided with lodging for himself and beast, if he has any, and with water from a well on the premises. The room or cell which he obtains is perfectly bare. If he has neglected to bring a rug, piece of carpet, or thick quilt with him, he may procure a mat perhaps, but nothing more. As to food, he must purchase what he needs from the town or village in or near which the khan may be situated, and if he requires a cooked meal, he must dress it himself, for which purpose a traveller's baggage contains one or more pots and dishes, with a vessel for water. A khan usually presents externally the appearance of a square, formed by strong and lofty walls, with a high gateway, which offers an entrance to the interior. On passing through this, the traveller finds himself in a large open quadrangle, surrounded on all sides by a number of distinct recesses. The people of Bethlehem in order to prevent their hospitality from becoming oppressive by reason of the numerous visits of

strangers, built a khan in or near the town. To this large structure Joseph and Mary repaired for accommodation. That they did so would seem to imply that they really were strangers in this the native seat of the family to which they belonged, or that, as they clearly came very late, they may have found the friends they had at Bethlehem already over-burdened with guests. However this may have been, whether as strangers, or as guests too late for any other accommodation, to the khan they went. But they were too late even there, for all the chambers were already occupied. Here again what was to be done? The critical condition of Mary rendered some kind of shelter necessary, and none but that which the stable offered could be found: to the stable they therefore repaired, and it was in such a place that the Saviour of the world was born, and it was thus that the manger from whence the cattle fed became a cradle for Him. *And she brought forth her first-born son.* These words assert the virginity of the mother of Jesus until the time of His birth. "He was born of the virgin Mary." The word *first-born* does not necessarily imply that Mary was subsequently the mother of other children than Jesus. The mistake which those commit who take the opposite view of this case, lies in making the word *first-born* a popular expression, to be interpreted by common usage, whereas it is a technical term of the Mosaic law, and as such familiar to the Jews of that day both in Greek and Hebrew, being constantly employed in the Septuagint version, to translate the Hebrew term applied to the firstling both of man and beast, but by way of eminence to the human child by which the womb was opened or the woman first became a mother. The Mosaic law prescribed the sanctification of the "first-born," Exod. xii. 2, and this first-born was still so called, whether succeeded by subsequent children or not. As to the word "till" in Matt. i. 25, which relates to this subject, it by no means clearly implies that other children were born to Joseph and Mary after she brought forth her first-born son. *Until*, and equivalents in other languages, affirm and deny nothing beyond the point of time which they are used to designate, but leave the rest to be discovered in some other way. The Greek interpreters assert this to be the usage of the Greek word employed in this case, and refer for proof to Gen. viii. 7, and Ps. cx. 1, to which others have added Is. xlii. 3, as quoted in Matt. xii. 20, where the meaning cannot be that after he has sent forth judgment unto victory he will begin to bruise the broken reed and quench the smoking flax. So too in 1 Tim. iv. 13, Paul cannot mean to say that after he comes Timothy must cease to read, exhort, and teach. Nor is the contrary affirmed in either case, but simply left to be determined by the context or the nature of the case. These examples are sufficient to establish the position that the inference in question from the use of the word *till* in the verse referred to, however natural, is not conclusive, or in other words, that this expression cannot prove the fact of subsequent cohabitation in the face of cogent reasons for disputing it. If, for any reason, it would not have been becoming or expedient that the woman chosen to be the mother of our Lord should sustain the same relation to any other child before His birth, why was it any more becoming or expedient after He was born? This view of the matter may at least induce us to suspend our judgment on this delicate and interesting question, without any fear of incurring the charge of popish or ascetic superstition. *And wrapped him in swaddling-clothes.* This binding with bandages or cloth was studiously attended to by the ancients, lest the tender frame of the infant might acquire, through weakness, or an accidental wrench, any distortion.

How great was the humiliation of the Son of God in the manner of His introduction into our world! Let us remember *why* He came. It was not to enjoy Himself, but to save us. In order to save us, two things were necessary—that He should obey the law of God which we had broken, and that He should suffer the punishment due to us for breaking it. Hence, He was always placed in suffering circumstances from the beginning to the close of

His earthly career. Poverty and contempt nursed Him in His infancy. The most splendid palace on earth would have been too humble an abode for Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, but instead of opening His infant eyes in a palace, He opened them in a stable. And as He walked through this world, at each step His way became rougher; as his *first* bed was a *manger*, his *last* was a *cross*. Sometimes Christians, even true Christians, are heard speaking, in tones which appear not wholly destitute of self-gratulation, of having renounced the world, foregone its vanities and its splendors, and given up, it may be, some one of the thousand comforts and luxuries with which their cup is filled, for the honor and glory of God, and for the sake of the Redeemer. But, surely, as we look into the stable at Bethlehem, and see the Ancient of Days, whose goings forth have been from everlasting, lying there in the manger a little helpless babe, we need not carry on our thoughts to the thirty years of misery which awaited Him in accomplishing our salvation, to be convinced that we have all need to blush and be ashamed for the poor, miserable pittance of self-denial, devotedness, and love, which we are returning for this costly sacrifice. The first faint and feeble cry, which issued from that manger, said, in language which cannot be misunderstood, "My kingdom is not of this world." "Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." We cannot be, in heart and life, the followers of this self-denying Saviour, unless we are content with the portion of this world's good which He sees fit to bestow upon us, however small, unless we are willing to lay down, without repining, our worldly blessings, however dear, and to acknowledge heartily and sincerely, that we had rather be "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom" than rank among the wealthiest, or take our place among the noblest of the world.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by "those days?"
2. What was the decree that was issued?
3. By whom was it sent forth?
4. What is said about the names "Cæsar" and "Augustus?"
5. When was Cæsar Augustus proclaimed emperor of Rome?
6. What happened in his reign?
7. What does the phrase "all the world" signify?
8. What was the taxing referred to?
9. What objection has been made to the taxing said to have taken place under Cyrenius?
10. What is the first answer given to this objection?
11. What is the second explanation?
12. When the census was made in any country, what had the inhabitants to do?
13. What was the reason of this requirement?
14. To what were the Jews left, in carrying out the edict?
15. Why was this the case?
16. In what cities did the Jews appear at such a time?
17. What was the reason of this arrangement?
18. Why is it said that Joseph "went up" to Bethlehem?
19. How was all Palestine divided in the time of our Lord?
20. What did Galilee include?
21. How was it divided?
22. What did the former section embrace?
23. What did the latter section, or "Lower Galilee," include?
24. Where was Nazareth situated?
25. What is its name supposed to be derived from?
26. Why was Bethlehem called "the city of David?"

27. What are the words "house and lineage of David" designed to give?
28. What is said of the name Bethlehem?
29. Is Bethlehem still in existence?
30. Where is it situated?
31. What is said about it?
32. What is said about the words "with Mary?"
33. From what does the propriety of the words "his espoused wife" appear?
34. Why did Mary, in her condition, undertake such a journey?
35. What was the first end of Providence accomplished by Mary's visit to Bethlehem?
36. What the second?
37. What the third?
38. How long were Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem before the child was born?
39. Why could they not find any suitable accommodation there?
40. What is said about caravanserais in the East?
41. Describe a khan.
42. Was it to a structure like this Joseph and Mary went?
43. To what part of the khan did they go?
44. How is the virginity of the mother of Jesus until the time of His birth shown?
45. Do the words "first-born" necessarily imply that Mary was subsequently the mother of other children than Jesus?
46. State the proofs of this.
47. Why were infants wrapped with bandages by the ancients?
48. Why did Jesus come into our world?
49. What two things were necessary for our salvation?
50. Do these things explain why Christ was always placed in suffering circumstances?
51. What does His humiliation teach us?
52. What is essential to our being followers of this self-denying Saviour?

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LESSON XI.

vs. 8-9.

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

<sup>1</sup>Gen. xxxi. 39, 40; Exod. iii. 1, 2; 1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35; Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71; Ezek. xxxiv. 8.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *the night watches.*

*In the same country, i. e., in the region near Bethlehem. The Gentile magi were brought from afar, but these shepherds are brought from nigh. Abiding in the field, both day and night, whether in tents or in the open air is uncertain, but the word abiding seems to indicate that near by the fold were temporary tents or booths for the convenience of the shepherds: Keeping watch over their flock by night. The expression seems to indicate that they were stationed at various posts, and perhaps relieved one another. The original word may be more literally rendered watching the watches of the night, i. e., each one keeping watch (which ordinarily consisted of three hours) in his turn. The sheep were not confined under a covered fold by night, it being regarded more conducive to the excellence of the wool to let*

them remain under the open sky by night as well as by day. It was necessary to watch the sheep in the field, to guard them against the wolves, foxes, and other beasts of prey common there. As Abraham, David and Moses, to whom the promise of the Messiah was first made, were shepherds, so was the completion of this promise first revealed to shepherds.

The following arguments have been adduced to show that our Lord's birth did not occur, as many maintain it did, on the 25th day of December. It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to pasture about the Passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the *first rain*. As the Passover occurred in the *Spring*, and the *first rain* began early in the month of *Marchesvan*, which answers to part of our *October* and *November*, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of the *Summer*. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it would seem that *October* had not yet commenced. 2. Whilst Barclay, Schwartz, and other travellers in Palestine, who give us the result of several years' observations in Jerusalem, agree in the statement that during the rainy season, from the end of *October* to *March*, there generally occurs an interval of several weeks' dry weather between the middle of *December* and the middle of *February*, and that during the month of *December* the earth is clothed with verdure, and sowing and ploughing go on at intervals, yet Mr. Barclay's meteorological tables show the average in inches of rain-fall through seven years to be as follows: *November*, 2 inches; *December*, 14, *January*, 13; *February*, 16, *March*, 8; *April*, 1, and *May*, 1. Average range of the thermometer through five years, *November*, 67; *December*, 53·3; *January*, 49·6, *February*, 52·1. So that *December* is within a trifle of being the severest month of the year. 3. It is unlikely that the Roman government would heighten the unpopularity of the registration edict, which was an intrinsically unpopular measure, by constraining a large part of the population of Palestine, including Northern Galilee as well as Southern Judea, to travel at mid-winter. 4. The inference drawn from the appearance of the angel to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, in the temple, on the day of atonement, on which only the high priest went into the sanctuary, to sprinkle the blood of atonement before and upon the ark, is unfounded. The inference is this: The day of atonement being in *September*, John would be born in *June*, but John was six months older than Jesus, who, therefore, must have been born in *December*. It is clear, however, that Zacharias, instead of being *high priest*, was an *ordinary* priest, who, in the due course of service, went into the *outer* sanctuary to offer the daily incense. 5. In the Western Church there was not any celebration of the nativity of Christ until about the middle of the third century. The Eastern Church, within whose bosom the locality of the sacred birth is centrally located, knew nothing of the date for centuries. These Churches had but one festival bearing any reference to the appearance of Christ, and that was the feast of the Epiphany, then regarded (for it has since acquired another meaning) as celebrating the commencement of our Lord's ministry by His baptism by John in the Jordan. When the Christmas festival, as the anniversary of our Lord's birth, came to them from the West, they at first resisted it strenuously, but at length they accepted the anniversary, but not the day, choosing rather to connect it with their old festival of the Manifestation, and, therefore, celebrating the Lord's nativity on the 6th of *January*, instead of the 25th of *December*.

*Fabritius* gives a catalogue of no less than one hundred and thirty-six different opinions concerning the day of Christ's birth. It has been placed in every month of the year. The Egyptians place it in *January*—Wagenseil and Wiesler in *February*—Bochart and Paulus in *March*—some mentioned by Clement of Alexandria, and Greswell and Alford in *April*—the Alexandrian Church in *May*—Epiphanius speaks of some who placed it in *June*—Lichtenstein places it in *July* or *December*—Strong and Lardner place it in

*August*—Lightfoot, Webster and Wilkinson place it in *September*—Scaliger, Casaubon and Calvisius and Archbishop Newcome in *October*, others in *November*. Dr. Robinson places it in Autumn, Clinton in Spring, and Andrews between the middle of December, 749, to the middle of January, 750 A. U. The fixing of the nativity of Christ on the 25th of December was really done at Rome, and was transmitted from thence over the Eastern Church. "The authority for the selection of that day was the government record of the *taxing*, or census of Cyrenius, said to be in the imperial archives at Rome. But the authenticity of these records is too untenable to allow any weight to the argument." "Pope Julius I.," says Dr. Adam Clarke, "was the person who made this alteration, and it appears to have been done for this reason: the sun now began his return towards the northern tropic, ending the winter, lengthening the short days, and introducing the Spring. All this was probably deemed emblematical of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness on the darkness of this world, and causing the day-spring from on high to visit mankind."

The widely conflicting views which have been stated as to the day of our Saviour's birth are most manifestly attributable to the absence of all certain evidence as to the precise date of that event. Revelation is silent on this point. The tradition of the Church is widely diverse and discrepant. There are no data upon which any calculations may be based, and hence every thing rests on mere conjecture. The question is one of little importance, even for those who observe the day, as the celebration of a public event is not necessarily confined to the day of the year on which it occurred. It is happy for us that the particular day on which Jesus was born is not necessary to be ascertained in order to our salvation, nor at all material to true religion. It is sufficient for us to know that, in *the fulness of time*, just when He was most needed, and when the Jewish and Gentile world was fully prepared for this central fact and turning point in history, the Saviour was born, was made flesh, and dwelt among us, assumed our nature, and in consequence thereof is become an all-sufficient Saviour and Redeemer, in whom *whosoever believeth with a right faith shall not perish, but have eternal life*.

9. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

§ Ch. I. 12.

*The angel of the Lord*, no particular angel is specified, *came upon them*, in a sudden and unexpected manner; the original words might be rendered, *stood over them*, that is, appeared in a visible form, standing in the air over their heads; and *the glory of the Lord shone round about them*, not only a great light, but such a glorious splendor as used to represent the presence of God; the Shechinah surrounded them with its effulgence: *and they were sore afraid*, thrown into consternation, at so uncommon and so awful an appearance. The fear which we so often find mentioned in the Scriptures, when man comes into immediate contact with the supernatural and holy, is mainly attributable to a conviction of moral impurity before God. While we are conscious of so much guilt, we naturally fear lest every communication from heaven is an expression of wrath.

The angels manifested great interest in Christ when He was upon earth. An angel declared His conception, an host of angels published His birth, in His temptation an angel strengthened Him, in His agony an angel comforted Him, at His resurrection an angel rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, at His ascension the angels attended Him up to heaven, and at His second coming to judge the world, He shall be *revealed from heaven with His mighty angels*.

Why, of all classes of men, those should be selected who were least favored by outward circumstances, of all orders of intellect, those should be chosen least enlarged by education and culture, to receive the first intelligence of the salvation of a world, is known fully only to God who made the choice of them. It was necessary that the witnesses of Christ's birth should reside in or near Bethlehem; and these shepherds alone were abroad and awake in the depth of the silent night. The gospel delights to put honor on those of low degree. Moreover, though the narrative does not say that amidst the general yearning for the appearance of the Messiah which was then felt throughout Judea, these shepherds peculiarly longed for it, it is not unlikely that these simple souls, untaught in the traditions of the Scribes, and nourished by communion with God, amid the freedom of nature, in a solitude congenial with meditation and prayer, had formed a purer idea of the Messiah from the necessities of their own hearts, than prevailed at that time among the Jews. At all events their case teaches us that God often meets men in the paths of their worldly employment. He sanctified the astronomy of the *wise men*, writing the lesson He wished to teach them, on the glittering alphabet with which their studies had made them especially conversant. It was from the sheep-fold David was taken to be anointed king, and from his father's barn that Gideon was called to deliver Israel. It was when Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, that the angel of the Lord promised him joy and gladness in a son. Matthew was sitting at "the receipt of custom," when called to follow Christ, and the fishermen, Peter, James, and John, were casting a net into the sea, when our Lord called them to be "fishers of men."

It is remarkable, that on all the more important occasions in our Lord's life, on which His lowliness and humiliation are signally manifested, there is always (or generally) in conjunction with this, some august exhibition of His Godhead. Though born in a stable, angels sung of His glory. When receiving baptism (a sinner's rite) at a sinner's hand, the heavens were opened, and a sublime voice from "the excellent glory" attested His Divinity. He wept with the sisters in Bethany, but with a word of omnipotence summoned the sheeted dead from the tomb. Calvary, with its crown of thorns, the gash of the spear, the criminal's torture, the malefactor associates, shows us a *dying man*; but a blackened sun, riven rocks, the earth trembling to support its Creator's cross, were nature's glorious testimonies that He who hung in ignominy on that tree was "*The mighty God.*"

### QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by "the same country?"
2. How did the shepherds abide in the field?
3. How and why did they keep watch?
4. Repeat in order the arguments to show that our Lord's birth did not occur on the 25th day of December?
5. Why are the views of the day of our Saviour's birth so conflicting?
6. Is it important to ascertain the precise day?
7. What angel of the Lord came upon the shepherds?
8. How might the words "came upon them" be rendered?
9. What shone around about the shepherds?
10. Why were they afraid?
11. Why are we afraid when brought into immediate contact with the supernatural and holy?
12. What is said about the interest of angels in Christ when on earth?
13. Why were these shepherds chosen to receive the first intelligence of the salvation of a world?
14. What does the selection of them teach us?
15. Mention instances in which the humiliation and Godhead of Christ were conjointly manifested.

## LESSON XII.

vs. 10-14.

10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, <sup>h</sup>which shall be to all people.

<sup>h</sup> Gen. xli. 3; Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark i. 15; ver. 31, 32; Ch. xxiv. 47; Col. i. 23.

*Fear not.* Thus the angel Gabriel had encouraged Zacharias and Mary, ch. i. 12, 30. As if he had said, "The design of my appearing to you hath nothing terrible in it, but the contrary; for *behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.*" The original expression here is peculiar: *I announce, or evangelize, unto you good tidings*, which shall be matter of great joy to all people, literally, *to all the people*. As these shepherds were representatives of the Jews, so Israel is the people to whom is the immediate joy, yet it redounds to all the world besides. In ver. 14, *good will* is proclaimed to all men. See Matt. xxviii. 19.

11. <sup>i</sup>For unto you is born this day in the city of David <sup>a</sup>a Saviour, <sup>h</sup>which is Christ the Lord.

<sup>i</sup> Is. ix. 6.    <sup>j</sup> Matt. i. 21.    <sup>h</sup> Matt. i. 16 and xvi. 16; Ch. i. 43; Acts ii. 36 and x. 36; Phil. ii. 11.

*For unto you, &c.*, shows the ground of the preceding joyous announcement. *Unto you*, not only the shepherds, and the Jews to whom the gospel was first preached, but all mankind—to *you* men, not to *us* angels, He took not on Him our nature. There is a reference to Is. ix. 6, *Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given. This day, at this time. In the city of David*, the true place for the birth of David's royal son. This reference to Bethlehem would recall Micah v. 2, which, according to Matt. ii. 5, 6, was, in those days, universally understood to refer to Messiah. *A Saviour*. The word thus rendered properly denotes such a Saviour as perfectly frees us from all evil and danger, and is the author of perpetual salvation. It signifies a *deliverer*, as Jesus is, from ignorance and folly, from a state of guilt, condemnation, and wrath, from depravity and weakness, in which all men are involved through the fall of their first parents, and their own actual transgressions;—a *restorer*, even to the favor and image of God, and communion with Him, lost by the same fall;—and a *preserver*, namely unto eternal life, one as willing as able to *keep* such as believe in Him, *through faith, unto final and complete salvation, to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.* Matt. i. 21. *Christ* is from the Greek word *Christos*, which signifies *Anointed*. The word *Messiah*, in the Hebrew, corresponds to the word *Christos*, in the Greek. Hence, the Jews or Hebrews speak of the Saviour as *the Messiah*, and Christians speak of Him as *the Christ*. This name points out the Saviour of the world in his *prophetic, regal, and sacerdotal* offices, as in ancient times it was the custom to anoint with oil *prophets, kings, and priests*, when they were installed into their respective offices. Exod. xxviii. 41; xxix. 7; 1 Sam. ix. 16; xv. 1; 2 Sam. xxiii. 1; 1 Kings xix. 16. This was a consecrating ceremony, making the person of the subject of it sacred. 1 Sam. xxiv. 6; 2 Sam. xix. 21; 1 Chron. xvii. 22. It was also emblematical of the effusion of the Holy Spirit. 1 John ii. 20, 27; comp. Matt. ii. 16, 17; John iii. 34. As no man was ever dignified by holding the *three offices*, of prophet, priest, and king, so no person ever had the title *The anointed one*, but Jesus, the

Christ. This title belonged pre-eminently to Him. 1 Sam. ii. 10; Is. lxi. 1; Dan. ix. 24, 26. He alone is *King* of kings;—the King who *governs* the universe, and *rules* in the hearts of His followers,—the *Prophet* to instruct men in the way wherein they should go, and the great *High Priest*, to offer up sacrifice, and make atonement for their sins. Of Him, Melchisedek, Abraham, Aaron, David, and others, were illustrious types, but none of these had the title of *the Messiah*, *the Christ*, or, *the Anointed of God*. *Christ the Lord*—not the Christ of the Lord, as He is called, ch. ii. 26, but the Messiah, who, equally with the Jehovah of the Old Testament, bears the name *Lord*; comp. ch. xxiii. 2, and Acts ii. 36. The Greek word rendered *Lord* corresponds to the Hebrew *Jehovah*; and the application of this word to Christ in this sense receives much strength from the fact that in ver. 9 the same Greek word is used twice of Jehovah. It is certain that the Lordship of Christ must be considered in a mere *spiritual* sense, as He never set up any *secular* government upon earth, nor commanded any to be established in His name, and there is certainly no spiritual government but that of God. “Christ,” the Divinely appointed Prophet, Priest, and King, of His people, their “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,” is sufficiently qualified to sustain these unspeakably important offices and characters, because He is “the Lord,” He is God, as well as man, “God manifest in the flesh,” “the Lord that in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,” &c., Heb. i. 10, and without whom “was not any thing made that was made,” John i. 3; Col. i. 16.

12. And this *shall be* a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

They might have expected to find Him dressed in splendid robes, lying in state, in the best house in the town, with a numerous train of attendants. As if, therefore, at once and forever, to rectify the common notions of earthly glory which prevailed, and which they may have in some degree shared, connected with the appearance of this great personage, the angel forewarned them that they should *find the babe in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger*, and made this the particular signal by which they should distinguish Him. The sign granted was as wonderful as the occurrence just announced, yet one suited to the capacity of the shepherds, and at the same time infallible. The fear, as to whether they might approach the new-born King, and offer Him their homage, was dispelled by the intimation of His lowly condition. The designation of the city of David, which they knew to be Bethlehem, as the place of the child's birth, gave them the general direction which they were to take. The announcement to the shepherds that the great Deliverer was born into a condition of life no better than their own, instead of casting a chill into their hearts, perhaps gave a touch of tenderness to their sympathies, which had else been wanting, and probably it was in regard to the heart-felt nature of the sympathies with which they especially would hail one who, by the manner of His coming, announced Himself as the friend of the poor and lowly, that to these shepherds, rather than to the learned or the great, this proclamation was made. *Pride* is the character of all the sons of Adam; *humility*, the mark of the Son of God, and of all His followers. As Jesus came into our world as a *babe*, we learn that He is able to sympathize with us<sup>1</sup> from the beginning of our life, and that His errand was one of tenderness and love. He came, not to *condemn*, but to *save*.

13. <sup>1</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxviii. 12; xxxii. 1, 2; Ps. ciii. 20, 21; cxlviii. 2; Dan. vii. 10; Heb. i. 14; Rev. v. 11.

*And suddenly there was, &c.* It is not possible to determine whether they

were present, though unseen, when the angel first appeared, and now made their presence manifest, or the angel was at this point suddenly joined by this heavenly band. A *multitude of the heavenly host*, or army, called an *host*, partly for their number and partly for their order. This is an usual appellation of the angels, who are represented as the body-guard of the Lord. Comp. 1 Kings xxii. 19; Dan. vii. 10; 2 Chron. xviii. 18; Ps. ciii. 21; Matt. xxvi. 53. These angels were not silent witnesses—they sang a song, whose very words are handed down to us. It is the only song sung by angels upon earth that we ever heard. In the Book of Revelation some of their songs in heaven are recorded, such as “Worthy is the Lamb to receive honor, power and glory;” and “Thou hast created all things, for thy pleasure they are and were created.” But here we read of a song to which poor shepherds listened. What gratitude and joy these heavenly beings appeared to have felt on this occasion! The reasons of this were, their *love to God*, who, through this wonderful event, was to be glorified in a pre-eminent manner, and, their *benevolence to man*, who, by this same event, was to be redeemed, and become the subject of a glorious and endless salvation.

14. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward man.

■ Ch. xix. 38; Eph. i. 6 and iii. 10, 21; Rev. v. 13.

■ Is. lvii. 19; Ch. i. 79; Rom. v. 1; Eph. ii. 4, 7; Col. i. 20.

■ John iii. 16; Eph. ii. 4, 7; 2 Thess. ii. 16; 1 John iv. 9, 10.

The heavenly host take up the announcement of the angel, vs. 10, 11, repeating it in substance, and confirming and stating it more distinctly as a message of glad tidings. In their song there is a threefold correspondence: 1, between *glory* and *peace*; 2, between *in the highest* and *on earth*; and 3, between *God* and *good will towards men*. The shouts of a multitude are generally broken into short sentences, and are commonly elliptic, which is the cause of some ambiguity in these words, which may be understood in different senses. Some read the phrase *Glory to God*, *Glory is to God*; others, *Let there be glory to God*. By some, *in the highest* is supposed to refer to the Jewish threefold heavens, so that the meaning is, “this glory ascends to the highest.” Some read the whole doxology thus: *Glory to God in the highest—that is, in heaven—and on earth peace, yea, favor, toward men*. Others understand it as signifying, That the *good will*, or favor, which was now shown to men, is the *glory of God in the highest*, and is the *peace* and happiness of those who dwell on earth. According to others, the sense is, “Glory be to God among the angels in heaven for sending the Messiah—and peace or salvation on earth among men of His good pleasure, i. e., among God’s chosen people in whom He is well pleased.” The most common interpretation of the passage is probably the correct one. The words are doubtless to be considered as expressions of rejoicing exclamation, strongly representing the piety of this multitude of the heavenly host, and their affectionate good wishes for the prosperity of the Messiah’s kingdom, as if they had said, “Glory be to God in the highest heavens, and let all the angelic legions resound His praises in the most exalted strains, for, with the Redeemer’s birth, *peace* and all happiness come down to dwell on earth, yea, the overflowings of Divine benevolence and favor are now exercised toward sinful men in giving this Saviour, through whom they become the objects of His complacential regard.” The words, considered in a doctrinal point of view, teach us what it is of great importance to know: 1. That the birth of Christ is an event which, above all others, brings glory to God, giving such a display of several of His perfections as had never been made before, particularly of His *holiness* and *justice*, in requiring such a sacrifice as was hereby to be prepared for the expiation of human guilt, and His *mercy* in providing and accepting it, His *wisdom* in devising such a plan for the redemption of

lost man, and His *power*, in executing it. 2. It brings *peace on earth*, that is, peace to man, peace with God, through the atonement and mediation of Christ, peace of conscience, as the consequence of knowing that we have peace with God, and peace with one another. 3. It displays the *good will*, the benevolence, the love of God to man, as no other of His works or dispensations ever did, or could do. See 1 John iv. 7, &c.; John iii. 16. If the angels, who are not otherwise interested in the incarnation of Christ than as it affords the brightest display of the Divine attributes, adore and glorify God on account of it, how much more should man do this, for whose salvation this astonishing interposition of love was designed? Let us not doubt God's *good will* toward us. It hurts a tender parent if he perceives that his children doubt his *good will* towards them; he tries to convince them of it by numerous acts of kindness, and he is much disappointed if he cannot succeed in winning their confidence. Has not the Lord done enough to convince us of His good will? Ought we not always to say, "If God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, will He not *with Him* freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32.

Let us never forget that the gift of Jesus furnishes the solution of this mystery, how a holy God can feel complacency towards sinful man, inasmuch as He looks not at us as we are *in ourselves*, but as we are in Him who "died for our offences, and rose again for our justification." There is not *yet* peace on earth, but *there will* be. This earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and then war shall cease, the swords shall be turned into ploughshares, and the spears into pruning-hooks, Is. ii. 4, because "the Prince of Peace" shall reign.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What did the angel say to the shepherds?
2. Why did he ask them not to fear?
3. What is said about the original expression rendered "I bring you good tidings of great joy?"
4. What do the words rendered, "to all people," literally signify?
5. What is said about the expression—"For unto you?"
6. What would the reference to "the city of David" recall?
7. What does the word "Saviour" properly denote?
8. What is said about the word "Christ?"
9. In what offices does this word point out the Saviour of the world?
10. How, and why, did the title "The Anointed" belong pre-eminently to Christ?
11. What is said about the words "Christ, the Lord?"
12. To what does the Greek word rendered "Lord" correspond?
13. How must the Lordship of Christ be considered?
14. What was the sign given to the shepherds?
15. Why was this sign given?
16. How did the shepherds know what direction they were to take to find the place of the child's birth?
17. How did the announcement of the low condition in which Christ was born probably affect the shepherds?
18. What is said of pride?
19. What of humility?
20. What do we learn from Christ's coming into our world as a babe?
21. Were the "multitude of the heavenly host" present when the angel first appeared?
22. Why was this multitude called an "host?"
23. Were these silent witnesses?
24. What is said of the song they sang?

25. What were the reasons of their gratitude and joy?
26. How was their song connected with the announcement of the angel in verses 10, 11?
27. What threefold correspondence is in their song?
28. What is the cause of some ambiguity in these words?
29. How do some read the phrase—"glory to God?"
30. How do some read the whole doxology?
31. How do others understand it?
32. How do others still, understand it?
33. How are the words to be considered?
34. What do they, considered in a doctrinal point of view, teach?
35. What inference is drawn from the interest of angels in the incarnation of Christ?
36. What is said about doubting God's good will toward us?
37. What mystery does the gift of Jesus solve?

## LESSON XIII.

vs. 15-24.

15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, <sup>2</sup>the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *the men, the shepherds.*

The good shepherds waited but to hear the close of the angel's song, and when all again was dark and silent, they hurried away, leaving their flocks behind, to witness at Bethlehem that which the Lord had made known unto them. Though it was midnight, and they had been watching their flocks throughout the night, no fatigue, no inconvenience could detain them, they delayed not to go. Those who delay to seek Jesus, when the messengers of God bring them glad tidings of salvation, risk their present safety and their eternal happiness. Those whose souls Divine grace has influenced, no sooner learn where Christ is, than they go after Him, judging no earthly comfort too dear to be forsaken for Him. *And see this thing which is come to pass.* Observe; not let us go and see whether this thing *be* come to pass, which the Lord hath made known, but, let us go and see this thing which *is* come to pass. They never for an instant questioned the certainty and the reality of all that had been revealed to them. What an instance of that true faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen!" This is the faith which we ought to exercise. Instead of questioning, doubting, and reasoning, we ought in all child-like simplicity to believe and act. Our feeling should be, God has Himself of his unspeakable mercy offered to me, a miserable sinner, pardon and peace; He has told me in the plainest and most unquestionable language, that they who come to this Saviour shall in nowise be cast out. This, then, is all that we require; if we cannot remember, if we do not know, another offer of salvation, another promise of acceptance throughout the Bible, we do know and can remember this, and one such promise "which the Lord hath made known" is, if embraced by faith, sufficient for us in life and death, in time and in eternity.

16. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

How must Mary and Joseph have been delighted, and how must their faith have been strengthened, by the visit of the shepherds! Though overlooked by the world, the holy child was honored by these poor men. Even now there are only comparatively a few who acknowledge Him as their Lord and Master, and these few are generally poor, like the shepherds of Bethlehem. Here, as usual in the history of the Nativity, the name of Mary comes before that of her husband. Natural as it was that the shepherds should not find the child without His parents, yet this meeting was specially adapted to give most light to the shepherds concerning the mysterious occurrence.

17. And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

*The saying*, that is, the appearance of the angels and the prediction by which they had been induced to visit the place where the infant Jesus was. *Made known abroad*: this publication was probably confined to a comparatively small circle, consisting of persons who at day-break may have been in the neighborhood. The shepherds were the first evangelists among men. Such as have found Christ to their comfort, and tasted that the Lord is gracious to themselves, cannot but recommend Him to the love and admiration of others.

18. And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

*Wondered*, that is, *conversed with amazement* concerning the statements of the angelic ministrations related by the shepherds. We are not told how many, if any of them, visited Mary, and obtained personal information respecting the child, but it is clear that their wonder and curiosity were strongly excited by what had been told them respecting Him. None who heard were unmoved, yet the contrast between those first hearers, and Mary, ver. 19, forces upon us the conclusion, that their wonder was less deep and salutary than her silent pondering. It is one thing to *wonder*, and another to *believe*. Neither the hearing of Christ with the outward ear, nor the seeing Him by the outward eye, will suffice for salvation. Neither the hearing of His doctrine, nor the sight of His miracles will work Divine faith in the soul, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit; the one may make us *marvel*, but the other makes us *believe*.

19. <sup>9</sup>But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.

p Gen. xxxvii. 11; Ch. i. 66, ver. 51.

*All these things*, the whole train of events, the miraculous birth of John, the annunciation of the angel to herself, the appearance of the angels to the shepherds, and the visit of the shepherds to her. *Pondered* means *weighed*. She *kept*, literally, *noted or watched closely, all these things*, and *weighed* them, kept them in active remembrance, compared them, reflected upon them. The people to whom the shepherds published the saying, ver. 17, *wondered*. Mary *pondered*; the things that affected their heads affected not only her head but her heart also. This is the way in which sermons should be heard, and the Bible should be read. The Israelites listened to the preaching of Ezekiel as people listen to one who can play well on an instrument, and who can sing a lovely song. We should not listen to sermons, that they may

amuse, or merely entertain us. Ez. xxxiii. 31, 32. Neither should we listen to God's word as a person looks in a glass, and then goes away and forgets what he has seen, James i. 24. Such hearers soon lose the good impressions they have received, and continue worldly-minded, and ungodly. All who receive benefit from what they read or hear of Divine truth, keep it, and ponder it in their hearts. The godly man is represented as meditating on God's law, day and night, Ps. i. 2. One verse of God's holy word laid up in the heart, will do us more good than a whole chapter hastily read, and little considered.

20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

These simple men, having satisfactory evidence of the truth of the good *tidings* of which they had heard, and, besides what they saw at Bethlehem, having doubtless heard from Joseph and Mary an account of those particulars which the sacred historian has related above, and which would greatly tend to confirm and comfort their minds, returned to their flocks, glorifying God for what He had shown them, and for the blessedness which they felt. This conduct on their part indicates that the supposition is true that they piously waited for the hope of Israel, the Messiah, and furnishes a beautiful example of their pious fidelity in their vocation. Their extraordinary experience did not withdraw them from their daily and ordinary duties, but enabled them to perform them with increased gladness of heart. They probably fell asleep, before the beginning of our Lord's public ministry, with the recollection of this night in their hearts, and a frame of mind like that of the aged Simeon. Their names, unknown on earth, are written in heaven, and their experience is the best example of the first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

21. <sup>¶</sup>And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

<sup>¶</sup> Gen. xvii. 12; Lev. xii. 6; Ch. i. 59. <sup>¶</sup> Matt. i. 21, 25; Ch. i. 31.

*And when eight days were accomplished*, that is, not when the eighth day was ended, but when it was come. The law had appointed that every male should be circumcised at eight days old, or on the eighth day after its birth. Gen. xvii. 12; see Notes on ch. i. 59. *For the circumcising of the child.* It is obvious, that for one at least of the purposes for which all the other children of Abraham received this rite, as the symbol of the renewing of a corrupt nature, and the putting away the lusts of the flesh, it was to our Lord wholly unnecessary. His spotless purity needed no symbol of the putting off of the sinful Adam. Why, then, did the spotless Saviour subject himself to this painful, and, as regarded His own person, if we consider Him individually and not federally, unnecessary rite? The reason was doubtless this: The Lord Jesus came to fulfil the whole law of God, that He might work out a perfect righteousness, as He came to suffer the whole penalty for sin, that He might offer "a perfect sacrifice." The rite of circumcision was the initiatory rite of the Jewish religion. When, therefore, the infant Saviour submitted to this important rite, it was in effect saying, that He acknowledged Himself as of the seed of Abraham, Heb. ii. 16; that He would be made in the *likeness*, not only of *flesh*, but of *sinful* flesh, Rom. viii. 3; that "in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto *his* brethren," sin only excepted, Heb. ii. 17; that He came not to destroy the law, or the prophets,

but to fulfil them, Matt. v. 17. And this, it is evident, would be perfectly intelligible to the Jews, however it may need explanation to us; for it was most clearly understood that, as the Apostle expresses it, every man who was circumcised was "a debtor to do the whole law." Gal. v. 3. Circumcision, therefore, was the gate by which the holy Jesus entered the temple of the Mosaic covenant, and, having so entered, He could not leave the house, but as a voluntary bondsman whose ear had been bored to the door-post. Exod. xxi. 6. He became bound to its ordinances forever. He who was *made of a woman* came also at the appointed time *under the law* by circumcision. Gal. iv. 4. His reception of this rite is an incident in the history of the self-humiliation of Him who, being originally "in the form of God," took upon Him "the form of a servant." By it He became symbolically bound to perform that will of the Father for whose fulfilment He had come into the world. Here, then, was the commencement of that active obedience of Christ, by which the law of God was to be honored in every part, and thus an everlasting righteousness brought in as a justifying righteousness for His redeemed people, "that as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one should many be made righteous." Rom. v. 15.

*His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.* See ch. i. 31. According to Gen. xxi. 3, 4, the performance of circumcision, and the bestowing of a name, had been simultaneous from the very origin of the rite. The name *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Joshua*, which may be variously analyzed, but always with the same essential meaning, that of *Saviour* or *salvation*, and with reference to *Jehovah* as its author. (See Num. xiii. 8, 16; 1 Chron. vii. 47; Neh. viii. 17; Matt. i. 21.) Some contend that the word *Jah*, or *Jehovah*, enters into the composition of the name. *Jesus is the proper name of our Lord*, that of *Christ* (signifying *Anointed*) identifies Him with the promised *Messiah*, John i. 41, the name given to the long-promised Prophet and King whom the Jews had been taught by the prophets to expect. Often, in Scripture, as here, the name is divinely imposed to signify the reality of the thing. As the name *Jesus* signifies Saviour, and is given because He is Saviour, it is fair to infer that as He is elsewhere, Matt. i. 23, called *Emmanuel*, signifying *God with us*, He is so called because He truly is *God manifest in the flesh*. So that we may forcibly maintain against the doctrine of the mere humanity of Christ the sublime truth of the Incarnation.

22. And when 'the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

23. (As it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24. And to offer a sacrifice according to 'that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.

• Lev. xii. 3-6.    † Exod. xlii. 2; and xxii. 29; and xxxiv. 19; Num. iii. 13.    ‡ Lev. xii. 2, 4, 8.

*Days of her purification*, that is, *thirty-three* days after what was termed the seven days of her uncleanness—*forty* days in all: for that was the time appointed by the law, during which the mother was held ceremonially impure, and remained in her own house. Lev. xii. 1-8. As Jesus, whom it behoved to fulfil all righteousness, was circumcised, though perfectly free from sin, so his mother submitted to the purification prescribed by the law, notwithstanding she was free from the pollutions common in other births. It was evident, indeed, that she was a mother, but her miraculous concep-

tion was not generally known. *They brought him to Jerusalem.* Up to this time they had remained at Bethlehem, and thither also they returned after the presentation in the temple, *to present him to the Lord.* (*As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;*) *And to offer a sacrifice, &c.* In remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt, when the destroying angel spared the first-born of the Israelites, it was ordered that the eldest son of every family should be consecrated to the Lord, Num. iii. 13, and they were to be redeemed from the service of the sanctuary by the payment of five shekels, Num. xviii. 16. The tribe of Levi afterwards took the place of the first-born thus dedicated and redeemed, and was set apart for God's special service. Num. iii. 12. A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, was the offering required from the poor. Lev. xii. 6, 8. Those in better circumstances were commanded to bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering, and a turtle-dove, or a young pigeon, for a sin-offering. The presentation of the child to the Lord is mentioned before the offering of the sacrifice for the mother's purification, but in fact this preceded the presentation, because, till it was performed, the mother could not enter the temple; accordingly the Evangelist introduces both the parents as presenting Jesus. It is evident from the offering made, that Joseph and Mary, although they were of the royal family, were in poverty. The best are sometimes the poorest, seldom the wealthiest: yet none are so poor, that God does not expect an offering from them: He looks for something from every one, not from every one alike. It is the providence of God that makes a difference in persons' abilities, but His pleasure will make no difference in the acceptance. Where there is a willing mind, it shall be accepted according to what a person hath. 2 Cor. viii. 12.

QUESTIONS.

1. How long did the shepherds wait after the song of the heavenly host?
2. What does their promptness in starting for Bethlehem teach?
3. How did they show the strength of their faith?
4. Is not this the faith we ought to exercise?
5. How did the visit of the shepherds probably affect Joseph and Mary?
6. What is said about the name of Mary?
7. What is meant by "the saying?"
8. How did they make it known?
9. Who were the first Evangelists?
10. What effect had the publication of the saying?
11. What was the contrast between those first hearers and Mary?
12. Will mere hearing of Christ suffice to save the soul?
13. What is meant by "all these things?"
14. How did Mary ponder them in her heart?
15. How should sermons be heard?
16. What did the shepherds do?
17. When did they return?
18. What does their conduct in this respect show?
19. What does their experience constitute?
20. What are we to understand by "when the eight days were accomplished?"
21. What had the law appointed in relation to the circumcision of male children?
22. Why was Christ circumcised?
23. What was the rite of circumcision?
24. In submitting to it, what did Christ in effect say?
25. By this symbol what was Christ bound to perform?
26. Why was Christ at this time named?
27. What is the import of the name "Jesus?"

28. What is the proper name of our Lord?
29. With whom does the name "Christ" identify Him?
30. How is Christ's Godhead said to be fairly inferable?
31. How many were the days of Mary's purification?
32. How was a mother, during this time, regarded by the law?
33. Why did Mary submit to purification?
34. Why was Jesus brought to Jerusalem?
35. Why was the eldest son of every family to be consecrated to the Lord?
36. What was the offering required from the poor?
37. What were those to bring who were in better circumstances?
38. What is said about the mention of the presentation of the child to the Lord before the offering of the sacrifice for the mother's purification?
39. What is evident from the offering of Joseph and Mary?
40. What is said about poverty and wealth?
41. Does God expect an offering from all?
42. Does He expect from every one alike?
43. What makes a difference in persons' ability?
44. What is said about a willing mind?

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#### LESSON XIV

vs. 25-35.

25. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

v. Ia. xl. 1; Mark xv. 43; ver. 33.

*Simeon*: Many writers have been of opinion that this person was Rabban Simeon, who, as the son of the famous Hillel, succeeded his father as president of the Sanhedrim, and was the father of Gamaliel, at whose feet Paul was brought up. Others think this improbable. Simeon was a common name among the Jews, and the persons just referred to allege that it is not likely Luke would have introduced so celebrated a character as "a man in Jerusalem," and that this Simeon was a very old man, much older than Rabban Simeon could have been. To the first objection it has been replied, that Luke introduces his still more distinguished son Gamaliel with the words "there stood up one in the council, a Pharisee," &c. Acts v. 34. And to the second objection, that it is not explicitly said that this Simeon was *very* aged, that the phrase "*should not see death*," is essentially used of the Apostle in Matt. xvi. 28, and that the words "now lettest thou thy servant depart," &c., might be used by any man of mature age, who feels that he has gained the goal of his earthly life.

Of *Simeon*, however, we know certainly no more than what is here recorded. And therefore all that is said about his being the son of Rabban Hillel is mere conjecture. It was not the design of Luke to refer to Simeon's worldly standing, but only his eminent religious attainments. *He was just and devout*, just in dealings towards men, devout in dealings towards

God. The same distinction holds here, as in the words *holiness* and *righteousness*, ch. i. 75. *Waiting for the consolation of Israel*—a common phrase for the Messiah, who was to be the everlasting consolation of the Israel of God, and founded on Isaiah's introduction of his prediction of the Messiah's coming, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people." The Messiah was to be the *consolation* of Israel, because He was to be its *redemption*. *And the Holy Ghost was upon him*. He was divinely inspired, overshadowed and protected by the Most High.

26. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

† Ps. lxxxix. 48; Heb. xi. 5.

He was divinely informed—he had an express communication from God concerning the subject. God, in reward of his piety, favored him so highly as to assure him by a particular revelation, the method of which is not stated, that he should not die till he had seen the Messiah. Prophets had almost ceased to prophesy for many years before Jesus came into the world. Malachi, who had prophesied four hundred years before His coming, was the last whose name is recorded. At the time of His coming the Spirit of prophecy was again shed upon some holy persons. The return of this Spirit might be looked upon as one of the tokens of the Messiah's advent. *See death*, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, *taste death*, Matt. xvi. 28; Heb. ii. 9. *The Lord's Christ*, that is, "The Lord's Anointed." See Ps. ii. 2. There is a beautiful and striking antithesis between the words *see death* and *see the Lord's Christ*.

27. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

‡ Matt. iv. 1.

Probably he had in view the prophecy of Malachi, iii. 1.—*The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple*. In this messenger of the covenant, the soul of Simeon delighted. Now the prophecy was just going to be fulfilled, and the Holy Spirit, by a secret but powerful impulse, directed this righteous man to go and see its accomplishment. *And when the parents brought in the child Jesus*, that is, into the court of the women, just at this very juncture: *to do for Him after the custom of the law*, that is, to present Him to the Lord, according to the reference in v. 24, and according to the Divine commandment, Num. xviii. 15, 16. Those who come, under the influence of God's Spirit, to places of public worship, will undoubtedly meet with Him who is the *comfort* and *salvation* of Israel.

28. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God and said,

The aged saint first beheld his Saviour, then transported with the fulfilment of all his hopes, took Him up in his arms and blessed Him, for his faith was so strong that he was able to believe that the infant of the poor woman he saw was the Lord of All. He embraced Him with the greatest affection imaginable. When we receive the record which the gospel gives us of Christ with a lively faith, and the offer it makes us of Christ, with love and resignation, then we take Christ in our arms.

29. Lord, \*now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

\* Gen. xlv. 30; Philipp. i. 23.

This is the beginning of the sweet canticle, or swan-like song of Simeon, a little before his dissolution, which has been celebrated for its beauty in all ages of the Church. This sacred song, which was probably spoken aloud, in the hearing of all the people then present, embodies the full doctrine of the personal glory of Christ, the spiritual purpose of His mission, and its universal extent. The utterances of Elizabeth, Mary, and Simeon are consecutive. Each begins where the other ends. Mary sings her own born Messiah, Zacharias celebrates the triumph of Israel, and Simeon announces the hopes of the Gentiles. The internal variety and harmony of these three compositions is a proof of the credibility of the early chapters of Luke, which must not be overlooked.

It had been Simeon's earnest desire to see his Lord with his bodily eyes before he died, and now, this desire having been accomplished, he avows his joy in being thus made ready, if not his desire also, to depart in peace. Yet he would not depart of himself; knowing that man cannot lawfully desert his station till God, who placed him therein, calls him away. The phrase *Lettest thou thy servant depart*, signifies a *release* or *loosening* from life—from a sorrowful and dark prison, such as this wretched life certainly is. In the use of the word *depart*, as found in the Scriptures, and the philosophers, there is a manifest profession of hope in a future state, since the body is supposed to enchain the soul, and detain it from its native home. *In peace*, refers to that happy and tranquil state of mind, which results from the full assurance of God's favor. The forgiveness of sin, and deliverance from sin, are also implied, and an entrance into perfect peace and felicity, else death would not be a desired and welcome release. *According to thy word*, a retrospect of the previous revelation, ver. 26. Note here, 1. That a good man having served his generation, and God in his generation, faithfully, is weary of the world, and willing to be dismissed from it. 2. That the death of a good man is nothing else but a quiet and peaceable departure; it is a departure *in peace* to the God of peace. 3. That it is only a spiritual sight of Christ by faith that can welcome the approach of death, and render it an object desirable to the Christian's choice.

30. For mine eyes <sup>b</sup>have seen thy salvation,

<sup>b</sup> Is. lli. 10; Ch. iii. 6.

This was the ground of Simeon's assurance, that he was now to depart from life. As *salvation* had its origin in the wisdom, power, and love of God, Simeon ascribed it to Him, putting the effect for the cause, and calling it *God's salvation*. Thus God is called *our defence*, *our song*, *our hope*, that is, our defender, the subject of our song, the object of our hope. The Lord Jesus Himself is here called "the salvation of God," because the whole salvation of a sinner centres in His Person, as "God manifest in the flesh," all the purposes and promises of salvation had reference to Him, He obtained all the blessings of it by shedding His blood, they are all treasured up in Him, and dispensed by Him to believers, and they are all applied, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, who is given to us through His intercession. Is. ix. 2; xlii. 5-7; xlix. 5-6; lx. 1-3; John i. 4-9; iii. 19-21; viii. 12; xii. 34-36. True believers may make the language of Job's assurance and triumph their own. Job xix. 25-7.

31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;  
Here it appears that Simeon knew that this salvation, which God had

*made ready, in the presence of all people, was not confined to the Jews, but was designed for all mankind, and he rejoiced in knowing that. This shows the love to other men that dwelt in his heart. He longed that all should know his Saviour. It is recorded of a celebrated minister, the Rev. John Howe, that in his latter days he greatly desired to attain such a knowledge of Christ, and feel such a sense of His love, as might be a foretaste of the joys of heaven. After his death, a paper was found in his Bible recording how God had answered his prayer. One morning, (and he noted the day,) he awoke, his eyes swimming with tears, overwhelmed with a sense of God's goodness in shedding down His grace into the hearts of men. He never could forget the joy of these moments; they made him long still more ardently for that heaven, which, from his youth, he had panted to behold.*

### 32. \*A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

c Is. ix. 2; xlii. 6; xlix. 6; lx. 1, 2, 3; Matt. iv. 16; Acts xlii. 47; xxviii. 23.

By Moses and the Prophets, a light of revelation was given to the Jews, in the blessedness of which the *Gentiles* did not partake. By Christ, as a moral light, or teacher, the Gentiles were to receive the knowledge of God, of true religion, and of Divine things in general, especially of a future state, and the true and only method of salvation through His own atoning blood. *And the glory of thy people Israel.* It was an honor to the Jewish nation that the Messiah sprung from one of their tribes, and was born, lived, and died among them. And of those who were *Israelites indeed*, of the spiritual Israel, He was indeed the glory, and will be so throughout eternity. Is. lx. 19. For in Him *shall the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* Is. xlv. 25. In this verse, the blessings of the Messiah's reign are promised conjointly to the Jews and Gentiles, and although Simeon spoke this under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, there can be no doubt of the belief of such pious Israelites as had studied carefully the Messianic prophecies, that the Gentiles were to participate in some degree in the same blessings. The idea of a *Jewish* Messiah was so strongly imbedded in the minds of the secular and unspiritual masses of the Jews, that even after the resurrection of Christ, it took the independence of a martyred Stephen and all the powers of an inspired Paul to assert the full rights of the Gentiles in the Church of God. Might it not be said that Simeon first asserted these rights?

### 33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

They did not yet *thoroughly* understand the things which were spoken, or they marvelled how Simeon, a stranger, came to the knowledge of the child. Although they had been prepared by the previous wonderful manifestations, for the remarkable destiny of the child, they did not as yet *fully* know the counsels of God relative to the salvation He was to procure, and hence they were struck and charmed by the new aspect under which this salvation was presented. Simeon sees fit to moderate their transports, by alluding to the approaching sufferings which must precede the glory.

### 34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the <sup>4</sup>fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a \*sign which shall be spoken against;

\* Is. viii. 14; Hos. xiv. 9; Matt. xxi. 44; Rom. ix. 32, 33; 1 Cor. i. 23, 24; 2 Cor. ii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8.      \* Acts xxviii. 22.

*And Simeon blessed them, namely, Joseph and Mary. He pronounced them blessed who had the honor to be related to this child, and were intrusted with the bringing Him up. He prayed for them, that God would bless them, and, doubtless, wished others to do the same. Said unto Mary, he blessed both, but addressed Mary, thus recognizing that she and not the husband is the parent.*

*This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. Is set, that is, destined, appointed for. This Divine setting or appointing is always to be considered as caused by their own fault, in those who fall, by wilfully continuing in unbelief and impenitence. Of many in Israel. We are not to limit this rise and fall to persons of the Jewish nation, but to those of every nation where the gospel should be preached in subsequent times. There seems to be a reference in this verse to the passage in which it is said, that Christ should be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. Is. viii. 14, 15. Paul says in 1 Cor. i. 23, that Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, or something over which they fell. How was it they fell over Him? Through pride. They went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit to the righteousness of God, through faith in Christ. Rom. x. 3, 4. And it is for the same reason that any still refuse Christ—they feel satisfied with their own righteousness, and imagine that God is also. People in this state of mind fall over Christ as over a stumbling-stone: they cannot receive Him, because they do not desire His salvation. Rising again. Many in Israel, who fell over Christ, afterwards believed, and rose from sin and death by Him, as myriads of penitent sinners have done since. Many of the priests who joined in crucifying the Saviour, were afterwards obedient to the faith. Acts vi. 7. But as the word again is not expressed in the Greek, we need not suppose that the same persons would fall and rise again. The meaning is, that many would be ruined by Christ's coming, and many others would be made happy, or be saved. God's first design in sending His Son into the world was, that through Him the world might be saved. John iii. 16. But to those who have no relish for spiritual things, no appreciation of Christ's character and mission, by reason of their pride and perversity, He becomes a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient. 1 Pet. ii. 8. His gospel has ever been, and must ever be, a "savor of death unto death," as well as a "savor of life unto life." 2 Cor. ii. 16. This child is the test by which men shall stand or fall. And for a sign which shall be spoken against. The word sign seems here to be used for a mark or butt to shoot or dart at, which finely illustrates the deliberate malice and hellish artifice with which the character and person of Christ were assaulted, while He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself. Heb. xii. 3. The fulfilment of this prophecy culminated in the crucifixion. True religion is still spoken against. People must often give up the favor of the world, if they would be faithful to Christ.*

35. (Yea, 'a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

† Ps. xlii. 10; John xix. 25.

Mary may be supposed to have thus far congratulated herself on being the mother of the Messiah, and to have had no idea that the honor was to be mingled with much suffering. She is now disabused of this erroneous impression. "A sword, or javelin, or dart, shall pierce through thy own soul also; the darts that are shot at thy Son shall pierce thee to the heart; the calumnies, persecutions, and sufferings which He shall be exposed to, especially in His death, shall prove matter of the greatest affliction to thee, and shall sting thee with the bitterest griefs." It is clear that Simeon's intimation of the

great grief in store for the mother, who stood before him, was founded on a clear conception, derived doubtless from Isaiah liii., of the sufferings that awaited her Divine Son, by which her maternal heart could not fail to be deeply wounded, especially when she saw His honored head droop in death upon the cross. *That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.* These words are to be taken with ver. 34. The word translated *thoughts* is a word of *middle* signification, and denotes *imaginings*, or the prevalent and dominant cause of thought, whether good or bad. "Thus will it be evinced what is the real disposition of every one to the Messiah." Christ shall *bring out* the secret characters, the moral feelings, and thoughts of men—all things in reference to Him were ordered by Providence to produce this effect. Lasting neutrality with respect to the Lord is impossible; he that is not for Him is against Him, Luke xi. 23. His appearing brings to light the latent good and evil, as the same sun which dissipates the clouds that obscure the sky, also draws up the mists and vapor of earth. Had not Christ been spoken against when on earth, many who despised Him would have followed Him. The people applauded Him till they heard the Scribes and Pharisees speak so much against Him; then they cried out, "Crucify him! crucify him!" Nothing will secure Christ and His gospel from the breath of slander, the language of contempt; and the calumny that is heaped upon Him and His cause will show who are willing to become the disciples of One thus despised and rejected of men. For *a time* persons may profess to be religious, and lose nothing by it; but when something happens to try them, when, for example, an opportunity occurs by which they can acquire wealth by the sacrifice of principle, the real state of their hearts is revealed; it appears whether they prefer godliness to gain. "Blessed is he," says Jesus, "who-soever shall not be offended in me." Matt. xi. 6.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Who was Simeon?
2. How was he just and devout?
3. What is said of "waiting for the consolation of Israel?"
4. How was the revelation referred to, made to Simeon?
5. Why was it made?
6. What is meant by "see death?"
7. What, by "the Lord's Christ?"
8. What antithesis is noticed?
9. Why and how did he come by the Spirit into the temple?
10. Into what part did the parents bring the child Jesus?
11. Why did they bring him there?
12. What did Simeon do to the child?
13. Why did he do this?
14. When do we take Christ in our arms?
15. In the hearing of whom was the song of Simeon probably spoken?
16. What does it embody?
17. What does Simeon's language about departing import?
18. What does the word "depart" intimate in regard to a future state?
19. What is meant by "in peace?"
20. What by "according to thy word?"
21. What was the ground of Simeon's assurance that he was now to depart from life?
22. To whom does he ascribe salvation?
23. Why is Christ called "the salvation of God?"
24. Did Simeon know that this salvation was designed for all mankind?
25. Did he rejoice in knowing this?
26. What is said of the Rev. John Howe?
27. How was Christ to be a light to the Gentiles?

28. How was He to be the glory of Israel?
29. Prove that the blessings of the Messiah's reign are promised conjointly to the Jews and Gentiles.
30. How were Joseph and Mary affected by the things spoken of Jesus?
31. Why did they marvel?
32. Why did Simeon allude to Christ's approaching sufferings which were to precede His glory?
33. Whom did Simeon bless?
34. Why did he bless them?
35. Why did he address Mary in particular?
36. What is meant by "is set?"
37. Are the rise and fall to be limited to persons of the Jewish nation?
38. To what passage is there probably a reference in verse 34?
39. How did the Jews fall over Christ?
40. Is it for the same reason any still refuse Christ?
41. What is meant by "rising again?"
42. Need we suppose that the same persons were both to fall and rise?
43. What does verse 34 teach?
44. How is the word "sign" here used?
45. When did the fulfilment of this prophecy culminate?
46. How did Simeon inform Mary that great grief was in store for her?
47. What is said about the word "thoughts?"
48. How does Christ bring out the secret feelings and characters of men?
49. Can a man be neutral in religion?
50. What did Christ say about not being offended in Him?

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## LESSON XV

vs. 36-40.

36. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

37. And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers *night and day*.

s Acts xxvi. 7; 1 Tim v. 5.

The other pious soul to whom the destiny of the infant Jesus was revealed was the aged Anna, who heard Simeon's words, shared in his anticipations, and joined in the song of thanksgiving. Her name is the same with the Old Testament Hannah. It will be observed, that although in this interesting transaction, Simeon is the foremost figure, and his words alone are recorded, yet more is stated personally of Anna than of him. *A prophetess*. Such an appellation must have been caused by some earlier and frequent utterances, dictated by the Spirit of prophecy, by reason of which she ranks among the list of holy women who, both in earlier and later times, were chosen instruments of the Holy Ghost. Doubtless the Spirit which had theretofore rested upon the Deborahs and Huldahs was known to speak at this time by her. *The daughter of Phanuel*. The particularity with which her parentage and lineage is given shows that she was a person whose family as well as per-

sonal history was well known to the public. Yet it is remarkable that the name of her father should be mentioned, and not that of her husband. Perhaps he also was known as one who waited for the Consolation of Israel. Her father's name is mentioned, says an ancient commentator, to put us in mind of Jacob's *Phanuel*, or *Penuel*, Gen. xxxii. 30, that now the mystery of that should be unfolded, when in Christ we should, as it were, see God face to face, and our lives be preserved; and her name signifies *gracious*. Of the tribe of *Aser*, or *Asher*. Her native province stretched its whole eastern side along the margin of the Mediterranean, and included those among the most ancient cities of the earth, Tyre and Sidon. Northward it bordered on Syria. Its pure and healthful climate should have been the abode of piety. The tribe of *Asher* was one of the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel, several families of which had returned from their idolatry unto God, in the time that Hezekiah proclaimed the Passover in Jerusalem, which is mentioned, 2 Chron. xxx. 1-11. Most of the northern tribes laughed to scorn the messengers whom Hezekiah sent to call them to attend the Passover, but a few families in *Asher*, *Manasseh*, and *Zebulun*, humbled themselves and went to the holy feast. One is tempted to believe that we have here one of the descendants of some family of that faithful few, whose piety was all the deeper because maintained amid surrounding apostacy. The mention of *Anna* as of the tribe of *Asher* is a further proof that the knowledge of their tribes and genealogies had been preserved among the Jews until the *Messiah* came. *She was of a great age*. We do not know her exact age, but if she had been a widow eighty-four years, and if she had been married for seven years, on the supposition that she was twenty years of age when she married, her age at this time must have been one hundred and eleven years. *And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years*. Some maintain that eighty-four years was the sum of her whole life, others that it was that portion of it which had elapsed since the death of her husband. The probability, we think, is in favor of the latter supposition. The years in which she had remained a widow are doubtless mentioned as a matter of commendation, for although widows were quite at liberty to marry again, it was considered praiseworthy in them to abstain from second marriages, and a woman who became a widow when still young, and remained the rest of her days in widowhood, was regarded with great respect and admiration among the Jews. The Romans had a similar feeling in this matter. *Which departed not from the temple*. This means, not that she was always in the temple—for it is stated that she had just come in—but that she was constant in her attendance on every act of worship and sacred service, making her extreme age no excuse for neglect, but rather rejoicing in it as a privilege—of which thousands younger and stronger than she would not avail themselves. *But served God with fastings and prayers night and day*. She accompanied her devotion with frequent fastings, probably not oftener than twice in the week; for this was the custom of the most rigid Pharisees. Ch. xviii. 12. When she fasted and prayed she *served God*; she did not do these things in a self-righteous spirit, as some of the Jews did, whom God reproves in Is. 58, because they fasted and prayed, and yet were living in their sins. *Night and day*. A considerable part of the night as well as of the day. This is plainly the meaning of *night and day*, nor can the expression possibly signify more. Perhaps she might sometimes attend those anthems which the priests sung in the temple during the night watches, Ps. cxxxiv. 1, 2, to which David may also allude, Ps. cxix. 62. That which is often done, is said in Scripture to be always done. We are said to do a thing continually when we do it seasonably: thus we pray continually, when we pray as often as duty requires us to pray. The devotions of a pious soul like *Anna's* are as constant, but more frequent, than the returns of day and night. No doubt *Anna* was also occupied in many good works, yet she lived in a constant habit of prayer. Paul in one of his Epistles describes such a widow as God

approves, and we find that such a widow both prays constantly and does all kinds of good works. It is written in 1 Tim. v. 6, "she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers *night and day*." It is also written that a widow should be "well reported of for good works, if she have brought up children, if she have loved strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." 1 Tim. v. 10. From these we see that a person may at once pray constantly and do good works also.

38. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that <sup>h</sup>looked for redemption in \*Jerusalem.

<sup>h</sup> Mark xv. 43; ver. 25; Ch. xxiv. 21.

\*Or, *Israel*.

*And she coming in that instant, or, at that very time, when Simeon held the blessed Redeemer in his arms, and gave utterance to the foregoing words, the providence of God so ordering it, that another important testimony might be borne to the child Jesus: gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him, &c.* By some, this expression is understood to mean, that Anna praised God, as Simeon had done, ver. 28, for sending the long-expected Messiah. By others, it is regarded as equivalent to "she confessed in concert with Simeon to the Lord Christ, and spake of Him." In support of the former construction, it is alleged that, in vs. 22 and 27, there are two instances in which the relative pronoun refers to a remote, and not immediately preceding substantive, also that the noun to which the pronoun of *him* refers, is to be elicited from the word *redemption* which follows, and which, by the common figure—the abstract for the concrete—is put for *one who redeems, a redeemer*. In support of the latter construction it is said, that it is so evident that Christ is often called the *Lord* by Luke, as well as by the other sacred writers, that there is no perceptible necessity for giving the passage such a turn, contrary to all the ordinary rules of language, as to make the word translated *Lord* refer to *Jehovah*; it is also said, that "if it should be objected that the infant Jesus did not seem capable at that time of receiving Anna's gratitude, as a rational agent, Anna might properly be said to *make her acknowledgments to the Lord*, if she addressed herself to the child, as Simeon had done, confessing Him to be the Messiah." It must be confessed that the former interpretation seems to be the more just and natural. Anna took up the theme of praise which had just fallen from the aged Simeon, and blessed the God of Israel who had sent the Redeemer: *and spake to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem*. She spake afterwards of the child, of the nature and design of His mission, to the pious persons dwelling in the capital, who lived in and upon the hope of salvation through the Messiah, and among whom the report of His birth was soon spread. The sceptre now appeared to be *departing from Judah*, though it was not actually gone: Daniel's predictions were plainly near their period. And the revival of the Spirit of prophecy, together with the memorable occurrences relating to the birth of John the Baptist, and of Jesus, could not but encourage and quicken the expectation of pious persons at this time, even in that fallen city and depraved age, of the holy Deliverer who would turn away unrighteousness from Jacob.

How great an honor did the Almighty confer upon Simeon and Anna, that, of all the dwellers in Jerusalem, of all the worshippers in the temple, they, and they alone, should be selected for the first interview with the Lord of the temple! There were many wise, many learned, at that time in Jerusalem, some of whom had often walked the courts of the temple, and had well read and understood the prophecies respecting the Messiah, yet no one of these was led to the temple upon that day and hour, to behold the

infant Jesus, and participate in the joy of which these two aged and eminent saints were partakers! Men of wisdom, learning, science, now abound, but alas, how often are all their thoughts and meditations engaged upon subjects which, if they do not necessarily exclude God, certainly do not necessarily lead to God—men who, if they, according to the false reasonings of a natural religion, profess to pay some respect to the God of nature, are lamentably ignorant of a God of grace, of the triune God of the Christian, of Him who has said that “all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father.” John v. 23. The consequence is, that the Holy Spirit of God often passes by these learned and these scientific men, and delights in bringing to the temple the man whose heart, like Simeon’s, overflows with love to God, and whose mind and thoughts are filled with desire after His name; the woman who, like Anna, departs not from the service of God night or day—persons like these, who in the sight of men have little, perhaps nothing, to recommend them, but who possess that which, in the sight of God, is above all price; who, in the quiet, unobtrusive duties of a lowly Christian walk and conversation, are daily waiting upon God, and, amidst the toils and business of life, are looking anxiously forward to the day when the Lord Jesus shall appear unto their complete salvation, seeking more of that light which cometh down from above, and of that peace which passeth all understanding.

39. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

The *all things according to the law of the Lord*, refer to the circumcision of Jesus, and the purification and presentation in the temple. *They returned into Galilee*. Luke passes over the coming of the wise men, and the flight of the holy family into Egypt, for it would appear that this return to Nazareth did not occur till some time afterwards. Probably they returned to Bethlehem, supposing that Jesus was there to be educated. After some time the wise men arrived, and then, by Divine monition, they fled into Egypt, and on their return went to reside at Nazareth. *To their own city Nazareth*, the place of their usual residence, and where the blessed infant passed the days of his childhood and youth. See Notes on Ch. i. 26.

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

1 Ver. 53; Ch. i. 80.

*The child grew* in bodily strength and stature: *and waxed strong in spirit*—the powers of His human mind daily expanded and improved. *Filled with wisdom*, not by any advantages of instruction and education, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit, every thing He said and did was wisely said and wisely done, above His years; in every stage of His human development He was perfect: *and the grace of God was upon Him*. The original word not only means *grace* in the common acceptation of the word, (some blessing granted by God’s mercy to those who are sinners, or have no *merit*,) but it means also *favor* or *approbation*, and this sense appears to be most proper for it here, when applied to the human nature of our blessed Lord. The same word is thus rendered, ver. 52. The peculiar favor of God rested upon Christ, even as man. He was greatly beloved of God. His piety was as conspicuous as his mental and physical development. He was perfect in all respects. It is evident from this verse that Jesus had a human soul capable of increasing in wisdom and knowledge. As to the manner in which the indwelling Deity gradually communicated knowledge, wisdom and

holiness to the human nature of Christ, we must confess that we know nothing. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." 1 Tim. iii. 16. That, as man, His wisdom and knowledge could not be infinite, or incapable of increase, we know; but how the union was formed, or the communications were imparted, we cannot, in the smallest degree, comprehend or explain.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. To whom beside Simeon was the destiny of the infant Jesus revealed?
2. With whose name is Anna's the same?
3. Why was she called a prophetess?
4. Whose daughter was she?
5. What does the particularity of her lineage show?
6. Is her husband's name mentioned?
7. Why is her father's name mentioned?
8. Of what tribe was she?
9. Describe the extent of her native province.
10. What was the tribe of Asher?
11. Of what is the mention of Anna as of the tribe of Asher a proof?
12. What was Anna's age?
13. Was she a widow?
14. Was it considered praiseworthy in widows to abstain from second marriages?
15. What is meant by "departed not from the temple?"
16. How did she serve God?
17. How often did she probably fast?
18. In what spirit did she fast and pray?
19. What is meant by "night and day?"
20. Was Anna also occupied in good works?
21. What is said of a widow in 1 Tim. v. 10?
22. Ought prayer and good works to be united?
23. When did Anna enter the temple?
24. By what was her visit at this time ordered?
25. What did she do?
26. To whom did she afterwards speak of the child?
27. What is said of the sceptre of Judah, and of Daniel's predictions?
28. What is said of the honor conferred on Simeon and Anna?
29. What is said of men of learning and science?
30. What is meant by "all things according to the law of the Lord?"
31. To what place did Joseph and Mary return?
32. Why was Nazareth called "their own city?"
33. How did the child grow?
34. How wax strong in spirit?
35. How was He filled with wisdom?
36. What is said of the grace of God?
37. Had Jesus a human soul?
38. Do we know how the indwelling Deity communicated wisdom and holiness to Christ's human nature?
39. Was Christ's knowledge, as man, incapable of increase?
40. Do we know how it was increased?

LESSON XVI.

vs. 41-53.

41. ¶ Now his parents went to Jerusalem <sup>h</sup>every year at the feast of the passover.

<sup>h</sup> Exod. xxiii. 16, 17; xxxiv. 23; Deut. xvi. 1, 16.

*His parents went—every year.* This was their constant custom, because positively enjoined by the law. Exod. xxiii. 17. Males only were required to make their appearance at Jerusalem *thrice* in the year, in attendance at the three great festivals, Exod. xxxiv. 23; yet females were not forbidden to be present, and it is quite probable that pious females often, on such occasions, accompanied their husbands. See 1 Sam. i. 7, 22, 24. Such as will go no farther than they are dragged in religious exercises, are strangers to Mary's piety and devotion. These parents every year attended the great national feast of the Passover, when the slain lamb foretold the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and the symbols of emancipation from Egypt shadowed forth the far higher redemption. Lev. xxiii. 5. No difficulties, no discouragements could hinder their attendance. Though it is no certain evidence of the truth of grace to frequent assemblies for worship, yet it is an infallible sign of the want of grace customarily to neglect them. All worldly business must give place to Divine appointments.

42. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

Every Jewish child of twelve years old was permitted, as "a son of the law," to take part in the celebration of the sacred festival. According to Jewish custom at a later time, a child was, in his fifth year, instructed in the law, in his tenth, in the Mishna, and in his thirteenth, was fully subjected to the obedience of the law. There existed, also, no longer any reason that Jesus should absent Himself from Judea, as Archelaus, whom Joseph had reason to fear, was already banished by Augustus, after a reign of ten years. The going up of Jesus in His minority to the sacred festival was no doubt intended to instruct us when we are young to give God an early possession of our souls, and in our youth to keep close to His worship and service, how much soever we may be influenced by the world to neglect them.

43. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

Religious duties are not to be attended to to the prejudice and neglect of our particular callings. God calls us, as well from His house as to His house. They are much mistaken who think God is pleased with nothing but devotion: He that says, *Be fervent in spirit serving the Lord*, says also, *Be not slothful in business*. Piety and industry must keep pace with one another. When Joseph and Mary *had fulfilled the days*—the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread, which immediately followed the Passover, and was usually counted as part of it—making eight days in all—they returned toward their home in Nazareth: *the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem*,

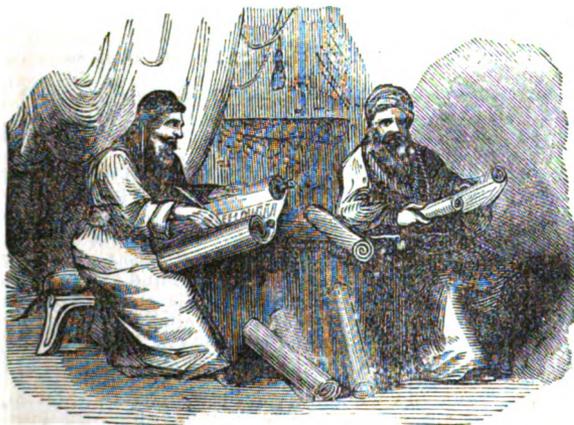
and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. In their annual visits to Jerusalem the parents of Jesus must have formed acquaintances and made friends in different parts of the city. The parents of Jesus may then have started for home at a time unknown to Him, supposing that He was with some of their travelling friends or relatives, or, they may have joined their elder fellow-travellers in the persuasion that Jesus knowing the time and place of departure, was among the younger ones. Or, again, it may be that Joseph and Mary had committed Him temporarily to the charge of some friends of the family, whose station was in some other part of the caravan, and, on the other hand, these friends with whom He was supposed to be, might justly infer that He was with His parents by some after arrangement. Certainly if Jesus had been in the immediate company of His parents, His absence would have been noticed during the day.

44. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance.

As the pilgrims to the Passover required to be all at Jerusalem by the same time, those who dwelt in the same neighborhood necessarily left their homes together, and, by previous arrangement as to the time of starting, made up a large travelling company. The Nazarenes doubtless timed their departure from home so as to fall in with parties arriving so far on their way from places more to the north on the same line of road, and in the southward journey were joined by parties from places lying nearer to Jerusalem on the same route. Quitting that city as soon as the festival was ended, the persons going the same journey would in like manner leave together, but would throw off parties right and left as they proceeded on their way. Thus the stream of travellers increased as it approached, and diminished as it receded from Jerusalem,—being in both cases largest when nearest the city. Thus the northward company must have been very large indeed during the first day's journey from Jerusalem, and the conclusion of the parents of Jesus, that their Son, although not at hand, might be with some acquaintance in the company, was perfectly natural. *Went a day's journey.* "The usual rate of travelling in the East," says Prof. Hackett, "is three miles an hour, and as the number of hours devoted to travelling rarely exceeds six or eight hours, the distance of an ordinary day's journey may be considered as twenty or twenty-five miles. The first day, however, on starting on an expedition forms an exception to this rule: on that day it is not customary to go more than six or eight miles, and the tents are pitched for the first night's encampment almost within sight of the place from which the journey commences. If the first day's journey of the caravan in which Joseph and Mary were, occupied two or three hours only, they had reason to suppose that Jesus was with some of the relatives or friends who were travelling with them; they could act naturally enough under the impression for so short a time, and would have no occasion for anxiety until His continued absence, when they came to halt, aroused their fears." Perhaps, too, they might have become uneasy on His account earlier in the day, but the multitude of the caravans at a time when, as Josephus tells us, Galilee contained more than four million inhabitants, would render an instantaneous search impracticable. It must not, besides, be forgotten, that in the East even an ordinary child of twelve would be equal to one of fourteen or fifteen among us, and that they could not, therefore, be extremely uneasy, especially about such a child as He was. *And they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.* Here they would most naturally expect to find Him, for the members of families, connected by relationship or friendship, doubtless often mingled together on the march, to beguile its tedious monotony by social converse.

45. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

When they found Him not, at the end of the day's journey, they went about seeking Him among the Nazarenes of their acquaintance, but could hear no tidings of Him. The company was to proceed in the morning, and it became necessary to decide either to go on with it, or to return to Jerusalem. They probably waited to see the caravan pass out in the morning, in order to make sure that He was not in it, and then feeling confident that He must have remained behind at Jerusalem, they hastened back with anxious hearts to seek their lost Son. Those that would find Christ must *seek till they find*; for He will at length be found of those that seek Him, and will prove their bountiful Rewarder. Those that have lost their comforts in Christ, and the evidences of their interest in Him, must consider where, when, and how, they lost them, and *turn back again* to the place where they last had them, *remember whence they are fallen*, and repent, and *do their first works*, and *return to their first love*, Rev. ii. 4, 5. Those that would recover their lost acquaintance with Christ must go to Jerusalem, the *city of our solemnities*, the place which He has *chosen to put His name there*, and there in His ordinances they may hope to meet Him.



DOCTORS OF THE LAW.

46. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

*Three days*, one day spent in their departure, another in their return, and the third in their search, which resulted in the finding. *In the temple sitting, &c.* There is perhaps some difficulty in determining in what part of the temple this took place. But this is of little consequence. The Jewish teachers of the law set a high value upon the interrogatory system of instruction. They questioned one another on points of difficulty, and their disciples and auditors were not only permitted, but encouraged, to put any such questions as occurred to them. This took place in the synagogues, schools, and consistories. There was no school in the temple, but there

was a synagogue, and several courts of council and judicature, including, at this time, the great Sanhedrim itself. It does not much matter in which of these places the young Jesus attended on this occasion. In any of them, it may have been that being struck by the searching power of His questions, and the depth of knowledge which they displayed, the doctors invited Him to take a seat among them, as well to mark their admiration, as that they might the more conveniently converse with Him. They sometimes offered this mark of encouragement and honor when their admiration was strongly excited. The Sanhedrim, however, which, when full, comprised no less than seventy persons, sat in a semi-circle upon a bench, and the students, arranged according to their proficiency, *sat* on three benches or forms, one behind another; in front of this arc, and behind these benches, *stood* the common or occasional auditors. If Jesus was in this part of the temple, Joseph and Mary could the more easily have approached Him to converse with Him in an undertone, which they did. There is no reason to suppose that Christ *disputed* with the doctors, as many imagine, from being unacquainted with the extent to which the system of interrogation, between the teachers and the taught, operated among the Jews in the time of Christ: *asking them questions*, not as a *scholar*, to be *informed*, but as a *teacher*, taking occasion thus to give *instruction*.

47. And 'all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 28; Mark i. 22; Ch. iv. 22, 32; John vii. 15, 46.

Christ's *understanding* appeared as much in His *answers*, as in His *questions*. It may be that He had just heard some passages from the Prophets read, had asked for explanations, put some questions, and then, from the fulness of His own knowledge, had given answers. It can scarcely be doubted that all that was said had special reference to the Messiah, and to the real nature of His Kingdom and His work. At all events, such was His display of wisdom and knowledge, that *all that heard Him*, even the most learned doctors, *were astonished at his understanding and answers*. There seems to have been nothing beyond mere *astonishment*. They had never heard one so young propose and answer such profound and important questions. Jesus now showed forth some rays of His glory. He revealed His grandeur and glory by degrees. Had His perfections appeared all at once, they had rather dazzled, than delighted, the eyes of the beholders, even as the sun would confound all eyes, should it appear at its first rising in its full strength.

48. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

Joseph and Mary were greatly astonished at what they beheld—to find that Jesus had so much respect shown Him, and was exciting so much astonishment. This scene doubtless brought up in remembrance the incidents of His birth and infancy. No longer, however, could Mary restrain the feeling of pain and anguish which His temporary loss had inflicted upon a mother's heart. What was it to her that He was exciting the astonishment of the assembled Sanhedrim—that He was speaking as never child before had spoken—she would far rather that He had been running at her side, with all the interest and attractiveness of happy childhood, and gladdening the eyes of His fond parents, than attracting the applause of the wisest sages in the world. When, therefore, Jesus, as we may suppose, perceiving His parents, arose dutifully out of His place, and came to them, Mary

privately talked with Him about their case—Joseph, knowing he had only the name of a father, therefore said nothing. How meekly, how tenderly, did she address herself to her supernatural child, as if she felt, while asserting a parent's authority, she was trenching upon some high, though undefined prerogative! *Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?* Why hast thou caused us so much fear and anxiety? Accustomed no doubt to the most affectionate behavior from Him, she was surprised at any conduct that appeared unkind. *Thy father and I.* This was not merely the only possible manner in which Mary could publicly speak to her son of Joseph, but is also an indisputable proof of the wisdom with which she brought up the child, a wisdom which taught her to say nothing yet to Him of the mystery of His birth. *Have sought thee sorrowing,* not only distressed that we lost thee, but reproaching ourselves bitterly that we did not take more care of thee to bring thee along with us.

49. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about <sup>my</sup> Father's business?

<sup>m</sup> John ii. 16.

The calm firmness of His reply, contrasted with Mary's natural agitation, and so different from what might have been expected from a lad of twelve years, when subjected to parental reproof, must have added to the astonishment of His parents, and of any others who may have heard it. This reply intimated that they needed not to be thus solicitous on His account, for they should have surmised the occasion of His tarrying behind, and, instead of seeking Him anywhere else, should have expected to find Him in the only place which He felt to be properly His home. *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* Some think that these words should be translated, *in my Father's house*, which was a reason that they should have sought Him in the temple only, but we prefer the rendering, *in the things or affairs of my Father*, in that which belongs to His honor and glory. Here already is the germ of that sacred *must* which Christ so often uttered in the subsequent way of His obedience. How full of the dignity, which belonged to Christ as the Son of God, was this reply! In His obedience to His mother, on other occasions, He set an example to *all* children, but in His conduct on this occasion He acted as became the King of kings and Lord of lords. It was as though He had said: "Although I owe respect to you as my natural parents, yet my duty to my Heavenly Father must be preferred. I am about His work, propagating His truth, and promoting His glory." The business which the Father had given the Saviour to do, was, as we learn from other parts of the Scriptures, the salvation of sinful man. God has appointed *us* a work to perform. That work is, *not* to accomplish our own salvation, for this Christ has done for all who believe in Him, but to promote the glory of God our Father. Yet, how few live as if their chief desire was to *please God!* When the Rev. Dr. Payson was on his dying bed, he said: "Oh, how often have I begun the day thinking, 'How shall I please myself?' instead of 'How shall I please God?'" Yet Dr. Payson had led a very holy life, and God had converted many sinners by him; but when a saint is dying, he often sees his actions in a light in which he never saw them before.

50. And <sup>they</sup> understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

<sup>n</sup> Ch. ix. 45; <sup>o</sup> xiii. 34.

They understood Him not well, or only caught glimpses of His meaning. They knew not fully even yet the wonderful relation in which the boy of twelve years old stood to the awful Being who inhabiteth eternity, that His

Father, to whose business He was now called, was the Father of the universe, the Father of time, yea, the Father of eternity, and of heaven itself, and that He, that wonderful and blessed child, could truly say, "Before Abraham was I am." John viii. 58. They did not understand what business He had to do then in the temple, they believed Him to be the Messiah, but as Mary's views of the Messiahship, as is evident from her song at the conception, included the idea that He should have the throne of His father David, they thought that this should rather have brought Jesus to the royal palace than to the temple. Besides, they understood not the great transition that had taken place in Him at this age of becoming a son of the law. Since the time of the angel's declaration, the word *father* at Joseph's home had been Joseph's name. This sudden transfer of the title to God was without warning to these parents. Mary had just called Joseph His *father*, and she naturally understood the use Jesus made of the term in the same sense. She could not therefore at the moment understand how losing Him from His father's company was being about His Father's business.

51. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

◦ Dan. vii. 28; ver. 19.

This glimpse of Christ's glory in the temple was to be short; it was now over, and He did not urge His parents either to come and settle at Jerusalem, or to settle Him there, but very willingly returned with them to Nazareth. See Notes on ver. 39. It seems almost as if Luke were trying to oppose the notion that the child had even for an instant spoken in an unchildlike manner to his mother and foster father. *And was subject unto them.* This is put in strong antithesis with the Divine parentage which He claimed in ver. 49, and it is inserted to prevent any inference, that Jesus did not afterwards render filial obedience and service to His earthly parents. He behaved toward them with all dutiful submission, He obeyed their commands, and, as is believed, followed Joseph's employment, working at the trade of a carpenter. Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3. No child among the Jews was ever brought up in idleness: *but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart,* rather, *events,* including both actions and words: she treasured them up in her memory, and pondered upon their mysterious import for eighteen years, before any thing else unprecedented should occur, expecting that afterwards they would be explained to her, and she should fully understand them. Who should remember them but that mother? And from whom could Luke derive this account, but from her own lips? Filial obedience under the new dispensation is inculcated and encouraged by the example of our Lord, as it had been before encouraged under the old, by the promise of God: "Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise." Let a person be never so high above others, he is still inferior to his parents.

52. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

† 1 Sam. ii. 26; ver. 40.

\* Or, *Age.*

*Increased in wisdom and stature.* See Notes on ver. 40. It is not improbable that the extraordinary improvement made by Jesus in His childhood was promoted by that Divine nature with which His human nature was united, though promoted, in a manner which did not interfere with the plan, according to which His physical and intellectual abilities were, like those of other men, gradually to increase. Christ grew and improved, His body in

stature, His soul in wisdom, and He became every day a more eminent and illustrious person in the eyes of all, being highly in favor both with *God and man*. His entire being was in the favor of God, yet as that being increased in amount, the amount of *favor* increased proportionately. There is no ground for the inference which Socnians draw from this verse, that Christ could not be God, because God cannot increase in wisdom, as Christ is here said to do, inasmuch as God's perfections, being infinite, will admit of no increase. For it is plain that the increase here attributed to Christ respects His humanity: the wisdom and endowments of His human mind were capable of increase, though His Divine perfections were absolutely perfect. Nothing but what is recorded in this verse is bequeathed to us of the life of Jesus, from His twelfth to His twentieth year! God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. Doubtless He has permitted all the incidents of Christ's history to be handed down to us which the necessities of the Church required, and we must await another day and another place for more.

### QUESTIONS.

1. How often did Christ's parents go to Jerusalem?
2. What was the law on going thither?
3. Did females ever go?
4. Why did Joseph and Mary go every year?
5. When was the Jewish child permitted to participate in the festivals?
6. What was the going of Christ to Jerusalem intended to teach?
7. What days did Joseph and Mary fulfil at Jerusalem?
8. What did they then do?
9. Does God require nothing but devotion?
10. Did the child Jesus tarry in Jerusalem?
11. State what is said on this subject.
12. What did Joseph and Mary do, supposing that Christ was in the company?
13. State what is said on this point.
14. What is the usual rate of travelling in the East?
15. Where did Christ's parents seek Him?
16. When they did not find Him, what did they do?
17. How long was it before they found Him?
18. Where did they find Him?
19. In what part of the temple was He?
20. What did the Jewish teachers of the law do to Christ?
21. How did the Sanhedrim sit?
22. What is meant by Christ *disputing* with the doctors?
23. How did He ask them questions?
24. In what did Christ's understanding appear?
25. To what was there special reference in what was said?
26. What effect did His understanding and answers produce?
27. Why did not Christ reveal all His glory at once?
28. At what, and why, were Joseph and Mary astonished?
29. What did Mary say to Jesus?
30. What was His reply?
31. What did this reply intimate?
32. What is said about "my Father's business?"
33. Did Christ obey His mother on other occasions?
34. How did He act on this occasion?
35. Has God given us a work to do?
36. What is it?
37. What is said of Rev. Dr. Payson?

38. How did not Joseph and Mary understand what Christ said to them?
39. Did He go with them to Nazareth?
40. How was He subject unto them?
41. What did His mother do with "all these sayings?"
42. How did Jesus increase in wisdom and stature?
43. How did He increase in favor with God and man?
44. What is said of the inference Socinians draw from ver. 52?
45. Is any thing recorded of Christ from His twelfth to His twentieth year?
46. Why is this the case?

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## CHAPTER III.

### LESSON XVII.

vs. 1-3.

IN this chapter, we have, I. The beginning of John's baptism, and the scope and intention of it, ver. 1-6; his exhortation to the multitude, ver. 7-9; and the particular instructions he gave to those who desired to be told their duty, ver. 10-14. II. The notice he gave them of the approach of the Messiah, ver. 15-18, to which is added (though it happened after what follows) the mention of his imprisonment, ver. 19, 20. III. Christ coming to be baptized of John, and His entrance therein upon the execution of His Prophetical office, ver. 21, 22. IV. His pedigree and genealogy recorded up to Adam, ver. 23-38.

1. Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

Luke, as will be observed, gives us with great exactness and faithfulness the names and dates, which connect the sacred history with the history of the time. The particularity with which he refers to the time when our Lord began His public ministry, evinces the accurate and well-informed historian. Christianity is a religion of *facts*. It stands in its place in history. It is neither theory, nor legend, nor myth. It is just as true that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ lived and preached, as that Tiberius Cæsar lived and reigned over the Roman empire; and the Evangelist appeals to the history of that time in his record of these gospel facts. There is thus every evidence that the Gospels were not written by impostors, and that the narratives which they give are true. Josephus, a writer of that very age, who was a Jew, and an enemy of Christianity, most remarkably confirms these statements of the Evangelists.

*Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar.* Tiberius Cæsar was the cruel, sensual, infamous successor of Augustus in the empire of Rome, to which Judea at this time sustained the relation of a province. Having been joint emperor two years with his predecessor Augustus, (from the beginning of which time the Evangelist reckons,) he had, after that, up

to the time here assigned as the commencement of John's public ministry, exercised sole dominion for thirteen years, making, in all, *fifteen years*.

*Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea.* Pilate came to Judea as Procurator, and continued to fill that office to the year 38. Nothing of his previous history is known. His office was rather of a pecuniary nature, yet, in the irregularities of the times, extended over every department of government. He was the sixth governor of Palestine after the cessation of the royalty. The Jews had in later days worse governors than Pilate, but the general character of his government appeared to much disadvantage as compared with that of most of his predecessors. He was a man of stern and inflexible temper, and understood but little of, or cared but little for, the peculiar character of the people whom he was appointed to rule. By his utter disregard for the religious feelings of the people, to which most of the former Procurators had shown some respect, he gave much offence, greatly disturbed the repose of the country, and laid the foundation for many troubles and revolts that afterwards followed. The conduct of Pilate, in the matter of Christ's condemnation, sufficiently appears in the narratives of the Evangelists, and requires no comment. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Eusebius, and others, state, with confidence, that Pilate, as, they say, was his duty, sent an account of these transactions to Tiberius, with some particulars concerning the history and miracles of Christ, and that the emperor was so struck by the account, that he wrote to the Senate on the subject, intimating a favorable opinion of the character of Jesus, with an inclination that Divine honors should be allowed Him. The Senate did not, however, enter into his views, and the matter dropped. Various spurious copies of the document thus attributed to Pilate were formerly in circulation.

*And Herod being tetrarch of Galilee.* This was Herod Antipas, the second son of Herod the Great, and bearing the abbreviated name of his grandfather, Antipater. When Herod the Great died, he bequeathed his kingdom to his three sons, Archelaus, Antipas, (to whom was assigned Galilee and Perea,) and Philip, the first of whom was soon displaced by Roman governors, while both the others reigned much longer as tributary sovereigns, but without the royal titles, for which Augustus substituted that of *tetrarch*, which originally signified the ruler of a fourth part, or one of four associated rulers, as in ancient Galatia, but was afterwards applied in a general sense to any ruler, and especially to tributary kings, immediately dependent on the Roman emperor.

*And his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis.* This Philip was the half-brother of Herod the tetrarch, being the son of Herod the Great, by his wife Cleopatra. He seems to have been, upon the whole, a quiet and well-disposed person, and perhaps the best of Herod's sons. When Augustus had confirmed his father's will, Philip settled himself quietly in his government, and being a moderate, unambitious man, contented with what he had obtained, he gave all his attention to internal improvements and administration of justice to his people. He died about five years after the present date, having previously married Salome, the daughter of Herodias, whose dancing afforded her mother an opportunity of procuring the death of John the Baptist. *Iturea*: This territory seems to have extended to the northeast of Palestine, forming a central district between the lake of Tiberias and the territory of Damascus. In that case, most of it would appear to have been included in the flat country at this day called Djedour, which is, perhaps, the same name differently spelt. At present it does not contain more than twenty villages, being in the same nearly desolate condition as the other districts beyond Jordan. The country is supposed to have derived its name from Iter or Itur, a son of Ishmael, who settled in it, but whose posterity were expelled or subdued by the Amorites, after which it is supposed to have formed part of the kingdom of Bashan, and to have been subsequently appropriated by the half-tribe of Manasseh. About 106 years B. C. Iturea was conquered by

Aristobulus, the high priest of the Jews, when the inhabitants were obliged to embrace the Jewish religion. *Trachonitis* was the most eastern portion of Philip's territory, lying to the east and southeast of Iturea, and to the south of Damascus, being thus a frontier district towards the Arabian Desert. The present Greek name implies a rough and uneven country, and well describes its character. The district is, in fact, a rocky wilderness, abounding in intricate paths and inaccessible fastnesses, which at the present day shelter daring Arab robbers, as they did in the time of Herod the Great, to whom this territory was given by Augustus, who took it from its former ruler, Zenodorus, on account of the encouragement which he was supposed to give to the predatory incursions of the Arabs, from the secure recesses of the Ledja into the neighboring plains.

And *Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene*. This person is not historically known. He was probably the son or grandson of another Lysanias, whom Mark Antony put to death about sixty years before the point of time here designated by Luke, and gave part of his territory to Cleopatra of Egypt. The enemies of the gospel have tried in vain to make him the same person, and thus convict Luke of a chronological mistake. Traces of the Lysanias to whom Luke refers are found outside of history. A coin has been found belonging to a period later than Herod's death, bearing the inscription, "Lysanias, tetrarch and high priest." A Doric temple in Abila bears the inscription, "Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene." This must have been Luke's Lysanias, for the first Lysanias was not a tetrarch, that title having been first adopted after Herod's death. *Abilene*. This territory took its name from the town of Abila or Abela. Its precise situation is not clearly known, but it appears to have been somewhere to the north or northeast of Palestine, bordering on Anti-Libanus, and adjoining Philip's territory. The Lysanias slain by Mark Antony governed it with the title of king. We afterwards find it as part of the territory which was taken from Zenodorus, and given to Herod the Great.

## 2. \*Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

a John ii. 49, 51; xviii. 13; Acts iv. 6.

The high priest, Lev. xi. 10, was at the head of the Jewish sacerdotal system, the sacred representative of the nation. Aaron, brother of Moses, was first consecrated high priest, all his male descendants were by Divine appointment consecrated to the priesthood, and the first-born of the family, in regular succession, was consecrated in the same manner to the office of high priest. The ceremony of consecration was alike for both. Exod. xxix. The office of high priest remained in the family of Aaron for some fifteen hundred years. The high priest was at the head of all religious affairs, and was the ordinary judge of all difficulties that belonged thereto, and even of the general justice and judgment of the Jewish nation. Deut. xvii. 8-12; xix. 17; xxi. 5; xxxiii. 9, 10; Ezek. xliv. 24. He, only, had the privilege of entering the sanctuary once a year, on the day of solemn expiation, to make atonement for the sins of the whole people. Lev. xvi. 2, &c. When invested with the ephod and the urim and thummim, he became the medium of prophetic responses. He was to be born of one of his own tribe, whom his father had married a virgin, and was to be exempt from corporeal defect. Lev. xxi. 18. In general, no priest who had any defect of this kind could offer sacrifice, or enter the holy place, to present the shew-bread. But he was to be maintained by the sacrifices offered at the tabernacle. Lev. xxi. 22. Until the time of Herod the dignity of the high priest's office descended with due regularity in the Aaronic line, but the Herodian and Roman rulers made changes at will, and appointed a new high priest so frequently that the office became almost annual, and a number of ex-high priests were living. The high

priest is supposed to have had an assistant to occupy his place in case of his incompetency from sickness, deflement, or otherwise. 2 Kings xxv. 18; Jer. lii. 24. Josephus on one occasion mentions two high priests, Jonathan and Ananias. The *name* of the high priest, also, continued to be given to any one who *had been* in that office, and especially when he still possessed some civil office after he had left the high priesthood. These facts help to show, inasmuch as there could properly be only one high priest at the same time, and as Caiaphas held this office during the public ministry of Christ, Matt. xxvi. 3, 57, John xi. 49, why *Annas*, his father-in-law, who had been high priest, but afterwards deposed by Valerius Grattus, is here mentioned. He was in all probability the coadjutor of Caiaphas, the actual high priest at this time, or was regarded by the Jews as still the legitimate high priest, and his age, rank and consequence, as a man of the first consideration and influence in the state, easily explains his being named before Caiaphas by the Evangelist.

*The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.* The priests entered upon the exercise of their functions at the age of thirty, and we know that it was about that age that John received his formal commission from Heaven as a prophet. This commission probably superseded the obligations which his priestly station would at that age have imposed, and it may be doubted if he ever exercised the priestly functions. If he did, these were, owing to the great number of the priests, so easy that the duties involved could interfere but little with those which his prophetic call imposed. It may be assumed, therefore, that it was in immediate view of the age when he should take his place among the officiating priesthood, and with an ulterior view to his being called upon to assume the special offices assigned to him before his birth, that John withdrew into the wilderness—perhaps some two or three years before he attained the age of thirty. The probability is, that, before he reached that time of life, both his parents were dead, and it is supposable that the demise of the survivor of them, by divesting him of earthly ties, (for he had no brothers or sisters,) and by breaking up his home, supplied the occasion for his withdrawal into the desert. The region to which he retired was doubtless that wild, mountainous region lying east towards the Dead Sea. There,—in the deep solitudes, where he had, no doubt, for several years brooded over the iniquities of the times, over the prospect of the Messiah's kingdom, and over the precise nature of that mission to which he knew that he had been nominated, though not yet called to its actual duties, *the word of God came unto John*, doubtless as the Divine word or message was communicated to the prophets under the Old Testament by the Holy Ghost, Jer. i. 2, 4, 11, Ezra i. 3, 6, and made clear unto him all that he needed to know. It not only taught him what to do, and that the time was come for him to do it, but it inspired him with all the energies and powers needed for the fit discharge of the high and solemn office to which he was called.

3. <sup>b</sup>And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance <sup>c</sup>for the remission of sins:

<sup>b</sup> Matt. iii. 1; Mark. i. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Ch. i. 77.

*And he came.* *Came* is, in Greek, the graphic present, *comes*, arrives, or retaining the precise sense of the compound verb, *becomes near*, at hand, or present. *Into all the country about Jordan.* At God's command he left the wilderness, and came to more inhabited places. This region was contiguous to the desert, to which John had retired "until the day of his showing unto Israel," ch. i. 80. Those that are best pleased with retirement must cheerfully exchange it when God calls them into places of concourse. *Preaching:* a verb so rendered more than fifty times in our version, but four times *publish*, Mark v. 20; vii. 36; xi. 10; Luke viii. 89; and twice *proclaim*, Luke

xii. 3, Rev. v. 2. It properly denotes the act of a public crier, or a herald, announcing or proclaiming something by authority. This primary and strict sense of the term must not be superseded by the technical and modern usage of the word *preaching*, as applied to formal and official religious teaching. In this sense, it is probable that neither John nor the Apostles preached while Christ was with them. *The baptism of repentance*: not the baptism of faith in a Redeemer already crucified and atoning, but a baptism of repentance and reformation preparatory to His coming. *Repentance* properly denotes afterthought, reflection, and then change of mind, including both the judgment and the feelings, upon moral subjects, with particular reference to one's own character and conduct, with an implication of improvement or reform in both. Evangelical repentance is not mere amendment nor mere sorrow for sin, but comprehends them both. The latter is expressed by the Greek verb used to denote even the remorse of Judas. Matt. xxvii. 3. The repentance to which John called the Jews was a total reformation of both heart and life, as an immediate preparation for the advent of Messiah. *For the remission of sins*. This phrase depends on *repentance*. It is not *baptism for the remission of sins*, but *repentance*, in faith on an approaching Messiah, for such *remission*. The remission of sin was the object or purpose of the baptismal rite. John's preaching and baptism did not of itself procure the remission of sin, which could be effected only by the death of Christ. It, however, prepared the way for this result. Those who repented and reformed their lives under his ministry, received the pardon of their sins, although the great atoning sacrifice had not actually been offered.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What are the contents of this Chapter?
2. What shows Luke's accuracy as an historian?
3. Is Christianity a religion of *facts*?
4. Who was Tiberius Caesar?
5. What is said of Pontius Pilate?
6. How long was he Procurator?
7. How did he act in the matter of Christ's condemnation?
8. Who was Herod?
9. To whom did Herod the Great bequeath his kingdom?
10. What does the word "tetrarch" signify?
11. Who was Philip?
12. What was his character?
13. State what is said about Iturea.
14. What was Trachonitis?
15. What is said about Lysanias?
16. What traces of the Lysanias to whom Luke refers are mentioned?
17. What is said of Abilene?
18. What was the office of the high priest?
19. Who was first consecrated high priest?
20. What is said of Aaron's male descendants?
21. How long did the office of high priest remain in Aaron's family?
22. What is said of the high priest?
23. How was he consecrated?
24. Who made changes in the high priest's office?
25. Was the name of high priest given to those who had left the high priesthood?
26. Why is Annas here mentioned as high priest?
27. When did the priests enter upon their official duties?
28. About what age did John receive his commission as prophet?
29. What effect did this commission probably have?

30. Why did John withdraw to the wilderness?
31. What is said of his parents?
32. To what region did he retire?
33. How did the word of God come unto him there?
34. At whose command did he leave the wilderness?
35. Where did he go?
36. What is said about "preaching?"
37. What did John preach?
38. What does "repentance" properly denote?
39. What was the repentance to which John called the Jews?
40. Did John's preaching and baptism of itself procure the remission of sin?
41. How was such remission effected?
42. What is said of those who repented and reformed under John's ministry?

LESSON XVIII.

vs. 4-9.

4. As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 Is. xl. 3; Matt. iii. 3; Mark i. 3; John i. 23.

Luke here proves, by a quotation from Is. xl. 3, that there was nothing unforeseen and suddenly contrived in the coming of Jesus Christ. It was predicted in Gen. iii. 15, and this promise was brightened and expanded in all subsequent prophecy. The purpose in this quotation is to connect the ministry of Christ, through that of His forerunner, with the ancient Scriptures and the church of the Old Testament, thus uniting the two canons in the closest manner, notwithstanding the long interval of four hundred years between them. John is here, as in the Gospel of John, ch. i., the representative and final expression of the whole Old Testament. But the Old Testament itself, terminating in him, becomes one great forerunner, and the voice of the Spirit of God in the wilderness, which proclaims the manifestation of Christ, that is, it becomes a compendious introduction to the New Testament, springing from heaven.

*Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.* This is a plain allusion to the custom that prevailed in Eastern countries, of sending messengers and pioneers to make the ways level and straight before kings and princes and other great men, when they passed through the country with large retinues, and with great pomp and magnificence. They literally lowered mountains, they raised valleys, cut down woods, removed all obstacles, cleared away all roughnesses and inequalities, and made every thing smooth, plain, and convenient, for the great personage whom they preceded. In the same manner was John, in a spiritual sense, to go before the Lord—before the Saviour of the world, calling upon the people, to *prepare His way, to make His*



ANCIENT ROLL.

*paths straight*—to remove out of their minds every thing that opposed itself to the admission of Divine truth, all prejudice, blindness, pride, obstinacy, self-conceit, vanity, and vain philosophy, but, above all, to subdue and regulate those depraved affections, appetites, passions, and inveterate habits of wickedness, which are the grand obstacles to conversion and the reception of the Word of God. John was a *voice*, which conveys the mind of the speaker, and then vanishes: he declared the mind of God concerning His Son, and then was seen no more, for his ministry was of short continuance. We may also suppose John to be here represented as a voice, because his life was vocal, no less than his lips, the whole man being as it were a sermon. It was He whose voice the prophet overheard and described in these words. He proclaimed Christ, as the Son of God, the King of Israel, and the Saviour of the world, John i. 29-34; iii. 27-36; and thus he *prepared the way of the Lord*, of Jehovah, for so the word is in Isaiah, and he *made His paths straight*. *Crying* denotes the zeal and fervency of John's preaching. The whole phrase, *the voice of one crying*, might be more exactly rendered, *a voice crying*. It is a kind of exclamation, as if it had been said, "Hark! one cries," (or is crying,) perhaps with the additional idea of long-continued previous silence. We have here a right notion of a minister of the gospel. He is but a *voice crying*, speaking what God has first suggested to him. Thus said God to Moses, Ex. iv. 15, "Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth, and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth." By *wilderness*, in Scripture, we are not always to understand what is commonly denominated so with us, an uninhabited region. Often, no more was denoted by it, than a country fitter for pasture rather than agriculture, mountainous, woody, thinly inhabited. No doubt, John's singular habits of dress and diet, Mark i. 6, and his holy life, secured him a congregation in the wilderness. Men went there to see him, and these bringing back a wonderful report of him, at length crowds were collected to hear his sermons.

5. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways *shall be* made smooth;

This passage from Isaiah is figurative language, derived from the march of a monarch, preceded by his herald. By the filling of the valleys and levelling of the mountains and hills, a smooth and even road would be formed, upon which the king and his retinue might travel with pleasure and safety. By the import of the language that the prophet uses, it is plainly to be seen that the main work is God's, though men are called to concur with Him in it, which is everywhere the scheme of Scripture, as it certainly is of sound reason. Philip. ii. 12, 13. If ever we design to receive Christ into our hearts, we must first prepare and make ready our hearts for receiving Him. For though the *preparation of the heart be from the Lord*, yet He requires the exercise of our faculties, and the use of our efforts, He prepares our hearts, by enabling us to prepare our own hearts, by getting a sight of the evil of sin, and a sense of our misery without Christ, an hungering desire after Him, and a lively faith in Him. It should be observed that Luke, who wrote his Gospel for the instruction of the Gentile converts, quotes here no less than three verses from Isaiah, whereas the other Evangelists, Matthew, iii. 3, and Mark i. 3, quote only the first of them. It was necessary for Luke's purpose that he should thus extend the quotation, in order to assure the Gentiles, for whom he wrote, that they were destined to be partakers of the privileges of the gospel, and to "see the salvation of God."

6. And 'all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

• Ps. xxviii. 2; Is. lli. 10; Ch. ii. 10.

These words are cited from Isaiah iii. 10, in which chapter the ancient Jews admit that the prophet is speaking of the Messiah. Now is the time when, all persons, Jews and Gentiles, may see the Author of salvation, whom God has promised to the world, and by faith be interested in Him. This salvation shall be more fully discovered than ever, and the discovery of it shall spread further. All mankind shall see it, and some of all tribes and kindreds and nations enjoy it. The great end of Christ's coming into the world was to procure salvation for all flesh willing to be saved by Him.

7. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come ?

† Matt. iii. 7.

This mode of address might seem strange to us, did we not know from Matt. iii. 7, that this *multitude* did not consist of persons who were anxious inquirers after salvation, but rather Pharisees and Sadducees, or at least such as were infected by their pernicious leaven. *To be baptized of him*. It has been much discussed whether baptism as introduced by John was then new to the people, or their minds were already familiar with it, and apprehensive of its general purport from some previous practice. It has been maintained that the baptism of proselytes existed among the Jews before the coming of John. The probability, on the ground of evidence, is strong against this opinion. Passages like John i. 25, and Matt. xxi. 24-27, are most naturally explained under the view that John originated baptism proper by Divine appointment, but in accordance with a Jewish expectation that something of the sort would be established, suggested by passages like Is. xii. 13; Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Zech. xiii. 1. This expectation may account for the absence of any surprise on the part of the people, or of any charge of innovation against John in respect of his baptism. This baptism was an appropriation and concentration into a single rite of all the lustrations and washings of the Old Testament dispensation. Thereby it became the emblem of the out-poured Spirit of regeneration, and so of induction from the world into the kingdom of God. And thence being the rite of initiation into the Christian Church, it becomes the successor of circumcision.

*O generation of vipers*. *Generation* is in Greek a plural. The plural may have reference either to variety of species or to multitude of individuals. *Generation* occurs only here and in the parallels, Matt. xii. 34; xxiii. 83. By the terms *generation of vipers*, or, broods of vipers, the diabolical nature of hypocrisy is pointed out. John evidently knew their radical insincerity notwithstanding their coming for baptism. No reflection on their parents is necessarily implied. The *children* of pious Eli are called *Sons of Belial*, merely with reference to their own licentious characters, *as they knew not the Lord*. 1 Sam. ii. 12. Before we accuse John of harshness, we should do well to remember, first, that love itself can be severe, and that the meek Saviour Himself was inexorably so, toward hypocrites; and secondly, that the judgment here announced was not inevitable, but only impending over obstinate impenitence, while John earnestly desires that they may yet escape it, and points out the way of safety. Neither commentator nor preacher should effeminately shrink at the "mention of hell to ears polite." *Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* rather, *who did warn you, or who warned you*, i. e., just now, or before you came out hither? The word rendered *warned*, denotes a slight as well as secret intimation or suggestion, as distinguished from a full and open disclosure. "Who has given you a hint of the impending danger?" "Who has shown you that you must flee?" *The wrath*, i. e., the manifestation of God's anger against sin and His determination to punish it. *To come*, in Greek, an active participle, *coming*, or

about to be, the verb denoting mere futurity and having no equivalent in English.

8. Bring forth therefore fruits 'worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *meet for*.

The condition of proud Pharisees, pretending and false-hearted hypocrites, though very dangerous, yet was not hopeless, and therefore John, whilst reproving them for their sins, yet out of love to their souls encourages their repentance. He repelled their application to be baptized until they should *produce or bear fruits worthy of repentance*; i. e., such effects as genuine repentance may justly be expected to produce, answerable to amendment of life. Let it be observed that John addressed himself, in the first instance, not to the *understanding*, but to the *heart*. He did not attempt to convince his hearers, but to reform them; he did not say to them, "Go and study the prophets, examine with care the pretensions of Him whom I announce, and weigh accurately all the evidences of His Divine mission;" he well knew how all this would end, in the then corrupt state of their minds. Hence his exhortation was, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance." "Till you have done this, till you have purified your hearts and abandoned your sins, my baptism will be of no use to you, and all the reasoning in the world will have no effect upon you." Thus it is that men everywhere, and at all times, must be prepared for the reception of Divine truth. They must first be reformed, and then convinced. It is not in general the want of evidence, but the want of virtue that makes men infidels: let them cease to be wicked, and they will soon cease to be unbelievers. "With the heart," says Paul, (not with the head,) "man believeth unto righteousness." Correct the heart, and all will be right. Unless the soil is good, as we learn from the Parable of the Sower, the seed will be cast upon it in vain. Unbelievers complain of the mysteries of revelation, but we have the highest authority for saying, that in general the only mystery which prevents them receiving it, and submitting to its claims, is the mystery of iniquity. *And begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father*: John, knowing what the Pharisees would answer in their hearts to the severe but doubtless deserved epithet he applied to them, proceeded to rebuke them for their reliance upon their Abrahamic descent, as the one essential qualification for salvation. He did not deny the fact of their descent from Abraham, which was notoriously true, but he condemned their reliance upon that fact, as securing the Divine favor, irrespective of their character and conduct. He warned them that bodily descent would not save them, they would be tried under the severe law of an individual responsibility. He gave them the strange and startling information that the benefits of the Messiah's reign were not necessarily limited to the chosen race, for that God could raise up a Church to Himself out of the most unlikely—was able from the very *stones* lying at their feet *to raise up children unto Abraham*. By this he clearly meant to tell them, that if the Jews disgraced their high descent, God would remove His kingdom from them, and give it unto strangers. Men are exceedingly apt to glory in their external privileges, and to place religion most in those things in which God places it least. It is vain, however, to expect exemption from the judgments of God, because of outward privileges. These, unless we be born again of the Spirit, will avail us nothing—will, indeed, increase our condemnation.

9. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees :

every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

5 Matt. vii. 19.

Having preached the doctrine of repentance in the foregoing verses, John now enforces it with a powerful argument, drawn from the certainty and severity of that judgment which should come upon them, if they continued in their sins, thus showing that it is not unsuitable for preachers of the gospel to press repentance and holiness of life upon their hearers, by arguments of terror. *And now also, at this very time: the axe is laid unto the root of the trees.* The representation is that of a man, passing early in the morning through the midst of certain trees which he owns, and carrying an implement which intimates the sort of work in which he is engaged. Finding trees worthless and unsightly, taking up room which would be better occupied by something else—mere cumberers of the ground—he sees that they must be removed, yet perhaps does not proceed at once to do so, but with his mind made up *lays the axe at the root of the tree*, ready at hand. *The axe*, an instrument for felling trees, is here a figure for Divine judgments, possibly suggested by the reference to *fruit* in the preceding verse. *The axe is laid*, there is here a passing on from the notion of the possibility, to that of the certainty, of the wrath to come, *unto the root*, not near to the unfruitful branches, but to the very root. The combination of the singular and plural (*root* and *trees*) may have no separate significance, or may specifically signify the common root of all the trees, with reference perhaps to the national dependence or descent from Abraham, as cherished by his individual descendants. *The trees* of this verse, corresponding to the *fruits* of that before it, must of course denote those from whom fruit was expected and required, namely, those to whom John was now speaking. The representation made in the verse, thus far, is just what Christ did when He came into the flesh. By Him *the axe was laid unto the root of the trees.* By the very covenant of peace which He has introduced, He has at the same time brought judgment near to the sinner. He has made, for the last time, an effort, and that the greatest of all, to convince the sinner that He has a controversy with him which must now be settled, either by his unconditional and complete surrender, or by his speedy and terrible punishment. And let it be marked well, that His dealing with the sinner will proceed upon the simple fact, “fruit,” or “no fruit,” “according to that done in the body, whether it be good or bad.” The gospel message is indeed one of grace, and it is by grace alone through faith that the sinner can be saved; but here, upon the very front of Christ’s mission, is written clearly and indelibly that the *judgment* shall strictly proceed on works. Where these exist, where they are seen and manifest, they will prove that the sinner has believed, and is saved; where they are not, they will equally prove that he has rejected the counsel of God against himself, and his condemnation will be just. *Every tree.* Each fruitless tree, each impenitent individual, *therefore*, because the axe is laid there for this very purpose, *bringeth not forth good fruit*, that is, right or acceptable to God, and salutary, useful, to the doer and to others. Let it be observed that the sin here specified is a sin of *omission*. The tree is described, not as bringing forth evil fruit, but as not bringing forth good fruit. Sins of omission are certainly ruinous, as well as sins of commission. The neglects of duty are as dangerous and destructive as the positive acts of sin. *Is hewn down*, means strictly *cut out*, and is so translated in Rom. ii. 24. It is here used to denote, not the mere felling, but the complete excision of the tree, *i. e.*, the being cut up by the root. In Scripture language, that which is very sure and very near, is spoken of as if it was *already done*. Thus Christ speaks of Himself, as if He was already in possession of His glory, while He was here on earth, John xvii. 14, sinners too are represented as *condemned already*, John iii. 18, and Christians are spoken of as *already*

*glorified*, Eph. ii. 6, and Heb. xii. 22, 23. *And cast into the fire—into fire, (not the fire)*: an indefinite description of the element made use of to consume the tree, and representing, as a figure, the wrath of God, already mentioned in ver. 7, or its ruinous effect upon the unforgiven sinner. Compare Heb. xii. 29. If the tree serve not for fruit, to the honor of God's grace, it must serve for fuel, to the honor of His justice.

### QUESTIONS.

1. From whom is ver. 4 quoted?
2. What is the purpose of the quotation?
3. What was the interval between the Old Testament Scriptures and Christ's ministry?
4. What is referred to by "prepare His way," &c.?
5. Why was John called a "voice?"
6. What was Christ proclaimed to be?
7. What does "crying" denote?
8. What is said of a minister of the gospel?
9. What is meant by "wilderness" in Scripture?
10. How did John get a congregation in the wilderness?
11. What kind of language is used in ver. 5?
12. What must we do to receive Christ into our hearts?
13. How many verses does Luke quote from Isaiah?
14. What is meant by "all flesh shall see the salvation of God?"
15. Of whom did the multitude consist that came to be baptized?
16. What is said of the baptism John introduced?
17. What was John's baptism?
18. What was meant by "generation of vipers?"
19. What is said of any apparent harshness of John?
20. What does the word "warned" denote?
21. What wrath was referred to?
22. What is the import of the words "to come?"
23. Did John encourage the hypocrites around him to repent?
24. What fruits did he urge them to bring forth?
25. Did he address their understandings or their hearts?
26. How must men be prepared to receive Divine truth?
27. What makes infidels reject the gospel?
28. What did John warn his hearers not to do?
29. Why did he give them this warning?
30. What did he mean by the reason assigned for giving this warning?
31. How did John enforce the doctrine of repentance?
32. What is the representation made by the axe as lying at the root of the tree?
33. What is the axe a figure of?
34. How is the certainty of the wrath to come indicated?
35. Whom do the trees denote?
36. How was the "axe laid," &c., by Christ when He came into the flesh?
37. How will Christ as Judge deal with the sinner?
38. What will works prove at the Judgment?
39. Is every impenitent sinner a fruitless tree?
40. What is meant by "good fruit?"
41. Are sins of omission ruinous?
42. What is meant by "hewn down?"
43. Is that which is sure, spoken of in Scripture as if it was already done?
44. What is said of the words "into the fire?"
45. What does fire here represent?

## LESSON XIX.

vs. 10-16.

10. And the people asked him, saying, <sup>b</sup>What shall we do then?

<sup>b</sup> Acts ii. 37.

Though it is not said that the Pharisees and Sadducees took warning from John's preaching, yet there were some persons who did.

*The people* (that is, the common people, as they are called) said, *What shall we do then?* This question indicated a strong desire to be instructed as to duty. Some think it was not the question of the penitent jailor, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" else John would have answered it as did Paul and his friend Silas that which was proposed to them, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." They maintain that as John had just been exhorting them to bring forth *fruits* worthy of repentance, and had been telling them that every tree that brought not forth good fruit was cast into the fire, they now wished to know what conduct on their part would indicate sincere repentance, and that it was to *this* question he replied. Others regard the question as proposed by perplexed penitents, and the answer as given entirely in the Old Testament fashion, and from a legal point of view, without any mention of the higher requisites of faith and love, accounting for this peculiar form of the answer, by the fact, that John being fully conscious that the moral regeneration which was indispensable to admittance into the Messiah's kingdom could only be accomplished by a Divine principle of life, and knowing that to impart this was beyond his power, confined himself to a *preparatory* purification of the morals of the people. According to the views of others still, and which seem to us as the right views, there is nothing so purely legal in John's reply as to produce the embarrassment which some have felt from it. There is law in all gospel, and there is gospel in the law. Though the atonement had not been made in the Old Testament times, yet sin was forgiven through the forbearance of God, in view of the atonement. Thus the faith in the Messiah to come as the remitter of sin was mingled with the repentance of John's dispensation, and it had power to save, when genuine, in its time and kind. The genuineness was to be tested by the bringing forth appropriate fruits. Hence, in the verse which follows, the general principles of benevolence are inculcated, not as in themselves rendering the person who practices them worthy of salvation, but yet of necessary performance, in order to obtain the Divine forgiveness for sin.

11. He answereth and saith unto them, <sup>1</sup>He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

<sup>1</sup>Ch. ii. 41; 2 Cor. viii. 14; Jas. ii. 15, 16.

By this answer John shows us that covetousness was the *chief* sin of the people, and also explains why he specified benevolence, which is its opposite. It was the sin of the *poor*, as well as the rich. The *coat* here mentioned was a tunic, worn next to the skin, with armholes or sleeves, and reaching down, like a shirt, to the knees. Its material was commonly linen. It was bound round the waist by a girdle. Clothing and food are here representative of all the physical necessities of men. It may not be

proper to interpret such general rules as that in this verse, *strictly* and *literally*, but, however explained, unless they be supposed to mean nothing, they certainly require a far greater degree of liberality in the rich, and even in the poor, according to their present ability, toward their still more indigent neighbors, than is almost anywhere practised among Christians. The word of God tells us that we should be ready to give—that we should even *labor* that we *may* have something to give. Eph. iv. 28; Acts xx. 34, 35. Those who have *more* than enough for themselves, ought to give to those who have *less* than enough. The Scriptures do not *forbid* our saving against old age or sickness, but they *command* us to give to those who are in need. An extensive liberality and a diffusive charity in distributing such things as we can well spare toward the relief of the necessities of others, is an excellent fruit of repentance, and a good evidence of its sincerity and genuineness.

12. Then <sup>†</sup>came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

13. And he said unto them, <sup>†</sup>Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

<sup>†</sup> Matt. xxi. 32; Ch. vii. 29.

<sup>†</sup> Ch. xix. 8.

The Roman government had conquered Judea, and obliged the Jews to pay taxes and tribute to support its tyranny. The *publicans* were the officers who collected the Roman taxes. The natives, who, like Matthew, Matt. ix. 9, were employed in a subordinate capacity by the Romans, generally, often excelled their superiors in rapacity and extortion. They extorted beyond what was really due, and seized every opportunity for exaction, in order to make a private purse for themselves. They overcharged when they had an opportunity, ch. iii. 13. They brought false charges of smuggling in the hope of extorting hush-money, ch. xix. 8. These *publicans* are spoken of as coming *also* to John's baptism. See ver 7. *Master*, means teacher, and as neither of the other classes here referred to used this term of respect, may be regarded as indicative of the humility and distress for sin with which these publicans approached John. *What shall we do?* See Notes on ver. 10. As extortion was their besetting sin, John therefore enjoins upon them integrity and justice—*exact no more than that which is appointed you*, that is, than the legal tax. Here note, 1. That acts of justice and righteousness, as well as of charity and mercy, are real fruits of sincere repentance. 2. John does not condemn the *office*, but *cautions the officer*. If magistrates may impose taxes, they may doubtless appoint officers to collect those taxes. Christian charity should teach us to distinguish between the *calling* and the *crime*. The maladministration of those who fill an office is not a sufficient reason for condemning it. In most trades and employments there is some temptation to dishonesty, and many people think that they may do whatever it is the *custom* to do. If there is any thing we do in our station, that we wish to conceal from our employer or our customer, *that practice is dishonest*, however *common* it may be. If we really repent, we will leave it off, though others should call us over strict and precise, and even try to injure us, because our conduct is a reproach to them.

14. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, <sup>‡</sup>Do violence to no man, <sup>‡</sup>neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your <sup>‡</sup>wages.

<sup>‡</sup> Or, put no man in fear.

<sup>‡</sup> Exod. xxiii. 1; Lev. xix. 11.

<sup>‡</sup> Or, allowance.

*Soldiers*: or, as the original denotes, *men actually under arms*. They are supposed to have been a part of Herod's army *then* on their way from Galilee to Arabia Petræa, with Aretas the king of which, Herod, though his son-in-law, was at that time at war. *What shall we do?* See Notes on ver. 10: *Do violence to no man*. The original word properly signifies "to take a man by the collar and shake him," and seems to have been used proverbially for that violent manner in which persons of this station of life are often ready to bully those about them, whom they imagine their inferiors in strength and spirit. *Neither accuse any falsely*—not to the government, thereby to make themselves formidable, and obtain bribes; neither to superior officers, in order to be revenged on those they had a pique against, or to undermine those above them, and get into their places. *And be content with your wages*. The Greek word signifies not only the *money* which was allotted to a Roman soldier, which was *two oboli* (about three cents) per day; but also the necessary supply of *wheat, barley*, etc., in other words, their *pay and rations*. "While you have what you agreed for, do not murmur that it is no more, especially do not make a mutinous demand for its increase, or seek to add pillage thereto." It will be observed that the office and employment of a soldier is not condemned by John, but regulated; he did not bid them cast away their arms, abandon war, appear no more as military men in the field, but manage their employment inoffensively. The injunction to be content with their wages implied their continuance in the military service for which the *wages* were received. From this we learn, that in some cases, and under some circumstances, it is both lawful and necessary to make war. War is, indeed, a terrible calamity, and earnestly should the prayer be offered that the soldier and his stern profession may become obsolete together; but, then, in the *present* state of society, war is often an unavoidable necessity, and the only means of defending the rights, the honor, and the very existence of a nation, and may thus prevent still greater evil. Aggressive wars, it is true, are always wrong; but defensive wars against foreign invasion and domestic rebellion are justifiable, yet they should be conducted without cruelty and oppression. So that the relation of a soldier is not an unlawful one. It is recognized and regulated in the Bible. He who undertakes an occupation of great toil and great danger, for the purpose of serving, defending, and protecting his country, is a most valuable and respectable member of society, and if he conducts himself with valor, fidelity and humanity, and amidst the horrors of war cultivates the gentle manners of peace, and the virtues of a devout and holy life, he most amply deserves, and will assuredly receive, the esteem, the admiration, the applause of his grateful country, and what is of far greater importance, the approbation of his God.

15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men <sup>5</sup>mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

<sup>4</sup> Or, *In suspense*.

<sup>5</sup> Or, *reasoned or debated*.

So extraordinary was John's person, so earnest his preaching, so acceptable his doctrine, and so exemplary his conversation, that many people began to think that he, perhaps, was the Saviour so long expected—that is, the Christ, or the anointed one. But he did not wish them to think this, hence—

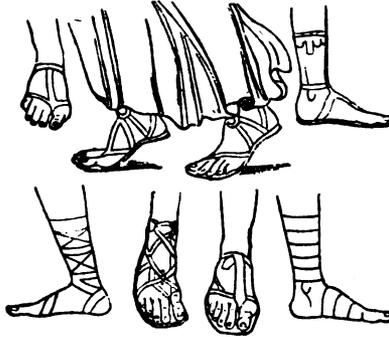
16. John answered, saying unto *them* all, <sup>2</sup>"I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet

of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: <sup>o</sup>he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire :

• Matt. iii. 11.

◦ Joel ii. 28, 29; John vii. 38; 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

It might naturally be expected that John's popularity, which we learn, not only from the Evangelists, ch. iii. 7; Matt. iii. 5, 6, but also from Josephus, who informs us that "multitudes flocked to him, for they were greatly delighted with his discourses," would fill him with conceit and vanity, and inspire him with a most exalted opinion of his own abilities, and a sovereign contempt for any rival teacher of religion. But so far from this, the most prominent feature of his character was an unexampled modesty and humility. Far from desiring or attempting to fix the admiration of the multitude on his own person, he gave notice, from his first appearance, of *another* immediately to follow him, for whom he was unworthy to perform the most servile offices. He wished no glory for himself. John ii. 28-31. Conduct like this will always be the characteristic of the true "man of God." He will never allow any thing to be credited to him, or his office, which belongs to his Divine Master. He will, like the ancient priest, be hidden by



SANDALS.

the cloud of incense ascending from the altar at which he ministers. He will say like Paul, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." 2 Cor. iv. 5. "He must increase, but I must decrease," will be a ruling principle in all his preaching. He will be content that his own name be forgotten, as long as Christ crucified is exalted. And here is a criterion by which we may judge whether preaching is profitable to us. Does it exalt Christ in our esteem? Does it more and more endear Him to us as He is revealed in the gospel? If this be its effect upon us, then, and only then, we may be sure that it is beneficial to our souls. Nothing can compensate for the overlooking of Jesus, as the substance of the gospel, in the ministrations of the sanctuary. John refers to Christ as *mightier than himself, the mightier than I*, more powerful, implying not only a diversity of rank, but also of efficiency and actual performance. *The latchet, &c.* Here it is shown that the difference was not merely that of first and second, but of master and servant, nay, it was still more marked and distant. For the meanest slave might unloose the latchet of his master's sandals, but this humblest of all services, as rendered to John's Master, was too great an honor for him to perform. *Latchet* signifies a *fastener* of some kind. It here signifies a *shoe-string*. *Shoes*, i. e., sandals, soles of wood or leather, fastened by a strap. *Not worthy*, not good enough. *To unloose*.

Servants were accustomed (as among the Mohammedans they do to this day) to take off their masters' sandals or slippers, when they entered the house, and to return them again when they departed. *I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.* John depreciates not so much his baptism as himself. *He shall baptize, abundantly impart.* Titus iii. 6; Acts ii. 3, 4, 17, and x. 44; and shall therefore show Himself *the mightier*. The Spirit and fire have the utmost power. The Holy Spirit, with which Christ baptizes, converts, purifies, and refines the heart; its fiery power, in the severer purgation, burning sin away by sharper agonies, and imparting a severer spiritual purity and energy, was manifested in the fiery tongues at Pentecost. Some understand by the *baptism of fire*, the punishment of the wicked, in contrast with the baptism *of the Spirit*; others, a fire through which the righteous will have to pass on the day of Judgment, to purify them from remaining defilements; but it is plain that the phrase refers to the powerful and purifying influences of the Spirit, so described elsewhere. See Is. iv. 4; lxiv. 2; Jer. v. 14; Mal. iii. 2; Acts ii. 3. We must be careful not to underrate the value of John's baptism. We have no proof that any of the Apostles received any other. The distinction between John's baptism and the baptism of Christ was not essential but accidental, that is, not in its essence, but in its accidents or circumstances. The contrast drawn in this verse, therefore, is not between Christ's baptism, as attended by a spiritual influence, and that of John as unattended by this influence. The meaning is, "I baptize you with water, not without Divine authority or spiritual effect, an effect dependent, however, on a higher power, but He whose way I am preparing is so far superior, both in power and office, that, in the exercise of an inherent power, that of His own Spirit, He will in the same way baptize you with an effusion of the Holy Ghost." John exalted the Saviour. *To Him* we must go direct. Nothing will answer but union with Christ by faith. He is the appointed fountain of mercy, grace, life, and peace. Man, when ordained, can, indeed, administer the outward ordinances of Christianity, with a prayerful hope that God may bless the means which He has Himself appointed, but here his power ends. Christ, the great Head of the Church, can alone make these ordinances savingly efficacious, and this He does by His Spirit. Of this we need frequently to be reminded. So do we, likewise, that the forgiveness of sin is not the only thing necessary to salvation, but that we must also have the baptizing of our hearts by the Holy Ghost. There must not only be the work of Christ *for* us, but the work of the Holy Spirit *in* us. There must not only be a *title* to heaven by the blood of Christ, but a *preparedness* for heaven wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ. Let us never rest till we know something by experience of the baptism of the Spirit.

## QUESTIONS.

1. Who took warning from John's preaching?
2. What did the people say?
3. What was the meaning of their question?
4. How was sin forgiven in the Old Testament times?
5. Why were the general principles of benevolence inculcated?
6. What was the coat mentioned?
7. What are clothing and food here put for?
8. How are such general rules of benevolence to be interpreted?
9. What does the word of God say about giving?
10. To what government were the Jews obliged to pay taxes?
11. Who were the publicans?
12. What was their character generally?
13. What did these publicans say to John?
14. What was the meaning of John's answer?

15. What are the practical reflections on this answer?
16. What did the soldiers say to John?
17. Who were these soldiers?
18. How did John answer them?
19. What is meant by "do violence to no man?"
20. What, by "neither accuse any falsely?"
21. What, by "be content with your wages?"
22. How much money was allotted to a Roman soldier?
23. What is said about war?
24. Is the relation of a soldier an unlawful one?
25. What had many people begun to think of John?
26. Did John's popularity fill him with conceit?
27. Are modesty and humility characteristic of the true man of God?
28. In what sense did John mean that Christ was mightier than himself?
29. What was the "latchet?"
30. What were sandals?
31. What is meant by "not worthy?"
32. Who were accustomed to take off sandals?
33. What is meant by "He shall baptize?"
34. What is said of the Holy Spirit and fire?
35. What is said about underrating John's baptism?
36. What was the distinction between John's baptism and Christ's?
37. Did John exalt the Saviour?
38. To whom must we go direct?
39. Who alone can make ordinances savingly efficacious?
40. Is any thing more than forgiveness of sin necessary to salvation?

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## LESSON XX.

vs. 17-20.

17. Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

p Jer. xv. 7; Mal. iii. 3; Matt. iii. 12.

The Saviour would communicate to His disciples the Divine Sanctifier, as purifying water, to wash away internal pollutions, and as refining fire, to consume their dross, kindle a holy flame of love and zeal, illuminate with heavenly wisdom, and purify and sanctify them. At the same time, to use another emblem, He would come to His visible church, then containing a few believers and many hypocrites, as the husbandman to his heap of threshed wheat, with his fan in his hand. *Whose fan.* A well-known agricultural implement, which was used by the Jews, as it is by husbandmen of the present day, to separate the chaff from the wheat when the wind is not sufficient. (Is) *in his hand*, in readiness for use. *Purge*, cleanse from the chaff. *His floor*, the area of flattened and hardened ground in the field where the winnowing was done. *Gather*, collect, or bring together, first from its dispersion, at the harvest, and then from its mixture with the chaff and other refuse, at the winnowing or threshing. *The wheat*, those who believe

in Him, in Matt. iii. 12, "his wheat," or His own wheat, that belonging to Him, which implies its value, while the chaff belongs to no one, because worthless. *His garner*, granary or grain depository, representing heaven. The garners or granaries of the East are often excavations in the earth in which the grain is buried, frequently for the sake of concealment, either from an enemy or an oppressive government. *But the chaff*, (or whatever is not nutritive and therefore valueless,) the disobedient and rebellious who would not come to Christ that they might have life, *he will burn with fire unquenchable*. This may in part refer to the calamities to come on the Jewish nation for rejecting Christ, yet it seems to intend the final destruction of all sinners in hell, which alone is properly opposed to *the gathering the wheat into the garner*, a phrase representing the destination of the saved. The words *unquenchable fire*, are absolutely inconsistent with all the views of the restoration of the wicked, and however the phrase of being *consumed like chaff* might seem to favor the doctrine of their *annihilation*, the epithet of *unquenchable* given to this *fire*, or more exactly *unquenched*, i. e., never quenched or put out, is so far from proving this doctrine that it cannot, by any easy and just interpretation, be reconciled with it. The Greek word has now been anglicized (*asbestos*) to denote natural or artificial substances considered incombustible, whereas it really describes them as perpetually burning. Compare Mark ix. 43, 45, where the same Greek word is paraphrased, *that never shall be quenched*, and where Jesus repeats the expression with great solemnity, as if to show that the highest possible meaning was to be attributed to His word. Restorationism teaches that the wicked will be delivered from hell, but this supposes the word *unquenchable* to be an empty terror devoid of meaning. For to what amounts it that the fire is unquenchable if the sinner may be snatched from it at any moment? Destructionism is the doctrine that the sinner ceases, by the penalty, to exist. But if this doctrine be true, then God still keeps an *empty hell* eternally burning! Many a man is forced, in the secret of his heart, to admit that God might righteously judge him, and cut him down as a barren tree, who yet deceives himself with the miserable hope that in some way or another, he does not know how, he will yet escape the terrible doom at last; that just as he passes muster with his fellow-men, so also, by some undefined process, he will be allowed to pass in the great day of account. This parable tells him his hope is vain. It announces to the Sadducee and the Pharisee of all generations, that the gospel day, however much it bears for a time the mark of "the evil being mingled with the good," is a day, nevertheless, in which the preparation is going on for a complete and final separation of these ill-assorted materials.

18. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

From this statement we learn the following characteristics of John as a preacher: 1. He was *affectionate*, exhorting and beseeching. 2. He was *practical*, urging to duty, directing in it, and not amusing with matters of nice speculation. 3. He was *popular*, addressing himself to the people, and accommodating himself to their capacity. 4. He was *evangelical*, he preached the gospel, for so the word here often signifies, Matt. xi. 5; ch. iv. 18, and Acts viii. 4, &c. He spoke of the Messiah, and prepared the people to receive the gospel in its full richness, as it was afterwards proclaimed by Jesus, John i. 29-34; iii. 27-36. As, however, he announced the most fearful judgments, in addition to announcing an abundant baptism of the Spirit, and to pointing to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," a significant hint is here given to those who consider a representation of the judgments of the Lord fundamentally incompatible with

the full and free preaching of the gospel. 5. He was a *copious* preacher. He preached a great deal, shunning not to declare the whole counsel of God, and he *carried* in his preaching, that those who were not influenced by one truth might be by another.

19. But <sup>¶</sup>Herod, the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,

20. Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

¶ Matt. xiv. 3; Mark vi. 17.

John was a zealous and faithful minister of the gospel,—one who dared to tell the greatest sinners their faults. Herod, the son of that Herod who slew the babes of Bethlehem, resembling his father in wickedness, and called *tetrarch* because he was the governor of the fourth part of the land of Canaan, had been married a considerable time to the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia Petræa, but conceiving a violent passion for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, (who, by the way, was the niece both of Philip and Herod, being the daughter of Aristobulus, another son of Herod the Great,) he first won her affections from her husband, then dismissed his own wife, and married Herodias, during the lifetime of his brother. It was impossible that such portentous wickedness as this could escape the observation or the reproof of the Holy Baptist. He raised his voice against the incestuous match, and this, too, although he could not be ignorant of the danger he incurred by such a measure. It is probable that the sentiments which John expressed were those which were generally entertained: and as he had great influence with the people, Herod was probably not less actuated by alarm than by resentment in determining to silence the faithful prophet. He *added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison*. Josephus says that the Baptist was imprisoned in the strong fortress of Machærus, in Perea, east of the Jordan. One sin leads to another, and generally to a greater. Shutting up John in prison was a greater sin on Herod's part, than his marrying his brother's wife. It was an insult directly against God, for God considers His *children* as Himself. Whoever injures one of *them*, injures Him, for they are as dear to Him as the apple of His eye. Besides, the incarceration of John hindered the preaching of the gospel, and thus men's souls were murdered. It is a dreadful sin to prevent the spread of Divine truth. How difficult it is to imitate John's fidelity! A minister knows that he shall give offence to sinners, if he speaks to them plainly of their sins. As long as he speaks in *general* terms, he does not offend them, but as soon as he points out the peculiar sins of each class of persons, then he makes them enemies. But how wicked it is to be angry with a faithful minister for pointing out our sins! How much more is he to be admired, than one who says, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace!" It is said, John vi. 20, that when *Herod heard John, he did many things, and heard him gladly*. Hypocrites may hear the word of God with some pleasure, and do many things with some delight, but they have always some cherished lust that must be spared; they will neither part with it, nor bear reproof for it. Herod finally hesitated not to cut off that head, whose tongue was so bold as to reprove him for his infamy.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. How would the Saviour communicate to His disciples the Divine Sanctifier?
2. By what other emblem did He show He would come to His visible Church?

3. What was the state of the visible Church at that time?
4. What is said of the "fan?"
5. What is said of "is?"
6. What, of "purge?"
7. What, of "his floor?"
8. What, of "gather?"
9. What, of "the wheat?"
10. What, of "his garner?"
11. Who are meant by "the chaff?"
12. Explain "he will burn with fire unquenchable."
13. What are the words "unquenchable fire" absolutely inconsistent with?
14. What is said of the annihilation of the wicked?
15. What is said of restorationism?
16. What is said of destructionism?
17. How does many a man deceive himself?
18. What does this parable teach?
19. What was the first characteristic of John as a preacher?
20. What was the second?
21. What, the third?
22. What, the fourth?
23. What, the fifth?
24. What Herod is referred to?
25. Why was he called tetrarch?
26. What is said of him?
27. How did John treat this incestuous match?
28. What was Herod actuated by in determining to silence John?
29. Where does Josephus say John was imprisoned?
30. Does one sin lead to another?
31. What is said about the imprisonment of John?
32. Why was it a great sin?
33. What is said about hindering the spread of Divine Truth?
34. What is said about ministerial fidelity?
35. How may hypocrites hear the word of God?

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## LESSON XXI.

vs. 21-22.

21. Now when all the people were baptized, 'it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

\* Matt. iii. 13; John i. 32.

We are not to suppose that all the people had been baptized before our Lord's baptism. We must attach to the word *all* the restricted sense, *great numbers*. The meaning is, that, at the period when the greatest number of baptisms was taking place, the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth took place among others. Not one Evangelist communicates a complete account of what happened at our Lord's baptism, and it is only by collating their several contributions that we obtain a complete view of the occurrence, Matt. iii. 13-17; Mark i. 9-11; John i. 32. Luke presupposes an acquaintance with the occurrence, and touches upon it for the sake of completeness, and especially to render conspicuous the testimony borne by the Father to the Son on this occasion.

*Jesus also being baptized.* The reason assigned by Christ, Matt. iii. 15, for His being baptized, was this: "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It was God's will that *all men* should be baptized, and therefore it was necessary that Jesus, when He was a man, should be baptized, for He came to do *all* God's commands, that by *His* obedience many might be made righteous. Christ was now about to enter upon His great work, and it was proper that He should be set apart by His forerunner, and that He should manifest His connection with him, and give His sanction to what he had done. Besides, it was requisite that some public act should mark the commencement of His ministry, and afford occasion for God to declare by some manifest sign His approbation of Him, and His solemn appointment to the office of the Messiah.

*And praying.* All the three voices from heaven, by which the Father bare witness to Christ, were pronounced while He was praying, or very soon after it. Ch. ix. 28, 35; John xii. 27, 28. It is our duty to sanctify every ordinance and every action with prayer. The inward and spiritual grace, of which sacraments are the outward and visible signs, must be obtained by prayer, and therefore prayer must always accompany them. Jesus, though He always lived in uninterrupted communion with the Father, marked specially and emphatically by prayer the most important occasions in His history. He prayed when He was baptized, when He was tempted, when He brake bread, when He wrought miracles, when He was in His agony in the garden, and when He suffered on the cross. What was the subject-matter of Christ's prayer at this time, is not stated, but by what followed, it is with probability conjectured that He prayed for some testimony to be given from heaven concerning Himself. What was promised to Him, He must obtain by prayer. *Ask of me, and I will give thee.* Thus He would put an honor on prayer, attach us to it, and encourage us in it.

*The heaven was opened,* i. e., *cloven or rent.* This cannot possibly denote a flash of lightning, or the shining of the stars, or a sudden clearing of the sky, or any thing whatever but an apparent separation or division of the visible expanse, as if to afford passage to the form and voice which are mentioned in the next verse. He that by His power parted the waters, to make a way through them to Canaan, now by His power parted the air, to open a correspondence with the heavenly Canaan. Thus was it shown that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened to us by Christ's undertaking for us. Compare the similar expressions of Is. lxiv. 1; Ezek. i. 1; John i. 52; Acts vii. 56. In all these cases the essential idea suggested by the version is that of renewed communication and extraordinary gifts from heaven to earth.

22. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.

<sup>a</sup> Ch. ix. 34, 35; Pa. ii. 7; Is. xlii. 1; Matt. xii. 18; xvii. 5; xxvii. 43; Col. i. 13; 1 Pet. ii. 4; 2 Pet. i. 17, 18.

The baptism of Jesus was not one of the least bitter of the ingredients of His most bitter cup. John's baptism was so far from being a rite acknowledged and honored by all the members of the Jewish church, that "the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." Ch. vii. 30. And we can easily imagine the scornful and contemptuous look of these Pharisees and lawyers, who from curiosity attended upon John's preaching, as Jesus approached the water for the purpose of partaking of this despised ceremony. Nor can we but think that these things carried with them a pang to the heart of Christ, for the language of prophecy represents every suffering of Him as aggravated by those feelings which aggravate our own. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out

the lip, they shake the head at me." Ps. xxii. 7. "Shame hath covered my face." Ps. xlv. 15. In every humiliation of Christ, provision is made to render what is due to His Divine glory. At His birth, it was done by the heralding of an angel; in His circumcision, by His name *Jesus*; in the presentation in the temple, by the testimony of Simeon; in His baptism, by the demurring of John, Matt. iii. 14, and the incidents here recorded; and in His passion, by various supernatural manifestations. *And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him.* This was the first manifestation of the threefold miracle attending Christ's inauguration as Mediator. The question has been asked, "Was the bodily shape in which the Spirit descended, that of a dove, or was the manner of the descent only dove-like, the shape being of some other kind?" To this it may be replied that there was certainly a visible appearance, and if it was not that of a dove, what was it? The Evangelist is explicit, and tells us that it was "in a bodily shape," not merely alighting as a dove would alight, but in a visible form or shape, "like a dove." The most usual symbol of the Divine presence was fire, or light, or glory. Such was the resplendent light which hovered over the tabernacle in the wilderness, and which settled between the cherubim in Solomon's temple. Such, too, was the symbol on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and disciples. We are expressly told that lambent flames of fire, or, what is the same thing, "cloven tongues as of fire," came down from above, and lighted on them, and remained upon them. We are entitled, then, to conclude, that after the baptism of Jesus, when it is said the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, a flame of fire, or a bright shining light, "in a bodily shape like a dove," rested upon Him. Thus the Spirit descended upon Him as the promised gift for His great office. Is. lxi. 1. The form of a *dove* would indicate the spirit of Christ's ministry, and, as the dove, with an olive-branch, flew to the ark, showing the waters of the flood to have abated, so this was the symbolical testimony of the Father, and the Spirit, at His baptism, which agreed with the angels' song at His birth, *Peace on earth*, &c. It is said, John i. 32, that the Spirit "abode upon Him," that is, the mystic symbol did not alight and then fly off again: it remained until it became invisible, as if fusing down into His person. Some suppose that in the selection of the form of a *dove*, there was a reference to the dove's hovering and brooding motion, used in Gen. i. 2, according to an ancient Jewish exposition, to describe the generative or productive agency of the Divine Spirit in the first creation. Others suppose there was a reference to the sacrificial use of this bird, as prescribed or permitted by the ritual in certain cases. Gen. xv. 9; Lev. xiv. 22; xxi. 6; Luke ii. 24. We must beware of supposing, for a moment, that this descent of the Spirit was meant to imply that our Lord first received the grace of the Holy Ghost at this particular time, or that He had not received the Divine Spirit before in the same degree. We must not doubt that the Holy Ghost dwelt in Jesus "without measure" from the very time of His incarnation. It was designed, on this occasion, that His receiving of the Spirit might be notified to others. It is clear that the *Holy Ghost* cannot be an attribute or influence which could not be embodied or subjected to the senses, but denotes a Divine Person. We have here a striking illustration of the incarnation. As the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Trinity, assumes the bodily form of a dove by way of self-manifestation to the eyes of men, what difficulty is there in supposing that the second Person of the Trinity should become God manifest in the flesh in a human form? The descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ indicates Him as the medium or channel through whom this great blessing is to be obtained.

*And a voice came from heaven*, not visionary or imaginary, but a literal and real sound, corresponding to the bodily appearance by which it was preceded. This was the second feature of the threefold miracle on the occasion. That the voice was audible to others, may be learned from the analogous occurrence at the Transfiguration, where the added words (*Hear*

ye Him) were addressed directly to the three disciples. Matt. xvii. 5. Indeed, the conjunction of the voice and the appearance seems to indicate that both were meant to be witnessed by all present. John individually needed not the voice, the visible appearance being to him a sufficient sign. The people needed both together—because, if they had seen the appearance only, they could not have known its signification without the accompanying words, and if they heard the voice only, they could not have known to whom it referred, but would have been likely to suppose that it applied rather to John himself than to Jesus. *From heaven*, or more exactly, *out of heaven*. Heaven is, both in conception and reality, *up* above us. Mark xvi. 19. We know not, indeed, its locality in the immensity of the universe. But wherever heaven is, it is *up*. The language of Scripture, the language of humanity, the language of our childhood, perhaps, too, the language of science, which tells us there is a centre of the universe, which we may suppose is the central residence of God—all unite to locate heaven *above*. Hence, both in conception and reality, a shape or a voice from heaven must come *down* to us. *Which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.* This was the third part of the miracle at the baptism. We have here, 1. *The nearness of Christ's relation. Thou art my Son.* Christ is the Father's Son, first, in respect of His eternal generation. "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." He is His Son, secondly, in respect of His miraculous conception, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. He is His Son, again, by particular designation, to hold the office of Mediator, and to be the heir and Lord of all things, whom the Father hath sanctified and sealed, and to whom He said, "I will make Him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." And He is His Son, or proved to be so, in respect of His resurrection, being "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The words, *My Son*, are applied to the Messiah in the promise made to David, 2 Sam. vii. 14, and in his own prophetic Psalm founded on it. Ps. ii. 7. Hence the *Son of God* became one of His standing designations, Matt. iv. 3, 6; viii. 29; xiv. 33; xxvi. 63; xxvii. 40, 54, corresponding to His other title, *Son of Man*, Dan. vii. 13; Matt. viii. 20; ix. 6; x. 23; xi. 19, &c., each implying more than it expresses, *the Son of God*, (who is the Son of Man,) *the Son of Man*, (who is the Son of God.) The filial relation thus ascribed to the Messiah, far from excluding, presupposes His eternal Sonship. 2. *The endearedness of Christ's person, Thou art my beloved Son.* The article recurs twice in the Greek, literally, *the Son of Me, the beloved*. This repetition of the article is exceedingly emphatic. Jesus is elsewhere called "God's dear Son." The Divine love here affirmed is not to be deemed as the ground or cause, but the effect or co-eternal adjunct of the Sonship here ascribed to Christ. The Father loves the Son on account of that independent absolute perfection, of which both are equally possessed, and He loves Him on the ground of that most intimate relation which subsists between them, as in some way distinct, though in essence one, and of which the relation of Sonship is the fittest analogy to be found among men. The Father loveth the Son on account of the manner in which He unfolds the Divine character, in the creation and the government of the world. But this love is drawn forth by the still more illustrious manifestation of these excellences, on the part of the Son, in the accomplishment of the great and beneficent work assigned to Him as the Saviour of the lost, a work expressly committed to Him by the Father—a work performed by Him, in the exercise of adequate powers, in a manner absolutely perfect—and, therefore, the proper object of the entire approbation, the most complacent regard, of Him who appointed Him. John x. 17, 18. *In thee I am well pleased.* The preposition indicates especially the object of the Father's good pleasure, and all persons and all things in the Son. The verb meaning *to be well pleased*, and the noun, meaning *good pleasure*, are employed when

one is pleased by what he, or another, has or does. The Father here proclaims that He accepts Christ as the Mediator between God and man. He publishes to the world that He is satisfied with Him, as the propitiation, the substitute, the ransom—prayer, for the lost family of Adam, and the Head of a redeemed people. John iii. 35. There is a rich mine of comfort in these words, for all Christ's believing people. In themselves, and in their own doings, they see nothing to please God. They are daily sensible of weakness, shortcoming and imperfection in their ways. But let them recollect that the Father regards them as members of His beloved Son Jesus Christ. They are clothed in Christ's righteousness, and invested with His merit. They are, as our persons and services only can be, "accepted in the Beloved." What sweet words are these! They have sustained the children of God in a dying hour. How could any man have the thought of entering God's presence, were it not for the assurance that the Father will receive him in the name of His own beloved Son?

The baptism of our Lord affords a demonstration of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. *Three* distinct *persons* are here represented: God the Holy Ghost made manifest "in a bodily shape like a dove;" God the Son ascending from the waters of Jordan in that body which had been prepared for Him; and God the Father, "whom no man hath seen or can see," manifesting Himself by the voice from heaven—the three Persons but one God of the Christian Trinity, co-essential, co-equal, co-eternal. Until we receive this doctrine, Christianity has not even effected an entrance into our mind. It only has its perfect work within us, when we are enabled to have near access to God the Father, through the mediation of God the Son, and by the grace of God the Holy Ghost.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Were "all" the people baptized before our Lord's baptism?
2. How are we to understand the word "all?"
3. How are we to obtain a complete account of our Lord's baptism?
4. Why does Luke touch upon the occurrence?
5. Why was Jesus baptized?
6. What is said of all the three voices that bare witness to Christ?
7. How are we to sanctify every ordinance and action?
8. What was the subject-matter of Christ's prayer at this time?
9. What is meant by "opened?"
10. How was the heaven opened?
11. What was shown by this?
12. What is said of Christ's baptism as a part of His humiliation?
13. What is said of John's baptism?
14. Did the circumstances of Christ's baptism carry a pang to His heart?
15. What proof is there that they did?
16. What took place in every humiliation of Christ?
17. What was the first manifestation of the threefold miracle on this occasion?
18. Was "the bodily shape" of the Spirit that of a dove, or was the manner of the descent only dove-like?
19. What may be said in favor of the former supposition?
20. What would the form of a dove indicate?
21. What is meant by the Spirit "abode upon Him?"
22. What do some suppose was referred to in the selection of a dove?
23. What do others suppose?
24. What must we beware of thinking?
25. What is clear about the Holy Ghost?
26. What is said about the Incarnation?
27. What does the descent of the Holy Ghost on Christ indicate?
28. Did a real sound come from heaven?

29. Was this the second feature of the threefold miracle?
30. Were the voice and appearance both witnessed?
31. What is said of "from heaven?"
32. What did the voice say?
33. What is said about the nearness of Christ's relation to the Father?
34. What is said about the endearedness of Christ's Person?
35. Explain the words "in thee I am well pleased."
36. What is said of these words?
37. How does the baptism of our Lord demonstrate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity?
38. What is true of us until we receive this doctrine?
39. When only has Christianity its perfect work in us?

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### LESSON XXII.

vs. 23-38.

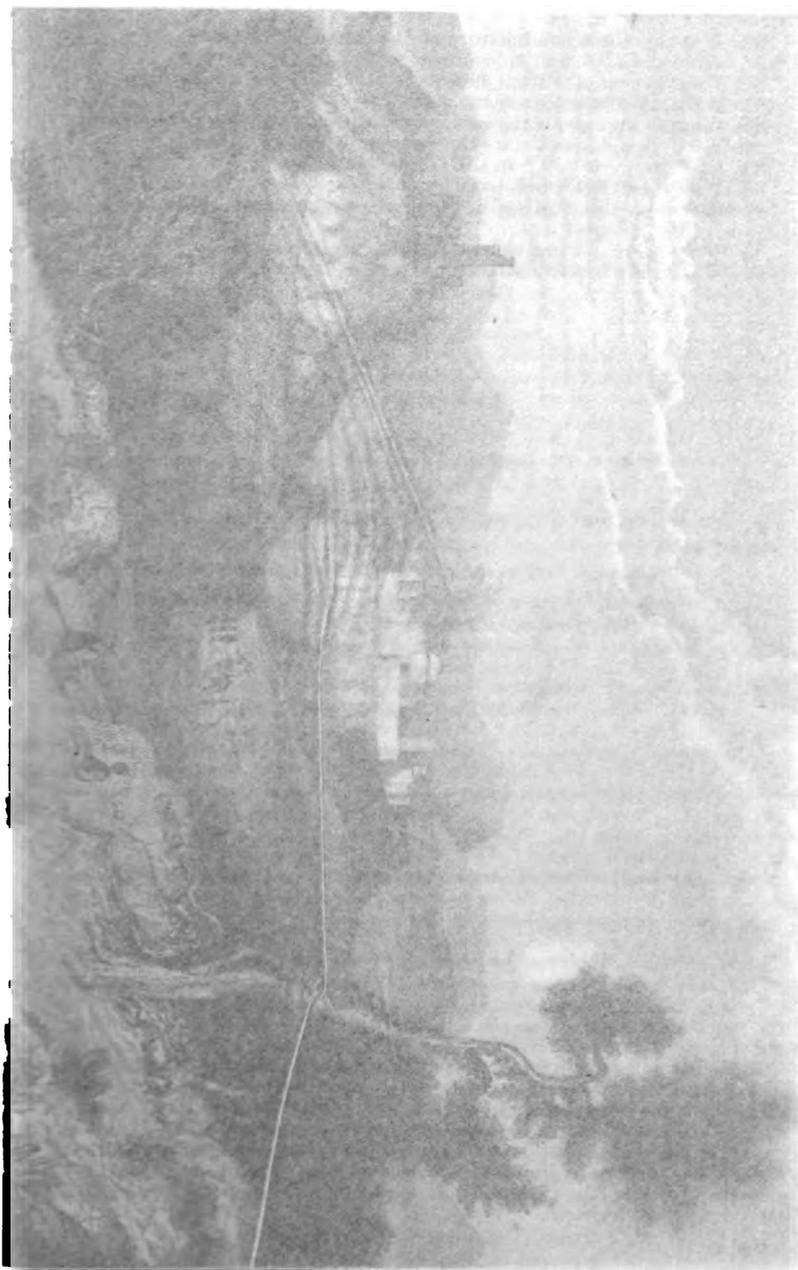
23. And Jesus himself began to be 'about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) "the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,

<sup>†</sup> See Num. iv. 3, 35, 39, 43, 47.

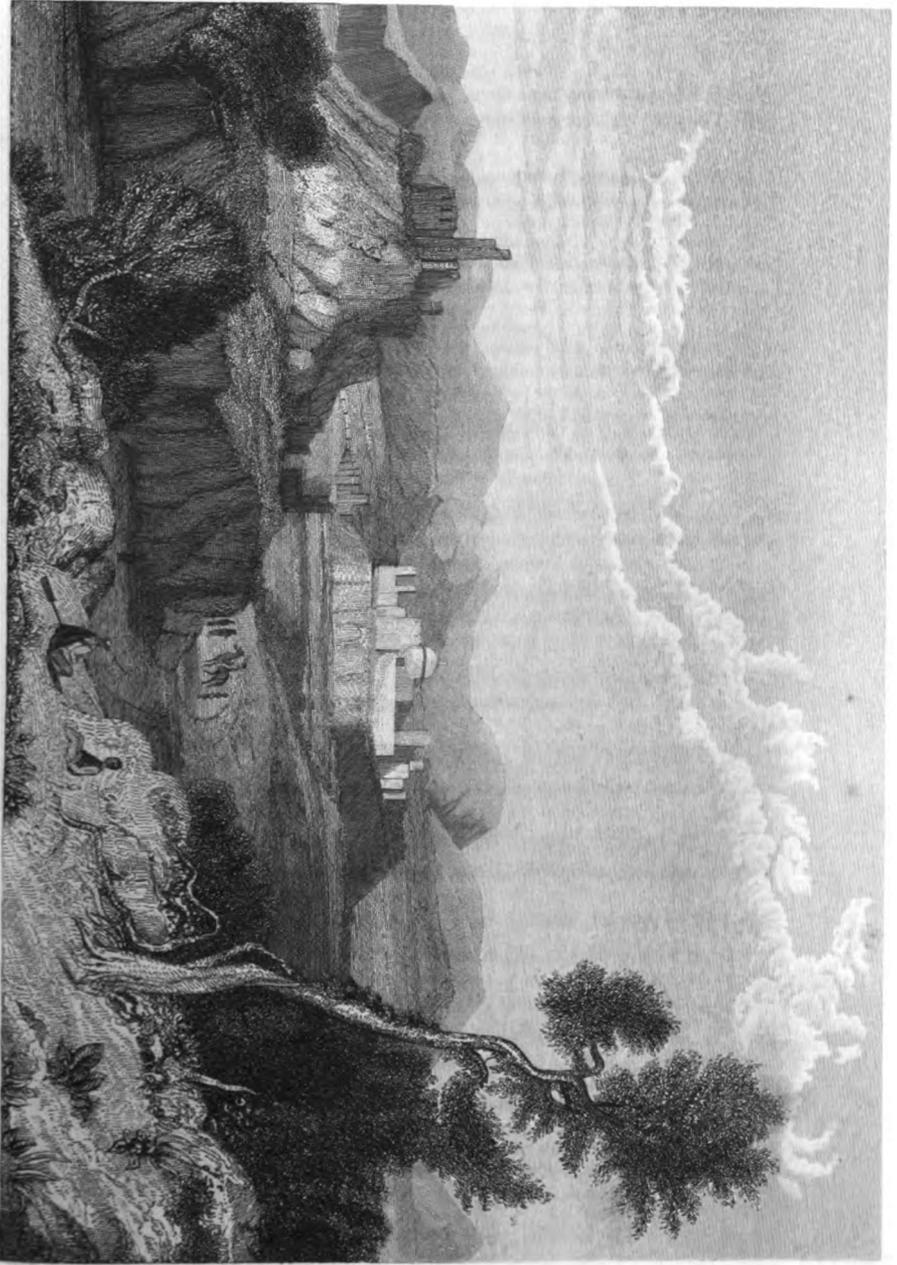
<sup>•</sup> Matt. xiii. 56; John vi. 42.

*Jesus himself, or this same Jesus, the pronoun serving to distinguish Him from others. Began to be about thirty years of age.* A better rendering of the original would be—and *Jesus was about thirty years of age*, (when thus,) see vs. 21, 22, in which the Evangelist has been describing the dedication of Christ to His work as Messiah, *beginning* (or entering upon) His public ministry. *About*. It has been remarked by an eminent Biblical scholar that the use of this adverb plainly teaches that nothing *certain* can be defined respecting the age of Christ at His baptism, and commencement of His ministry, and that hence it is no wonder that the conjectures of commentators should be so various. Thirty years, however, was the legal age for entering on the priesthood. It was also the age at which the scribes entered upon professional duty as teachers. *Being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph*, i. e., being the reputed son of Joseph. *Which was the son of Heli*. Matthew, who also gives a genealogy of the Messiah, says, ch. i. 2, that Joseph was the son of Jacob, here he is called the son of Heli. This apparent discrepancy is by most commentators explained by the fact, that two distinct pedigrees are given, Matthew giving the genealogy of Joseph, Luke giving that of Mary. This explanation requires the word *son*, in the link between Joseph and Heli, to be taken in the sense of *son-in-law*, a meaning which it has in 1 Sam. xxiv. 16; xxvi. 21, 25. Compare also Ruth i. 11, 12, 13. If it be asked why Luke did not openly express this idea, by putting the name of Mary in place of Joseph, and writing, *which was the daughter of Heli*, the answer is, that as the Hebrews never permitted *women* to enter into their genealogical tables, whenever a family happened to end with a *daughter*, instead of naming *her* in the genealogy, they inserted her *husband* as the *son* of him who was in reality but his *father-in-law*. It is remarkable that the Jews in their Talmud call *Mary the daughter of Heli*, showing that either that is their own tradition, or that so they originally understood the genealogy as recorded. And on that passage in the Talmud, Raschi thus comments: "Jesus was connected with the blood royal by birth."

24. Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of









Levi, which was *the son of Melchi*, which was *the son of Janna*, which was *the son of Joseph*,

25. Which was *the son of Mattathias*, which was *the son of Amos*, which was *the son of Naum*, which was *the son of Esi*, which was *the son of Nagge*,

26. Which was *the son of Maath*, which was *the son of Mattathias*, which was *the son of Semei*, which was *the son of Joseph*, which was *the son of Judah*,

27. Which was *the son of Joanna*, which was *the son of Rhesa*, which was *the son of Zorobabel*, which was *the son of Salathiel*, which was *the son of Neri*,

28. Which was *the son of Melchi*, which was *the son of Addi*, which was *the son of Cosam*, which was *the son of Elmodam*, which was *the son of Er*,

29. Which was *the son of Jose*, which was *the son of Eliezer*, which was *the son of Jorim*, which was *the son of Matthat*, which was *the son of Levi*,

30. Which was *the son of Simeon*, which was *the son of Judah*, which was *the son of Joseph*, which was *the son of Jonan*, which was *the son of Eliakim*,

31. Which was *the son of Melea*, which was *the son of Menan*, which was *the son of Mattatha*, which was *the son of Nathan*, which was *the son of David*,

32. Which was *the son of Jesse*, which was *the son of Obed*, which was *the son of Booz*, which was *the son of Salmon*, which was *the son of Naasson*,

33. Which was *the son of Aminadab*, which was *the son of Aram*, which was *the son of Esrom*, which was *the son of Phares*, which was *the son of Judah*,

34. Which was *the son of Jacob*, which was *the son of Isaac*, which was *the son of Abraham*, which was *the son of Thara*, which was *the son of Nachor*,

35. Which was *the son of Saruch*, which was *the son of Ragau*, which was *the son of Phalec*, which was *the son of Heber*, which was *the son of Sala*,

36. Which was *the son of Cainan*, which was *the son of Arphaxad*, which was *the son of Sem*, which was *the son of Noah*, which was *the son of Lamech*,

In regard to the catalogue of names, it is most likely that Luke took his account from family records. This will account for the introduction of Cainan the son of Arphaxad, which is omitted in Gen. ii. 12, 13, probably for a similar reason that the names of three kings are omitted in Matthew's genealogy.

37. Which was *the son of Mathusala*, which was *the son of*

Enoch, which was *the son* of Jared, which was *the son* of Maleleel, which was *the son* of Cainan,

38. Which was *the son* of Enos, which was *the son* of Seth, which was *the son* of Adam, which was *the son* of God.

*Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.* "Who, being descended of no human parents, but formed by the immediate power of a Divine Creating Hand, might, with peculiar propriety, be called (*the son*) of God, in his original state the heir of immortality and glory." The fact that Adam is here called the son of God, signifies that Christ, born of a virgin, was the second Adam, and that His production by the Holy Spirit was no less than the peculiar work of the Divine Power, than was the creation of Adam. *Son of God*, therefore, in this passage, is one who, other than God, has no natural father. Gen. v. 1, 2. Compare Ch. i. 27. The Syriac has it, *Who was of God*, referring his descent or origin to God as the author of it. Luke carried up the pedigree to Adam, the human, and to God, the Divine Father of ALL, that he might intimate the right of the Gentiles in the Messiah. Matthew, writing more particularly for the Jews, in pursuance of his purpose to demonstrate the Messiahship of Jesus, by showing the exact correspondence of His life to the prophecies and types of the Old Testament, traced His descent not only from David the first and greatest of the theocratic kings, but from Abraham the Father of the Faithful and the founder of the ancient church or chosen people.

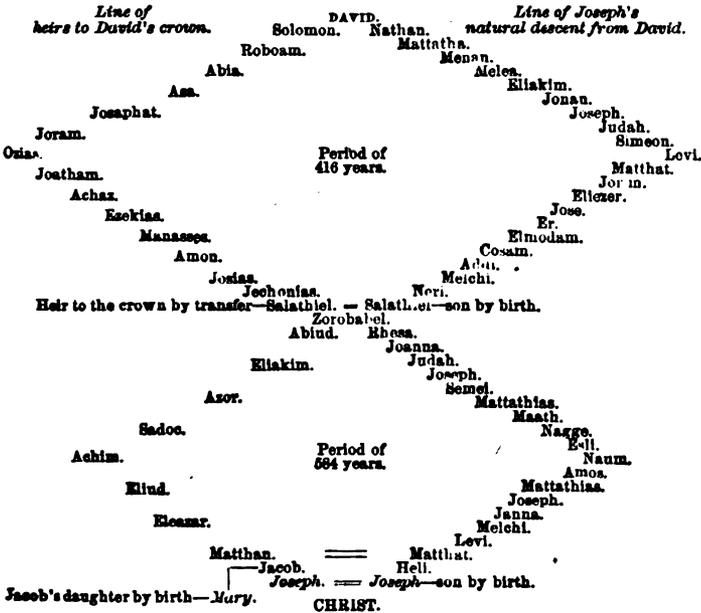
"The genealogy of Matthew," says Dr. Smith, Classical Examiner in the University of London, "is Joseph's genealogy as legal successor to the throne of David, i. e., it exhibits the successive heirs of the kingdom ending with Christ, as Joseph's reputed son. Luke's is Joseph's private genealogy, exhibiting his real birth, as David's son, and thus showing why he was heir to Solomon's crown. The simple principle that one Evangelist exhibits that genealogy which contained the successive heirs to David's and Solomon's throne, while the other exhibits the paternal stem of him who was the heir, explains all the anomalies of the two pedigrees, their agreements as well as their discrepancies, and the circumstance of there being two at all."

"We agree with those," says Dr. Lange, "who consider that, while Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, Luke gives that of Mary. Considered in itself, it was far more likely that Luke would give the genealogy of Mary than that of her husband. She is the principal figure throughout his early chapters, while Joseph occupies a far more subordinate position than in Matthew. He is very explicit in narrating that Mary became the mother of the Holy Child, through the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit; why then should he, who was not writing for Jews, give the descent of His foster-father, when he is intent upon asserting, that the Lord was not related to Joseph according to the flesh? He is expressly contrasting His true descent from Eli, the father of Mary, with His supposed descent from Joseph, and Mary is simply passed over, because it was not customary among the Jews to insert the names of females in their genealogies. We find it then here stated, that Jesus was the descendant of Eli, viz., through Mary, his daughter." Dr. Lange also says: "On comparing the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, we are immediately struck with the difference between them. The former is written in the descending, the latter in the ascending line: the former extends to Abraham, the common ancestor of the Jewish nation, the latter to Adam, the common parent of mankind: the former is divided into three parts, each of fourteen generations, and thus exhibits a more artificial arrangement, while it wants the completeness which we discover in the latter. Both tables give fourteen names from Abraham to David, while from David to the Babylonian captivity, Matthew gives fourteen, and Luke twenty-one names. Symmetrical arrangement causes

Matthew to omit certain names, while a desire for historical completeness is more strongly manifested in Luke, who, during his stay with Paul at Jerusalem, Acts xxi. 17, might easily have found opportunities of obtaining important particulars concerning Mary and her genealogy. The universal character of his genealogy is explained by the fact, that his Gospel was not written, as that of Matthew, for the Christians of Palestine."

Notwithstanding a few difficulties which some have perceived in relation to the genealogical tables of Matthew and Luke, it is certain that no difficulty was ever found, or alleged, in regard to them, by any of the early enemies of Christianity. There is no evidence that they ever adduced them as containing a contradiction. Many of those enemies were acute, learned, and able, and they show by their writings that they were not *indisposed* to detect all the errors that could possibly be found in the sacred narrative. It is to be remembered also that the *Jews* were fully competent to show that these tables were incorrect, if they were really so, and it is clear that they were fully disposed, if possible, to do it. The fact, therefore, that it is not done is clear evidence that *they* thought them to be correct. The same may be said of the acute pagans who wrote against Christianity. None of them have called in question the correctness of these tables. This is full proof that, in a time when it was easy to understand these tables, they were believed to be correct.

"The theory of Lord Arthur Hervey," says Dr. Whedon, "lately published in England, founded in a great degree on the theory of Grotius, seems likely to be ultimately universally adopted. This theory in its details solves so many of the facts as not only to remove difficulties, but to furnish a sort of proof of the genuineness of the record. By this theory *Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph* (including in fact, that of Mary) in the line of *royal inheritance*; *Luke gives that of natural descent*. This is made clear by the following table :



"From David, Matthew traces the *royal line* through Solomon to Jechonias; Luke gives the private line through Nathan to Salathiel. But Jechonias was *childless*, Jer. xxii. 30, so that with him the Solomonic line ended. Consequently, Salathiel, of the Nathanic line, came into the royal heirship. By this transfer Salathiel stands in both: namely, the *line of natural descent* from David through Nathan, and the *line of political succession* to the crown. From Zerobabel's son, Abiud, Matthew furnishes a series of heirs; from his other son, Rhesa, Luke gives the natural line of Joseph down to Matthat. But this Matthat is the same as Matthew's Matthan. Of this Matthat, Jacob and Heli are two sons; the former, being the elder, is crown-heir; the second stands in the private line. Heli's son is JOSEPH; Jacob, the crown-heir, has only a daughter, *Mary*. The royal line thus failing of a direct male heir, Joseph marries Mary, and is thus transferred to the royal line both by kin and by marriage. Both these views secure the true Davidic descent of Mary; which is indeed absolutely necessary to the fulfilment of a most explicit Divine promise, 2 Sam. vii. 12, to which Peter refers, Acts ii. 30."

When we survey any such series of generations, it is obvious to reflect how, *like the leaves of a tree, one passeth away and another cometh, yet the earth still abideth*, and with it the goodness of the Lord, which runs on, from generation to generation, the common hope of parents and children. Of those who formerly lived upon the earth, and perhaps made the most conspicuous figure among the children of men, how many have there been whose names have perished with them! and how many of whom nothing but their names are remaining! Thus are we passing away, and thus shall we be shortly forgotten. Happy, if, while we are forgotten of men, we are remembered by God, and our names are found *within the book of life!*

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by "Jesus himself?"
2. What is said about "began to be about thirty years of age?"
3. What was the legal age for entering on the priesthood?
4. What are we to understand by "being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph?"
5. What other Evangelist gives a genealogy of the Messiah?
6. How is the apparent discrepancy referred to between Matthew and Luke explained?
7. How does this explanation require the word "son" to be understood?
8. Give instances in which this word means son-in-law.
9. Why did not Luke openly express this idea?
10. What do the Jews in their Talmud call Mary?
11. From what source did Luke probably take his account of names?
12. What does this account for?
13. What is said about "which was the son of Adam?"
14. What does the fact that Adam is here called the son of God signify?
15. Why did Luke carry up the pedigree to Adam?
16. Why did Matthew trace Christ's descent, not only from David, but up to Abraham?
17. What does Dr. Smith say of the genealogy of Matthew?
18. What does Dr. Lange say of the genealogies of Matthew and Luke?
19. Did the ancient enemies of Christianity find any difficulty in the genealogical tables?
20. Did the Jews detect any difficulty?
21. What is said of the theory of Lord Arthur Hervey?
22. Mention the line of heirs to David's crown.
23. Mention the line of Joseph's natural descent from David.
24. What period of years did these include?
25. How does Matthew trace the *royal line*?

26. How did Salathiel, of the Nathanic line, come into the royal heirship?
27. What does Matthew do from Zorobabel's son, Abiud?
28. What does Luke furnish from Zorobabel's other son, Rhesa?
29. Who was this Matthat mentioned by Luke?
30. Who were the two sons of Matthat?
31. Which was the elder?
32. What did his seniority make him?
33. How did Heli stand?
34. Whose son was Joseph?
35. Whose daughter was Mary?
36. How was Joseph transferred to the royal line?
37. What do both these views secure?
38. What is the Davidic descent of Mary absolutely essential to?
39. Where is this promise found?
40. What reflection is suggested by the survey of such a series of generations?

## CHAPTER IV.

### LESSON XXIII.

vs. 1-2.

THE last words of the foregoing chapter, that Jesus was the *son of Adam*, indicate Him to be the *Seed of the woman*; being so, we have an account of Him in the beginning of this chapter, according to the promise, *breaking the serpent's head*, baffling and foiling the devil in all his temptations, who, by one temptation, had baffled and foiled our first parents. Thus, in the beginning of the war, He made reprisals upon him, and conquered the conqueror.

1. And <sup>a</sup>Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and <sup>b</sup>was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

<sup>a</sup> Matt. iv. 1; Mark i. 12.

<sup>b</sup> Ch. ii. 27; ver. 14.

The remarkable transaction in our Lord's life we are now to consider, is one of the most, if not the most, difficult to interpret of all in the sacred history.

Some have undertaken to regard it as a *parabolic description of an actual event*, others, as a *train of thought*, others, as a *vision or prophetic trance*, others still as a *myth*. But to all these views there are the following objections: 1. It is an established rule of interpretation, that in explaining the sacred writings we ought never, without the most apparent and indispensable necessity, allow ourselves the liberty of departing from the plain, obvious and literal meaning of the words. And, evidently, no such necessity can be alleged in the present instance. It is true there are in this narrative many difficulties, and many extraordinary, surprising and miraculous incidents, but the whole history of our Saviour is wonderful and miraculous from beginning to end, and if, whenever we meet with a difficulty or a miracle, we should have recourse to figure, metaphor, or vision, we should

soon reduce a great part of the sacred writings to nothing else. 2. There is not in any part of this narrative of the temptation, the slightest or most distant intimation that it is nothing more than a parable or a vision. And it is certain that if any one had meant to describe a real transaction, he could not have selected any expressions better adapted to that purpose than those actually made use of by the three Evangelists in the record they have made of the temptation. 3. The view that the temporal and earthly thoughts which constituted the temptations to which Christ was exposed, were the result of His own reflections, revolts us as an outrage against the Person of our Lord. Had Jesus cherished such thoughts in the faintest degree, He had been Christ no longer. We dare not suppose in Him a choice which, presupposing within Him a tendency for evil, would involve the necessity of His comparing the evil with the good, and deciding between them. 4. It was in itself extremely provable that there should be a real and personal conflict between Christ and Satan. This chief of the fallen angels has ever been an irreconcilable enemy of the human race. From the very creation of man he has exercised towards him the most malignant art and subtilty, and, with what success, in leading to acts of folly, stupidity and weakness, we all too well know and feel. At the time of our Saviour's appearance, the tyranny of this diabolical spirit seems to have arrived at its utmost height, and to have extended to the bodies as well as the souls of men, of both of which he took absolute possession. It was, therefore, highly probable that our blessed Lord would think it a measure eminently proper, to begin His ministry with showing a decided superiority over the great adversary of man, whose empire He was going to abolish, with manifesting to mankind that the great Captain of their salvation was able to accomplish the important work He had undertaken, and with setting an example of virtuous firmness to His followers, which might encourage them to resist the most powerful temptations that the prince of darkness could throw in their way.

The history of our Lord's temptation ought never to be contemplated apart from His baptism. It is certain, at least, that much of its significance will be missed, when it is dissociated even in thought from the solemn recognition of the Son by the Father, and the salutation of Him from heaven, with which the Evangelical history, in all its three narratives, has knit it so closely. Matt. iii. 16, 17; Mark i. 9-11; Luke iii. 21, 22. Jesus had received His heavenly armor, and now He went to prove it, and try of what temper it was. Having been baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, He now goes to be baptized with the fire of temptation, even as there was another baptism of blood. Matt. xx. 22. Satan had certainly either himself, or through some of his attendant spirits, heard the miraculous attestation to the Sonship of the Messiah vouchsafed from heaven at His baptism, and He now approached Him for the purpose of ascertaining His identity, and sifting His pretensions, as well as, if possible, to lead Him into sin, and thus ruin the scheme of man's redemption; for he knew that if Jesus once sinned, He could not repair the ruin of the apostasy, because He could not offer a perfect obedience and an unblemished sacrifice.

*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost.* This is peculiar to Luke, and is to be referred to the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him after His baptism. Luke iii. 22. Christ had now greater measures of the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Holy Ghost than ever before. He was occupied, endowed, and governed by Him, not merely as man, but as the God-man or Mediator. Immediately afterwards, He was exposed to terrible sufferings and temptations. It is often God's method to prepare His people for great sufferings, by granting them great consolations beforehand. Such as are baptized with Christ, must expect to be assaulted by Satan. *Returned from Jordan, probably a short distance towards Jerusalem. And was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Was led.* We must not understand an act of compulsion. There was some urgency, but this referred to the necessity of this for Christ's work,

and not to any compulsion contrary to His will. Christ was led by a strong impulse distinct from His own will, though not opposed to it. *By the Spirit*, that is, not His own mind or the evil spirit, but the Holy Ghost, often simply so described. The words *Ghost* and *Spirit* are the same in the original. The best of men may sometimes be permitted to fall into temptations. They are not therefore to be considered as marks of God's displeasure or desertion of us, but only as trials of our virtue and tests of our character. As Jesus did not go of His own private motion to enter the lists with Satan, we are taught that we must not run into or rush upon temptations, without a warrant and call from God. We cannot consistently and acceptably present the petition, "Lead us not into temptation," unless we guard against going into temptation. We are not to be so fool-hardy as to be glad of an opportunity of having our spiritual strength tried by temptation. "He who carries about with him much inflammable matter, would do well to keep at the greatest possible distance from the fire." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." The man who knows he is very irascible, yet voluntarily places himself in circumstances in which he is likely to be put into a passion, or he who feels that the love of the world is gaining on him, yet earnestly seeks after a situation where that principle is likely to be greatly strengthened, or he who has a liking to intoxicating liquors, yet exposes himself to constant temptation—all these persons are not *led* into temptation, but *run* into it. And they would do well to remember that there is no necessary connection between entering into temptation and coming out of it. Both Judas and Peter went in, but only one of them returned. *Into the wilderness*. That it is distinguished as "*the wilderness*," and not by any name, seems to indicate that this wilderness was in the neighborhood of the place where Christ had been baptized. There is, therefore, sufficient probability in the tradition which finds this wilderness in the desolate region east of Jerusalem, overlooking the valley of the Jordan. The high mountain which the same tradition makes the immediate scene of the "temptation" that ensued, is from this tradition called *Quarantania*, and lies about three miles north of the road to Jericho. It is fifteen hundred or two thousand feet high, and is distinguished for its sere and desolate aspect even in that gloomy region of savage and dreary sights. A modern traveller thus describes the scene on his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho :

"After pursuing our way for an hour or two down the rugged ravine which forms the road, we turned to the left, and ascended into the desolate and blackened mountains of the 'Wilderness of Judea,' the scene of John the Baptist's ministration and of our Lord's temptation. Of all places in the world, it is naturally fitted for the centre and kingdom of Satan the destroyer; for, as Maundrell says, 'it is a most miserable, dry, barren place, consisting of high, rocky mountains, so torn and disordered as if the earth had suffered some great convulsion, in which its very bowels had been turned outward.' This fearful wilderness, not ten miles east of Jerusalem, has always been the abode of violence and misery. The very road on which we passed was the scene of our Lord's parable of the Good Samaritan." Referring to *Quarantania*, which, as already stated, is about three miles north of the road to Jericho, he says: "Its summit seems inaccessible, yet a little chapel is perched upon it, and its side next the Jordan is cut into caverns and chambers, in which we saw at night the flitting taper of the hermit, or of the pilgrim doing penance during Lent."

There could not have been any fitter scene for the temptation of our Lord than the *wilderness*, nor any so fit. The waste and desert places of the earth are, so to speak, the characters which sin has visibly impressed on the outward creation, its signs and its symbols there, the echoes in the outward world of the desolation and wasteness which sin has wrought in the inner life of men. In the antagonism of the wilderness to Paradise or the garden, we see a yet higher fitness in the appointment of the place. The garden and

the desert are the two most opposite poles of natural life; in them we have the highest harmonies and the deepest discords of nature. It was just, that the first Adam, so long as he stood in his original uprightness, should be a dweller in the garden; that his outward surroundings should correspond with his inner life; that there should be no disagreement between them; and it was there, in the garden of Eden, that *his* temptation went forward. Being worsted in the conflict, he was expelled therefrom, and he and that race whose destinies were linked with his, should thenceforth inhabit an earth which was cursed for his sake. It is true, indeed, that in this, as in so much else, the curse was in part mercifully lightened, and the earth was not all desert, yet for all this its desert places do evermore represent to us what the whole of it might justly have been: the curse concentrates itself upon them. The second Adam, therefore, taking up the conflict exactly where the first had left it, and inheriting all the consequences of his defeat, in the desert does battle with the foe, and conquering him there, wins back the garden for that whole race, whose champion and representative in this conflict He had been. Milton showed that he had a true feeling of this, when he wrote a poem which contained nothing more than a history of this victoriously surmounted temptation, and called it *Paradise Regained*, setting it, as the narrative of the second Adam's victory, over against *Paradise Lost*, or the narrative of the first Adam's defeat. And this view is not the less true, because as yet the garden blooms not again, or blooms only in part, for in the higher culture and more complete subduing to the needs and delights of men, of those regions where the faith of Christ is owned, we may see already pledges and promises of the complete restoration of the earth to all its original fertility and beauty, which Christ's victory over Satan in the wilderness shall have one day brought about.

2. Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

• Ex. xxxiv. 28 : 1 Kings xix. 8.

*Being forty days.* The forty days spent by our Saviour in the wilderness bear a striking resemblance to the forty days' retirement of Moses on Mount Sinai, and the forty days spent by Elijah at Horeb; and this likeness between the Mediator of the New Covenant and the Mediator and Reformer of the Old becomes the more significant from the subsequent appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. And yet Christ's fast of forty days is not determined by theirs, but rather theirs and His are alike determined by the significance which this number, forty, in the Scriptures everywhere obtains. It is the signature of the punishment of sin. Gen. vii. 4, 13; Num. xiv. 33; xxxii. 13, 14; Ps. xc. 10; Deut. xxv. 3; 2 Cor. xi. 24; Ezek. xxix. 11. *Tempted.* Mark says, i. 13: "And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan." From this it would appear that, to a greater or less extent, Christ was subject to the assaults of Satan, during His whole sojourn in the desert, yet it is probable, that at the close, such fierce and unwonted temptations beset Him, that it was as though the tempter had come to Him for the first time.

To be *tempted*, means originally nothing more than to be tried, proved, or (in modern English) tested, *i. e.*, shown to possess or want certain qualities, to be determined by comparison with some prescribed and well-known rule or standard. In a material sense the term is thus applied to the precious metals; in a moral sense to human character, as proved or tried by God Himself, or as solicited to sin by men or devils, in which sense God can no more tempt than He can be tempted, James i. 13. In reference to the nature of Christ's temptation, the learned Commentator, *Joseph Addison Alexander*,

says: "Our Lord's susceptibility of temptation was no more inconsistent with his sinlessness than that of Adam, and is insisted on in Scripture as essential to His office, and especially as necessary to a real sympathy between Him and His tempted people, Heb. ii. 18." Whilst, however, it is impossible for us to form a complete conception of our Lord's temptation, because temptation with us is always associated with the possibility of sin, we cannot but believe that Christ's trial was that of One who could not possibly have fallen. He could be tempted only from without, not from within. Coming as He did, not in this sinful flesh of ours, to which evil is native, and in which it inevitably rises up; but coming, as the Apostle expressly tells us, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," Rom. viii. 3, (where the "likeness" is plainly introduced to qualify the "sinful," for with the flesh itself He had not likeness, but identity, 1 John iv. 2; 2 John i. 14.) evil could in no other way be present to Him. Christ Himself declared: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me," John xiv. 30, and in v. 1, it is said, that He was "full of the Holy Ghost," so full that no single thought or wish of evil could find an entrance into that pure and spotless mind. There certainly, therefore, was no "lusting of the flesh against the Spirit," Gal. v. 17; no possible injection of any evil feeling or desire. All that the devil could do against such a heart as the heart of Jesus was to propose external temptations, to show to the outward senses what in any other case might have captivated the mind, and eternally ruined the soul of the tempted, but, in the case of our Lord, could gain not even a momentary access. Every attempt of Satan to inject temptation there, must have been (if it be not a derogatory simile) like the attempt to thrust a lighted torch into the exhausted receiver of an air-pump: the moment of its entrance would necessarily be the moment of its extinction. It is a question with some, whether Satan was present in the wilderness, only by his suggestions to Christ which He recognized as from him, or in a bodily shape. The probability is strongly in favor of the latter supposition. As Satan is a personal agent, there can be no difficulty in believing in his personal presence, and if personally present, it is easy to conceive that he could not be hid from Jesus, although under the like circumstances, *we* only become aware of his presence by the nature of his suggestions—by the torturing presence of his hot hand upon our souls. It is, however, really immaterial whether Satan did or did not appear in a distinct embodiment in this temptation. However understood, his presence was not the less actual, nor were his temptations the less real.

*Of the devil.* The devil is a being of the angelic order, formed, as all intelligent beings were, in a state of moral integrity, who, at a period anterior to the fall of man, in consequence of violating the Divine law, in a manner of which we are not particularly informed, was (along with a number of other spirits, who, it would appear, in consequence of being seduced by him, were partakers of his guilt) cast out of heaven, his original abode, placed in a state of degradation and punishment, and reserved to deeper shame and fiercer pains, at the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Matt. xxv. 41. His name, in the Greek, *diabolos*, properly signifies calumniator, detractor, false accuser, &c. Though the term "devils," in the plural, occurs frequently in the English version, in application to fallen spirits, the original word is not, in such instances, *diaboloi*, but *daimones* or *daimonia*. When used in the plural, *diabolos* never refers to fallen angels, but to human beings. See 1 Tim. iii. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 43; Titus ii. 8. There is, therefore, according to the strict propriety of Scripture language, only one devil, yet we are also taught that his chief apostate has under his control, angels or ministers that execute his malicious designs, and both are finally to be destroyed with an everlasting destruction. Matt. ix. 34; xii. 24, 25, 41; Jude 6; Rev. xx. 10.

That such a malignant and powerful being as Satan exists, none can

doubt, unless it is those whose minds are "spoiled by philosophy and vain deceit." That there are difficulties attending every attempt to define the character and relations of this prince of evil, none will deny, but the difficulties are much greater if we attempt to reconcile the expressions of the sacred writers with the opinion that they merely represent "a symbolical person," "the principle of evil personified," "a fictitious personage," "an evil disposition," &c. Such attempts cannot be reconciled with any rational or consistent principles of Scripture interpretation, and deserve to be classed with the hypothesis that our Saviour Himself had no real existence, but, as described by the Evangelists, is only a personification of virtue or moral excellence, and with other subtle errors which would deprive the prominent and essential truths of the gospel of all their force and character, by turning the expressions in which they are conveyed to us into fables, or mere figures of speech. We have no more right to reduce Satan and hell to figure, than we have Christ, angels, and heaven; nay, God Himself. If there are good beings in the body, there are also bad. So, also, if there are good bodiless spirits, there may be bad. It is no more contrary to the nature of God's government that there should be a Satan, than that there should be a Nimrod, a Nero, a Tamerlane, or a Mohammed. By the devil our first parents were betrayed into transgression, 2 Cor. xi. 3. He is called *Satan* or the *Adversary*, Mark i. 13, and in the text *the Devil*. He is also characterized by the epithets "the prince," "the god of this world," "the prince of darkness," "the prince of the power of the air," "the accuser," "Belial," "the tempter," an "adversary," "deceiver," "liar," "the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience," who "leads them captive at his will,"—descriptions which could not with the least conceivable propriety be applied except to a living, active, and malicious being.

Eastern travellers have furnished very curious accounts of people who worship the devil. Over the minds of the human race, while they continue unregenerate, the devil exercises a very powerful, though not physically irresistible influence. Even over their bodies he has, in many instances, exercised a malignant power. Though not omnipresent nor omnipotent, he may fill a vast space with his presence, and he exerts himself, by his numerous agents, in counterworking the Divine benignant plan for the salvation of men, throwing obstacles of various kinds in the way of their conversion, and spreading his snares for, and aiming his fiery darts at those who have thrown off his yoke. Error, sin, and misery, in all their forms, are ultimately his works, and his leading object is to uphold and extend the empire of evil in the Universe of God.

Truly appalling, however, as are the power and influence of Satan, they may be successfully resisted by those who will avail themselves of the means placed at our disposal for this end by our benevolent and merciful Creator. It is therefore absurd for sinners to attempt to exculpate themselves by throwing the blame of their wicked actions on the devil. *Tempt* them he may, and he does, but *fores* them to the commission of one sin he cannot. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James iv. 7. "Whom resist steadfast in the faith." 1 Pet. v. 9. It was by this enemy of God and man that Jesus was now led into the wilderness to be tempted, as a necessary part of His own human discipline and humiliation, as a lesson to His people of what they must look for, and an assurance of their own escape and triumph, but besides all this, as a premonition of the great decisive crisis in the war between the "seed of the woman" and the "seed of the serpent," the heads and representatives of both which parties were now to be brought personally into contact.

*And in those days he did eat nothing.* We are to understand this fasting in the strictest sense, forty days' and forty nights' entire privation. Jesus not only abstained from some kinds of food, or for a certain portion of each day, but He ate nothing all those days. This fasting was doubtless miraculous

or superhuman. It is beyond the power of nature to endure such privations. There is no authenticated instance of any healthy person having remained for nearly so long a time without food. Our Lord here intended our admiration rather than our imitation, or, if our imitation, of the action only, not of the time. In seasons of danger, or general affliction, it was customary among the Jews to abstain from food as a religious duty; Josh. vii. 6; Judges xx. 26; and the same practice prevailed among individuals when the occasion was personal. Exod. xxiv. 18; 2 Sam. xii. 16; 1 Kings xix. 8. Fasts are evidently of Divine authority, and fasting at the present day may be regarded as one of the outward means which may be profitably employed to humble and chasten the soul, and train it anew to the love and pursuit of holy and spiritual joys. There can be no doubt of its being sanctioned under the gospel dispensation. Matt. vi. 18; ix. 15; Acts xiii. 3; 1 Cor. vii. 5. How far or how long a person should abstain from food, depends on circumstances. The great end to be kept in view is, humiliation *for sin*, and abstinence *from sin*. "If," says Marshall, "abstinence divert our minds, by reason of a gnawing appetite, then you had better eat sparingly, as Daniel in his greatest fast." Dan. x. 2, 3.

*He afterwards hungered.* Immediately after such a fast, hunger must necessarily have made itself felt with unexampled power, and the more so, probably, from the combat with the Prince of Darkness. Satan, who doubtless had been heedfully watching an opportunity to assail Jesus at disadvantage, thought he perceived an opening for his insidious approaches, and sought to make the want of food the occasion of His sinning by the unlawful creation of food. No place can exempt us from temptations, or be a refuge from Satan's assaults. The solitary wilderness has a tempter in it; yea, Satan oftentimes makes use of man's solitariness to further his temptations, and those who separate themselves from human society, and give themselves up to retirement and solitude, have a tempter without, and an enticer within, as well as other men. The devil often attacks the people of God in times of deep affliction. When they are sorely distressed, or when their children are dying, or when they know not how to provide them with food, or when they are disappointed or unkindly treated, then the malicious fiend insinuates hard thoughts of God into the mind.

The three temptations which follow are by some compared to the threefold bait presented to Eve, Gen. iii. 6; in which the fruit being good for food, so appealed to the appetite, and being pleasant to the eye, so pleased the sense of beauty, and being represented as being able to make her as the gods, so awakened her ambition. Others see in them the threefold description of unholy lusts by the Apostle, 1 John i. 16, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." There is clearly one element common to all these temptations: they are attempts to call up a wilful and wayward spirit in contrast to a patient, self-denying one.

### QUESTIONS.

1. How have some regarded the temptations of our Lord?
2. What is the first objection to all these views?
3. What is the second?
4. What is the third?
5. What is the fourth?
6. From what ought the temptation never to be contemplated apart?
7. What is meant by "being full of the Holy Ghost?"
8. What are we to understand by "was led up by the Spirit?"
9. Dare we rush upon temptations without a warrant from God?
10. Into what wilderness was Christ led?
11. What does a modern traveller say of "the wilderness of Judea?"

12. Why was the wilderness the fittest place for the temptation?
13. What do the forty days of Christ in the wilderness resemble?
14. What is said of the number forty in the Scriptures?
15. Was Christ tempted during his whole sojourn in the wilderness?
16. What is meant by being tempted?
17. What is said about our Lord's susceptibility of temptation?
18. By whom was Christ tempted?
19. Who is the devil?
20. What is his name in the Greek?
21. What does this name signify?
22. What is said about the term "devils"?
23. Is there strictly more than one devil?
24. Has he evil angels or ministers under him?
25. What is to be the destiny of both?
26. Is the devil a mere "principle of evil personified"?
27. What is the devil called?
28. What epithets are applied to him?
29. Do these epithets prove him to be a living, active, malicious being?
30. Do any persons worship the devil?
31. Does the devil exercise a powerful influence over sinners?
32. Is he omnipresent, or omnipotent?
33. How does he exert himself to counterwork the plan of salvation?
34. Are error, sin and misery ultimately his works?
35. May his influence be resisted?
36. Can sinners throw the blame of their wicked actions on the devil?
37. Why was Jesus tempted by him?
38. How long did Christ fast?
39. Was this fasting miraculous?
40. What is said about fasting?
41. Did Satan take advantage of Christ's hungering?
42. Will any place exempt us from temptation?
43. To what are the three temptations of Christ by some compared?

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### LESSON XXIV.

vs. 8-18.

3. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

*Said unto him.* The devil now probably had a visible form, not terrifying, but as a friend, and perhaps as an "angel of light." 2 Cor. ii. 14. At any rate it was such a form as would render him most likely to fascinate by his blandishments, or subdue by menace and terror. *If thou be the Son of God.* The voice of the evil one evidently links itself with the remembrance of the heavenly voice at the Jordan. Luke iii. 22. "If thou art the Son of God, in such an extraordinary manner as thou hast been declared to be, and art indeed the promised Messiah, who is expected under that character." That the Jews supposed the Messiah would be in a very extraordinary manner, the *Son of God*, appears from comparing Matt. xiv. 83; xvi. 16; xxvi. 68;

John i. 34, 49; xi. 27; xx. 81; and Acts viii. 37. Or, the meaning of Satan's address to Christ may have been, "What! art thou the Son of God, and left in this desert to perish with hunger? Can it be? Is this the love of the Father? Wait no longer on Him for a supply, which has been so delayed, and of which there is no prospect. The case is urgent, and the power inherent in thee. Exert thyself, and show thy Divinity, by commanding this stone to become bread." The phrase, "*If thou be,*" &c., may be either understood as expressing a doubt, (if thou art really the Son of God,) or as admitting that the fact was so, (since Thou art the Son of God.) *Command*, that is, order, *that this stone*, probably pointing to a loaf-like stone on the ground before them, *be made*, changed into, *bread*. How artful the suggestion! There is no severer physical want than hunger (unless thirst be greater)—none that occasions severer pangs—none that more tempts to extreme resources for its gratification.

Under these circumstances, how perfectly natural might it seem, at the first view, to one conscious of possessing miraculous power, that He should exercise those powers for the satisfaction of His wants! But Jesus understood the nature of this insidious suggestion, and refused to yield to it, knowing that to satisfy the appetite by working a miracle would imply distrust in God, and a disposition to leave the path of duty, as well as to use improper means of relief. The principle on which Christ here acted ran throughout the whole of His ministry. All His miracles were wrought for the benefit of others, not one for His own gratification. Though He endured hunger and thirst, indigence and fatigue, and all the other evils of a laborious and an itinerant life, yet He never once relieved Himself from any of these inconveniences, or procured a single comfort to Himself by the working of miracles. And in this, as in all other cases, He acted with the most perfect wisdom; for had He always or often delivered Himself from the sufferings and the distresses incident to human nature by the exertion of His miraculous powers, the benefit of His example would have been in a great measure lost to mankind, and it would have been of little use to us, *that he was in all things tempted like as we are*, Heb. iv. 15, because He would have been supported and succored as *we* cannot expect to be. It is the grand policy of Satan, first to tempt the children of God to doubt of their adoption, next to distrust God's parental care, and, last of all, to use unwarrantable means to help themselves.

4. And Jesus answered him, saying, 'It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

<sup>a</sup> Deut. viii. 3; Is. viii. 20, Eph. vi. 17.

How blessed an example of the infinite forbearance and self-denial, the meekness and wisdom of our Lord! He brings no railing accusation against the destroyer; He does not even vindicate His own questioned authority. Jesus, of course, had resources within Himself, from which to baffle and to overthrow the devil; but, if He had drawn upon these resources for this purpose, whence would have been the example and the comfort to be derived by us, when we are called to conflict with this great enemy? The text which our Lord quoted is from Deut. viii. 3, and was addressed by Moses to the Israelites, when reminding them that though God had suffered them to hunger, He had fed them miraculously with manna, to show that He had other methods of sustaining man than by bread alone. The application of the passage intended by the Saviour to His own case was this: "He that brought me into this wilderness, and subjected me to these trials, can support me under the pressure of hunger by a variety of means, besides the common one of bread, just as He fed the Israelites in the wilderness with manna, with food from heaven. Instead, therefore, of

questioning God's willingness and power to supply me," (as the ancient Jews were guilty of doing in relation to themselves,) "or working a miracle for my relief, I will rely on His gracious providence for my support in this exigency." It is clear from the connection here and in the passage quoted, that the contest is not between material and spiritual food, but between ordinary food, represented by bread, and any other food which God may prescribe or promise. *But by every word of God.* This does not mean that men must dispense with bread, and feed only on the study of the Divine word, but that our meat and drink, our food and raiment, are all the work of the creating hand of God, and that a sense of *dependence on God* is the duty of man. His word is to be the basis of our hope. Through it we are to have communion with Him, and on it, on *every word of God*, whether it be His instructive, consoling, or preceptive word, we are to rely and rest, giving Him our entire confidence.

Satan often tempts Christians, first to distrust God's Providential regard for them, and then to supply improperly their own necessities. If they are in difficulty, so that it appears to the eye of sense as if their Heavenly Father, instead of bread, was giving them a stone, and if there seem a way of helping themselves by doing something not quite upright, not quite open, or honest, not quite according to the commands of God, Satan recommends them to take that way, to turn the stones into bread, assuring them that if they are too conscientious, they will never get out of their difficulties. At such times they should remember that bread alone, without God's blessing, cannot nourish them, while with God's blessing, the want even of bread itself cannot starve them. "God will provide." Gen. xxii. 8. So, likewise, in things spiritual, Satan tempts Christians. When their mind is enfeebled by anxiety, or their body weakened by disease, their spiritual enemy urges the most distressing doubts of the love of their heavenly Father to them, or of their relationship to Him. In hours like these, the Christian should take refuge in the written Word, and lie down in peace on the many blessed promises which God has given.

5. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

In the first temptation our Saviour had silenced the tempter. Satan, however, determining not to be thus easily foiled, resolved upon making another effort. When he fails in one attack upon the people of God, he generally tries another, and at a point where he hopes to have better success. *Taking him up.* *Taking him along with him,* is the exact English of the original Greek. But whether he did, or did not, *transport him through the air,* cannot, we think, be determined from this passage. This part of the transaction is supposed to have occurred in vision, even by some who understand what goes before as literally true. But such a difference is highly arbitrary and unnatural, nor is there any more necessity for such a supposition here than in the other cases. *Into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.* If we take *the world* to mean only the land of Judea, and some of the surrounding nations, as it appears sometimes to signify, Luke ii. 1, then Mount Quarantania, which is fifteen hundred or two thousand feet high, the highest mountain in Judea, and which bears its name in allusion to the forty days' fast of our Saviour, could have afforded the prospect in question. Of it, *Maundrell* says, "It is, as St. Matthew calls it, 'an exceeding high mountain,' and in its ascent difficult and dangerous." The *Abbé Mariù*, also, in his travels through Cyprus, &c., speaking of this mountain, says, "Here we enjoyed the most beautiful prospect imaginable. This part of the mountain overlooks the mountains of Arabia,

the country of Gilead, the country of the Ammonites, the plains of Moab, the plain of Jericho, the river Jordan, and the whole extent of the Dead Sea." These various domains the tempter might show to our Lord distinctly, and might also at the same time *point out* (for so the original word rendered *showed* sometimes signifies) and direct our Lord's eye towards several other regions that lay beyond them, which might comprehend all the principal kingdoms of the Eastern world. "Yonder is Persia, there is old Egypt, and beyond the Mediterranean is imperial Rome, where Tiberius now rules the world. Thou shalt possess his throne and more." It will be observed, that it is not said that our Lord really *beheld* the world's kingdoms, but only that Satan *showed* them unto Him, that is, as we have just seen, *pointed them out*. It is maintained by some, that, either by a voluntary and miraculous extension of our Lord's vision on His own part, or by a combination of sensible perception with rhetorical description, (*show* being elsewhere used to express both visual and oral exhibition, as in Matt. viii. 4, compared with Matt. xvi. 21.) there was an actual exhibition of what lay within the boundary of vision, and an enumeration of the kingdoms which in different directions lay beyond it, with a glowing representation of their wealth and power. Upon either of these latter suppositions, *all the kingdoms of the world* may be strictly understood, instead of being explained away, as meaning the different provinces of Palestine, or even of the Roman empire. *In a moment of time*. The word rendered *moment*, literally signifies, *point*, and when applied to time, it signifies *an instant, a moment*, not unlike our expression, *at a glance* of the eye. The suddenness of this prospect added much to the power of the temptation.

6. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

• John xii. 31; xiv. 30; Rev. xiii. 2, 7

7. If thou therefore wilt \*worship me, all shall be thine.

\* Or, *fall down before me*.

As the first temptation is addressed to animal *appetite*, this is addressed to the craving for the possession of kingly dignity, upon which the Messiah is conscious of being assuredly able to reckon. *All this power will I give thee, &c.* Before time began, the world was made over in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten, to the incarnate Son. "Thou shalt have the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Ps. ii. 8. And, it is distinctly declared not only "That the Most High alone ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will," Dan. iv. 17, but also that Christ "is the Governor among the nations," Ps. xxii. 28, and that "all power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth." It was therefore false for him whom Jesus denominated "the father of lies," John viii. 44, to affirm that all the kingdoms of the world were committed to him, and were at his disposal. It is true, indeed, that Satan is frequently referred to as the prince or god of this world, John xii. 31; xvi. 11; 2 Cor. iv. 4; and doubtless by the power temporarily allowed him he can and does use worldly things as baits to allure his votaries; but nothing could be more false than for the devil to pretend that God has retired from the government of the world in order that he might dispose of it as he pleased. The reply which he received plainly shows that he had no absolute right, no lawful power or dominion, God had delegated to him no such authority as he here claimed. *If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine*. "Thou art come to be great—to be a king on the earth, but I

am strong, and will resist Thee. Thy followers shall be imprisoned and slain, some of them shall fall away through fear, others shall forsake Thy cause, loving this present world. Cast in Thy lot with me, let Thy kingdom be an earthly kingdom, only the greatest of all—a kingdom such as the Jews seek to be established on the throne of David. Worship me by living as the children of this world live, and so honoring me in Thy life; then shall all be Thine." Such was the base proposition of Satan to Jesus. What words can describe the reckless audacity of that fallen and foul spirit?

8. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for 'it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve.

{ Deut. vi. 13; and x. 20.

The impious boldness of the suggestion just made required a stern and unmistakable rebuke. Jesus replies to Satan, who had now shown his cloven foot, with indignation. *Get thee hence, begone*, avaunt, out of my sight! a strong expression of indignation and abhorrence. We are not to parley or to reason with temptations, to hesitate and deliberate whether we shall yield to them or not, but must at once repel them with firmness and vigor. Jesus did not dispute with the tempter, or tell him that the world was not his to bestow, or that it was a perishing portion, but He simply appealed to the *command* of God. The passage He referred to is found in Deut. vi. 13, and is here given in the words of the Septuagint version. We must oppose to the dictates of our passions the plain and positive precepts of God in His holy word. *Him only*—this was the key of all. There could not be two masters—no divided empire. The kingdom must either be wholly spiritual—that is, of God—or wholly temporal—that is, of the devil. And there could be no question *which* it should be—"Him *only* shalt thou serve." This verse, compared with other similar passages of Scripture, proves the Divinity of Christ. The worship and service due to God cannot be given to a creature without the guilt of idolatry. Since, then, God requires "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father," John v. 23, and "when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him," Heb. i. 6, and since Christians "serve the Lord Christ," Col. iii. 24, He cannot be a creature, but must be truly God. Satan offers to us pleasure, profit, praise, the world's principal points of attraction, upon condition that we worship him, that is, do his will in some respect, for he cares not for external forms of worship, he knows that we are really the servants of *him* whom we *obey*, and not of him whom we *call* master. How many great men have fallen by this second temptation presented by the devil to our Lord! True greatness is not incompatible with goodness, yet many a ruler has been willing to *serve* the devil and *rule* the world. A Bacon, a Burr, a Buonaparte, could as readily yield to temptation as a simpleton or a boy.

9. "And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

{ Matt. iv. 5.

Though Jesus had resisted two temptations, Satan was not dismayed. Here we have an instance of the *perseverance* of our great enemy, in a third assault. The point of attack is changed. Having seen in the first tempta-

tion, which was to *distrust*, that the dependence of our Saviour upon the power and will of His heavenly Father to supply Him could not be shaken, Satan now imagined that he had discovered the weak point of the Messiah's character—that He possessed more love than prudence, more zeal than wisdom, more ardor than discretion, and hence tempted Him to *presumption*. *He brought Him*, doubtless by His own permission. They went together, but at Satan's instance, which is no more inconsistent with our Lord's Divine or human dignity, than His submitting to be scourged and crucified by Satan's agents. In either case it was a part of His voluntary humiliation as a Saviour and a substitute. *Set Him on a pinnacle of the temple*. *The temple* was that immense building on the top of Mount Moriah, which had been rebuilt and adorned till it rivalled that of Solomon on the same site. The *pinnacle*, or wing, as the word means, was doubtless the summit of the royal gallery built by Herod over the brink of the valley of Kedron, with a dizzy height from summit to bottom of seven hundred feet, down which, as any one looked, according to Josephus, "he would become dizzy, his eyes being unable to reach so vast a depth." *Set Him*, literally, *made Him stand*, but here again without implying force or authority. *If Thou be the Son of God*, &c. How much artfulness was displayed in this proposition! "You were willing to trust God for your food, now show that you can equally trust Him for your safety: throw yourself boldly from this elevation, and proclaim by this act at once the strength of your faith, the completeness of your dependence, and the reality of your Sonship, and you shall be hailed with wonder and delight by the assembled worshippers!" thus tempting our Lord, as it were, by the very excess of that Christian grace which He had before so beautifully exhibited. To a vain-glorious mind, nothing could have been more gratifying, more flattering, than such a proposal.

10. For <sup>it</sup> is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

<sup>b</sup> Ps xci. 11; 2 Cor. xi. 14; Heb. i. 14.

11. And in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

*It is written*. The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose. Nothing makes wicked men so self-satisfied as to be able to bless their crime with a holy text. They can ridicule the Bible, and trample upon it at any other time, but they are profoundly Biblical, and deep reverers of God's holy and inspired word, if a text can be wrested to their purpose. The Bible, like every other good, can be misused for our own destruction. It is a part of our probation, that God has not given a revelation so unequivocal that perverse minds may not pervert it to the service of error and sin. Satan now combats our Lord with His own weapons. The passage, Ps. xci. 11, 12, is not Messianic, but speaks of the saints in general, and the devil leaves Christ to draw a conclusion *from the less to the greater*, from the safety of the saints to that of the Messiah. The cause of truth, and sometimes of common sense, has suffered a great deal by the quoting of Scripture merely by scraps. The devil did this on this occasion. In his quotation he left out, because they did not suit his purpose, the words, to keep thee "in all thy ways," thus making the passage a general promise of safety in *all* ways, whether ways of duty, or ways of folly and of sin. God will command His angels to guard the Christian from harm *in all his ways*, that is, in all the ways in which he *ought* to walk. Had Jesus cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, He would not have been walking in God's ways, but in

Satan's ways. God has promised the protection of angels to encourage us to trust Him, not to tempt Him. *In their hands they shall bear thee up.* This denotes a tender care like that of nurses. See Num. xi. 12; Deut. i. 81; Acts xiii. 18; 1 Th. ii. 7. *Least at any time, or, least haply or by chance, thou dash, or strike thy foot in walking so as to stumble, against a stone, i. e., the one which happens to be lying in the way.* We are not, for the sake of appearing more abundantly to trust God, to incur danger where no duty calls, but in the assured path of Christian duty, we cannot trust Him too simply, or too exclusively, or too largely. To expect the largest degrees of help from Him when plainly following a direct command, is only a justifiable exercise of faith; to expect even the smallest when contrarily engaged, is an unwarrantable act of presumption. This distinction marks the separation between the enthusiast and the sober-minded child of God.

12. And Jesus answering said unto him, 'It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

<sup>i</sup> Deut. vi. 16.

Our Lord answers a third time in the language of Scripture, from Deut. vi. 16. The word of the Law which He quotes, contains no contradiction of the devil's quotation from the Psalm, but a rectification of the misuse which the evil one had made of it. *Tempt*, to demand further evidence of what is already made sufficiently plain. That this is the purport of the phrase, *tempting God*, is easy to be seen from comparing Ex. xvii. 2, 7; Num. xiv. 22; Ps. lxxviii. 18, and cvi. 14. If our Lord had cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, He would have demanded a needless miracle, publicly to prove Himself "the Son of God," and would have put Himself in expectation of an interposition for which He had no warrant, and thus would have "tempted the Lord."

13. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him <sup>b</sup>for a season.

<sup>k</sup> John xiv. 30; Heb. iv. 15; James iv. 7.

*Ended all the temptation*, the trial of forty days. Jesus gave the tempter opportunity to say and do all he could against Him, He let him try all his force, and yet defeated him. God expects His people to pass through all their trials, to go through the *hour of temptation* assigned them. *He departed from him*: the idea here expressed is not that of mere locomotion or departure, but of cessation from disturbance and annoyance. *For a season*, literally, *until an opportune season, or a convenient time*. Such an occasion was furnished in the hour of darkness, ch. xxii. 53, when our Lord's "soul was sorrowful, even unto death." See Matt. xxvi. 38; John xiv. 30. In Matt. iv. 11, and Mark i. 13, it is said, *angels came and ministered unto him*. As soon as the angel of darkness departed, the angels of light appeared upon the scene. It is a change from deep night to glorious morning. Probably the angels assumed a visible appearance, as the devil had done in the temptation. During the assault, they stood at a distance, that it might appear that Christ vanquished Satan in His own strength; but when the conflict was over, they came to congratulate Him on His success, and to give the glory due to His name. *Ministered unto him*, waited on Him, served Him, with particular reference to food. In our *war with devils*, we may have abundant comfort from our *communion with angels*. God will more than make up to us, even in *this* life, all we suffer or give up for His sake.

To the practical lessons already noticed as taught us in this amazing account of our Lord's temptation, the following may be added: 1. We are immeasurably indebted to our great Deliverer. Who can sufficiently adore Thy condescension, O blessed Jesus! who wouldst permit Thyself to be thus assaulted and led from place to place by an infernal spirit, whom Thou couldst in a moment have remanded back to hell, to be bound in "chains of darkness," and overwhelmed with flaming ruin! 2. Since Christ Himself was tempted to worship the devil, there is no sin so horrid and monstrous, but the Christian may be tempted to it. 3. We may expect that sensual gratifications, incitements to vanity and ostentation, and the charms of wealth, power, rank, and splendor, will, in the different stages of our existence, successively rise up to entice us, and to oppose our progress to heaven. 4. Nothing, like a vigorous resistance of temptation, by watchfulness, prayer, and meditation on God's word, causes the tempter to flee from us. Resistance has a promise of success by virtue of Christ's triumph. Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 15, 16. 5. Our spiritual interests shall be always advanced, in proportion to our trials and faithful resistance. 6. A more than ordinary measure of Divine consolation shall be the consequence of every victory. 7. It is a most solid consolation in all our temptations, as we honestly exert our utmost efforts to vanquish the enemies of our salvation, that we shall not be judged by one who has no *feeling* of our infirmities, but by One who knows and pities them, who was Himself tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Heb. iv. 15. 8. In heaven we shall be exempt from every trial.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. How did the devil now appear to Jesus?
2. What did he say to Him?
3. What is meant by "If thou be the Son of God?"
4. What did the Jews suppose the Messiah would be?
5. Did the devil doubt or admit that Christ was the Son of God?
6. What is said about the suggestion of Satan to Jesus?
7. Why did Christ refuse to yield to it?
8. For what were all our Lord's miracles wrought?
9. How does the wisdom of Christ appear in not delivering Himself from the sufferings and distresses incident to human nature?
10. In what spirit did Jesus receive the suggestions of Satan?
11. Could He not at once have baffled and overthrown the devil?
12. Why did He not do so?
13. Whence did our Lord derive His answer?
14. What is the meaning of the text quoted by Him?
15. How are we to understand what is said about "every word of God?"
16. How does Satan often tempt Christians?
17. What should they do at such times?
18. What is said about the word of God?
19. What was Satan's second temptation?
20. What is meant by "taking him up?"
21. Was this a real transaction?
22. What is said of Mount Quarantania?
23. What does the original word rendered "showed" sometimes signify?
24. How could the tempter show Christ the kingdoms of the world?
25. What do some maintain in reference to the showing of Jesus the kingdoms of the world?
26. What is said of the phrase "in a moment of time?"
27. What was the second temptation addressed to?
28. Why was it false for the devil to affirm that all the kingdoms of the world were committed to him?
29. How is his power limited in regard to this world?

30. What was the proposition of Satan to Jesus?
31. What is said of this proposition?
32. How did Christ rebuke the tempter?
33. To what passage did he refer?
34. What does the verse quoted, compared with other verses, prove?
35. What does Satan tempt us to do?
36. When are we his servants?
37. What does the devil's third temptation show?
38. How did he vary his point of attack in the case of our Lord?
39. How did he bring Christ to the pinnacle of the temple?
40. What was the pinnacle of the temple?
41. What did the devil say to our Lord there?
42. What is said about Satan's quoting Scripture?
43. Did Satan quote the Scripture fairly on this occasion?
44. How will angels guard the Christian?
45. Are we to incur danger where no duty calls?
46. What marks the distinction between the enthusiast and the sober-minded child of God?
47. How did our Lord answer the third time?
48. How would Jesus have tempted God by casting Himself from the pinnacle of the temple?
49. What is meant by "ended all the temptation?"
50. How did Satan depart from Christ?
51. Did he ever tempt Him again?
52. How did angels minister to Christ in His hour of darkness?
53. State the practical lessons taught by this temptation, in the order in which they are given.

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## LESSON XXV.

vs. 14-22.

14. ¶<sup>1</sup>And Jesus returned <sup>m</sup>in the power of the Spirit into <sup>n</sup>Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iv. 12; John iv. 43.

<sup>m</sup> Ver. 1.

<sup>n</sup> Acts x. 37

Prepared by His baptism and temptation for His ministerial work, our Lord now enters on His public activity in Galilee. *The power of the Spirit.* Having conquered the grand adversary, He went forth, with the Spirit which had descended after His baptism not only not suppressed by the temptation in the wilderness, but, on the contrary, exhibiting Himself for the first time in full power in Him after the triumph there achieved. The phrase may refer either to the miracles He wrought in confirmation of His doctrine, or to the energy which attended His word to the hearts and consciences of the hearers. He who, through the grace of God, resists and overcomes temptation, is always *bettered* by it. Those very things which are designed for our utter ruin, God makes the instruments of our greatest good. *Galilee* was the most northerly of the three general divisions of Palestine. A considerable

interval elapsed between the time of the temptation and this visit to Galilee. *And there went out a fame, &c.* The mode of the Saviour's teaching, the spirituality of His doctrines, John's testimony of Him, His work at the temple in Jerusalem, all these things had a wonderful effect upon the people, and served to draw their attention to this new spiritual teacher who had come among them.

15. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

This helped to excite the attention of men concerning Him. We do not find that the persecuting Jews ever hindered Christ or His disciples from preaching in their synagogues: *being glorified of all*, that is, with universal applause. The word *synagogue*, which means a "congregation," is used in the New Testament to signify a recognized place of worship. They appear to have arisen during the exile in the abeyance of the temple-worship, and to have received their full development on the return of the Jews from captivity. They were very numerous in Palestine in our Saviour's time. James calls the place of Christian worship *synagogue*. James ii. 2. Where the Jews were not in sufficient numbers to be able to erect and fill a building, there was the *Proseucha*, or place of prayer, sometimes open at the top, sometimes covered in, commonly by a running stream or on the sea-shore, in which devout Jews and proselytes met to worship, and, perhaps, to read. Acts xvi. 13.

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

• Matt. ii. 23; xlii. 54; Mark vi. 1.

p Acts xlii. 14; xvii. 2.

The account of this incident, ver. 16-31, is found only in Luke, although it is doubtless alluded to in Matt. iv. 13-16. *Nazareth*. Nazareth is beautifully situated among the hills which constitute the south ridges of Lebanon, just before they sink down into the plain of Esdraelon. Yet though its site and surroundings were lovely and attractive, it labored under a special opprobrium. We learn this from the reproachful question of Nathaniel of Cana, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" John i. 47, as well as from the coarse and murderous violence of its mob on this occasion, ver. 29. *Where He had been brought up*. The Holy Ghost has seen fit to communicate but little concerning the Saviour's life, until He entered upon His public ministry. He had no public education. As His parents were poor, it is not likely that He lived in indolence. His reputed father was a carpenter, and once this name is applied to Himself. Importance and usefulness are not confined to publicity; we must be willing to be hid as well as displayed; a great work requires much preparation—before we teach we must learn. It was probably Christ's long residence at this place that caused Him to be called *Jesus of Nazareth*, though some regard this name as one of reproach. Pilate fixed it on His cross, and after His ascension it was one of the distinguishing titles of all who believed on Him. *As His custom was*, i. e., according to His habit of attending the synagogue worship on the Sabbath. The synagogue was the place where His Father's day and word were publicly recognized, and, as such, He thought it good to do it honor. The example of Christ has the force of a law to His followers. *He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day*. Bad a place as Nazareth was,

it was not so bad but that it had a synagogue. Here Jesus preached the opening sermon of His whole activity in Galilee: *and stood up for to read.* It was the custom in the synagogue for persons when reading to stand, and when they finished reading, and undertook to expound or to teach, to sit down and commence their address to the congregation. The reading of the Scriptures should always be attended to whenever an assembly convenes for the worship of God. It is a great advantage to the ignorant who cannot read for themselves. It honors the written word as the supreme authority in our religion. It solemnizes the mind, and prepares the heart for devotion and instruction. There was an officer who presided over the services of the synagogue, who called out such of its members as he knew to be qualified, and desired them to read. Sometimes they volunteered to perform this service. As Jesus was a member of the synagogue at Nazareth, He may have been called out to read on this occasion, or He may have offered Himself, and probably did, expressing His readiness by standing up.

17. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

The shape of the ancient *book* was that of a roll or scroll. It was a cumbersome roll of linen, papyrus, or parchment, with letters laboriously written, with a *calamus* or reed pen, or a *stilus* or iron pen. When rolled up, it was bound round with thongs, called in Latin *lora*. The scroll was read by unrolling the one end, and rolling up the other end, so as to glide the eye down the open page. *And there was delivered unto him the book.* There was a "minister," ver. 20, or servant of the synagogue, called the *chazan*, who had no duties of reading or instruction to perform, but who attended to what may be called the keeping of the synagogue. One of his functions was to take charge of the sacred books, to produce them from the chest or ark near the pulpit or desk in which they were kept, deliver them to the reader, and to receive them back again. *Of the prophet Esaias.* Why this book in particular? The book of the Old Testament, to be read, was selected by the ruler of the synagogue, but the particular portion was left to the choice of the reader. *And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written.* Whether Christ chose the particular passage quoted for the occasion, or whether it was the first passage that presented itself to His eye when He unfolded the roll, is uncertain. The latter would seem probable, yet, were this to be conceded, we must remember that He did nothing casually; accidental circumstances subserved His pleasure, and were parts of His plan.

18. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

¶ Is. lxi. 1, 2.

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, &c.* This passage is found in Is. lxi. 1, 2, and is almost in the exact words of the original, the clause, *to set at liberty them which are bruised*, being added apparently from Is. lviii. 6. In this prophecy Christ asserts His designation to the office of the Messiah, and His qualification for it. The reference is to His baptism, at which the Spirit was given to Him without measure. *Because he hath anointed me.* The

Greek word rendered *anointed* is the very term from which the title Messiah or Christ is derived. Not that He was literally anointed as were the kings and priests who were the types of His office, but that He had the unction of the Holy Ghost to perform the very works here predicted. All the functions of the Messiah are exercised on the *hearts* of men. *To preach the gospel.* Preaching is the great ordinance Christ Himself made use of, and enjoined upon His Apostles and ministers, for accomplishing His purpose of salvation. The word *gospel* has different meanings, both in the subsequent part of the New Testament, and in modern use: sometimes signifying the publication of Christianity, or the coming and kingdom of the Messiah, in general; at other times, the glad tidings of salvation, as distinguished from other parts of revealed truth. *To the poor,* the poor in spirit, and such also as are poor in outward condition, if meekened and humbled by the sight and sense of their sins. Matt. xi. 5. Though the Jewish doctors despised the poor, such as are destitute of worldly riches, yet to them the gospel is emphatically glad tidings. *He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted,* to comfort those who are bowed down by a crushing sense of sin, or by heavy afflictions. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Ps. li. 17. Precious assurance! In other cases people are said to die of a broken heart; but here we learn they will only die of a whole one. *To preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind.* There is no bondage like that of corruption, no vassalage like that of the soul under the dominion of sin, and when taken captive by the devil at his will. There is here an allusion to the wretched state of those prisoners, who, according to the inhuman custom in some Eastern countries, had *their eyes put out*; and with regard to such as these, this great Deliverer is represented as *restoring them*; a work far beyond all human power. They are no doubt the same with those who are spoken of in the next clause as *bruised* with the weight of their *fetters*, for it is plain that even the *blind captives* were sometimes loaded with them, as Samson, Judg. xvi. 21; and Zedekiah, 2 Kings xxv. 7; Ps. cv. 18. Paul and Silas, when cast into prison, "had many stripes laid upon them." *To set at liberty them that are bruised.* These words seem to have been quoted from Is. lviii. 6, to strengthen the idea in the preceding clauses. Our Lord may have turned to that passage as He read, or quoted it, in the hearing of His auditors, from memory. Some suppose there is here also a reference to the Jews, whom, as bruised in their consciences by the galling fetters of a religion of external ordinances, our Lord released by the promulgation of His perfect law of liberty.

### 19. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

There is here a manifest reference to *the Year of Jubilee*. It was celebrated every fiftieth year. For the manner of its celebration, see Lev. xxv. 8-18. It commenced on the great day of atonement, and was ushered in with the universal sound of trumpets throughout the land. It restored individuals, families and communities, as far as possible, to the same situation they occupied at the beginning of the fifty years. All servants of Hebrew origin were set free, there was a general release of debts and obligations, all pledges were given up, and the inheritances which had been alienated, no matter how often, nor for what cause, came back to the hands of the original proprietors. So the trumpet of the gospel was to proclaim a restoration of all things to their primeval order and harmony. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound." Ps. lxxxix. 15. Our Saviour, by applying this text to Himself, plainly declares the typical design of the institution referred to. *The acceptable year of the Lord*, that is, the definite time in which the Lord is gracious. A present and full salvation is now

proclaimed by the gospel. This is the *time* in which God saves to the uttermost all who come unto Him in the name of His Son Jesus Christ. The whole continuance of this dispensation is represented as a *year*, and each of us has only a *day* of it. "Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." How important the questions: "What do I know of this salvation?" "Am I still bound with the chain of my sin, or have I been set free from the power of Satan?"

20. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

*Closed the book, &c.* See Notes on ver. 16, 17. Manuscript copies of the Old Testament were kept in the temple and the synagogues. So also copies of the Gospels and Epistles were preserved in the Christian churches. It was therefore impossible that any counterfeit, or any great alteration, should come into existence. *And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him*, that is, were attentively fixed on Him. There was something in His manner or tone of voice which riveted the attention of the people. That He should undertake to teach, excited surprise, as He was known there, not as one learned in the law, but rather as a carpenter's son, who had perhaps Himself worked at His father's trade. And yet strange and wonderful rumors had come home lately in regard to Him, as setting up high claims, and pretending abroad to do great works. Besides, the text gave our Lord occasion to set forth His work on its most amiable side. Hence their eyes were earnestly directed toward Him. As the eye affects the heart, and usually the heart follows the eye, it is good, in hearing the word, to keep the eye fixed on the minister, by whom God is speaking to us, or, rather, on Christ speaking to us in and by the minister.

21. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.

He began by explicitly declaring, that the words read to them were, at that very time, and on that very occasion, *fulfilled in their hearing*, thus declaring, in no ambiguous language, to his fellow-townsmen, that He was the promised Messiah of whom the prophet spake, and doubtless He explained the words at some length, as referring to the spiritual redemption which He came to effect in behalf of enslaved sinners, and earnestly exhorted His hearers to seek these important blessings. Had this explanation been necessary for our salvation, it would have been recorded. The custom of preaching from a text of Scripture, which prevails throughout all Christian churches, seems to have had its origin in the authority of this example.

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

• Ps. xlv. 2; Matt. xiii. 54; Mark vi. 2; ch. ii. 47.

• John vi. 42.

*Bare him witness*, gave a favorable testimony; and *wondered at the gracious words*, or, *the words of grace*. This phrase may refer to the agreeable manner of Christ's discourse, as well as to the matter of it. They *admired*, especially when they remembered His humble origin, which gave no warrant for such speaking. It cannot be doubted that our Lord's elocution was pecu-

liarily becoming, majestic, solemn, impressive, and persuasive. In every sense, "He spake as never man spake." *Proceeded out of his mouth*, an oriental expression for the utterance of a grave and earnest discourse. *And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?* This question was asked in the strange conversational freedom in which the Jews indulged at their religious meetings. One moment they were astonished, the next their pride rose. The impression made by Christ's sermon was only on the surface, for the audience were unconscious of their spiritual bondage, and felt no longings for deliverance. "How is it possible that this man can speak in this tone?" "Who is he, that we should listen to him?" "Why should he know more than we do?"

Thus, while some may have inferred from the *gracious words* that Christ was *taught of God*, others, doubtless the large majority, yielded to stupid pride and blind prejudice. They wondered, but did not believe. Of how many, alas! is this true, in respect to the preaching of the gospel!

#### QUESTIONS.

1. How was Christ prepared for His ministerial work?
2. What is meant by "the power of the Spirit"?
3. What spread the fame of Christ?
4. What did Jesus do in Galilee?
5. What is said about synagogues?
6. What was the *Proseucha*?
7. Where was Nazareth situated?
8. Where was Christ brought up?
9. What is said of the phrase—"Jesus of Nazareth"?
10. Was Christ in the habit of attending the synagogue?
11. What did our Lord do in the synagogue?
12. What was the shape of the ancient book?
13. What was it called in Latin?
14. What was the "minister" of the synagogue?
15. Did Christ choose the place from which He read?
16. Where is the passage found which Jesus read?
17. What does Christ assert in this prophecy?
18. What is said of "anointed"?
19. What was Christ anointed to do?
20. What does the word "gospel" signify?
21. Who are meant by "the poor"?
22. Who are "the broken-hearted"?
23. What is said of "the captives," and "the blind," and "the bruised"?
24. Describe the year of Jubilee.
25. What are we to understand by "the acceptable year of the Lord"?
26. Where were copies of the Old Testament kept?
27. What effect had Christ's teaching on the people?
28. What did Christ declare by the words—"This day is this Scripture," &c.?
29. What did the people do at the gracious words of Christ?
30. How did their pride show itself?

## LESSON XXVI.

vs. 23-30.

23. And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done 'in Capernaum, do also here in "thy country.

† Matt. iv. 13 and xl. 23.

‡ Matt. xiii. 54; Mark vi. 1.

Seeing the captiousness of prejudice rising against Him in the hearts of His hearers, as indicated by their contemptuous allusion to His low birth, Jesus now addressed them in the language of reproof. In doing so, He also gives them an intimation in respect to the blessed purpose of His appearance as Israel's physician. *Physician, heal thyself.* This proverb, as used by our Lord here, in expectation of what they would allege against Him, has received the following interpretations: "Undertake the remedy of thine own poverty before the world." "Take better care than hitherto of thy prophetic dignity." "Heal the broken-hearted in *thy own country.*" "You who paint our misery as so deep, and yourself as our *physician*, first remedy your own case. If we are miserable Nazarenes, you are as Nazarene as we, and a mere mechanic's son at that." From the latter part of the verse, this proverb would appear to be a demand upon Jesus to display His miraculous powers in the sight of His fellow-townsmen. *Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, &c.* "Do for your own Nazareth what you have done for Capernaum, (in which He had healed the nobleman's son, John iv. 46-54, and doubtless performed other cures not mentioned,) and thus satisfy our craving for the marvellous, or, satisfy us of your claims to the Messiahship, before you seek to convince the nation of the truth of your pretensions. Perhaps miracles that would pass current at Capernaum might not stand before us sharp men of Nazareth." "Why should not the disease of unbelief, if it be indeed a disease, be cured in those of thine own city, as well as in those of others?"

24. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

‡ Matt. xiii. 57; Mark vi. 4; John iv. 44.

*He said*, in answer to some response with which they interrupted Him. *Accepted*, i. e., approved, acceptable. This is stated as a matter of general experience—as wide as life; and parallel passages have been abundantly cited from pagan writers, and may be found among the choice sayings of every country. Strangers judge of a man only by his public acts or his official conduct, while his friends and neighbors have their minds so occupied with minor matters, that the greater are obscured, if not distorted, to their view. Then, again, it is one of the evil propensities of our nature, that envy arises from seeing former equals outstrip us. This is especially characteristic of coarser natures like the men of Nazareth. Jesus, in regard to His human nature, had developed Himself according to the general laws of man's life, and it thus became difficult for His townsmen to recognize His Divine highness in His human lowness. Ministers generally are least acceptable among those who are familiarly acquainted with their extraction, the follies of their childhood and youth, and their education. That which

comes from afar, and has not been much known, gains the greatest reputation among a people. Ministers should avoid too much familiarity with their congregations, and by gravity of deportment keep up esteem and a certain measure of awe, always tempering their gravity with courtesy and a condescending affability.

25. But I tell you of a truth, \*many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

\* 1 Kings xvii. 9 and xviii. 1; James v. 17.

26. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27. \*And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

\* 2 Kings v. 14.

Our Lord now illustrates His proverb, as well as His line of conduct, by the examples of two of the greatest of Hebrew prophets. This language of Christ is one among the many strong proofs of the authenticity of the historical books of the Old Testament. The first example was in the days of *Elias*, (the Greek form of the Old Testament name Elijah,) when, though there were *many widows in Israel*, his own nation, yet none of them were qualified to receive his miracles, but a stranger, a *widow of Sarepta*, a *heathen city*, (known as Sarafend at the present time, and a large inland village half way between Tyre and Sidon,) whom in time of *great famine* he had sustained with oil and meal. 1 Kings xvii. 8-24. *The heaven was shut up three years and six months*. In James v. 17, the duration of the drought is stated to be of the same length as it is here, while from 1 Kings xviii., it appears to result that Elijah in the third year returned to Ahab, and very soon after his return the rain commenced. In explanation of the seeming difficulty, we may suppose that the third year, 1 Kings xviii. 1, must be reckoned from the arrival of Elijah at Sarepta, 1 Kings xvii. 9, which, however, had been already preceded by a year of drought, during which the prophet had abode at the brook Cherith, ver. 7. The second example was in the days of *Eliseus*, (Greek form for Elisha,) when, though there were many lepers in and about the neighborhood, yet they, being his countrymen, despised him, and none were qualified for a cure, but Naaman, the Syrian, a man of another and *heathen country*. 2 Kings v. 10. *Lepers*. Leprosy, in its worst form, was one of the most terrible of diseases. It began with red spots upon the body, grouped in circles, and covered with a shiny scale or scab. It became, generally, incurable, and so corrupted the system that it became hereditary for generations. The body crumbled, the limbs fell apart, and the man literally went to pieces. The argument of Christ here is: "The Israelites had as good ground to reproach these eminent prophets for passing them by, as you Nazarites have to reproach me in the manner you have done." It was also intimated that the ground of reproach in both cases was unbelief. The verses teach that God dispenses His benefits *when, where, and to whom He pleases*. No person can complain of His conduct in these respects, because no person *deserves* any good at His hand. God never *punishes* any but those who *deserve* it, but He blesses incessantly those who deserve it not.

28. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

Truth embitters those whom it does not enlighten and convert. The gospel, when preached with soft words, wins the acquiescence of the godless, but, when it is applied to the conscience, it kindles indignation. The Nazarites could not bear the doctrine of the Divine sovereignty—that God has a right to do what He will with His own. They saw, at least the great majority of them, that the faithless widows and lepers were but types of themselves, and, instead of any longer wondering at *the gracious words*, they were exasperated to madness. Suddenly the church became a mob.

29. And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the \*brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

\* Or, *edge*.

Perhaps their first intention was only to expel Him from the town. But one act of violence usually leads to another. Their rage waxed more and more fierce, as they dragged Him along, until they determined to take His life. The treatment He received remarkably resembles that with which afterwards Stephen met. Acts vii. 51. *Rose up*, in tumultuous excitement, *thrust Him out*, implying that He would have stayed. *The brow of the hill*. As Nazareth is a region of some fifteen hills, abounding in precipices, there are several which might have been suitable. The most striking of these is about two miles from the city, and is shown by the monks as the so-called "Mount of Precipitation." The most judicious travellers reject this as being too far, and Dr. Thomson thinks it was selected by the monks on account of its bold character and fine view over the plain of Esdraelon. Dr. Robinson says, that in the southwest part of the town is a hill, which breaks off in a perpendicular precipice, forty or fifty feet in height, and he suggests this, or some one of the several precipices in that vicinity, as the cliff down which they were intending to throw Jesus. *Precipitation* was a punishment rarely used, though we meet with it in the history of the kings, and in subsequent times. 2 Kings ix. 30, 33; 2 Chron. xxv. 12. If we compare this treatment of our Lord with the enthusiasm, ver. 22, we learn the inconstancy of human honor and the untrustworthiness of human passions. Not at Rome alone did the Capitoline border hard on the Tarpeian rock.

30. But he \*passing through the midst of them went his way,

a John viii. 59 and x. 39.

It has been maintained that Christ escaped by a miracle, either in rendering Himself entirely invisible, or putting on some *other form*, or affecting their eyes or minds in such a manner that they should not *know Him*. But Christ and His Apostles seem never to have wrought miracles in the way of self-preservation. The probability is that Jesus beheld His enemies with a look of His hitherto unrestrained majesty, reserved for this last need, and they, receiving yet another sign of His spiritual might as a parting token, were compelled on the right and left to make place reverently for His going forth. Examples are numerous, where the composure and awe of the person assailed has unmanned and defeated the assailants. On one occasion the Rev. John Wesley was attacked by a mob, beaten, bruised to bleeding, and nearly thrown to the ground, yet, under all this violence, he maintained a composure superior to pain. Amid his utterance of prayer and their clam-

ors for his life, a strange and sudden reaction took place. And, says his historian, "the people fell back, as if by common consent, and led on through their open ranks by the champion of the rabble, he safely escaped to his lodgings."

Had Jesus been less faithful in proclaiming the truth, He might have avoided persecution, but He sought not to please *men*, but *God*. Persecution may be escaped by us by acting insincerely and unfaithfully, but what if we should, by so doing, lose our peace of mind, and the approbation of God!—It can scarcely be wondered that the ablest preaching and most exemplary living of the holiest and best of Christ's ministering servants so often secure no greater success than they do, when His own presence at Nazareth for so many years had not sufficient influence upon that people to induce them to receive His message, instead of raging at the messenger. The first sermon of Jesus at Nazareth imparts pregnant suggestions to the minister of the gospel at the beginning of his work. It shows, 1. The origin, matter, and object of preaching, vs. 18, 19. 2. That preaching is to be grounded on Scripture, adapted to the necessity of the hearers, and presented in an attractive manner. 3. That blossoms are as yet no certain signs of fruit, and that unhappy causes may blast fair promises and prospects of success. 4. That a new work is to be begun, with thankful recollections of the past, ver. 16, with holy spiritual might for the present, ver. 18, and with joyful hope for the future, ver. 21.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. How did Jesus now address them?
2. What interpretations have been given to the proverb our Lord used?
3. What are we to understand by the words—"Whatsoever we have heard," &c.?
4. What is meant by "accepted?"
5. What is said of the phrase—"No prophet is accepted," &c.?
6. How did our Lord illustrate His proverb?
7. What bearing has this language of Christ on the historical books of the Old Testament?
8. What was the first example He gave?
9. What is said of "Sarepta?"
10. What is said of the words—"the heaven was shut," &c.?
11. What was the second example Jesus gave?
12. Who was Eliseus?
13. Describe the disease of leprosy.
14. What is the argument of Christ in these examples?
15. What effect had Christ's examples on the people?
16. What was probably their first intention in regard to Him?
17. How did their increased rage manifest itself?
18. What hill did they drag Jesus to?
19. What is said of precipitation?
20. How did Jesus escape from His enemies?
21. What is said of the Rev. John Wesley?
22. What is said of our Lord's faithfulness in proclaiming the truth?
23. How may persecution be escaped?
24. Should it be thus evaded?
25. What is the first suggestion of our Lord's first sermon, to ministers at the beginning of their work?
26. What, the second?
27. What, the third?
28. What, the fourth?

## LESSON XXVII.

vs. 31-36.

31. And <sup>b</sup>came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. iv. 13; Mark i. 21.

*Capernaum* is compounded of the words Kefr, village, and Nahum, refreshment, so called from the springs near which it stood. Christ's residence and preaching there were the subject of prophecy. Matt. iv. 13-15. The place is not named in the Old Testament, which, probably, though not necessarily, implies a later origin. Josephus mentions the town once by the name of Cepharnome, but applies the form Capernaum (or Capharnaum) only to a fountain. It was situated upon the shore of the lake of Gennesaret. *Capernaum* itself is now no longer in existence, and its very site is a subject of dispute. Dr. Robinson says it was always understood to be marked by a village now called Khan Minyeh, till the seventeenth century, when travellers began to seek it at a place called Tell Houm, an hour further to the north-east. Dr. Thomson locates the site at Tell Houm, at the head of the Lake, and a short distance west of the entrance of the Jordan.

Jesus had a *home*, Mark ii. 1, iii. 19, at Capernaum, where he became so complete a resident as to be legally taxable. Matt. xvii. 24. That He had no house of His own, appears from Matt. viii. 14. Probably He either resided with Peter, Matt. viii. 14, who seems to have been host for other apostles, Mark i. 29, or His mother had transferred her own residence, with her son's, to Capernaum. The suitability of this town as a place of residence for our Lord is evident at a glance. The lake by which it stood, though now deserted and lonely, was then the scene of busy life. "Situated," says Stanley, "in the midst of the Jordan valley, on the great thoroughfare from Babylon and Damascus, in Palestine, its waters seemed to answer a purpose like that served by the lake of Lucerne, between Italy and Germany. Its fisheries furnished a source of sustenance to the surrounding inhabitants, and an industry for its laborers. Its surface was alive with the ships, or rather lake-boats, of fishermen and navigators. Under the Roman government custom-houses were established, at which tribute was taken by the publicans, of which Matthew was one. The adjoining counties of Naphtali and Zebulun, diversified with mountain and vale, were covered with verdure, and cultivated by a swarming population. Its surface was dotted by countless villages, visited by our Lord at various times, mentioned or unmentioned by the Evangelists. Thus the double advantages of intercourse by sea and land were secured by our Lord's position at Capernaum." We may add to these advantages, that the influence of the sacerdotal party was not so strong at this place as in Jerusalem; that if Jesus wished for rest He could find this nowhere better than on the shore of the lake; and that the moral wretchedness of the town above that of many others, might recommend it only the more to the great Physician of sinners. *Came down*, the way thither from Nazareth was descending. Capernaum was six hundred feet lower than the Mediterranean sea, and much lower therefore than Nazareth. *And taught them on the Sabbath days*. What He preached there is given in Mark i. 15. Nothing moved by the treatment He had received at Nazareth, ver. 28, 29, Jesus patiently worked on in another place. Christians should not give

up any work they are called to do, for want of success. The day comes when every man shall be rewarded according to *his own labor*. The discouragements we meet with in trying to do good, enable us to show the world that there are such things as faith and patience, and that, at all events, we are persuaded that we have truth on our side.

32. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

c Matt. vii. 28, 29; Tit. ii. 15.

*Astonished, they were struck*, literally *struck out*, driven from their normal or customary state of mind by something new and strange: *at his doctrine*, both the matter of His discourse, and the manner of His teaching. *For his word was with power*, with authority. He spoke as one not relying on rabbis, or elders, or prophets, or even upon Moses, but as one greater than they all, having authority, original and unappealable, in His own Divine person. Indeed it was *Emmanuel, God-man*, who thus addressed them, although they then knew it not. It is one thing to admire the preacher, but another and quite a different thing to believe the truth he proclaims.

35. And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice,

d Mark i. 23.

*In the synagogue.* See Notes on ver. 15. Synagogues were intimately connected with our Lord's life and ministry. In them He worshipped in His youth, and in His manhood. They were the scenes, too, of no small portion of His work. In them were wrought some of His mightiest works of healing, Luke xiii. 11; Mark i. 23; Matt. xii. 9. In them were spoken some of the most glorious of His recorded works, Ch. iv. 16; John vi. 59, and many more, beyond all reckoning, which are not recorded, Matt. iv. 23; xiii. 54; John xviii. 20, &c.

*There was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil.* When God became incarnate, Satan became incarnate also. It is undeniable that in the time of Christ there was such a thing as the possession of men's bodies by evil spirits, or devils, as they are usually called in the Scripture. Every expression that our Lord makes use of with respect to these demoniacs plainly supposes them to be really possessed. He treated them as such. Everywhere a plain distinction is made between common diseases and demoniacal possessions, which shows that they were totally different things. Matt. iv. 24; Mark i. 32; Luke vi. 17, 18; vii. 21; viii. 2; xiii. 32. We find, from Josephus, and other historians, that it was no uncommon case in those days to be possessed with evil spirits. That demoniacal possession and insanity were not convertible terms is evident from the fact that out of one woman Jesus cast "seven devils." Mark xvi. 9. So, too, the unclean spirits are said to "enter in" and "depart out of" the patients. They speak and are spoken to, both while within their victims and after they have come out. They hold converse with Christ in a manner quite unsuitable to the sufferers, but just in the terms we should expect from fallen spirits, still in rebellion against His authority, which yet they are compelled to own. He fixes their very place of abode after they have left the bodies of their victims. In the face of all these facts, to explain away "possession" as epilepsy, or lunacy, is to accuse our Saviour and the Evangelists of a delusion or imposture. We do not affect to explain the state itself, nor need sceptical philosophers complain of

this till they have explained mental derangement. The limits and mutual reactions of the spiritual, mental, and corporeal faculties in man have as yet baffled all the researches of science. It is enough that we can see in this condition a consequence of the doctrine of an usurped kingdom of evil in the world, under a personal head, with many followers and agents, who exercise power over fallen man. Acts v. 3; John xiii. 2; comp. 1 John iii. 8; John viii. 44. This subject is confessedly a most mysterious one. We cannot understand it. But if we were to believe nothing we could not clearly comprehend, how *little* we would believe! The course of wisdom, not only upon this, but upon every subject, is simply to take the word of God, as we find it, without any reference to our own opinions, or to human systems, and where we cannot understand, there simply to bow before Infinite Wisdom, and receive its declarations in humility and love, waiting for the day when we shall see as we are seen, and know even as we ourselves are known.

In this instance the evil spirit had permitted the man to go to the *synagogue*. The Jews were careful that a man thus afflicted should suffer as little as possible on account of his misfortune. He was allowed to go where he pleased, and no restraint was laid upon him, so long as his conduct was not dangerously violent. *Spirit of an unclean devil, spirit* probably referring to the influence, and *devil* to the personality of the possessing demon. *Unclean*, not only indicates that wicked spirits are impure and filthy, and continually endeavor to pollute mankind, but it is probably intended to teach the awful truth, that works of uncleanness, in breach of the seventh commandment, are works which Satan especially labors to promote by lascivious thoughts, images, and desires. It may also teach us that those who were given over to Satanic possession were often people who had been specially addicted to sins of uncleanness and impurity. *And cried out*. The term refers to a specific act, and not to one of common occurrence. The cry was under a *certain fearful looking for of judgment*. The unclean spirit felt at once that One was nigh who was stronger than all the kingdom to which he belonged: hitherto his goods had been at peace, but now there was come One who should divide the spoil.

34. Saying, \*Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; 'the Holy One of God.

\* Or away.

• Ver. 41.

' Ps. xvi. 10; Dan. ix. 24; Ch. i. 35.

*Let us alone*, disturb not our actual condition, a most miserable desire to have nothing to do with Jesus. Comp. Rev. vi. 15. *What have we to do with thee?* what is there common to us or connecting us, *thou Jesus of Nazareth?* From the plural "we," "us," it is possible that the demon spoke in the name of the whole demon-world, or also in the name of the entire throng assembled in the synagogue, in the definite purpose of arousing a bitterness against Jesus and bringing His life into danger. *Art thou come to destroy us?* Here is a testimony of the decided opposition between the demon empire and Christ, and of His supremacy. From this it may be inferred that the demons live in fearful anticipation of the day when they shall be *destroyed* by being subjected to greater torment than they now suffer. They shall be cast into the bottomless pit. Rev. xx. 10. They are now reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. *I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God*, he does not say, *we* know, he speaks of himself, not the rest. No *disease* could enable a man to know the Holy One of God. The demons in the possessed seem to have perceived before the rest who Jesus was. Here, then, the powers of hell avouch Christ's character and mission, ("to destroy the works of the devil,") to which Heaven had already borne

its testimony. But earth gave no responsive recognition. Heaven had spoken—Hell had spoken—but Earth still was mute. In Matt. viii. 29, the two demons also recognize Christ in His Divine and adjudging character. So in Acts xvi. 16-18, the girl possessed with the spirit of Python or Apollo, proclaimed the Apostles to be the servants of the Most High. Let us beware of an unsanctified knowledge of Christianity. It is a dangerous possession, but a fearfully common one. We may know the Bible intellectually and familiarly, and yet it may have no influence over our hearts, wills, consciences, lives—thus augmenting our guilt.

35. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

*Rebuked him*, not as Michael the archangel, "*The Lord rebuke thee*," Jude 9, but in His own name and in His own power. Christ passes over for a moment the sufferer himself in order to direct at once His word of might against the evil spirit controlling him. A spirit of this cast will only yield to the sovereign power of the Son of God. *Hold thy peace*, literally, *be muzzled*. Christ afterwards *rebuked and bridled* the seas and the winds. Luke viii. 22-4. *Diseases* are not commanded to hold their peace. *And come out of him*: here is a recognition of two distinct personalities.

*And when the devil had thrown him in the midst*, that is, had thrown him into convulsions in the midst of the assembly. This was the decisive paroxysm with which the healing was declared, at the same time, a phenomenon exhibiting the knavish, spiteful, and degraded nature of the demons. Mark ix. 26; Luke ix. 42. *And hurt him not*. Mark says, i. 29, *when the unclean spirit had torn him*, but there is no contradiction between *that account* and *this*: the meaning is, he did not inflict on him any serious or permanent injury. Every open sinner who scornfully rejects the gospel for his rule of life, and the Lord Jesus for his Redeemer, even while he knows that he cannot disprove the one, or disbelieve the other, stands before God in almost as awful a state of danger, as the unclean spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum. But whilst, for that unclean spirit, not all the blood of Calvary could avail to purchase him a release from everlasting wo, yet to the sinner, however obstinate, hardened, and impenitent, "*Judah's cleansing fountain*" still is open, and no sooner does he fall before the throne of God, a willing, earnest suppliant, than he may enter within the door of grace and mercy. Even when temptations are at the worst, when every faculty of our soul seems to be in league with the tempter, we should still cling to the Redeemer with mighty prayer, and weak and helpless though we be, He will fulfil His promise, and make us more than conquerors. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Eph. vi. 10.

36. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

The miracle of casting out the demon—the first miracle of the kind—struck the people with amazement. No one doubted of the truth of the miracle; it was evident beyond contradiction. They saw the man, heard the voice of the demon, and also the tone of authority with which Jesus commanded him to come out, and were led to inquire, What kind of teaching is this? The ground of their inquiry is contained in the clause, *for with authority and power, &c.*, i. e., as one having power, self-derived and independent. From the appearance of a new power of delivering, they inferred the appearance of a new revelation and deliverance; miracle and prophecy always to the Israelites were reciprocal in their influence.

## QUESTIONS.

1. What is "Capernaum" compounded of?
2. Were Christ's residence and preaching there subjects of prophecy?
3. What does Josephus say of the town?
4. Where was it located?
5. Had Jesus a home at Capernaum?
6. With whom did He probably reside?
7. How was Capernaum a suitable place of residence for our Lord?
8. What is meant by "came down?"
9. What did Jesus do in Capernaum?
10. Where is what He preached recorded?
11. What does Christ's example teach?
12. What effect had Christ's teaching on the people?
13. What is said of His word?
14. What is said of synagogues?
15. Was there, in the time of Christ, the possession of men's bodies by evil spirits?
16. What evidence is there of this?
17. Why was the man with the spirit of an unclean devil permitted to go to the synagogue?
18. What does "spirit" refer to?
19. What does "devil" refer to?
20. What does the word "unclean" indicate?
21. What kind of a cry was it the unclean spirit uttered?
22. Why did he utter it?
23. What is meant by—"Let us alone?"
24. What, by "What have we to do with thee?"
25. Why is it possible that the demon spoke in the name of the whole demon world?
26. How does it appear that the demons anticipate destruction?
27. How will they be destroyed?
28. What is said of the words—"I know thee who thou art," &c.?
29. What did Jesus do to the demon?
30. How did He rebuke him?
31. What is meant by "Hold thy peace?"
32. How are two distinct personalities recognized?
33. What is meant by "thrown him in the midst?"
34. What is said of the phrase—"hurt him not?"
35. What is said of the sinner who scornfully rejects the gospel?
36. Is there reason to hope that the worst sinner may obtain pardon?
37. What is said about clinging to the Redeemer?
38. How did the miracle of casting out the demon strike the people?
39. Was it the first miracle of the kind?
40. Did any doubt the reality of the miracle?
41. Why not?
42. What kind of power did the people ascribe to Christ?
43. What did they infer from a new power of delivering?
44. What were miracle and prophecy always to the Israelites?

## LESSON XXVIII.

vs. 37-44.

37. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

*The fame, literally, the sound.* This is a very elegant metaphor. The people are represented as *struck with astonishment*, and the *sound* goes out through all the coasts, in allusion to the propagation of sound, by a strong stroke upon any substance, by which the air is suddenly agitated, and conveys the *report* made by the stroke to distant places. So this miracle, just performed, was told to others by those who saw it, till it was heard through all the coasts of Galilee, Mark i. 28.

38. And he arose out of the synagogues, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

s Matt. viii. 14; Mark i. 29.

How indefatigable was the good Physician!—one hour removing spiritual ailments, and the next, bodily diseases, thus evincing far more clearly than words can speak, that there is nothing above His power, or His willingness to heal. *And he arose out of the synagogues*, a concise expression for *he arose and went out*. *Simon's house*, in Mark i. 29, is *the house of Simon and Andrew*. These brothers were partners in the fishing business, and appear to have lived together in the same house, Matt. iv. 18. Peter is mentioned alone by Luke for his strong personal character. *And Simon's wife's mother*—whether his mother-in-law lived with him, or whether he received her into his house that she might be affectionately attended to during her sickness, is not known, but either shows the kindness of his heart. We should show piety at home. “Despise not thy mother when she is old,” Prov. xxiii. 22. The Romish doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy certainly finds no countenance in the fact that the chief of the Apostles, who is claimed by that Church as the first pope, was a married man. We find Paul speaking of him as such, many years after this, 1 Cor. ix. 5. When writing to Timothy, also, he says. “A bishop must be the husband of one wife,” 1 Tim. iii. 2. Marriage is one of the first of Divine institutions, and a positive command of God, who declared the state of celibacy *not good*, Gen. ii. 18. “Marriage is honorable in all,” Heb. xiii. 4. Neither the Prophets of the Old Testament, nor the Apostles of the New, judged themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. Several of the earliest ecclesiastical writers mention others of the Apostles, besides Peter, who were married men, and one of them asserts that they all were, “excepting John and Paul.” An interesting account is given from Eusebius by Gibbon, the historian, of the appearance of two *grandsons* of Jude, “the brother of James,” before a Roman tribunal, during the reign of Domitian. *Was taken with a great fever*. Strength of grace, and special regard even from Christ Himself, cannot prevail against diseases. Though Peter was a good man, and his mother-in-law probably a pious woman, this did not exclude sickness from his family. That her fever was of a serious nature appears not only from the terms in which Luke, who was a physician, describes it, but also from the fact that it hindered her even from entertaining, in a manner somewhat befitting Him, the so greatly desired guest. Of Tabiga, the grand manufacturing suburb of Capernaum,

Dr. Thompson says: "As there is considerable marshy land about this Tabiga, may not this account for the prevalence of fevers at Capernaum? for here it was, of course, that Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever. Fevers of a very malignant type are still prevalent, particularly in summer and autumn, owing, no doubt, to the extreme heat acting upon these marshy plains, such as the Būtaiha, at the influx of the Jordan."<sup>3</sup> *And they besought him for her.* Most probably she was too ill to ask His help herself. Doubtless Jesus loved Peter, and therefore could not be indifferent to the sufferings of his mother, yet He waited until He was *besought*. So truly does our Lord delight to hear the voice of His praying people, that He delays many a blessing until He has heard the voice of faithful, fervent supplication.

39. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

*Stood over her.* Matthew says, viii. 15, *he touched her hand*; Mark i. 31, *he took her by the hand*. The accounts taken together harmonize and complete the narrative. The Evangelists who add something more, do not contradict the other who says less. *And rebuked the fever*, as, just before, the demon, and, as at other times, He "rebuked" the winds and the waves, Matt. viii. 26; Mark iv. 39; Luke viii. 24. This is generally regarded as a mere personification; but may it not be regarded as a recognition of Satan and the powers of evil as the authors of the disharmony in the outward world, a tracing of all these disorders up to their source in a person? We speak of rebuking a child or a servant, but not a clod or a tree. *And it left her.* Not in that state of extreme weakness and exhaustion which fever usually leaves behind when in the ordinary course of things it has abated. There was not a gradual convalescence, but an instantaneous cure was effected. The suddenness of the cure showed the reality of the miracle. *And immediately she arose and ministered unto them.* The completeness of her recovery was shown by the fact that she at once girded herself for serving. She was restored to her original position, and resumed her ordinary household duties. *She ministered unto them*, or waited on them, served them, with specific reference to food. For *them*, some manuscripts and editors read *him*, thus confining her attendance to the person of our Lord Himself, as showing her gratitude for the performance of the cure. Serving Christ in His ordinances and in His members is the best proof we can give to others that we are restored to spiritual health. How few render to the Lord according to the benefits they have received! Let those who have been restored to bodily health, perhaps rescued from the sight of an opening grave, not forget the Divine goodness, but be found ministering to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the wants of His people. "I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble," Ps. lxxi. 13, 14.

40. Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. viii. 16; Mark i. 32.

The report of Christ's two astonishing miracles caused the light of a new hope for the sick in the town and vicinity to rise. *When the sun was setting.* As the Jewish Sabbath ended at the setting of the sun, the people felt no scruple in carrying the afflicted and laying them at the feet of Jesus at this time. Then, again, it must be remembered that the cool of the day was

the best time for the sick to appear on the street, and that some time was necessary to spread the news of the great Physician, and bring the sick together. *All they that had any sick with divers diseases, &c.*, that is, *ill*, or being in an evil condition, disease in general is denoted. The sick, the lame, the blind, the paralytic, the possessed, Matt. viii. 16, Mark i. 32; walking, led, supported by crutches, or carried in their beds, attended by numerous friends, gathered at the door of the house in which Jesus was. The Saviour could not behold unmoved the diseased creatures that were brought to Him. His heart was full of compassion. Some persons turn away from the view of misery, because it gives them uneasiness, but such conduct is selfish. Jesus felt far more at the sight of suffering than we can feel, yet He was willing to bear the pangs of sympathy. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Is. lvi. 3. *And he laid his hands on them*, following His usual custom of connecting the exercise of His power with some external act. Most probably He uttered some kind word of encouragement, as individual cases required. *And healed them*. What rejoicing was heard that night through all the place! No sinner need despair who comes to Christ, conscious of his spiritual malady, to be healed by His merciful hand. Jesus, as it was predicted, Is. liii. 4-6, *Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*, Matt. viii. 17. His sympathy with the distressed was a part of His suffering, and His removal of diseases was the fruit of His bearing our sins, and the punishment of them. It was by His substitutional suffering in our stead, that the man Christ Jesus was entitled to redeem us from hell, and relieve us from the earthly part of our woes. Christ, by relieving suffering, has left us an example that we should follow His steps. We are not to give ourselves up to selfish enjoyment, while our fellow-creatures are groaning, but to visit them, and aid and comfort them according to our ability. All the philanthropic means employed by individuals or by society at large for the relief of human suffering, and especially of that produced by bodily disease, are but continuations of the work begun by Christ Himself. The medical profession, more especially, when governed by right principles and actuated by becoming motives, bears the same relation to our Lord as the Physician of the body, that the ministry ought always to sustain to Him as the Physician of the soul.

41. 'And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to \*speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

Mark i. 23, 34; iii. 11.

\* Or, to say that they knew Him to be Christ.

*Came out of many*, at His command. *Suffered them not to speak*, i. e., declare His Messiahship. See Notes on ver. 35. Our Lord refused testimony from devils, for the very reason why they were eager to give it, because He and they would thus seem to have one interest. Matt. xii. 24. He wished to show His abhorrence of their malignant nature. He would not accept them as preachers. They so mingled falsehood with their truth, that he who listens to them for their truth's sake will be led away by their lies. Are we not here taught at this day not to found our faith on pretended spiritualistic manifestations from unknown supernatural sources or sorceries?

This is an appropriate place for noticing several peculiarities of our Lord's miracles. 1. They were public. Many of them, it is true, were wrought in private, thus indicating that there was no ostentation in the manner of performing them; yet as a general thing they were wrought in public—in the presence of His disciples, in the sight of multitudes in all parts of the country, in a great number of populous towns, in broad day, and, in fact, under the eye of a whole nation for nearly four years. 2. They were of a benefi-

cent character. They were not, like the wonders of the heathen magicians, either hurtful or trifling, or like those of Mohammed, frivolous, or like those recorded in the legends of the church of Rome, most of which are so grotesque that they make a rational man smile, and a Christian man weep, nor were they a wild, arbitrary display of power; but they all looked to some benignant result, such as comforting the distressed, relieving the diseased, feeding the hungry, consoling the fearful, and demolishing the bulwarks of unbelief. 3. Christ's miracles were of such a character, that if *they* were not miracles, then miracles can have no existence, and it would be impossible for a Divine mission to be authenticated to mankind by this species of evidence. They are not of a nature to be referred to the possible effects of imagination, nor to occult laws of nature, never till then developed, nor to fortunate coincidences. The universal experience of man up to that time, and since that time, proves that they were not only above nature, but in many instances contrary to all its fixed and uniform laws. They were, moreover, generally of such a character as to preclude all preconcerted action with a view to collusion and deception, being performed, not in circumstances previously arranged, or at places specially suggested, but just when and where exigencies arose, and necessities required.

42. 'And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 35.

According to Mark i. 35, Jesus "prayed" during this retirement. There was an alternation of prayer and labor in His life, such as in truth might be called a *praying without ceasing*. Ch. iii. 21; vi. 12; ix. 29; Mark xiv. 23; xiv. 34. He thirsted for communion with His Father. Holy and sinless as His human nature was, He felt the need of the regular use of the means of grace. This example we would do well to follow, if we desire to grow in grace. We must make time for private meditation, and being alone with God. Constant excitement and engagement entail great peril on the soul. The morning is the best time for devotion. Boerhave, the celebrated physician, rose early in the morning, and, through life, his practice was to retire an hour for private prayer and meditation. This, he often told his friends, gave him firmness and vigor for the business of the day. Chief Justice Hale, too, rose early, and retired for prayer, and to read a portion of God's word, without which, he said, nothing prospered with him all the day. "Ministers," says an old divine, "should be much in prayer. They use to reckon how many hours they spend in reading and study. It were far better, both for ourselves and the Church of God, if more time were spent in prayer. Luther's spending three hours daily in secret prayer, and Bradford's studying on his knees, and other instances of men in our time, are talked of rather than imitated." *A desert place*, not a large desert, as when the desert of Judea or of Sinai is spoken of, but only a solitude near Capernaum. *And the people sought him, inquired whither He went, and continued to ask until they ascertained, then came unto him, even in the solitary place to which He had retired: and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.* There was growing up a dangerous popularity. The miracles Christ had performed were in danger of producing too secular and general excitement. He indicated a disposition to go away, but the people earnestly solicited and pressed Him to remain at Capernaum.

43. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

*I must preach—to other cities also.* Not in the sense of an absolute necessity, but of a moral obligation which sprang from His very relation as the Messiah of Israel, and not of Capernaum alone. As it was Christ's great design to plant and propagate the gospel, He must not confine His ministry to one particular place. *For therefore am I sent*, equivalent to "For that have I come out." In Mark i. 38, "for therefore came I forth." Is. lxi. 1; John xvi. 28; xvii. 4, John x. 36. Preaching was Christ's *great work*. Hence those who regard preaching as a thing of less importance than some other religious observances, are in error. It is a striking circumstance in our Lord's history, that although He was almost incessantly preaching, we never read of His baptizing any person. The testimony of John is distinct on this point: "Jesus baptized not." John iv. 2. As preaching was Christ's great work, so it is that of His ministers, and they, like Him, are to be willing to perform this solemn duty, wherever God may call them.

44. "And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

" Mark i. 39.

From this it appears that their synagogues were scattered through the villages of Galilee, as churches are among us. *He preached*, the proper meaning of the word is, *He continued preaching*; He never slackened His pace—He continued proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation to all—there was no time to be lost—immortal souls were perishing for lack of knowledge, and the grand adversary was prowling about, seeking whom he might devour. In the earlier part of our Lord's ministry, He preached mostly in the synagogues. Afterwards, when the people followed Him from place to place by thousands, He was obliged to address them in the open air, from a ship anchored near the shore, or from some eminence, where He could be seen and heard by all.

QUESTIONS.

1. What does the word "fame" mean?
2. What is the import of the metaphor used?
3. How far was the report of the miracle, just performed, circulated?
4. Into whose house did Jesus enter?
5. How was Simon's mother-in-law in his house?
6. What is said of the Romish doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy?
7. How does it appear that the fever of Simon's wife's mother was of a serious nature?
8. What does Dr. Thomson say about Tabiga?
9. What did Christ do to the sick woman?
10. What is said of the accounts of the several Evangelists?
11. What is meant by "rebuked"?
12. How did the fever leave the woman?
13. How was the completeness of the recovery shown?
14. What did Peter's mother-in-law do when recovered?
15. What practical lesson does her example teach?
16. What effect was produced by the report of Christ's two astonishing miracles?
17. What is said about "when the sun was setting"?
18. Who are meant by the sick?
19. What did Jesus do to the multitude of diseased persons?
20. Why did He lay His hands upon them?
21. Need any sinner despair, who comes to Christ conscious of his spiritual malady?

22. What does Christ's example of relieving suffering, teach?
23. What is said about the medical profession?
24. What is said of the devils?
25. Why did Christ refuse testimony from devils?
26. What was the first peculiarity of our Lord's miracles?
27. What, the second?
28. What, the third?
29. What did Jesus do when it was day?
30. What did He do during this retirement?
31. What is said of Christ's praying and laboring?
32. Ought we to follow His example?
33. What is said of Boerhave?
34. What, of Chief Justice Hale?
35. What kind of a desert place did Christ retire to?
36. Did the people seek Christ out, and remain with Him?
37. What are we to understand by the words, "I must preach," &c.?
38. What was Christ's great work?
39. Is preaching less important than other religious observances?
40. Do we ever read of Christ baptizing any person?
41. What is John's testimony on this point?
42. What is the great work of ministers?
43. Were synagogues scattered through the villages of Galilee?
44. Did Jesus preach in those synagogues?
45. When multitudes followed Christ, how did He address them?

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## CHAPTER V.

### LESSON XXIX.

vs. 1-7.

THE narrative with which this chapter begins, falls, in order of time, before the two miracles recorded in the close of the last chapter, and is the same with that which was more briefly related by Matthew and Mark, of Christ's calling Peter and Andrew to be *fishers of men*, Matt. iv. 18; Mark i. 16. They had related this miraculous draught of fishes at that time, having only in view the calling of His disciples, but Luke gives us a statement of that event, as one of the many signs which Jesus did in the presence of His disciples, which *had not been written* in the foregoing books. John xx. 30, 31.

1. And *it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret.*

a Matt. iv. 18; Mark i. 16.

*Pressed upon him.* A crowd rapidly gathered around One of whom so many strange things had been reported, and about whom local curiosity had been so intensely excited. Their wish was such as Jesus never repelled—to *hear the word of God*. It seems the sermons which He had preached in His last tour through the country, had made a great impression on the minds of the people who heard Him. There was a glorious prospect of a plentiful

harvest, but how few of these *blades* came to *full corn in the ear!* To hear with diligence and affection is well, but a preacher of the gospel may expect that, out of crowds of hearers, only a few, comparatively, will fully receive the truth, and hold out to the end. *He stood.* It is probable, from Matt. iv. 18; Mark i. 16, that Jesus was in the habit of walking upon the broad beach of the lake. He now stopped in His course as He arrived at the boats of the future Apostles. *By the Lake of Gennesaret.* This inland sea or lake is called by various names. 1. *The Sea of Galilee*, Matt. iv. 18; through it the Jordan flows, along the east side of the province so called. 2. *The Sea (or Lake) of Tiberias*, from a city built by Herod on the southwest shore, and named in honor of the Emperor Tiberius. See John vi. 1; xxi. 1. 3. *The Lake of Gennesaret*, in Hebrew *Cinnereth*, Deut. iii. 17, or, *Cinneroth*, 1 Kings xv. 20, from a city and a district on the western shore. Josh. xix. 35; Num. xxxiv. 11. This lake is of an oval shape, about thirteen geographical miles long, and six broad. The river Jordan enters it at its northern end, and passes out at its southern end. In fact the bed of the lake is just a lower section of the great Jordan valley. Its most remarkable feature is its deep depression, its surface being no less than seven hundred feet below the level of the ocean. Like almost all lakes of volcanic origin, it occupies the bottom of a great basin, the sides of which shelve down with an uniform slope from the surrounding plateaus. This lake, with its beautiful and attractive surroundings, in the time of our Lord, its pure, clear water, the blooming flowers on the plains, the olive gardens and vineyards cresting the heights which are now bare and treeless, and the tropical plants spreading all around, as they still spread, in rich and fragrant luxuriance, is blended with His history by imperishable memories.

“What went ye out to see  
O'er the rude sandy lea  
Where stately Jordan flows by many a palm,  
Or where Gennesaret's wave  
Delights the flowers to lave,  
That o'er her western slope breathe airs of balm?”

“All through the summer night,  
Those blossoms red and bright  
Spread their soft breasts, unheeding, to the breeze,  
Like hermits watching still  
Around the sacred hill  
Where erst our Saviour watched upon His knees.

“The Paschal moon above  
Seems like a saint to rove,  
Left shining in the world with Christ alone,  
Below, the lake's still face  
Sleeps sweetly in th' embrace  
Of mountains terrac'd high with mossy stone.”

“Here may we sit, and dream  
Over the heavenly theme,  
Till to our soul the former days return,  
Till on the grassy bed,  
Where thousands once He fed,  
The world's incarnate Maker we discern.”

2. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

*Ships*—two small vessels. They were a sort of large fishing-boats, of

which Josephus says there were about 230 on the lake, and four or five men to each. *Standing by the lake.* Stationed, at anchor, near the shore of the lake. *But the fishermen were gone out of them.* They were not only fishing on this occasion, but followed this business as their stated occupation and the means of their subsistence. This is not to be exaggerated as a proof of abject poverty and social degradation, for in the part of Galilee adjacent to the lake, this was probably a common and a profitable business, as it is now on the banks of Newfoundland and coasts of New England. This lake still abounds in a great variety of excellent fish. The *fishermen* mentioned in this verse were James and John, see ver. 7, 10, who are not mentioned by name, and are therefore considered as strangers to the reader. *Were gone out of them.* Out of their boats, but were probably in sight. *Were washing their nets,* from the filth of the sea, before laying them out to dry, ere they went home to get such rest and refreshment as might fit them for the toils of another night. In Matt. iv. 21, it is said "*mending their nets.*" Some of the company might be employed in "*mending their nets,*" after washing, and others in "*washing their nets,*" by casting them from the shore into the lake. The "*mending their nets*" is a trivial circumstance which it would never have occurred to the inventor of a fictitious tale to mention, and is one of those minute, latent, indirect proofs of the authenticity of the Gospel, which it is most agreeable to trace when opportunity offers, although not, perhaps, of great importance. It has been ingeniously and usefully remarked by a mystic writer of the middle ages, that the washing and repairing of their nets, by the fishermen at the lake, ought ever to be imitated by all "*fishers of men,*" after they have cast in *their* nets for a draught; meaning by this that they should seek carefully to purify and cleanse themselves from aught which, in that very act, they may have gathered of sin, impurities of vanity, of self-elation, or of any other kind, and that this they must do if they would use their nets effectually for a future draught.

3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

*Entered into, went on board, one of the ships, which was Simon's.* The ship of James and John was at some distance, perhaps around at the farther point of the cove. Simon having descried Jesus approaching, followed by the multitude, forthwith returned to his boat. *And prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land.* — requested him, for the sake of convenience, to put out a short distance upon the sea, just far enough for Him to be heard distinctly by those on shore. *And He sat down,* the usual position of a teacher, *and taught the people out of the ship,* the knowledge of the Lord. The shore was the church, the ship the pulpit, the Saviour the preacher. Here, with the deep blue sky above, the high rocks or gently sloping hills around, and the placid waters beneath, with brow yet unfurrowed with the lineaments of predicted sadness, He proceeded to unfold the great revelation for which, during four thousand years, the world had waited in anxious expectancy. It was a momentous day in the history of the Church. It is holy work that makes holy ground. A builder may raise an edifice, but religion alone can make it a sanctuary. An orator may collect an audience, but living religion alone can make it a church. It is right that there should be places set apart for holy lessons and holy services, but we must never think for one moment that there is any spot of ground so holy, that there we must think right thoughts, and speak right words, and do good deeds, but that the moment we are outside, the rest of the ground is so profane that we may live just as we like. The whole earth was consecrated for the fruits of

Christianity when Jesus, the Son of God, allied Himself to our humanity, was born of a virgin, took into union with Himself a part of the dust of the world, and consecrated all space for His temple, all time for His worship.

4. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, 'Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

b John xxi. 6.

When Christ had done preaching, and had probably dismissed the people to their homes, He directed Peter to resume his business. Time spent on week days in the public exercises of religion, may be but little hindrance to us *in time*, and a great advantage to us in *temper of mind*, in our worldly calling. *Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught*: as opposed to the shallow water near the shore, and where would be a larger shoal of fishes. The *nets*, including also those of the fishermen employed by Peter, were probably seines, although some suppose they were *bag-nets*, or *basket-nets*, such as were used in deep water. This command to Peter, following the slight test to which his obedience had been already put, had its force also with reference to the rest of the crew of the boat, who must have been active therein. Christ commands *the use of means*.

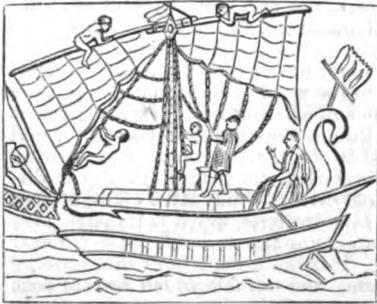
5. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

*Master*: Peter familiarly addresses Jesus, not as a new acquaintance, but as an old disciple. He received the first blessed word from Him on the banks of the Jordan. *We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing*, a circumstance which one would have thought should have excused them from hearing the sermon, but such love had they to the word of God, that it was more reviving and refreshing to them than the softest slumbers. This is given as a reason why, in the ordinary course of things, the casting of the nets would be unsuccessful. Having fruitlessly cast in their nets several times during the night, which was regarded as the best time for fishing, they were disheartened. "Fishers of men," says an old divine, "may labor all night, and all day, too, and catch nothing. This is sometimes the fisherman's fault, but oftener the fishes, who are crafty and cunning, and will not come near the net, or are too slippery to be holden. It is the fisher's fault that nothing is taken if he doth only play upon the sand, and not *launch out into the deep*, deliver some superficial and less necessary truths, without opening to the people the great mysteries of godliness, and if he fish with a broken net, either deliver unsound doctrine, or lead an unexemplary life; also, if he doth not fish at Christ's command, but run a fishing unsent." Certain it is that all the labor of the ministry must be unsuccessful where the blessing of God is not. It is the presence and influence of Christ in a congregation, that cause souls to be gathered unto Himself: without these, whatever the preacher's eloquence or abilities may be, all will be *night, and fruitless effort*. *Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net*. We are not to regard these as the words of one half despairing of the issue, yet merely complying with the request of One whom, out of regard to their former transient relation, he recognized as his "Master," and felt bound to obey. On the contrary, they were spoken more in the spirit of the Psalmist, when he exclaimed, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Ps. cxxvii. 1. They were words of faith. "Though my own reason is against Thine, though my conclusions are the opposite of Thine, though I am a fisherman,

and have the greater experience in my trade, and the knowledge of the best seasons for prosecuting it, and of all the likelihoods or unlikelihoods of success that may attend it,—*nevertheless*, my reason shall be laid prostrate at Thy feet, my conclusions shall be dismissed, and because Thou biddest me, I will do it." The phrase implies a previous acquaintance with the Lord, from which Peter had already received impressions of His power and of the weight of His words. What a precedent for us! Let us not despond upon any unsuccessful trial in our Master's business, nor be dejected by any disappointment in the way of our ordinary calling, when we contemplate this eminent example of such a blessing upon a mind ready to labor at His word, and so large amends made at once for so many fruitless experiments before. Though we let down the net of faith amid the promises of God, and being unable to appropriate them, are ready to fear that God has forsaken us, let our resolve be, "*Nevertheless*, at Thy word, blessed Saviour! I will launch forth once more." Let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, being the man of our counsel, the ultimate court of appeal, to which our own proud reason or self-will, or corrupted nature and blinded conscience, should, and shall yield.

6. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7. And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.



ANCIENT SHIP.

*Brake*, literally, began to break, or, was breaking. Such an immense weight of fish was enclosed in the net, as it was impossible for the united strength of the two brothers to draw, or for the boat to manage. Perceiving this, the brothers *beckoned*, or made signal, to their partners in the other boat, who were probably not within call, to come to their aid. What a pity there should be such an envious separation among the different denominations that profess to believe in Christ Jesus! Did they *help each other* in the spirit of Christian fellowship, more souls would be

brought to the knowledge of the truth. *And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.* Perhaps miraculous power gathered in more than the nets. Probably the one-sided dip came near to swamping the boats, the *beginning* to be merged was arrested by the righting.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of the narrative with which the chapter begins?
2. Did a crowd gather around Jesus?
3. What was their desire?
4. What is said about hearing?
5. What did Jesus do?
6. By what names is the Lake of Gennesaret called?
7. What river enters it?

8. What is said about this lake?
9. What kind of ships did Jesus see?
10. Where were the fishermen?
11. What is said of the business of fishing?
12. Who were the fishermen mentioned in verse 2?
13. What were they doing?
14. What is said of their mending their nets?
15. Whose ship did Christ go on board?
16. What did He ask of Simon?
17. What attitude did He assume in teaching?
18. What did He proceed to unfold?
19. What makes holy ground?
20. Did Christ direct Peter to resume his business?
21. What kind of nets were used?
22. On whom also, had this command to Peter, force?
23. How did Peter reply to Jesus?
24. What did he mean by "we have toiled all night," &c.?
25. What is said of fishers of men?
26. How are we to regard the words "nevertheless at thy word," &c.?
27. What does the phrase imply?
28. How is this a precedent for us?
29. What is said of the word "brake?"
30. Why did the net begin to break?
31. What did they do when they saw this?
32. What is said of different Christian denominations?
33. What is said of miraculous power?
34. How did the ships begin to sink?

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### LESSON XXX.

vs. 8-11.

8. When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'

c 2 Sam. vi. 9; 1 King xvii. 18.

Peter had as yet been able to judge no other miracle which he had seen, so well as this. It belonged to his *calling*, it took place on *his* vessel, with *his* fish-net, after *his* own fruitless endeavors, in *his* immediate presence. In the case of the earlier works of the Saviour, his understanding had indeed given silent acquiescence, but here both understanding and heart were constrained to bow themselves before a present majesty.

*He fell down at Jesus' knees*—a profound reverence, as to a Divine being. He had a full Divine impression that this was no prophet, or angel, but God incarnate, the Son of God, who had just shown His lordship over nature, animate and inanimate, and His knowledge of the secrets of the deep. *Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* He was not weary of Christ's presence, but acknowledged Himself unworthy of it. He felt he was in the presence of Deity, a sense of his sins and unworthiness suddenly rushed on his mind, while, with mingled feelings of humility, gratitude, and awe, he entreated Jesus to depart from one who was so guilty and undeserving. He thought the Divine purity of Jesus could not endure him, and perhaps feared that the power which had brought the miraculous supply would break forth and consume him. It seems to have been a received maxim among the Jews,

that whoever had seen a particular manifestation of God, should speedily die. Exod. xxiv. 10, 11 ; xxxiii. 20 ; Deut. v. 26 ; Judg. vi. 21, 23 ; xiii. 22. This belief arose from what God had said to Moses : "There shall no man see me, and live." Exod. xxxiii. 20. Observe, 1st, Peter's acknowledgment was very just, and one which it becomes us all to make ; for even the best of men are sinful men, and should be ready upon all occasions to own it, and especially to own it to Jesus Christ ; for to whom else but to Him, who came into the world to save sinners, should sinful men apply themselves ? 2d, His inference from it was not just : if we be sinful men, as indeed we are, we should rather say, "Lord, for that very reason, while we own ourselves most unworthy of thy presence, we most importunately entreat it. Come unto me, O Lord, for *I am a sinful man*, and if Thou stand at a distance from me, I perish !" Prayer should not be too much controlled by emotion. When the *wicked* say to God, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways," He often takes them at their word, yet He does not deal thus with the trembling penitent, but receives him in His arms, and bids him live with Him forever.

9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken :

The word *astonished* is far too weak for expressing the effect which we find this miracle produced upon Peter. The original literally means *amazement wrapt him round*. Terror was mingled with his astonishment. All that were in his boat were similarly affected. We learn, from Matthew iv. 18, that Andrew, Simon's brother, was with him.

10. And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ; <sup>4</sup>from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. iv. 19 ; Mark i. 17.

*James and John* were affected with like astonishment. *The sons of Zebedee*. In respect to their relation to the Saviour, it is more than probable that Salome, the wife of Zebedee, was an own sister of Mary, the mother of the Lord, so that her children were own cousins of Jesus. The children and wife of Zebedee are often noticed in the New Testament, but it is in this transaction alone that we catch a glimpse of Zebedee himself. Matt. iv. 21. It is supposed that he died shortly after. *And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt catch men*. Though Peter was immediately addressed, the rest, Andrew, James, and John, were included. "Be not afraid, these discoveries tend to *life*, not *death*, and ye shall become the instruments of *life* and *salvation* to a lost world. Instead of doing you any harm, I from this design to employ you in much nobler work, in which I will give you such happy success, that ye shall, with the net of the gospel, captivate men in greater abundance than those fishes ye have now caught." This was properly the inauguration of the great work whereunto they were about to be sent.

Jesus intending to call Peter, James, and John into His service. 1. *Taught* in their presence, that they might *know* His *doctrine*. 2. He performed a *miracle* before their eyes, that they might see and be convinced of His *power*. 3. He called them to go forth with *this doctrine*, and through *this power*, that they might *teach* the ignorant, and be *successful* in their work. *Thou shalt catch men*. Not only in His parables, but in His other discourses, Jesus draws His doctrines and instructions from the scenes of nature, from the objects that surround Him, from the most common occurrences of life, from the seasons of the year, from some extraordinary incidents or remarkable transactions. The fishermen were to *catch* men, as David,

the shepherd, was to *feed*. Ps. lxxviii. 71, 72. Julian the Apostate endeavoured to turn the simile of fishing against Christianity, inasmuch as fish were caught from their living element for death; but the expression used singularly excludes such a turn, for it signifies to take alive, or for life, being compounded of the words *alive* and *capture*. The parallel word "fishers," used by the other Evangelists, is the oldest name by which the ministerial office is described in the New Testament. It lies deeper down than the name of bishop, elder, or deacon. It is the first idea which should be before a minister's mind. The *sea* is the emblem of the world. The number *four* is the symbolical number of the world.

The first step in the conquest of the world was taken when Jesus summoned these four Apostles to become fishers of men to the world. The main points of resemblance which the metaphor presents are, the value of the object, the necessity of skill as well as strength, of vigilance as well as labor, with implication if not explicit promise of abundance and success in their new fishery. "Here," says a Commentator of the last century, "is the work of ministers set out, to gain souls to God; they are not to fish merely for a livelihood, much less for honor and applause to themselves, but to win souls to God, and are to bait their hooks and order their nets to this end, which they will never serve, if either by general discourses they make the meshes so wide that all will dart through them, or if by their wit and learning they make their discourses so fine and curious that few or none of their hearers can understand them. Nor will all our art make us fishers of men. *I will make you to become*, says Christ. Here we see His authority. Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, God must give the increase. But yet we must order our nets rationally and probably in order to our end, and without that cannot expect God's blessing. Nor were the Apostles presently to enter upon the work of the ministry, out first to *come after Christ*. And indeed such should all gospel ministers be. In the choice of Matthias, Peter limited the people in their election to those that had accompanied with them all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst them. Acts i. 21. Other fishers commonly prove fishers for something else, not for the souls of men."

God's call of men to places of dignity and honor, and His appearances of favor to them, have ordinarily been when they have been busied in the honest employments of their callings. Saul was seeking his father's asses, David keeping his father's sheep, when the Lord called them to reign. The shepherds were feeding their flocks when they had the revelation of Christ, and to the magi, who were given to the study of the stars, God gave a star to guide them to the Saviour at Bethlehem. Amos was called from among the herdmen of Tekoah, Matthew from the receipt of custom, Moses when keeping Jethro's flock, Exod. iii. 1, 2, Gideon from the threshing-floor, Judg. vi. 11; to the Samaritan woman, who, as was probably her business, came to the well, Jesus preached of the water of life, and here several Apostles were called from their fishery. God never encourages idleness, nor does He despise persons in the humblest employments. We here learn that the world's dullest tasks and most drudging toil can be baptized and hallowed with religious influence, and that, while men may be "not slothful in business," they may be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." To illustrate Divine truth by appealing to fixed formulas and modes of thought, to recognized habits, and set prejudices even, and prepossessions, is the most effective way of bringing home great lessons to the mind of the most of mankind.

11. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

• Mat. iv. 20; xix. 27; Mark i. 18; Ch. xviii. 28.

*They, Simon or Peter, Andrew, James and John, (see Notes on Ch. vi. 14,) brought their ships to land, had drawn them up again on the shore for a final abandonment: they forsook all and followed Him. They renounced*

their boats, and nets, and fish, the habits of life to which they had been used, and the occupation in which alone they were skilled, and which furnished their subsistence. And this, not to attach themselves to one who was rich or great, or who could or did hold out to them any worldly advantages, but to One who was as poor as themselves, One with whom they were often to suffer peril, hunger, and thirst, and who could not assure them of a place where to lay their heads. Whatever they left, it was their *all*, and was as valuable to them as may be the house or land, the library, the office, the shop, of any one who reads this.

Forsaking consists not in the more or less that is forsaken, but in the spirit in which it is left. A man may be holden by love to a miserable hovel with as fast bands as to a sumptuous palace, for it is the worldly affection which holds him, and not the world. The sincere Christian, in every age, though he does not cast aside his worldly calling, is enabled to do what is in every respect the same—follow his occupation with a single eye to God's glory, holding all his possessions in charge for God. The minister of the gospel is to give himself up wholly to his great work, and not encumber himself, more than can be avoided, with secular affairs and worldly business. Churches should adequately provide for their ministers, so as to prevent necessity for their resorting to worldly business.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said about Peter judging this miracle?
2. When he saw it what did he do?
3. What did his falling at Jesus' knees express?
4. Why did he ask Christ to depart from him?
5. What seems to have been a maxim among the Jews?
6. Whence did this belief arise?
7. What is said of Peter's acknowledgment?
8. What is said of his inference from it?
9. What is said of the wicked saying to God, "Depart from me," &c.?
10. What is said of the word "astonished?"
11. How were James and John affected?
12. What is said of their relation to the Saviour?
13. What is said of this notice of Zebedee?
14. What did Jesus say to Simon?
15. Were the rest included in this address?
16. What did Jesus, intending to call these men into His service, do?
17. Whence did Jesus draw His doctrines and instructions?
18. What is said of Julian the Apostate?
19. When was the first step in the world's conquest taken?
20. What are the main points of resemblance which the metaphor "fishers of men" presents?
21. By whom are men called to, and qualified for, the ministry?
22. What were the Apostles to do before entering on the work of the ministry?
23. When has God ordinarily called men to places of dignity and honor?
24. Give instances of this.
25. What is said about idleness?
26. What is said about illustrating Divine truth?
27. What is said about "brought their ships to land?"
28. What did these men then do?
29. What did they renounce?
30. Why did they forsake all?
31. Did they forsake much?
32. What is forsaking said to consist in?
33. What is said of the sincere Christian?
34. What is the minister of the gospel to do?
35. What is the duty of churches?

## LESSON XXXI.

vs. 12-16.

12. ¶ 'And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on *his* face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

[Matt. viii. 2; Mark i. 40; Matt. viii. 1-4; Mark i. 40-45.]

*A certain city.* We cannot ascertain certainly where this miracle was wrought. The confines of the city are intended, for lepers were not suffered to live in towns. *A man full of leprosy.* His disease was deep-seated, virulent, and covered all his body.

Of all diseases to which the human frame is liable, the leprosy, perhaps, was the most astonishing and appalling. It was a poisoning of the springs of life, and was deemed one of the Lord's most fearful visitations of wrath. Num. xii. 6, 10; 2 Chron. xxvi. 19. It affected not merely the body of the sufferer, which it covered with deep bright spots, eating through the skin into the very flesh, and spreading like one great cancer over the whole frame, but in some supernatural manner it broke forth upon the garments, in green and reddish spots, fretting them away; it even contaminated the walls of the dwelling-houses, marking them with hollow strakes, greenish or reddish, which in sight, were lower than the wall, Lev. xiv. 37, i. e., corroding not merely the plaster, but eating even into the stones of which the houses were built.

For this terrible disorder no cure had ever been discovered; when a house was the subject of it, it was ordered to be pulled down, and utterly destroyed. When it was found upon the garments, they were directed to be burnt. This disease is still to be found in some parts of the world. There is said to be a small island on the coast of South Africa, near the Cape of Good Hope, which is appropriated by the Colonial Government to lepers. It is mentioned in McCheyne's Memoirs, p. 200.

*Fell on his face.* In Mark i. 17, *kneeling down*; in Matt. iv. 19, *worshipped*. There is no essential difference in the accounts. Either of the postures might have been assumed, according to the custom of the country, in token of civil respect, or as an act of religious homage. *And besought him.* The leper expressed the profoundest reverence and most earnest importunity. *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* The leper's faith had doubtless been aroused and strengthened by the report that had gone out concerning Jesus. See Luke iv. 37. There was here no questioning of Christ's *power*, nothing of *his* unbelief who said, "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us and help us." Mark ix. 22. *Wilt and canst* are not mere auxiliaries, but distinct and independent verbs, *if thou art willing thou art able to cleanse or purify me*, i. e., to free me from the leprosy, considered not as a mere disease, but as a symbolical and actual defilement. If the leper had known the compassion of the Saviour's heart, he would not have said, "If thou wilt." Christ's *mercy* is as great as His *power*. It is true that by His *power* He stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth. But it is also true that, "high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is His *mercy* towards them that fear Him." How agonizing must have been the leper's suspense after the utterance of his cry! But it was not protracted. A voice replied that went at once to his heart and filled it with rapture.

13. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

By the law of God, Lev. v. 3, he that touched a leper was unclean. By what Christ did, as He was God, He could not contract any ritual uncleanness. The sun casts his beams upon all that is polluted on the earth, but retains unscathed his own purity and splendor. The deed of stretching out the hand and touching the leper had no magical intrinsic power, being frequently dispensed with, but it visibly connected the author with the subject of the miracle, and at the same time symbolized or typified the healing virtue which it did not of itself impart. *Saying, I will: be thou clean.* Christ ratified and approved his utterance of faith, by making the concession of his request in the very words wherein the request itself had been embodied. *I will.* This is the saying of God, and God only—the saying of Him whose almighty will is the cause of all things. When His servants wrought miracles, far different were the phrases they used. *Their* cures were in the name of *another*, but Christ's were in *His own* name and by *His own will.* Joseph says, Gen. xli. 16, "It is not in me, God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." 2 Kings v. 7; Acts iii. 6. *And immediately the leprosy departed from him.* The effect, as usual, was instantaneous; the man was cleansed or purified, as he had asked, and Christ had promised, both in a physical and moral sense. What an astonishing and convincing spectacle! This action of Jesus is a representation of that *invisible hand* which makes itself *felt* by the most *insensible heart*, of that *internal word* which makes itself *heard* by the most *deaf*, and of that *supreme will* which *works* every thing according to its *own counsel.* "To my mind," says Dr. Thomson, "after describing this dreadful malady as he saw it, "there is no conceivable manifestation of Divine power more triumphantly confirmatory of Christ's divinity, than the cleansing of a leper with a word. He who can cleanse the leper can raise the dead, and can also forgive sins and save the soul. I ask no other evidence of the fact."

14. <sup>a</sup>And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, <sup>b</sup>according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. viii. 4.

<sup>b</sup> Lev. xiv. 4, 10, 21, 22.

*Charged him to tell no man.* Our Lord's purpose in the injunction to the man that he should not divulge the cure, as well as on similar occasions, was probably this, that His stiller ministry might not be hindered or disturbed by the inopportune flowing to Him of multitudes, who should be drawn to Him merely by the hope of sharing the same worldly benefits, as we see was the case on this very occasion, Mark i. 45, nor yet by the premature violence of His enemies, roused to a more active and keener hate by the great things which were published of Him, John ii. 46, 47. The words, *tell no man*, are to be taken with this limitation, "till thou hast shown thyself to the priests, lest if a rumor of these things go before thee, the priests at Jerusalem, out of envy, out of a desire to depreciate my work, may deny either that thou wast a leper, or else that thou art now truly cleansed." This limitation is suggested by the order of the sentence, "see thou tell no man . . . . *but go,*" &c. The man was ready to remain. Adversity transfers our affections from natural objects to Christ.

*And show thyself to the priest,* i. e., subject thyself to the inspection of a priest, and obtain an official recognition of the cure that has been wrought upon thee. The Saviour condescends to permit His miracle to be judged by

the priest as to its genuineness and completeness. *And offer for thy cleansing,* according as Moses commanded. The sacrifice here referred to is found prescribed in Lev. xiv. 10, 21; xli. 1-32. By this requisition Christ not only provided for the full authentication of the miracle, but, as it were, defined His own relation to the ceremonial law. He knew that the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, which were only shadows and figures of good things to come, and had in themselves no inherent power, were now drawing to a close, and were soon to be laid aside forever. But so long as they were not abrogated, He would have them respected. As they were ordained by God Himself, they were not to be lightly esteemed. There is a time to be silent about the work of Christ, as well as a time to speak. There are times when our Lord would have us work for Him quietly and silently, rather than attract attention by a noisy zeal. There is a zeal which is "not according to knowledge," as well as a zeal which is righteous and praiseworthy. Often we can be more useful by quietness and patience, than in any other way. We are not to "give that which is holy to dogs," nor "cast pearls before swine." By forgetfulness of this, we may even do more harm than good, and retard the very cause we want to assist.

*For a testimony unto them,* i. e., as a proof that I reverence the law and comply with its requirements, or, it may refer to the fact of the man's being cleansed, which could be fully ascertained by nothing but official scrutiny and attestation. "That they may know that a mighty cleanser is here." It was a most suitable case to present to the priesthood, because it came by law under their notice, Lev. xiv. 2, 10, 21, because of its peculiar symbolical significance, and because of its demonstrative character.

Leprosy is an emblem of sin. What are we all but lepers, spiritually, in the sight of God? Sin is the deadly sickness by which we are all affected. It is inherited from our parents, Ps. li. 5. It has eaten into our constitution. It has affected all our faculties—heart, conscience, mind, and will, are all diseased by it, Is. i. 6. It excludes from communion with God, and from heaven, and, at length, it will bring the body down to the grave, Rom. vi. 23, and if sin is unpardoned, it will ruin the soul forever. Who shall deliver us from this body of death? Let us thank God that Jesus Christ can. With Him nothing is impossible. Let us never despair of any one's salvation, so long as he lives. No cases of spiritual leprosy could be worse than those of Manasseh, Saul, and Zaccheus, yet they were all cured, Jesus Christ made them whole. "*I will.*" These two little words are a deep mine, rich in comfort and encouragement to all laboring and heavy-laden souls. They show us the mind of Christ toward sinners. They exhibit His infinite willingness to do good to the souls of men, and His readiness to show compassion, and impart salvation, to all who, like this leper, approach Him, sensible of their misery, feeling that they have no claim other than their misery gives them, realizing their guilt, and exercising faith in His power and mercy.

15. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him : and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iv. 25; Mark iii. 7; John vi. 2

The greater Christ's precaution against having His cure of the leper blazoned abroad, the more rapidly and extensively the news spread. We learn from Mark i. 45, that the delivered one forgot the injunction. 1 Sam. xv. 22. Thankful joy made silence impossible. It is noticeable that in the Gospels we never find the behavior of those who transgressed such a command very severely censured. Yet certainly this man, by his disobedience, did the cause of Christ no service. The rumor he started raised a

crowd and excitement, wholly unlike the gentle and spiritual movement it was the purpose of Jesus to create, and He was followed by such numbers, that had He entered into any city, He would have been in danger of attracting the suspicious notice of the authorities.

16. <sup>2</sup>And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

\* Matt. xiv. 23; Mark vi. 46.

*He withdrew*, literally, *He was withdrawing*, or separating Himself, implying a habit, and *prayed*. Christ frequently, doubtless, daily went aside from the multitude, into retired places, for those exercises of devotion in which His soul delighted. Luke vi. 12; Prov. xviii. 1; Matt. xiv. 23; Mark vi. 46. Often, when the labors of the day were so arduous and continuous as to give Him no time for this, He drew upon the hours of night, in order that the duty and privilege of prayer might not suffer interruption. It was not enough for Him to have the feeling of devotion in His soul, He uttered audible prayer to God, and retired and withdrew Himself from other engagements, and from His most intimate friends, for this purpose. Here we have an example for our imitation. If Jesus gave himself to prayer, shall *we* venture to neglect doing so? The more various and important public labors are, the more evidently do we need to draw down succor by ardent prayer, that we may be strengthened and prospered in them. We should so order our affairs, that our public work and our secret devotions may not encroach upon, or interfere with each other. Ministers, especially, are here taught, that they are to receive fresh supplies of light and power from God by prayer, that they may be the more successful in their work, and that they ought to seek frequent opportunities of being in private with *God* and their *books*.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What was the certain city referred to?
2. What part of the city was intended?
3. What was the disease of leprosy?
4. Had any cure been discovered for this disorder?
5. Is this disease still to be found in some parts of the world?
6. State where.
7. What posture did the leper assume before Christ?
8. What was this a token of?
9. What is said about the leper's faith?
10. What was the import of his appeal?
11. What is said of Christ's mercy?
12. What was the law of God concerning touching a leper?
13. What is said about stretching out the hand and touching the leper?
14. What did Christ say?
15. What is said about the words "I will?"
16. How did Christ's servants work miracles?
17. Was the leper cleansed?
18. In what sense?
19. What was this action of Jesus a representation of?
20. Why did Christ forbid the divulging of the cure?
21. What is said of "show thyself to the priest?"
22. What was the sacrifice to be offered for cleansing?
23. Why did Jesus require this offering to be made by the leper?
24. Is there a time to be silent about the work of Christ, as well as to speak?

25. What is meant by—"for a testimony unto them?"
26. What is leprosy an emblem of?
27. What are the particulars in which it is thus emblematical?
28. Who can deliver us from the disease of sin?
29. What is said of the words—"I will?"
30. Did the cleansed leper remember Christ's injunction of secrecy?
31. Was the behavior of those who violated such an injunction severely censured?
32. Did this leper, by telling his cure, do the cause of Christ any service?
33. What evidence is there that he did not?
34. Did Jesus frequently retire for prayer?
35. Did He utter audible prayer to God?
36. Is Christ's example to be imitated by us?
37. What is said about secret devotions?
38. What are ministers, especially, here taught?

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LESSON XXXII.

vs. 17-26.

17. ¶ And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them.

Active and indefatigable as our Lord was in preaching in their synagogue publicly on the Sabbath, He considered this as no sufficient reason for not instructing the people in the same blessed truths on every day, in private, and in the house in which He resided. Where the heart is full of the love of God, no time will appear inappropriate, no place unseemly, to speak of all His wondrous works of providence and grace.

*There were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by.* It being ascertained where Jesus might be found, persons of consideration repaired to Capernaum, Mark ii. 1, not only from other parts of Galilee, but even from Judea and Jerusalem, some, doubtless in search of benefit to their souls, some from curiosity to see and hear One whose name was in every mouth, and others to watch whether any dangerous principles lurked in a doctrine so actively promulgated. Among these, and all, probably, belonging to the latter class, were Pharisees, and *doctors of the law*, who were the same as the Scribes, ver. 21, so often mentioned in connection with the Pharisees. In the phrase, "and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them all," if we refer the pronoun *them* to the persons, implied in the words *he was teaching*, i. e., to such persons in His audience as stood in need of His healing power, the passage may be interpreted, *the power of Jesus was (operative) to heal all who were diseased*; in other words, there was on this occasion an eminent display of His miraculous healing power, accompanying His presentation of the truth, and attesting to His Divine character and mission.

18. <sup>1</sup>And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought *means* to bring him in, and to lay *him* before him.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ix. 2; Mark ii. 3.

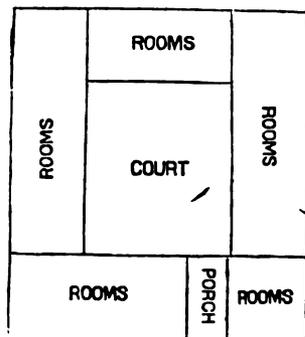
Out of the other miracles of healing which were performed at this time, this one is recorded in detail, on account of the remarkable circumstances which attended it. *Behold*, merely indicates something new and unexpected. *Men brought in a bed*. Mark says, ii. 3, he was brought by four men. According to Oriental usage, the *bed* was probably no solid framework like our bedsteads, but a simple pallet, rug, or blanket. Even the most costly Oriental beds consist of cushions and light coverings, spread upon the floor or divan. *A man which was taken with a palsy*. *Palsy* seems to be a contraction of the word paralysis. It is the cessation of nervous activity and muscular motion—a disease that is found everywhere in various forms. It was not uncommon in the East, and was often caused by sleeping at night in the open air. Sometimes it attacks the whole body, sometimes only parts of it. Some think this man's disease had been of long standing. Others suppose it was the *universal palsy*, which is quickly fatal, and which may account for the earnestness and haste of the bearers in getting their friend to Christ. At all events his case was a very aggravated one. He was totally disabled. *And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him*. When they reached the house, they implored, but in vain, that an opening might be made in the crowd, that they might present their sick friend to Jesus. The door-way was thronged, some were seeking a cure themselves, others were anxious to hear the Saviour preach, many were influenced by curiosity to see Him, and the envious Scribes were not disposed to give way that He might again prove His almighty power.

19. And when they could not find by what *way* they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling with *his couch* into the midst before Jesus.

To understand the scene here described, we must banish from our minds every form of American or European houses. In those Eastern countries



ORIENTAL HOUSE.



houses were built very low, with flat roofs, Sam. ii. 2; Josh. ii. 6; Jer. xlviii. 38; Zeph. i. 5, and with a small square, or court-yard, in the midst of the building. Access was obtained to the roof by a staircase outside, so that a

person might ascend to the roof without entering the house. In the present case our Lord appears to have been preaching in the court-yard of the house. Those who carried the paralytic not being able to reach Him because of the crowd, ascended to the roof, removed so much of it as was necessary, and let down their patient through the aperture. This could be done by holding the corners of the couch, which was but a thickly-padded quilt, without any apparatus of ropes or cords.

What pains men will take about an object when they are in earnest! The friends of the paralytic were ingenious in finding out a way. If we are as anxious to obtain spiritual blessings as they were to benefit the sick man, we shall be ingenious too. We shall find time in almost any circumstances for prayer and for reading the Scriptures. Many have shown great ingenuity in contriving means to bring sinners to Jesus. The last day will reveal how abundantly their pious plans have been blessed.

20. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

The Saviour was not annoyed by the interruption, so ready was He always to help the afflicted. Not a word appears to have been spoken by any one of the party. The sick man's friends, who remained on the roof, and were no doubt looking down with deep anxiety, conceived, and conceived truly, that the silent misery of the sufferer would plead his cause far more effectually than their best eloquence, while the sick man himself, unable to speak from his malady, was content to lie at the feet of Jesus, and there to trust to His Divine compassion. *When He saw their faith*, that of the bearers of the paralytic, as well as of the paralytic himself, manifested by their making these extraordinary efforts to bring him to Jesus. *He said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Saving faith and healing were alike the gift of God, and often, if not commonly, bestowed together. Instead of healing the paralytic immediately, our Lord, who knew well the state of his heart, and as if regarding him with special tenderness, as one who mourned more for his sins than his sufferings, pronounced his sins forgiven. This absolution was not a declaration of what was, or a wish for what might be, but a judicial sentence of what took effect the moment the words were uttered. The poor paralytic's sins were now actually pardoned, and he must have experienced the blessedness of the "man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." The worth of the pardon which Jesus bestows is valued only by those who groan beneath the burden of sin. The great reformer, Martin Luther, soon after he became a monk, fell dangerously ill. Though he had long sought for pardon, he was filled with terror at the prospect of eternity. An aged monk visited his cell, and reminded him of those words in the Apostles' Creed—"I believe in the forgiveness of sins." "Believe," said the old man, "not only that the sins of David or Peter are forgiven, but that your *own* are pardoned." These words were a balm to Luther's wounded heart. He thought no more of gaining heaven by his own righteousness, but he looked with confidence to the mercy of God in Christ.

Our Lord's procedure on this occasion, in pardoning the paralytic's sins before healing his bodily disease, though it does not show, as some maintain it does, that He regarded special suffering as punishment for special sins, nevertheless was calculated to remind him, and all who were present, and all who read the account of the transaction, that sin is the root and cause of all pains and diseases. Greatly may he rejoice whose experience enables him to bless the Lord who hath first forgiven him all his iniquities, and then healed all his diseases.

21. "And the Scribes and the Pharisees began to reason,

saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

▫ Matt. ix. 3; Mark ii. 6, 7.

▫ Ps. xxxii. 6; Is. xliv. 25.

The Scribes and Pharisees who surrounded Jesus now began to show their malice toward Him. They *began to reason*, to discuss, or interchange views, secretly. Matt. ix. 3. Blasphemy is committed when, (1,) unworthy things are attributed to God; (2,) when worthy things are denied to God; (3,) when that which is exclusively Divine is attributed to others than God. The charge of *speaking blasphemies* brought by Christ's subtle and bitter foes against Him, was based upon an arrogation of the Divine prerogative. "What are this man's pretensions, that on his own authority, he should pronounce forgiveness of sin, the sole prerogative of God? He is guilty of the rankest blasphemy." Had our Lord been a mere man, or the highest of created beings, their reasoning would have been correct, for no one but God has power to forgive sin. But His language is becoming and appropriate, when regarded as spoken by a Being who was God incarnate. As it seems to have been then agreed on all hands, that forgiving of sins was the prerogative of God alone, and that for man to arrogate to himself such a power as belonged to God alone was no less than blasphemy, how can man, without guilt, undertake to pronounce absolution?

22. But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?

Mark says, ii. 8, *they reasoned within themselves*. Our Lord seeing their thoughts, addresses them with a question corresponding in form with theirs: *What reason ye in your hearts?* In Matt. ix. 4, the question is, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" "Why do ye secretly reckon and meditate evil?" The words refer to this process as going forward not merely in their minds, but in their inner parts, or secretly. In both cases the interrogation implies censure. To know the hearts of men was, with the Jews, a test of the true Messiah's claims. In telling them what the thoughts of their hearts were, (for they had expressed nothing publicly,) our Lord gave them the fullest proof of His power to forgive sins; because God only can forgive sins, and God only can search and know the heart.

23. Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

*Whether is easier*. This was a point which could be determined without trouble. Miracles had other prophets also performed, but really to bestow forgiveness, that belonged to the Searcher of hearts alone. Christ's enemies, however, as He knew, thought that to *say*, or *claim*, that sin is forgiven was undoubtedly the easier; particularly so long as inquiry was not made respecting the credentials of the speaker's authority. In order, therefore, that they might doubt no longer of His credentials, (which seems to have been the great end of the miracle,) the Saviour accomplished the miracle of healing, whereby the blessing of the forgiveness of sins was at once manifested and sealed.

24. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house.

The phrase *Son of man* appears to have been taken from Dan. vii. 13, which the Jews understood as referring to the Messiah. Luke xxii. 69, 70; John xii. 34. *That ye may know, &c.* "By doing that which is submitted to the eyes of men, I will attest my right and power to do that which, in its very nature, lies out of the region of ocular demonstration. From what you shall see, you may conclude that it is no 'robbery,' Philip. ii. 6, upon my part, to claim also the power of forgiving men their sins." *Power upon earth, the counterpart of power in heaven.* It could be no superior scientific skill, it could be no mere earthly magnetic power, it could be no accidental coincidence of events. Earth is exclusively the place where sins are committed and remitted. The phrase implies a condition of heavenly glory, in which no one will call in question Christ's right to remit sins. *I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house.* This was added to show the paralytic's perfect cure from a state of absolute helplessness. Our Lord here places the miracle as *proof*, in close succession after His claim of forgiving power as *the thing to be proved*. No geometrician could ever bring proposition and demonstration into closer contact.

25. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

Christ's command was accompanied with Divine power, the helpless man instantly sprang to his feet, lifted upon his head the mattress upon which he had lain, and strode with vigorous limbs out of the court, through the crowd which now instinctively made way for him, hastening, under a command so pleasant to obey, first of all to his own home and family, to be a help where he had formerly been a burden, *glorifying God* for the wonderful cure which He had performed on his body, and for the still more wonderful grace He had bestowed on his soul.

26. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.

*They were all amazed*, or, literally, "amazement took them all." The word used for amazement is the same that is translated in three places as "a trance," Acts x. 10; xi. 5, and xxii. 17. The effect was thrilling. *Filled with fear.* A natural awe and reverence pervaded the people, which led them to say, *We have seen strange things to-day*, literally, events beyond belief, marvellous, paradoxical, things contrary to opinion, expectation, or ordinary experience. *They glorified God*—an admirable antithesis, the enthusiasm of the people, over against the murmuring of the scribes. Matthew says, ix. 8, "the multitude glorified God, who had given such power unto men." From this it would seem that their ideas of Christ were, as yet, very imperfect, and that they looked on Him in no higher light than that of a man acting with delegated authority, whereas they ought to have concluded that He was the Divine Messiah. Nevertheless *they glorified God*, saying, "We never saw it in this fashion," "We never saw any thing like this." In addition to the practical lessons already derived from the narrative explained, the following are worthy of serious consideration: 1. Affliction may prove a great blessing to a man's soul. Many an one would never think of Jesus, but for the sickness with which he is visited. 2. Whilst it is pleasant to see crowds flocking to the house of God, there is too much reason for the painful fear, that many go there, not as humble worshippers, but as censors and spies. 3. All who are themselves in health, and strength, and

comfort, ought to be ready to perform the various offices of humanity to those who are in sickness, or in any trouble. Especially ought Christians who have friends and acquaintances under the disease of sin, to endeavor to bring them to the Saviour, in a spiritual sense. 4. It is a solemn truth that Jesus can perceive the thoughts of men. This should be a daily and habitual reflection with us. All our purposes or desires even, for good or evil, are known to Him, Heb. iv. 18. See Ps. cxxxix. 5. It is delightful to think that the Son of man has still power to forgive sin. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," Acts v. 31.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Did our Lord instruct the people on all occasions?
2. Why did the Pharisees and doctors of the law now repair to Capernaum?
3. Who were the doctors of the law?
4. What is said about "the power of the Lord was present to heal them?"
5. Why is the miracle of the paralytic recorded in detail?
6. What was an oriental bed?
7. What was the palsy?
8. What has been thought of this man's disease?
9. What did his friends who carried him do?
10. What is said about houses in Eastern countries?
11. What did those who carried the paralytic do?
12. If we are anxious to do good, is there not always a way?
13. Was the Saviour annoyed by the interruption?
14. Was any thing said by any of the carriers of the sick man?
15. Whose faith was it Jesus saw?
16. What did our Lord say?
17. What was this absolution?
18. What is said of Martin Luther?
19. What is the root and cause of all pains and diseases?
20. What spirit did the Scribes and Pharisees show toward Jesus?
21. When is blasphemy committed?
22. What was the charge against Christ for speaking blasphemies based upon?
23. Had our Lord been a mere man would the charge have been well founded?
24. Can man without guilt undertake to pronounce absolution?
25. How did Christ answer the Pharisees?
26. When did He answer them?
27. How did the Jews regard knowing the hearts of men?
28. In telling the Pharisees their thoughts, of what did our Lord give strong proof?
29. What is said of the phrase—"Whether is easier to say," &c.?
30. Whence does the phrase "Son of man" appear to have been taken?
31. Explain the words "but that ye may know."
32. What is meant by "power upon earth?"
33. Why was the paralytic commanded to "arise," &c.?
34. In what relation was the miracle placed to Christ's claim of forgiving power?
35. With what was Christ's command accompanied?
36. What did the helpless man do?
37. Where did he go?
38. Why did he glorify God?

39. What was the effect of this miracle upon the spectators?
40. What kind of a fear did they experience?
41. What did they say?
42. What did they do?
43. Were their ideas of Christ as yet very imperfect?
44. What is the first practical lesson mentioned?
45. What the second?
46. What the third?
47. What the fourth?

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### LESSON XXXIII.

vs. 27-39.

27. "And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.

• Matt. ix. 9; Mark ii. 13, 14.

28. And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

*After these things*, i. e., after He had healed the leper and restored the paralytic: *he went forth*, left the house: *and saw a publican named Levi*, that is, *looked upon, attentively regarded*. A publican was a gatherer of taxes imposed by the Romans on the subject provinces of the empire. These taxes being regarded with disgust and impatient abhorrence, as badges of the national dishonor, the Jews who accepted this office, and thus made themselves the instruments of this disgrace to their country, were regarded with great abhorrence. So deep and undisguised was this hatred, that it had become a common saying among the Jews that "vows made to thieves, murderers and publicans, might be broken." It was also a proverb applicable to one who was to be shunned or cast forth, "Let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican." Matt. xviii. 17.

*Named Levi*, or Matthew. The two were one and the same person. It was a common thing among the Jews for a person to have two names. Matthew, who was the first Evangelist, was originally called Levi, but later, as Simon was named by the Lord, Peter, received from Him the new name of Matthew, which signifies, *God's gift*. *Sitting at the receipt of custom*, i. e., the place of such receipt. The publicans had tenements or booths erected for them at the foot of bridges, at the mouth of rivers, and by the sea-shore, where they took the toll of passengers. As it appears from Mark ii. 13, 14, that the "receipt of custom" at which Matthew was sitting, was not in the town, or at the gate, but by the sea-shore, it is presumed that he was one of the inferior officers employed to collect the dues levied upon the fish brought to shore, and upon the vegetables and fire-wood received from the other side of the lake.

*Sitting*. Dr. Thompson says, "The people of this country *sit* at all kinds of work. The carpenter saws, planes, and hews with his handaxe, sitting upon the ground or upon the plank that he is planing. The washerwoman *sits* by the tub; and, in a word, no one stands where it is possible to sit. Shop-keepers always sit, and Levi *sitting* at the receipt of custom, is the exact way to state the case." *And he said unto him, Follow me*. Doubtless

this was not Levi's first knowledge of the Saviour. The analogy of the class described, Matt. iv. 18-22, makes it not improbable that this man, like his predecessors, already belonged, for a shorter or longer time, to the most attentive hearers of the Saviour. But now he is called to accompany Him continually as an Apostle, and to leave all for His sake. *And he left all, rose up and followed Him.* We are not to understand, that he departed without settling up and arranging his affairs, so that his employers might receive detriment from his change of pursuit, and yet it is plain that, unhesitatingly, without the reply of a word, or the least unnecessary delay, he left all in which he had just before been immersed, obeyed the summons which was to change the whole tenor of his life.

1. Such is the freeness of Divine grace that it calls and converts when, where, and whomsoever it will. 2. Conversion is as much a supernatural work now, as it was eighteen hundred years ago. Ps. xxvii. 8. 3. We must never despair of any one's salvation so long as he lives, after reading of Levi's case. 4. Conversion now is as equally decisive a work as it ever was. Where the inward call of the Holy Spirit accompanies the outward call of the Word, the soul promptly yields obedience to the call of Christ, Satan cannot hold us down, the world shall not keep us back. It is admitted that Matthew's resigning his worldly calling, and worldly gains, was peculiar, but this only as regards the act, and not as regards the state of mind which produced the act, and which is required of all. 5. Instant obedience to what Christ says is duty. God says, "Believe—do." We are not to discuss the metaphysics of the question, but just believe as God says, and do as God prescribes, and in the effort we will find the strength that is adequate to the occasion.

29. <sup>p</sup>And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and <sup>q</sup>there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

<sup>p</sup> Matt. ix. 10; Mark ii. 16.

<sup>q</sup> Luke xv. 1.

Levi regarded the change in himself as occasion of rejoicing and gratitude. There are many who, if they hear of a relation being converted, consider it rather a misfortune. What an error! Nothing can happen to a man which ought to be such an occasion of joy as his being made a subject of Divine grace. *Made Him a great feast.* When Christ was invited to any table, He never refused to go, even if a publican or Pharisee invited Him, He went mainly for an opportunity of conversing and doing good: a *great feast*: the words refer more properly to the number of the guests, and the manner in which they were received, than to the quantity or quality of the fare. The *great company of publicans* consisted in all probability of Levi's old friends and companions, whom he desired to be convinced of the change he had experienced, and to have the opportunity of seeing and hearing his heavenly Teacher. Having been graciously delivered from the bondage of sin, he wished others also to be set free. This feeling of Levi will always be the feeling of a true Christian.

30. But their Scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

*Their Scribes and Pharisees*, i. e., those belonging to Capernaum, where this entertainment was given. They were outraged, not only by our Lord's going to a publican's house to eat with him and his guests, but also by His choosing such a man for one of His most honored servants and closest com-

panions. We are not to suppose that the Scribes and Pharisees were among the company at table, for they would then, undoubtedly, according to their own opinion, have defiled themselves. We are rather to believe that the feast was so far of a public character, that access to the house was forbidden to no one, and that the desire of Christ's enemies to observe the Saviour was stronger than their disinclination to enter into the house of a publican.

*Why do ye eat and drink, &c.?* This fault-finding question was not directly addressed to the Saviour Himself. The defeat suffered by them shortly before at the healing of the paralytic, had probably deterred them from coming too frequently in contact with Christ. But though the cavil was addressed to *His disciples*, as it was aimed at our Lord, *He* answered, not merely to shame the Scribes and Pharisees and to maintain His own cause, but also and especially in order to come to the help of His perplexed disciples, who were not yet in a condition suitable to defend themselves and Him.

31. And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

As if our Lord had said, "Why should a physician be censured for conversing with sick patients? I came into the world to perform the office of a kind physician unto men; surely then I should take all opportunities of conversing with them, that I may help and heal them, for *they that are sick need the physician*, but as for you Scribes and Pharisees who are strong and sound in your own opinion and conceit, I have no hope of doing you good, for such as *think themselves whole* desire not the physician's aid." Very striking is this image of sickness to mark the prostrate condition of man in his sin. The drooping, the disgust with the very sights and sounds which gladdened him before, the feverish restlessness, the parched tongue, the weary limbs, the acute pain, the dull, deep gnawing of mortal disease, the disarrangement of all the functions of the body, the sleeplessness, the delirium, the helplessness and the hopelessness of the poor stricken one, and his death, if his sickness is not removed—surely all this supplies a wonderful picture of sin in the soul of man, the spiritual disease under which he is suffering, and his melancholy doom, if that disease is not healed by the Great Physician.

32. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

† Matt. ix. 13; 1 Tim. i. 16.

Here, as elsewhere, we see that our Lord's call to sinners is not a bare call to become His disciples, but a call to *repentance*. Repentance, or godly sorrow for sin, is for the just-named sick, the restoration of the health of the soul. We are not to understand that Christ found some who were "whole," and "righteous;" for an Apostle has declared that "all have sinned." Jesus called those Scribes and Pharisees "righteous" and "whole," not because they were really so, but only because they, with a holy mockery, esteemed themselves so. The language in relation to them is entirely ironical. Jesus Christ did not come into the world merely as a teacher, but as the Saviour of that which was utterly lost, and those only can receive benefit from Him who will confess that they are ruined, bankrupt, hopeless, miserable sinners. If we feel ourselves "righteous," Christ has nothing to say to us. But if we feel ourselves "sinners," we have a warrant for applying to Him, and trusting in Him to our life's end.

33. And they said unto him, "Why do the disciples of John

fast often, and make prayers, and likewise *the disciples* of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?

• Matt. ix. 14; Mark ii. 18.

The objection here made, that the disciples of our Saviour did not fast so often and so much, and "make prayers" so frequently, as the disciples of John the Baptist, seems, according to the fuller account of Matthew and Mark, to have come from the disciples of John themselves, in union with the Pharisees, the Pharisees having perhaps incited these disciples to make common cause with them, which they could the more easily do, as now Jesus was at a feast and John in prison. The *prayers* do not refer to the common and usual prayers of devout men, but to those which accompanied a life of austere devotion such as John and his disciples practised, of whom many may have been from among the Essenes, whose previous asceticism would lead them to regard with surprise the departure of Jesus and his disciples from the stern habits of self-denial practised by their master.

34. And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?

*Can ye make*, by your ordinances, precepts, and practices, *the children of the bridegroom*, &c.—an evident allusion to the last testimony of John the Baptist, John iii. 29, given with a look at his murmuring disciples. It will be noticed that there is an antithesis between this and the following verse. In the one case fasting would be performed, if at all, by compulsion; in the other case, it would be spontaneous and genuine. Now that the Bridegroom was with the children of the bride-chamber, and it was a day of joy and rejoicing with the disciples, mourning and fasting would be very inappropriate for them. Christ would not discourage His disciples by over-rigorous institutions, and it is unfit that His religion should be burthened with them. He suits the duties of His people to their circumstances, and kindly proportions their work to their strength, with a tender regard to their weakness, till by degrees they may be fitted for the more difficult and humbling services. From His example, and the whole genius of His gospel, let us learn to make all proper allowance to those about us, that we may teach them, and train them up as they are able to bear it, not crushing them under any unnecessary load, nor denying them any indulgence which true friendship will permit us to grant them, lest the good ways of God should be misrepresented, disgraced, and abandoned through our imprudent, though well-meaning severity: a caution to be peculiarly observed in our conduct towards young persons. What a wonderful intimation does the figure *bridegroom* make of what Christ is to His people! "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name." It is not merely now that pardon is vouchsafed to the sinner, deliverance from death to the transgressor, recovery of sight to the spiritually blind, health to the spiritually sick, and everlasting security on the Rock of Ages, but, this poor, sinful, erring, diseased, dying creature is to be raised to "glory, honor, and immortality," by an everlasting union with the King who has redeemed him. This is what Christ has determined to do. This is "the joy which is set before him."

35. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

"*The days will come*, in which a much greater sorrow will befall my disciples than even that which has now smitten the sorrowing disciples of John—I am not only to be separated from them, but to be *taken away*—an evident

allusion to the violent death He should die, *and then shall they fast in those days.*" The words, *those days*, are not to be regarded as an unnecessary pleonasm of *the days will come*, but as an emphatic repetition. Though the expression—*then shall they fast*—does not seem to warrant the inference drawn by many from it, that when the Saviour left the world, literal fasting from meats and drinks, at certain seasons, was to be the duty of all Christians, yet it may not be doubted that fasting and abstinence were occasionally practised by believers after our Lord's ascension. And it is plain that all who find the practice useful and helpful to their souls, are right in fasting, if they do it without ostentation and pride. Acts xiii. 2; 1 Cor. vii. 5. The words in this verse appear to have a deeper meaning than any mere abstinence from food. They describe the state of mind in which all true Christians should live until their Lord returns. It is time for daily and hourly self-denial and mortification. The time of fulness and satisfaction cannot be until we see the Bridegroom amongst us again.

36. 'And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was *taken out* of the new agreeth not with the old.

† Matt. ix. 16, 17; Mark ii. 21, 22.

Our Lord now introduces a *parable*, which here means a proverbial expression, or simile, illustrative of some truth, to explain and enforce the principle of congruity and fitness which would be violated, should His disciples adopt the ascetic habits of John's disciples, or those of the Pharisees. The special fitness of a parable taken from wine and clothing while He sat at a feast, strikes the eye of itself. *If otherwise*; if he does, he both rends the new garment and the patch from the new garment, and the patch from the new garment will not agree with the old. This is meant to show how the attempt to patch up the old with the new, spoils both systems. The new loses its completeness, and the old its consistency. The Saviour gave the murmuring Scribes and Pharisees to understand that that which He was bringing in, was not a mere addition to, or complement of that which had gone by. The whole Jewish dispensation was passing away. The dispensation of the gospel was at hand. But the latter was not to be thrust into the midst of the former, in order to make it last longer, or wear better. The old dispensation was not the more important of the two, and so the new ought not to be used to renovate and help on the old. The garment of law righteousness was old. The garment of Christ's righteousness was new. The first was waxing feeble, and ready to perish altogether. The latter was not to be pieced into it, in order that it might be preserved. The "agreement" spoken of in the parable as not existing between the new and the old, simply has reference to any effort to bring them together, to unite them, to save the one from perishing by the help of the other. The old and the new Covenants are both originally from God, and both, as such, are *good*, but they must not be blended together, or mixed up with each other, as if to make *but one*.

37. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

38. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

This parable has nearly the same meaning with the one preceding it. There is, however, this distinction, that in the former, the new (the cloth) is represented as something added with the intent of mending the old, while, on the other hand, in the second, the new (the wine) is now the principal thing, and comes into prominence in its peculiar force and working. The first parable tells us, that the improvement must not be begun externally, leaving the state of the inner man untouched; the other shows inversely, that the internal renovation must reach to what is outward, and give to this a suitable direction.



ANCIENT BOTTLE.

39. No man also having drunk old *wine* straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

It seems very likely that in this concluding verse, which is peculiar to Luke, our Lord refers especially to the disciples of John the Baptist. They had drunk of the "old wine" of John's teaching, and could hardly be expected to become attached to the "new wine" of our Lord's kingdom. Or, it may be that the reference is to the Pharisees. The gracious Redeemer apologizes for those hearts which had grown accustomed to the nature of the old, regarding it as not unnatural that they should feel it difficult to depart from the regular and wonted course,

and venture into a new and fermenting element of life. The old, though in itself less pleasant, is yet, through custom, more acceptable. "Use forms the taste."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. After what things did Christ go forth?
2. What was a publican?
3. How was the office regarded by the Jews?
4. What is Levi identical with?
5. Was it common among the Jews for a person to have two names?
6. What was the receipt of custom?
7. What is said about sitting?
8. What did Jesus say to Levi?
9. Had Levi probably known the Saviour before?
10. How was he now called to accompany Jesus?
11. What did he do?
12. What is said of the freeness of Divine grace?
13. What of conversion?
14. What of salvation so long as there is life?
15. What of instant obedience to Christ's commands?
16. How did Levi regard the change in himself?
17. Did Christ, when invited, refuse to go to any table?
18. What are we to understand by "a great feast"?
19. Of whom did the "great company of publicans" consist?
20. What did the Scribes and Pharisees do?
21. Were there any Scribes and Pharisees among the company at the table?
22. What questions did the Scribes and Pharisees ask?
23. To whom was this cavil addressed?

24. At whom was it aimed?
25. What was the import of our Lord's reply?
26. Is sickness an image of man's sinful condition?
27. What is said of our Lord's call to sinners?
28. What is said of repentance?
29. Did Christ find any "whole" and "righteous"?
30. How did He call the Scribes and Pharisees "whole" and "righteous"?
31. Who alone can receive benefit from Christ?
32. What objection did the Scribes and Pharisees and disciples of John make?
33. To what does the word "prayers" refer?
34. What answer did Christ make?
35. To what is there an evident allusion in ver. 34?
36. What does Jesus teach in this verse?
37. What is said of the figure "bridegroom"?
38. To what is there an allusion in ver. 35?
39. What is said about fasting?
40. What does the word "parable" here mean?
41. What was this parable designed to illustrate?
42. What is said of the special fitness of such a parable at this time?
43. What did the Saviour give the Scribes and Pharisees to understand by this parable?
44. What is the meaning of the second parable of the new wine and old bottles?
45. What is the distinction between the two parables?
46. To whom does our Lord probably refer in ver. 39?
47. If to the disciples of John the Baptist, what did it mean?
48. If to the Pharisees, what did it mean?

## CHAPTER VI.

## LESSON XXXIV.

vs. 1-5.

IN this chapter we have Christ's exposition of the Moral Law, which He came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and to fill up by His gospel.

1. And 'it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn-fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing *them* in *their* hands.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xii. 1; Mark ii. 23.

The phrase, *second Sabbath after the first*, which is peculiar to Luke, is thus explained: From Passover to Pentecost was seven weeks. The customary reckoning of these seven weeks was from the *second day* after the Passover, and the *first Sabbath* after this *second day* was called the *second-first Sabbath*. The Passover was in April, a time not too early for the ripening of the barley-fields in the better parts of Palestine. *He went through the corn-fields*, attended by His disciples and some of the Pharisees, whose curiosity, it is probable, prompted them to follow on this occasion, in expectation of seeing more miracles. The fields were sown with corn, in the proper English sense of grain or breadstuffs, with particular reference to wheat and barley. Rabbinic authority shows that there were paths leading through the fields of corn. *And his disciples*, who had eaten nothing during the day, *plucked the ears of corn*, wheat or barley, and as it was ripe, *rubbed them in their hands*, so as to separate the kernels from the chaff, *and did eat*. This is a customary way of appeasing hunger in Palestine at this day.

2. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that <sup>b</sup>which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-days?

<sup>b</sup> Exod. xx. 10.

From the fact that the *disciples* were rebuked, it would appear that Christ did not Himself eat of the barley, His mind being probably so intent on the great object of His mission, that He was for the time insensible to hunger. See John iv. 32-34. *Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-days?* This could not refer to walking in the fields, for, according to Jewish tradition, one might travel beyond the limits of a town, "a Sabbath-day's journey," which was about seven-eighths of a mile. Exod. xvi. 20; Acts i. 12. The plucking of ears of corn by passengers in a corn-field through which a path lay, was allowed by the law, Deut. xxiii. 25. Dr. Robinson says it is the custom still. Indeed, the Pharisees only say that it was *unlawful on the sabbath-days*. This was more than the law of the Sabbath said or implied. The law forbade servile work on that day, but the act of the disciples was no servile work. However, the Pharisees made it such—thus: Reaping is a servile work, and he who reaps on the Sabbath-day, however little, is a Sabbath-breaker, but to pluck ears of corn is a kind of reaping, and he who does this—even to pluck any thing from the springing of his own fruit—is also a Sabbath-breaker. As such, he was to be stoned, if he sinned presumptuously. This shows the danger to which the disciples were

exposed. Another reason alleged for this regulation was, that on the sabbath-day, there should be rest not only for man and beast, but for plants and trees, and that on this ground also, it was unlawful to cut a plant or branch, or so much as to pluck a leaf, on the sabbath-day. It was by a multitude of such far-fetched and nonsensical constructions and traditions as these, that the Pharisees and doctors of the law had laid upon men's shoulders burdens too heavy to be borne. Hypocrites expend their zeal about the lesser things of the law, whilst they neglect the greater. Matt. xxiii. 24. They place all holiness in the observance of outward ceremonies, whilst they neglect moral duties. An intolerant and censorious spirit in religion is greatly to be deprecated. The questions we should ask concerning others are—Do they believe on Christ? Are they living holy lives? The moment we begin to place any thing in religion before these things, we are in danger of becoming as thorough Pharisees as the accusers of the disciples. We ought not to be deterred from professing to be Christians by the fear that our conduct will be canvassed, and that we shall be blamed, even when innocent.

3. And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, 'what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him;

c 1 Sam. xxi. 6;

4. How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shew-bread, and gave also to them that were with him; 'which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?

d Lev. xxiv. 9.

Though Luke does not say that the Pharisees addressed their question to Jesus, it is probable that they held Him responsible for the conduct of His disciples. At all events, the Saviour, who was their Master, pleaded their cause, and defended them against their accusers. We are thus reminded that though there is one who is called "the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them day and night," even Satan, the prince of this world, Rev. xii. 10, yet we "have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," who is ever maintaining the cause of His people in Heaven, and continually making intercession for them. In the answer of our Lord there was a reference to 1 Sam. 21. *The house of God*, in which He dwelt among His people, an expression no less applicable to the tabernacle than the temple. As the ancient sanctuary, under both its forms, was meant to symbolize the doctrine of Divine inhabitation and peculiar presence with the chosen people, it was movable as long as they were wandering and unsettled, but as soon as they had taken full possession of the promised land, which was not till the reign of David, the portable tent was exchanged for a permanent, substantial dwelling. At the time here mentioned the tabernacle was at Nob, 1 Sam. xxi. 1. *The shew-bread*, in Hebrew, "*bread of the presence*," or *faces*, because this bread was to be set continually "*before the face of Jehovah*," see Exod. xxv. 23 and 30. Twelve loaves were every Sabbath placed on a table, in the Holy Place, first in the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple of Solomon, and when they were removed, they were eaten only by the priests. The argument of Jesus was this: "If David, when he was fleeing from Saul, and was overtaken with hunger, took and ate that holy bread, and did this, not because he was called of God to a peculiar work and office in which he might lawfully do things forbidden to others, for he gave also to them that were with him, why might not my disciples pluck barley on a holy day, when they were hungry? If God permitted the rules of His own house to be infringed in cases of necessity, would He not

allow work to be done on His own sabbath-days, when it was work for which there was really a need?" Our Lord did not argue for a proper breaking of the law, but for its true construction. The example adduced by Him, not only indicated His purpose to remain in all things spiritual faithful to the standard of His illustrious ancestor, but was also admirably fitted to show that under such a pressure a ceremonial precept must give place to a moral duty. It likewise would carry much weight with them whom Christ was seeking to convince, David being counted the great pattern and example of Old Testament holiness. It is evident from our Lord's reproving the Jews for rigorously exacting the *rest* of the Sabbath, that we ought not to be morbidly scrupulous in observing that day, and that many things may be allowable on it, which timid minds consider unlawful. This inference, however, when it reaches to any thing like a violation of the sanctity of the Sabbath by any unnecessary employment or recreations, even such as are proper on other days, is unwarranted. Jesus condemned nothing in the Jews which was not plainly absurd and superstitious, and He allowed no exceptions to that rest from labor which they observed on the Sabbath, except for works of necessity and charity. It is lawful, in short, as our Saviour expresses it, see also Matt. xii. 7, to do well on the sabbath-day, to preserve ourselves, and to benefit our fellow-creatures; with these exceptions, and these only, we should consecrate the Sabbath as a holy rest unto the Lord.

5. And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

The Sabbath is an ordinance for man's rest, both actually and typically, as setting forth the rest that remains for God's people. Heb. iv. 9. But He who is now speaking has taken on Himself manhood—the whole nature of man, and is rightful Lord over creation, as granted to man, and of all that is made for man, and therefore of the Sabbath. The whole dispensation of time is created for man—for Christ, as He is man—and is in His absolute power. Hence the Sabbath having been ordained for man, not for any individual, but for the whole race, it must needs be subject to the Son of man, who is its Head and Representative, its Sovereign and Redeemer. This implies that though the Sabbath, in its essence, is perpetual, the right of modifying and controlling it belongs to Christ, and can be exercised only under His authority.

The Sabbath is of Divine institution. It was established on the day of the holy *rest* of God, at the end of the creative week. It formed a part of the Patriarchal religion. It was woven into the moral code given to Moses. It was not given as a part of the *ceremonial* law, but of the *moral*. The injunction in the fourth commandment, to "*remember*" it, implies that it was an institution with which the Israelites were already acquainted. We meet with directions concerning it in the Prophets, and then passing on we find it hallowed by Christ's holy example, iv. 16.

After the resurrection of Christ, the Jewish Sabbath, which was laid upon the primitive Sabbath, was abolished, and "*the Lord's day*," Rev. i. 10, or Christian Sabbath, was superimposed upon another day—the *first day of the week*—thus making the day of universal and perpetual obligation. On this day, when His disciples were assembled, Jesus appeared to them. The appearance was repeated by Him on the same day a week afterwards. On this day, in all probability, the Holy Ghost was given, for the day of Pentecost signifies the fiftieth day from the first day of the feast of the Passover, and always happened on the first day of the week. On the first day of the week the disciples assembled for worship. Acts xx. 7. On it contributions were made for charitable purposes. 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. John refers to it as "*the Lord's day*," Rev. i. 10, meaning that it was that day which was con-

secrated to the worship and service especially of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, A. D. 101, says: "Let us (Christians) no more sabbatize," that is, keep the seventh day, as the Jews did—"but let us keep the Lord's day." Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, about A. D. 162, says: "Both custom and reason challenge from us that we should honor *the Lord's day*, seeing on that day it was that our Lord Jesus completed his resurrection from the dead." Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, A. D. 167, who had been a disciple of Polycarp, the companion of the Apostles, says: "On the Lord's day every one of us Christians keeps the Sabbath, meditating on the law and rejoicing in the works of God." Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 192, says: "A Christian, according to the command of the gospel, observes *the Lord's day*, thereby glorifying the resurrection of the Lord." The words of Tertullian, about the same time, are, "The Lord's day is the holy day of the Christian Church." Constantine, in the fourth century, issued an edict, obliging all the Roman empire to "observe *the Lord's day*, in memory of those things which were done by the common Saviour of men;" and Chrysostom says, "The first day of the week is to be observed by Christians, as *the Lord's day*."

The Sabbath is absolutely essential, not only to the animal creation in the service of man, but to man's welfare, physically, intellectually, socially, morally. Hence nearly all nations have observed a day of rest periodically, and generally the seventh day. The infidel actors in the French Revolution abolished the Christian Sabbath. They voted "No God," instead of the God of Abraham, and they voted "No Sabbath," but substituted what they called the Decades, or every tenth day. But what was the result? After the desperate experiment had been made, Robespierre was constrained to say, "The world will go to pieces if we cannot find a God;" and, in the course of a few years, as if the Sabbath was made for man, the world fell back into the olden ruts, it seized the Sabbath again as too precious to be let go.

We live in days when any thing like strict observance of the Sabbath is loudly denounced by some as a remnant of Jewish superstition. Vague talk like this has no confirmation in the word of God. Let us settle it in our mind that the fourth commandment has never been repealed by Christ, and that we have no more right to break the Sabbath, under the gospel, than we have to murder and to steal. The architect who repairs a building, and restores it to its proper use, is not the destroyer of it, but the preserver. The Saviour who redeemed the Sabbath from Jewish traditions, and so frequently explained its true meaning, ought never to be regarded as the enemy of the fourth commandment. On the contrary, He has "magnified it, and made it honorable."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What have we in this chapter?
2. How is the phrase, "second Sabbath after the first," explained?
3. Who accompanied Christ through the corn-fields?
4. With what were the fields sown?
5. What did His disciples do?
6. Why did they pluck the ears of corn?
7. What did the Pharisees say to the disciples?
8. To what did they refer as "not lawful?"
9. What is said about the law concerning plucking ears of corn?
10. What is said about hypocrites?
11. What are the questions we should ask concerning others?
12. What did Jesus answer to the Pharisees?
13. Why did Jesus answer?
14. What is said of "the house of God?"
15. What is said of "the shew-bread?"
16. What was the argument of Jesus?

17. What is evident in relation to the Sabbath, from our Lord's reproving the Jews?
18. What is the Sabbath?
19. How is the Son of man Lord of the Sabbath?
20. What is said of the Sabbath?
21. When was "the Lord's day" substituted for the Jewish Sabbath?
22. What is said of the first day of the week?
23. What does Ignatius say?
24. What does Theophilus say?
25. What, Irenæus?
26. What, Clement of Alexandria?
27. What, Tertullian?
28. What, Constantine?
29. What, Chrysostom?
30. Have all nations observed a periodical day of rest?
31. What is said of the actors in the French Revolution?
32. What did Robespierre say?
33. What is said about strict observance of the Sabbath in our day?

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### LESSON XXXV.

vs. 6-11.

6. \*And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.

• Matt. xii. 9; Mark iii. 1; see Ch. xiii. 14 and xiv. 3; John ix. 6.

*Another Sabbath*, probably the next after the incident in the corn-field: *the synagogue*, of those with whom He had thus disputed, Matt. xii. 9, *taught*, according to His usual custom. *And there was a man whose right hand was withered*. An atrophy, (of the limb,) and an inability to move the nerves and muscles, which would cause the limb to be *rigid*, was what the Jews understood by a "withered limb." It was occasioned by a deficient absorption of nutriment in the limb. The affection would sometimes attack a person suddenly, if the hand was stretched out at the moment of the attack, it was impossible to draw it back to its place, or whatever was its position when struck, in that form it remained. It was attended with great danger, and often proved fatal. When once thoroughly established, it was incurable by any art of man. We have an instance of a withered hand in king Jeroboam. 1 Kings xiii. 4. *Right hand*, the mention of the right hand is important, not only as it is a definiteness of expression which attests the independence of Luke's narrative, but also as showing the great mercy of restoring to a man the use of the hand (or arm) with which he labored.

7. And the Scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day; that they might find an accusation against him.

Christ's enemies were present, for they observed the *forms* of religion, though they knew not its *power*. They *watched him*, and, as the original

verb denotes, with evil intent. It is thus that some minds place themselves when they come to view religion. They scan it, not to know the true will of God, and their duty in His sight, but to see if some ground of perversion cannot be found.

8. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

*But he knew their thoughts:* this assertion of Christ's omniscience is not the less valuable and convincing a proof of His Divinity, because introduced with so little apparent design on the part of the Evangelist. *And said to the man with the withered hand.* Notwithstanding the men were present who had just charged His disciples with breaking the Sabbath, Jesus here proceeded with His work. The unjust censures and malicious cavils of wicked men must not discourage us, from doing our duty either towards God or our neighbor. *Rise up, and stand forth in the midst,* literally, "Up! into the midst." It may have been the design of this command, to stand forth and show himself to the congregation, that the sight of his distress might move them to pity him, and that they might be the more sensibly struck with the miracle when they observed the wasted hand restored to perfect soundness in an instant.

9. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

To expose the malice and superstition of His foes, our Lord appealed to the dictates of their own minds, whether it was not more lawful to *do good on the Sabbath-days than to do evil, to save life than to kill.* He meant, more lawful for Him to save men's lives than for them to plot His death without the least provocation. In Scripture, the mere negation of any thing is often expressed by the affirmation of the contrary. Thus, ch. xiv. 26, *not to love, or even to love less, is called to hate*; Matt. xi. 25, *not to reveal is to hide, and here, not to do good, when we can, is to do evil, not to save is to kill.* From this, and many other passages of the New Testament, it may be justly deduced, as a standing principle of Christian ethics, that not to do the good which we have the opportunity and power to do, is, in a certain degree, the same as to do the contrary evil, and not to prevent mischief when we can, the same as to commit it. In this language Jesus showed that He read the wicked hearts of His enemies, and perceived their design of killing Him. It was impossible for them to resist the appeal to their consciences, hence *they held their peace,* Mark iii. 4—the silence of self-condemnation. Thus shall the wicked do at the judgment-seat of Christ. "The mouths of them that speak lies shall be stopped." Ps. lxiii. 11. "The wicked shall be *silent in darkness.*" 1 Sam. ii. 9.

10. And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

The *manner* in which Christ performed this miracle is very remarkable. **First,** He made a full pause, gazing upon His adversaries as they stood with the obdurate silence of hatred in a circle before Him. He *could* have healed the poor man by a *word*, but He desired him to *stretch forth his hand.* Was

not this a strange command? The man might have replied, "I have often endeavored to stretch forth my hand, and have not been able. Why should I try again?" But he made no such unbelieving answer; he confided in the power of Jesus, and his attempt was successful—*his hand was restored whole as the other*. In this simple history we have the best answer to those doubts, hesitations, and questionings by which anxious inquirers often perplex themselves in relation to repenting and returning to Christ. Let them do as *he* did who had the withered hand. Let them not stand still, reasoning, but act. Depraved man is withered in every limb of his soul, impotent by fallen nature. Yet just as this man was commanded to put forth his strengthless hand, so is the strengthless soul commanded to commit itself to the Redeemer, and in the effort to do so it will find that power accompanies the precept. Faith disregards apparent impossibilities, where there is a command and promise of God. "God's commands," says an old writer, "are grants. When He enjoins us, Repent, or Believe, it is only to draw from us a free acknowledgment of our impotence to perform what He commanded us. This confession being made, what He enjoins, He will enable us to do. Man's owning his weakness is the only stock for God to engraft thereon the grace of His assistance."

11. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

They felt they could not stand before His arguments, sustained as they were by such signs and wonders. Their credit was in danger; they saw that if Jesus was allowed to go on, their influence and gains would be lost. What then would be done? It was an affair of so much importance that they called a council. Mark iii. 6. They also united with them a sect of the Jews called Herodians, who were attached to the Romans, and to whom they were commonly opposed, but with whom they now became friends, that they might compass the death of one whom they hated and feared. The enemies of Christ and His cause, when arguments fail, fall to violence. It is a certain sign of a weak cause, that it must be supported by passion, which is all tongue and no ear. Pride, obstinacy and interest combined together, are capable of any thing. When men have once framed their *conscience* according to their passions, madness passes for zeal, the blackest conspiracies for pious designs, and the most horrid attempts for heroic actions. The cures effected by our Lord on the Sabbath, and actually recorded, are seven in number, viz. : that of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum, Mark i. 21; that of Simon's wife's mother, Mark i. 29; that of the impotent man at Bethesda, John v. 9; of this man with a withered hand; of the man born blind, John ix. 14; of the woman with a spirit of infirmity, Luke xiii. 14; of the man who had a dropsy, Luke xiv. 1. We have a general intimation of many more, as at Mark i. 34; and the "one work" to which our Lord alludes, at John vii. 21-23, is perhaps not any of the miracles which he has recorded at length, but one to which we have no further allusion than that contained in these verses.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by "another Sabbath?"
2. Where did Jesus go?
3. What did He do?
4. What man was in the synagogue?
5. What was his affliction?
6. What is said of it?
7. Who were present?

8. What did our Lord's enemies do?
9. Did He know their thoughts?
10. What is said of this assertion of His Omniscience?
11. What did Christ say to the afflicted man?
12. Why did He command him to "rise up," &c.?
13. Why did our Lord appeal to His enemies?
14. What did He mean by His question?
15. What is a standing principle of Christian ethics?
16. Why did Christ's enemies hold their peace?
17. What is said of the manner of performing this miracle?
18. What is said about "Stretch forth thine hand?"
19. What resulted from stretching forth the hand?
20. What have we in this simple history?
21. What is said of faith?
22. What effect did the miracle produce on Christ's foes?
23. What did they do?
24. What is said of the enemies of Christ?
25. What is a certain sign of a weak cause?
26. How many cures were effected by Jesus on the Sabbath?
27. What were they?
28. Have we a general intimation of many more?
29. What is said of the "one work" alluded to in John vii. 21-23?

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### LESSON XXXVI.

vs. 12-13.

12. 'And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

{ Matt. xiv. 23.

*In those days.* The designation of time is here very general. It would appear, from a comparison with Matt. x. 2-4, and Mark iii. 13-19, that what is here related took place soon after Jesus returned from the Sea of Tiberias, Mark iii. 7, to avoid the murderous designs of the Pharisees and Herodians, Mark iii. 6. *Went out.* Out of synagogue and city, from the crowded haunts of men. Solemn was the exchange from town to mountain. Hattin was the mountain-summit to which our Lord ascended. *To pray.* What a sublime and striking picture is here presented—the incarnate Son withdrawn from the noise and tumult of the world, to hold converse with the ineffable Jehovah! The Christian should be much alone with God. Shut out from life's distracting cares and business, he should hold communion with his "Father who seeth in secret," and place his soul under the beams, and breezes, and blessed visions of heaven. If the sinless Saviour found retirement necessary for His spiritual strength, how much more do we need it who are polluted with sin! *And continued all night.* What ardor of love must have filled His bosom to have driven sleep from His eyelids, and sustained Him in prayer during the watches of the night! This perseverance furnishes a high and holy lesson for imitation. It is not by the short and transient applications to a throne of grace, which we are too apt to dignify with the name of prayer, that we can hope to be qualified for seasons of peculiar

trial, temptation, or labor. This can alone be done by dwelling near the mercy-seat; by sitting, as it were, upon the footstool of the throne, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2; by daily, hourly, constantly, sending forth our petitions to Him whose grace alone can be sufficient for us. *In prayer to God*, literally, *in prayer of God*. This expression is a Hebraism, meaning "fervent and earnest prayer," just as "mountains of God," and "cedars of God," in the Old Testament, mean "lofty" mountains, and "high" cedars. Ps. xxxvi. 6; lxxx. 10. We must not only *ask*, but *seek*, and *knock*. It is not difficult to determine what was the subject of our Saviour's prayer that night, when we observe that the next morning He chose twelve from among His disciples to be Apostles. Was He not praying in the night for them, and for their followers through all time? Here, then, we learn the great importance of prayer and intercession on behalf of ministers, and particularly at the time of their ordination, that they may enter upon the great work before them with a becoming caution and fear, with a proper sense of responsibility, not with aspiring but humble thoughts, *for who is sufficient for these things?* Those to whom the responsible office of ordaining is committed, should pray that they may "lay hands suddenly on no man." Those who offer themselves for ordination should pray that they may not undertake work for which they are unfit, and not run without being sent. The lay-members of the Church, not least, should pray that none may be ordained, but men who are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost. Happy are those ordinations, in which all concerned have the mind that was in Christ, and come together in a prayerful spirit. Converted ministers are God's special gifts. Man cannot create them. If we would have earnest, active, devoted, faithful ministers, we must remember our Lord's example, and bear them on the arms of our faith to the throne of grace. Their work is heavy, their responsibility is enormous, their strength is small. Like the people whom they are to address, they have to battle with temptations, many of which are peculiar to their calling. It is our duty, therefore, to support them, and hold up their hands by frequent and fervent prayer. Even the great Apostle said: "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you." 2 Thess. iii. 1.

13. And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

5 Matt. x. 1.

*When it was day*, probably early in the morning, *he called unto him his disciples*. The persons commissioned were disciples before they were Apostles, to teach us, that Christ will have such as preach the gospel to be His disciples before they are ministers; trained up in the faith and doctrine of the gospel, before they undertake a public charge. The successive stages of apostolic induction are, *First*, the admitting to a more intimate association of one and another as *disciples*, John i. 35-52. *Second*, a choice of one or several at a time to be strictly His intimate *followers* in order to be his future *preachers*, Luke v. 1-11. *Third*, the formation of the whole into an organism of *twelve*, under the title of *Apostles*, as specified here in verse 13. *Fourth*, a sending of them forth on a *trial mission*, Matt. x. 1-42. *Fifth*, the Apostolic keys, Matt. xvi. 13-20. *Sixth*, their qualifications for the exercise of their inspired and miraculous apostolic authority by the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit, Acts ii. 4. It will be remembered, also, that Christ called them at first servants, Matt. x. 24, afterwards friends and children, John xiii. 33; xv. 15; finally even brethren, John xx. 17. *And out of them he chose twelve*. The Saviour caused a great number of His disciples to come to Him, and now out of this number *chose* the twelve Apostles. He chose them, not they Him, yet He chose with discerning power, knowing

their character and state of heart. Though the call of all proceeded alike from their Master's grace, we cannot fail to notice those personal qualifications which He Himself condescended to own and use in His service—the firm faith of Peter, (*the rock*;) the energy of the sons of Zebedee, whom He surnamed Boanerges, (*sons of thunder*,) united in John with that spirit of love which made him the *beloved disciple*, the fraternal and friendly affection of Andrew and Philip, the devotion and guileless sincerity of Nathanael, the self-sacrifice of Matthew, the practical godliness of James, and the firm resolve of his brother Judas, to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,” and, at the opposite extremity of the moral scale, that love of the world which made Judas Iscariot an awful example, that even one of those chosen by Christ to live with Him and hear His word could yet betray His Master, and prove to have been all along “a son of perdition,” for “He knew from the beginning who should betray Him.” Why Christ chose *twelve* it is difficult to say. Perhaps, if He had taken fewer, it would have been too limited a testimony. By taking twelve He took a competent number who could be witnesses of the facts they saw, and of the truths they heard, and thus go forth as eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses, to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. Or, perhaps, He selected twelve, because that was the number of the tribes of Israel, see Matt. xix. 28. That there was a Divine *idea* in the selection of *twelve* Apostles, is evident from the symbolical usages in the Apocalypse. In Rev. xii. 1, the woman that symbolizes the Church has upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And the tree of life, emblem of gospel grace, has twelve manner of fruits, that is, a monthly harvest, thus combining therein a Mosaical and Apostolic allusion. *Whom also he named Apostles.* *Apostle* means *one sent forth*. By this name, thenceforth, were those to be known, whom Jesus now commissioned to be His more intimate friends and followers, and to be the founders, under Him, as their Great Head, of the Church which He was about to establish. Judas by his betrayal of Christ forfeited his apostleship. The place thus left vacant was filled by Matthias, although some, who look upon his appointment as not being in accordance with the mind of the Spirit, number Paul with the twelve, in the place of Judas.

The following are the names of the Apostles, and the order in which they are given :

<i>Matthew</i> x. 2, 3, 4.	<i>Mark</i> iii. 16, 19.	<i>Luke</i> .	<i>Acts</i> i. 13.
1. Simon Peter, and 2. Andrew, his brother.	1. Simon Peter, 2. James, and	1. Simon Peter, and 2. Andrew, his brother.	1. Peter, and 2. James, and
3. James and	3. John, surnamed Boanerges.	3. James, and	3. John, and
4. John, Sons of Zebedee.	4. Andrew.	4. John.	4. Andrew.
5. Philip, and	5. Philip.	5. Philip and	5. Philip and
6. Bartholomew.	6. Bartholomew.	6. Bartholomew.	6. Thomas.
7. Thomas, and	7. Matthew.	7. Matthew and	7. Bartholomew and
8. Matthew, the publican.	8. Thomas.	8. Thomas.	8. Matthew.
9. James, the son of Alphaeus.	9. James, the son of Alphaeus.	9. James, the son of Alphaeus.	9. James, the son of Alphaeus, and
10. Lebbaeus, surnam'd Thaddæus.	10. Thaddæus.	10. Simon Zelotes.	10. Simon Zelotes, and
11. Simon, the Canaanite.	11. Simon, the Canaanite.	11. Judas, the brother of James.	11. Judas, the brother of James.
12. Judas Iscariot, “Who also betrayed him.”	12. Judas Iscariot, “Who also betrayed him.”	12. Judas Iscariot, “Which was also the traitor.”	

It will be observed that in Luke's catalogue their names are given by couples, doubtless to indicate how they were assorted in sending them forth two by two. It will be noticed also that although the arrangement of the names is so unlike in these four lists, the variation is confined to certain

limits, as the twelve may be divided into three quaternions, which are never interchanged, and the leading names of which are the same in all. Thus Peter is invariably the first, Philip the fifth, James the ninth, and Iscariot the last, except in Acts, where his name is omitted on account of his apostasy and death.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of—"in those days?"
2. From what did Christ go out?
3. Where did He go?
4. For what did He go?
5. What is said of the Christian?
6. How long did Jesus continue in prayer?
7. What is said of perseverance in prayer?
8. What is said of the phrase—"in prayer to God?"
9. What was the subject of our Saviour's prayer?
10. For whom did He pray that night?
11. What is said of those to whom the office of ordaining is committed?
12. What is said of converted ministers?
13. Were the persons commissioned disciples before they were Apostles?
14. What does this teach us?
15. What were the successive stages of Apostolic induction?
16. Did Christ choose the Twelve, or they Him?
17. How did He choose them?
18. What were the personal qualifications He condescended to own and use?
19. Why did Jesus choose twelve?
20. What does the word "Apostle" mean?
21. Were those whom Jesus sent forth thenceforth to be known by this name?
22. Did Judas forfeit his apostleship?
23. How was the place thus left vacant supplied?
24. What is said of Paul?
25. State the names of the Apostles as they are given by the Evangelists.
26. How are the names given in Luke's catalogue?
27. What is said about the arrangement of the names?

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#### LESSON XXXVII.

##### v. 14.

Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,

<sup>h</sup> John i. 42.

*Simon, (whom he also named Peter.)* Simon was the son of Jonas, or Jona. This was his original name, and signifies *hearing*. He was born at Bethsaida, a town situated on the western shore of the lake of Gennesareth, but in what particular year we are not informed. John i. 42, 43. He was a married man, and had his house, his mother-in-law, and his wife, at Capernaum, on the lake of Gennesareth. Matt. viii. 14; Mark i. 29; Luke iv. 38. He was by occupation a fisherman, and seems to have been associated with his brother Andrew in this business. The name *Cephas* (a Syriac word signifying a rock, and in Latin *Petra*, translated Peter) was given to him when Andrew introduced Simon to our Lord. His call to the special discipleship did

not take place till some time after this introduction. Matt. iv. 18-20. The phrase, *whom he also named Peter*, is not at variance with the statement made by John i. 43, that the change of name was made at Simon's first introduction to the Saviour, for Luke does not say when the new name was imposed, and only mentions it in order to give both the names by which the Apostle was familiarly known. The name itself, *Peter*, signifying *a rock*, or *stone*, does not denote constancy, or firmness, which were not peculiar traits of Peter's character, but strength and boldness. The new name did not wholly supersede the old one, as in the case of Saul and Paul, Acts xiii. 9, for we find the latter still employed, Luke xiv. 37, xxii. 31, xxiv. 34; Matt. xvi. 16, 17; Acts xv. 14, and throughout the Gospel of John, and in the opening words of Peter's second Epistle, both names are combined. The religious life of this Apostle, from its commencement to its close, is filled with the most interesting incidents. His two Epistles, the date usually assigned to which is between A. D. 64 and 66, and which are called *general*, because they were not addressed to any particular church or community of believers, constitute a valuable part of the inspired writings. The fact that Peter is first named in the catalogue of the Apostles, does not imply any superiority of rank or office. Matthew and Luke mention Andrew next to Peter, as being his brother, and one of Christ's first disciples. The names of James and John follow, as having been called next, see Matt. iv. 21, and being persons of great eminence for piety and usefulness, and James is placed before John as being the elder brother. The names of the others seem to be placed nearly, at least, in the order in which they became disciples. Judas Iscariot, however, though, perhaps, not last called, is named last, because he was the traitor. But whatever might be the reason of ranking the Apostles in the catalogues in the order in which we find them, we are certain they are not ranged according to their dignity, for had that been the case, the order of the names would have been exactly the same in all the Evangelists, which it is not, Andrew being placed the second in order, as we have observed, by Matthew and Luke, and the fourth by Mark, and Thomas being placed before Matthew by that Apostle, and after him by Mark and Luke. To this may be added, on supposition that the Apostles are ranked in the catalogues according to their dignity, it would follow, that John and Matthew, whose praise is in all the churches, on account of their writings, were inferior to Apostles who are scarce once named, except in the catalogues. It is true that Peter was a spokesman to the college of Apostles, like the foreman of a jury or the chairman of a large committee—a position for which he was qualified by his forwardness of speech and action, and which was naturally accorded to him as one of the oldest, most active, and most faithful of those who had "seen the Lord." But there is no evidence that he had any superiority of rank or office. Whatever honor or authority he received from Christ, in establishing the first institutions of Christianity, and declaring what it enjoined and from what it released, Matt. xvi. 18, 19, the other Apostles also received. Matt. xviii. 18; John xx. 23; 1 Cor. v. 3, 5; Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14. It is plain that the other Apostles and first churches conceded to him no primacy, or authority over his brethren, Matt. xxiii. 8-12; Acts xi. 12, xv. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 11; Gal. ii. 2, 11-14, and that he did not claim it for himself. 1 Pet. v. 1-4. Besides, Peter was frequently betrayed into the gravest errors, both of judgment and of practice, he was repeatedly rebuked with great severity by Christ, and he alone of the eleven went so far as to deny his Master, and continued under the reproach of that apostasy, until the risen Saviour condescended to restore him. John xxi. 15-17. Subsequent to Peter's history, as recorded in the Acts, he seems to have lived in the East, as one of his Epistles is addressed to the churches of Asia Minor, and was written from Babylon. It is supposed, from John xxi. 18, 19, that the death predicted of Peter, and expressed by the stretching forth of his hands and his being bound by cords, was that of crucifixion. Accordingly, ecclesiastical history testi-

fies that he suffered martyrdom, by crucifixion, at Rome, in the reign of the Emperor Nero—probably in the year 65. It is added that this death, and the tortures connected with it, were endured by the venerable Apostle with marvellous patience and fortitude, and that, deeming himself unworthy to die in precisely the same manner and posture as his Lord, he asked and obtained permission to be crucified with the head downward—a posture which could not fail greatly to aggravate the tortures of the cross.

*And Andrew his brother.* Andrew was a native of Bethsaida, and brother of Peter. Whether he was Peter's elder or younger brother is uncertain. He, too, was called from his fishing-net to be a fisher of men. The name Andrew was Greek, and is found in Herodotus. He probably had a Hebrew name besides, which had been gradually superseded by the Greek one. It was very common for the Jews of that age to have double names—one native and one foreign. Compare Acts i. 22; ix. 36; xii. 12; xiii. 1-9. Andrew was first a disciple of John the Baptist, whom he left to follow our Saviour, after the testimony of John. John i. 40. In seeking out his own brother Simon, and bringing him to Jesus, he set the first example of brotherhood in Christ, and was the first to proclaim, "We have found the Messiah." John i. 40-42. He is mentioned several times in the Gospels, though is not prominent. Except in the catalogue, ch. i. 14, his name does not occur once in the *Acts*. The events with which he was particularly connected are recorded in Matt. iv. 18-20, Mark xiii. 3, and John i. 35-40, vi. 3-13, xii. 22. Some of the ancients are of opinion that he preached in Scythia, others, that he preached in Greece, others, in Epirus, Achaia, or Argos. He is said to have died as a martyr at Patræ in Achaia, being sentenced to be executed on a cross of peculiar form, by Egæus, pro-consul of that province.

*James and John.* These two Apostles in most passages of the Gospels are named together, and from the prevailing order it is inferred that John was the younger. Their father was Zebedee, their mother Salome, whom some recent critics identify with the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in John xix. 25. Zebedee, whose occupation the two sons followed, was a fisherman of Bethsaida, on the lake of Tiberias, who, as he had a vessel of his own and hired servants, Mark i. 20, appears to have been in good circumstances for his station in life. We know nothing of him beyond his interposing no refusal when his sons were called to leave him, Matt. iv. 21, and his disappearance from the Gospel narrative leads to the inference that his death set Salome free to join her children in ministering to the Lord. Luke viii. 3. The surname *Boanerges*, which was given to James and John, Mark iii. 17, is no doubt a double modification (Greek and Aramaic) of some Hebrew phrase, which cannot now be certainly identified, but which Mark himself translated *sons of thunder*. *Sons of thunder* has been commonly explained as an Oriental figure for powerful preachers, and the word "*Boanerges*" has become proverbial in this sense, even as a singular, whereas it is determined by the Greek version to be plural. It has been objected that these brother-fishermen could scarcely be distinguished for their eloquence when called to be Apostles, but the name, like that of *Peter*, given to Simon, might have been at once descriptive and prophetic. They were called *Boanerges*, doubtless, with reference to the fiery, grand, sublime spirit which found its utterance in correspondingly high, strong and pregnant words. The objection which some have made, that the gentle John could not have been a son of thunder, rests upon a widespread but erroneous notion as to this Apostle's character and temper. Because he is called the disciple whom Jesus loved, and because he dwells much in his first Epistle on the love of God, he has been generally described as of a gentle, yielding, effeminate nature. It is well known, however, that the most intense affection is compatible with an ardent temper and ambitious spirit, of both of which qualities we find some traces in the words and actions of these Apostolical brothers. Matt. xx. 20, 24; Luke ix. 49; xix. 54. It is, moreover, plain

that no part of the Scripture is more suited to give offence to all hypocritical professors of Christianity, than John's first Epistle, or even to put inconsistent or negligent Christians to a stand, and make them question their own sincerity. The zeal of James seems to have been ardent and strong. He and John occupy a conspicuous position in the history of our Lord. Matt. v. 7; Luke viii. 51; Matt. xvii. 1; Mark ix. 2; Luke ix. 28; Matt. xxvi. 37; Mark xiii. 8; xiv. 33. *James* is the Greek form of Jacob, and it is somewhat remarkable that it now reappears for the first time since the patriarch himself. James was the first of the Apostles who died. He was also the first martyr of the apostolic body, being slain by Herod with the sword. Acts xii. 2. This occurred A. D. 44. Clement of Alexandria says, that such was his firmness in death that the officer at his execution was converted thereby to Christianity, and was martyred with him.

*John.* To the particulars given of this Apostle in the foregoing sketch, the following must be added. It is generally believed that he was the youngest of the Apostles, but it is not agreed what age he was of when called to follow Christ. The more general opinion states it at twenty-five or twenty-six years, but others think he was not more than twenty-two, and some conceive him to have been about the same age as his Lord. His character appears to have been affectionate. He enjoyed, in an eminent degree, the special intimacy of Christ. To him belonged the distinction, in the apostolic band, of being "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and this love was returned with a more single, undivided heart by him than by any other. He was present at several scenes in our Lord's history from which most of the other disciples were excluded. His attachment to Jesus was remarkable toward the end of His earthly course. John was a witness to the interesting circumstances which occurred after Christ's resurrection. The tradition which ascribes to him a life of celibacy receives some confirmation from the absence of his name in 1 Cor. ix. 5. Ecclesiastical historians state that he remained several years at Jerusalem, or at least in Judea, till after the death of Mary, who had been committed to his care. This is corroborated by the Acts of the Apostles, in which we find him at Jerusalem, as one of the chief Apostles of the circumcision. At first we find him, with Peter, working miracles, and preaching the gospel with great success and boldness. John was also one of the Apostles present at the council held at Jerusalem in the year 49 or 50, and before this time, he had, probably, not travelled beyond Judea. But the ancient writers inform us, that, after the death of Mary, he travelled into Asia Minor, where he founded many churches, making Ephesus his principal residence, and which continued to be such until, towards the close of Domitian's reign, he was banished to the isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation. Being released on the accession of Nerva, it seems that he returned to Ephesus, where he wrote his Gospel and three Epistles, and where he died, the last of the Apostles, in the third year of the emperor Trajan, when he must have been about one hundred years of age.

*Philip.* The name is an old Greek one, and is found everywhere in ancient history. Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter, John i. 44, and apparently was among the Galilean peasants of that district who flocked to hear the preaching of the Baptist. He was a firm believer in the Messiahship of Christ, John i. 25. The statement that Jesus found him, John i. 43, implies a previous seeking. To him, in the whole circle of the disciples, were spoken the words so full of meaning, "Follow me." He was the introducer of Nathanael, upon whom our Lord pronounced so high a commendation, John i. 48. He apparently was among the first company of disciples who were with the Lord at the commencement of His history, at the marriage of Cana, and on His first appearance as a prophet in Jerusalem, John ii. In the lists of the Apostles his name is uniformly coupled with that of Bartholomew. We find him present at the feeding of the Galilean crowds which had halted

on their way to Jerusalem to hear the preaching of Jesus, and were miraculously fed, John vi. 5-9. To him the Gentile proselytes (Hellenes) who had heard of Jesus and desired to see Him, expressed their wish for an interview with Him, John xii. 20, 22. He was distinguished for his frankness, through which he ventured to open every difficulty to the Saviour, John vi. 7; xii. 22; xiv. 8, 9. He was among the company of disciples at Jerusalem after the Ascension, Acts i. 13, and on the day of Pentecost. After this all is uncertain, yet it is said that he labored in Phrygia, and died at Hierapolis, probably as a martyr.

*Bartholomew* is a patronymic, *the son of Tholmai*. His *own* name nowhere appears in the three first Gospels. He is supposed to be the same person who is elsewhere called Nathanael. This opinion is formed in part upon the fact that Bartholomew is not mentioned in John's list of the names of the disciples, nor is Nathanael mentioned by the other Evangelists. Besides this, Philip and Nathanael are associated together by John, and in the parallel passages of the other Evangelists Philip and Bartholomew are associated. These circumstances, though not conclusive evidence, make it probable that they were one and the same person. If this may be assumed, he was born at Cana of Galilee, and was known for his uprightness. John i. 47. He is said to have preached the gospel in India, meaning thereby, probably, Arabia Felix, which was sometimes called India by the ancients. Some allot Armenia to him as his mission-field, and report him to have been there flayed alive and then crucified with his head downwards.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Who was Simon?
2. When was the name Cephias given to him?
3. What does it signify?
4. What does it denote?
5. What is said of his two Epistles?
6. Why were the Apostles mentioned in the order in which they are?
7. Were they arranged according to their dignity?
8. Had Peter any superiority of rank or office?
9. What was the history of Peter after that recorded in the Acts?
10. Whose brother was Andrew?
11. Of what place was he a native?
12. What is said of his name?
13. State the history of Andrew.
14. What is said of James and John?
15. Who was their father? and who their mother?
16. Who was Zebedee?
17. What is said of the word "Boanerges?"
18. What objection has been made to John's being called a son of thunder?
19. How is this objection answered?
20. What is said of the zeal of James?
21. What is said of his name?
22. How was he slain?
23. When?
24. What does Clement of Alexandria say?
25. What is said of John?
26. What is said of his banishment to Patmos?
27. What is said of Philip's name?
28. Where was he born?
29. State his history.
30. What is said of Bartholomew?
31. With whom is he supposed to be the same?
32. What is reported of his death?

## LESSON XXXVIII.

vs. 15-16.

## 15. Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes,

*Matthew* is the same as *Levi*, Luke v. 27, 29. He was the son of a certain Alphaeus, Mark ii. 14. The only certain information which we possess concerning Matthew is contained in the Gospels, as his name occurs but once in the Acts of the Apostles, and never in the Epistles. Although a Jew, he was in the employment of the Romans as a publican, or tax-gatherer, and persons thus employed were odious to their countrymen, even to a proverb. The office was, however, one of some trust, and the means of worldly comfort which it offered were in proportion to its responsibilities, and this the more enhances the devoted self-denial of Matthew, in so readily leaving all to follow ONE who had "nowhere to lay his head." That on this occasion he made an entertainment to which he invited his acquaintance—probably to hear the instructions of Christ—is the only other fact concerning Matthew which the Scripture records, except that, in the gospel history, we are apprised of his presence and conduct on various occasions, as involved in that of "the twelve," when they are collectively mentioned. As to the proceedings of Matthew after the death of our Lord, traditions concur in stating that he went abroad preaching the gospel of Christ; but they do not agree as to the countries in which he labored. Some say he preached in Ethiopia, others, in Persia, and others, among the Parthians. It is probable that he died a natural death. In relation to the traditions here referred to, as well as in the case of the other Apostles, it may be observed generally, that many of them are contradictory, and none are entitled to implicit belief. Still, they deserve more attention than those which concern the prophets, inasmuch as some of them can be traced up to times very near those in which the persons to whom they refer lived.

*Thomas* was also called *Didymus*, the two names being Aramaic and Greek synonymes, both meaning a *twin*. He was probably a Galilean, as well as the other Apostles, but the place of his birth and the circumstances of his calling are unknown. Besides the lists of the Apostles, he is named eight times in the Gospel of John, xi. 16; xiv. 5; xx. 24-29; xxi. 2. His character was that of a man slow to believe, seeing all the difficulties of a case, subject to despondency, viewing things on the darker side, and yet full of ardent love for his Master. The earlier traditions, as believed in the fourth century, represent him as preaching in Parthia or Persia, and as finally buried at Edessa. His martyrdom (whether in Persia or India) is said to have been effected by a lance. The Christians of the Syrian Church in India claim him as their founder, and call themselves by his name.

*James the son of Alphaeus*. The words *the son*, are not in the original, but the ellipsis is no doubt to be supplied with them. He is called by Mark *James the Less*, xv. 40, and appears to be that James whom Paul calls "the Lord's brother," Gal. i. 19. *Alphaeus* seems to be a Greek modification of an Aramaic name, of which *Clopas*, John xix. 25, is supposed to be another form. Now, as *Clopas* was the husband of the Virgin Mary's sister, John xix. 25, his son would be the cousin of our Lord, and might, according to a common Hebrew idiom, be called brother, see Gen. xiii. 8; 2 Sam. i. 26; Acts vii. 25, 26; ix. 17. Alphaeus appears to have died before the commencement of our Lord's ministry, and after his death it would seem that his

wife and her sister, a widow like herself, and in poor circumstances, lived together in one house, generally at Nazareth, Matt. xiii. 55, but sometimes also at Capernaum, John ii. 12, and Jerusalem, Acts i. 14. James the Less is mentioned with peculiar distinction, Acts xii. 76; xv. 13; xxi. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 7; Gal. i. 19 and ii. 9, 12. He was put to death in the year 62, and tradition says that he was thrown by the Jews from the battlements of the temple, and then despatched with a fuller's club, while on his knees, and in the act of praying for his murderers. His Epistle was written in the year 61 or 62. It is called *general*, because it was not addressed to any particular church, but to the whole Jewish nation—to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, ch. i. 1.

*Simon called Zelotes*, in Matt. x. 4, *the Canaanite*. The two epithets attached to his name have the same signification, the former being the Greek translation of the latter, which is Chaldee. Both seem to point him out as belonging to the Jewish faction called *Zealots*, which was animated by a most bitter and uncompromising zeal against the Roman rule, as a thing accursed, unlawful, and by every means to be put down, and which played so conspicuous a part in the last defence of Jerusalem. Possibly, as some suppose, the name was given to him on account of personal zeal for the law. If Simon was really a member of this fierce sect, it was a great change for him to be placed thus intimately near to Him who was "meek and lowly in heart." Simon is not mentioned in the New Testament out of the catalogues of the Apostles. He is reported, on very doubtful authority, to have preached in Egypt, Cyrene, and Mauretania, and to have been crucified in Judea under Domitian. A modern writer remarks, that, while Matthew x. 4, associates Judas Iscariot with Simon Zelotes, Luke associates him with Jude, brother of James. This, he thinks, arose not from a varying tradition, but from a varying practice of our Lord, who allowed not Judas always to retain the same companion, for fear of his corrupting influence.

16. And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

Jude 1.

*Judas the brother of James*. The place here occupied by the name of *Jude* is filled by that of *Lebbeus* in Matthew x. 8, and that of *Thaddeus* in Mark iii. 18. It is generally accepted that these were three names for one and the same person, who is therefore said by Jerome to have been *trionymus*. As the words *the brother* do not occur in the original, it has been a question whether the ellipsis should not be supplied with the words *the son*, as the ellipsis is supplied in ver. 15. The probability is, however, that he was the brother of James the Less, son of Mary, (sister of the Virgin Mother,) and therefore cousin-german of the Saviour. He is the "Judas, not Iscariot," mentioned by John, xiv. 22. The names *Thaddeus* and *Lebbeus*, signifying *heart* and *breast*, are regarded by some as denoting him as a courageous, spirited man. He was the author of the short Epistle near the end of the New Testament canon, which was written, as many have supposed, about A. D. 65, but it is by no means certain. Nothing is certainly known of the later history of the Apostle. It is impossible to determine from conflicting traditions whether he died a natural death, or was martyred, but Edessa seems to be the place where his earthly career terminated.

*Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor*, i. e., who became, or turned out to be the traitor. Judas is uniformly mentioned last on the lists, with a brand of infamy. Many conjectures have been made as to the meaning of the appellative *Iscariot*. Some suppose it to signify, "The zealot;" others, that it is derived from a word signifying *suspension*, and refers to the manner of his death, Matt. xxvii. 5; others still, that it means "the man of Carioth,"

or Kerieth, a city of Judah. Josh. xv. 25. The last explanation is now generally accepted; and if it be right, Judas is the only one of the Apostles whom we have any reason to regard as not a Galilean. *Also*, i. e., besides being an Apostle, or although he was one, which was a fearful aggravation of his guilt, he became a *betrayed*. Judas came to an awful end. Matt. xxvi. 34; John xvii. 2; Acts i. 25.

Such were the persons Jesus chose to be His assistants and coadjutors in the establishment and the administration of His kingdom. It was, indeed, natural to expect that in making this choice, He should look to men of influence, authority, and weight, that being Himself destitute of all the advantages of rank, power, wealth, and learning, He should endeavor to compensate for these defects in His own person by the contrary qualities of His associates, by connecting Himself by some of the most powerful, opulent, learned, and eloquent of His time. In pursuing an opposite course, however, He meant to show that He was *above* all such instruments, and that He had far other resources, far different auxiliaries, to call into His support, in comparison with which all the wealth, magnificence, power, and wisdom of the world, were trivial and contemptible things. 1 Cor. i. 28.

To the question, why did Jesus choose such a man as Judas Iscariot, when, from the beginning He knew he would betray Him, and once said: "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"—various answers may be given. It was, doubtless, to fulfil the prophecy, Ps. xli. "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Thus, also, was the great purpose accomplished of redeeming the human race by Christ's sufferings and death, and thus were the Scriptures fulfilled, Acts i. 16. After all, however, it must be acknowledged that this choice is surprising, and at variance with the course which human wisdom would have marked out. But the foolishness of God is wiser than men, 1 Cor. i. 25; and it may have been a part of the Divine plan to illustrate by this selection the sovereignty of God in choosing even His most honored instruments, without regard to any merit of their own. Probably some of the mystery that envelopes this case may be solved as we look at the following lessons which it teaches: 1. It is possible to be with Jesus, to hear Him night and day, to *appear* to be religious, and to preach holy doctrines, and yet to perish everlastingly. 2. Although the Church is to desire and aim at absolute purity, it cannot be expected even in her highest places, during her militant condition, and it is her duty to guard against terror and despair when great defections do occur. The wheat and the tares, the good fish and the bad, will always be found side by side, till the Lord comes again. 3. It is the duty of ministers to guard against avarice, hypocrisy, and all unfaithfulness. Matt. xxvi. 34; John xvii. 12; Acts i. 25. The infamy of Judas is indelible; and this will at last be proportionably the case of all who, bearing this sacred office, habitually "seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ." 4. The choice of Judas supplies a powerful indirect evidence of the purity and blamelessness of our Lord's conduct and ministry. If any thing *could* have been proved against Him, Judas, the traitor, was exactly the witness who could have proved it. But he had nothing to allege to Christ's disadvantage. His remorseful confession was a signal testimony to the spotless innocence of Jesus. Matt. xxvii. 4. Then, again, look how Christ treated Judas. He warned him, Matt. vi. 19-21, Mark vii. 21-23, Luke xii. 1C-20; He repeatedly left him free to go, John vi. 67, xiii. 27; with long-suffering He endured him, John xiii. 11; finally, with majesty, He removed him. Living and dying, therefore, even Judas was a witness of the Lord; so that the scoff of unbelief upon this point, from Celsus on even to Strauss, and later than he, to Rénan, rebounds on the heads of its own authors.

## QUESTIONS.

1. With whom is Matthew the same ?
2. Whose son was he ?
3. Where is the only certain information concerning Matthew contained ?
4. What was his secular office ?
5. What is said of the office ?
6. By what fact is his self-denial enhanced ?
7. What do traditions concur in stating about him ?
8. What was Thomas also called ?
9. What is said of the two names ?
10. Was he a Galilean ?
11. Are the circumstances of his calling known ?
12. What was his character ?
13. How do the earlier traditions represent him ?
14. Whose son was James ?
15. What is he called by Mark ?
16. What is said of the name Alpheus ?
17. What is said of Alpheus' death, and his wife, and her sister ?
18. State where James the Less is mentioned with peculiar distinction.
19. When did he die ?
20. What does tradition say of his death ?
21. When was his Epistle written ?
22. Why is it called *general* ?
23. What is Simon, called Zelotes, named in Matthew ?
24. What do the two epithets attached to his name signify ?
25. To what do both seem to point him out as belonging ?
26. What was the faction called Zealots ?
27. Is Simon mentioned in the New Testament, except in the catalogues of the Apostles ?
28. State his history.
29. What is Judas, the brother of James, called, in Matthew, and in Mark ?
30. Were there three names for one and the same person ?
31. Who was this Judas ?
32. What do the names Thaddeus and Lebbaeus signify ?
33. Of what Epistle was Jude the author ?
34. When was this Epistle written ?
35. What is said of Judas Iscariot, as the traitor ?
36. How is he uniformly mentioned on the lists of the Apostles ?
37. What is the meaning of "Iscariot" ?
38. What is said about the word "also" ?
39. What was the end of Judas ?
40. What is said of the persons Jesus chose to assist Him in establishing and administering His kingdom ?
41. Why did Jesus choose such a man as Judas Iscariot ?
42. What is the first practical reflection given ?
43. What, the second ?
44. What, the third ?
45. What, the fourth ?
46. How was Judas a witness of the Lord ?
47. What is said of the scoffs of infidels about Jesus ?

## LESSON XXXIX.

vs. 17-21.

17. ¶ And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases ;

† Matt. iv. 25 ; Mark iii. 7.

After choosing His Twelve Apostles, our Lord descended with them, and stood in the plain. As the place where the following discourse was delivered is said, by Matt. v. 1, to have been a mountain or eminence, we must interpret the words here of an elevated plain or table-land at the foot of the mountain. Robinson and Stanley both describe the Tell Hattin, lying a little west of the sea of Galilee, and so called from the village at its base, which the Latin, though not the Greek tradition, connects with the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount, and which is now called the "Mount of Beatitudes," as consisting of a ridge, from which rise two horns or peaks, known as the Horns of Hattin. If the tradition is correct, as Stanley is disposed to regard it, (and even Robinson finds nothing contradictory to it in the situation of the hill,) our Lord ascending the ridge into one of the peaks, would have gone up into the mountain, Matt. v. 1, and coming down afterwards, for greater convenience, upon the ridge, would have been upon a level place, without having left the mountain. *The company of His disciples* ; no longer including in their class the Twelve who had just been chosen as His immediate attendants : *and a great multitude of people, &c.* Some had come to hear the new Teacher, whose fame had spread abroad in every direction, others, and perhaps the large majority, *to be healed of their diseases.* How true to the life this picture is, the following passage will show : "The news that a foreign hakeem or doctor was passing through the country," says Mosier, "very soon was spread abroad, and at every halt our camp was thronged with the sick, not only of the village near which we were encamped, but of all the surrounding villages. Many came several days' journey to consult our doctor, and were brought to Him in spite of every difficulty and inconvenience. Some came on asses, bolstered up on cushions, and supported by their relations ; others on camels, whose rough pace must have been torture to any one in sickness. It may be seen what a misfortune sickness must be in a country where there is no medical relief, nor even a wheel conveyance to seek relief when it is at hand." Our Lord, as a miraculous Healer, as well as Teacher, doubtless attracted, in a similar way, still greater crowds.

18. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.

Persons demoniacally possessed were among the gathered crowd. *Were healed* : those who were possessed with demons were afflicted to a greater or less extent with physical maladies.

19. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

† Matt. iii. 14, 36.

‡ Mark v. 30 ; Luke viii. 46.

There was such eagerness to be healed, that they pressed forward in a body to *touch* Jesus. *Virtus* means power. The word is the same as that used by our Lord, Mark v. 30, when "He perceived that virtue had gone out of Him." Christ's inherent, underived power *went forth* from Him, so that all who had approached Him, desiring a cure, were healed. Happy are they who, treading in the steps of Jesus, delight in relieving the miserable! What a scene of *suffering* must have been witnessed on this occasion! Then what a scene of *joy*! Yet these changes were but faint emblems of the glorious works which are now wrought where the gospel is preached in power; for virtue, a Divine power, still goes out of Jesus, so that tongues that were dumb in His praise are loosed, feet that could not walk in His ways are strengthened, and parents behold their wandering children returning to their forsaken God.

20. ¶ And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, "Blessed *be ye* poor : for yours is the kingdom of God.

• Matt. v. 3 and xi. 5; Jam. ii. 5.

Having by His miracles established His Divine authority, and acquired, of course, a right to the attention of His hearers, and a powerful influence over their minds, our Lord proceeded to instruct them in what is commonly called His Sermon on the Mount. His mission had been unfolded step by step, till it lay fully open to the inquiries of His disciples and the objections of His foes, and the time had come to rebuke malignant cavils, to correct erroneous expectations, and to satisfy humble and earnest inquiries. As the choice of the Apostles was preceded by silence and prayer, so this sermon was immediately preceded by miraculous works. Here in fullest significance was the sublimest symbolism of the kingdom of heaven, whose fundamental law Christ would forthwith reveal to the world. The might of deed must support the might of the Word. So was the faith of the just chosen ones strengthened, and the people were made to see the path to heaven.

Though the sermon which Jesus now preached contains a greater variety of new, important, and excellent moral precepts, than is anywhere to be found in the same compass, it does not pretend to give a regular, complete, and perfect system of ethics, or to lay down rules for the regulation of our conduct in every possible instance that can arise. This would have been an endless task; hence only the great outlines of our duty are traced out, and general principles and comprehensive rules are given to us, which we may ourselves apply to particular cases, and the various situations in which we may be placed. There is throughout the sermon a direct reference to the false notions generally entertained by the Jews respecting the Messiah's kingdom, but as their prejudices originated in principles common to unregenerated human nature, though taking a peculiar form and color from their circumstances, the statements made are calculated to be "profitable" to mankind in all ages, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Without entering into any thorough discussion of the question, about which some difference of opinion exists, whether the sermon here given, and that recorded in the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of Matthew, are two relations of the same discourse, or distinct discourses delivered at different times, we shall assume, as most harmonists and interpreters maintain, that they are identical. The very variations in them tend to establish an essential sameness. Both begin with the same blessings, and end with the same striking parable concerning the difference between hearing and doing, and it is inherently improbable that Christ, at different periods in His life, should have made use of the same commencement and the same conclusion of His discourse. Between this common beginning and ending, it is true, there is

much in Matthew which Luke does not give, and some passages in Luke which do not appear in Matthew, yet it is also true that the passages common to the two Evangelists are perfectly identical in substance, follow in the same order, and contain those truths which are of universal concern to the disciples of Christ in every age. Should it be asked why Luke omitted such extended and important parts of the discourse, this question might be answered, first, by replying that he repeats the like sentiments in other passages of his Gospel, and, secondly, by asking why Mark omitted the whole discourse, or why Matthew passed over all that is contained in chapters 1 and 2 of Luke? It is well that the Evangelists did not follow servilely each in the steps of his predecessor, else what need would there have existed for four Gospels? In what respect would the second, third, and fourth have added to the amount of information given in the first?

In order to harmonize the arrangement of Luke's report of the sermon with that of Matthew, we must read the verses in the following order: 20-26, 29-30, 27, 28, 32-42. Verses 34 and 35 in Luke are additional matter.

*And he lifted up his eyes*, a form of expression representing the solemnity and importance of the discourse about to be pronounced; *on his disciples*, to whom, until ver. 27, His discourse is addressed, but in the hearing of the people. *Blessed be ye poor*: Jesus, at the beginning of His sermon, does not proceed like Moses or a law-teacher, with command, threatening, and terrifying, but in the friendliest possible way, with pure, enticing, alluring, and amiable promises. All men naturally desire happiness, and our Lord begins with describing who are the truly happy. He does not speak so much of the manner in which men are to obtain happiness, as of the characters of those who are really happy. *Ye poor*: this is explained by the terms in Matthew, "poor in spirit." The reference is not to external situation, but to disposition and character. A bare outward poverty, or an avowed voluntary poverty, will entitle none to the blessing. Many poor persons are proud, ungodly, dishonest, and profligate, while some of the rich are humble, pious, and holy. Poverty, indeed, has advantages in respect of religion, but none are here pronounced *blessed*, except such as have "poverty of spirit," that is, are of a true, humble, lowly spirit. *For yours is the kingdom of God*. Such persons are blessed, because their humility rendering them teachable, submissive, contented, and obedient, and leading them to rest their hope entirely on something out of themselves, prepares them to be members of the kingdom of grace, and heirs of the kingdom of glory, particularly as this humility is connected with the other dispositions represented in this sermon, for all of them, though no doubt with a great variety of degree, are to be found in every man, who, being born again, has entered into the kingdom of God. As we read this first of the series of blessings pronounced upon certain states of minds, how does it compel us to feel that we are in the presence of One who is come to establish a kingdom in the inner man, to deal with the principles of things, to lay the axe to the roots, to baptize with the Spirit and with fire, to reform the fruit by reforming the tree!

21. *Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.*  
*Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.*

• Is. lv. 1; lxx. 13; Matt. v. 6.      • Is. lxi. 3; Matt. v. 4.

*Hunger* is used in all languages to express vehement desire. *Filled*, is a figure taken from cattle in good pasture, fed till they are satisfied and graze no longer. Probably, many persons present were kept at a great distance from their necessary food by attention to our Lord's instructions, and thus would be the better prepared to appreciate the declaration that hungering after righteousness, they should be satisfied in due time with Divine consolations and a holy felicity. In the knowledge and faith of the truth respect-

ing the Saviour, they would obtain the gratification of their desires, and, in the fulness of their grateful and happy hearts, would be able to exclaim, "Surely, in the Lord have we righteousness," we "are complete in Him," "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Is. xiv. 24; Col. ii. 10; 1 Cor. i. 30. *Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.* It is as if Christ said, "Ye disciples that are now in a sad, mournful, afflicted state are blessed, for there will come a time when ye shall be comforted, a time when God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes." Happy are they who now sorrow after a godly sort for their sins, "When they behold transgressors are grieved," Ps. cix. 158, and mourn under that wholesome discipline of affliction by which God reduces His wandering children, and trains them up to higher holiness, for all their sorrow shall pass away like a dream, and they shall ere long rejoice in a complete deliverance from it. God will comfort them in this world by His Word and Spirit, and in the world to come with the sight and enjoyment of Himself. Every one flies from *sorrow*, and seeks after joy, and yet true joy must necessarily be the *fruit of sorrow*.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What did Jesus do after choosing His Apostles?
2. What kind of a plain is referred to?
3. What do Robinson and Stanley say of the Tell Hattin?
4. Who are designated by "the company of His disciples?"
5. What did the great multitude of the people come to Jesus for?
6. Were there any persons demoniacally possessed among the crowd?
7. What is meant by "virtue?"
8. After what did our Lord deliver His Sermon on the Mount?
9. Does this Sermon give a regular, complete, and perfect system of ethics?
10. What direct reference is there throughout the Sermon?
11. Are the Sermon here given and that recorded in Matthew identical?
12. What evidence of their identity is there?
13. What is necessary to harmonize Luke's report of the Sermon with that of Matthew?
14. What was signified by Christ's lifting up His eyes?
15. To whom was the Sermon addressed?
16. How did our Lord begin His Sermon?
17. Who are meant by the "poor?"
18. How are such persons blessed?
19. What is said of hunger?
20. What is said of "filled?"
21. How are those who hunger after righteousness filled?
22. Who are those who weep?
23. When shall they rejoice?

## LESSON XL.

vs. 22-26.

22. "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

¶ Matt. v. 11. 1 Pet. ii. 19 and iii. 14, iv. 14.

¶ John xvi. 2.

*When men shall hate you.* Hatred of Christ's disciples is the bitter root from which persecution grows. The wicked hate the holy image of God, and those who bear it, His holy truth, and those who profess and preach it, His holy law, and those who obey and stand up for its obligation and authority, His holy ordinances, and those that attend on them: *and when they shall separate you from their company*: these words designate all kinds of expulsion from society, in consequence of the odium attached to faith in Christ, and an open profession of His Name. We learn from a Latin historian of that time, (Pliny,) that the primitive Christians were hated merely because they were so called, and we find him consulting the Emperor Trajan, whether or no he should punish the Name itself, (of Christians,) *though no evil should be found in it.* *And shall reproach you*, shall cover you with opprobrious epithets, as they eject you forth from society: *and cast out your name as evil.* It will be noticed that there is a climax in the verse: 1, hatred; 2, severance from general and special intercourse; 3, reproach; and 4, formal excommunication from the synagogue, or church fellowship. John ix. 34; xvi. 2. Christ's disciples were abhorred for their name. As such, they were sometimes called *Nazarenes*, and sometimes *Christians*, and both these names were matters of reproach in the mouths of their enemies. In Acts xxiv. 5, Paul is called a *ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes*, and the character of a *pestilent fellow*, and that of a *mover of sedition*, is joined to it. In Acts xxviii. 22, *this sect* is represented as *everywhere spoken against*. Slander is a part of the Christian's portion. He must endure the persecution of the *tongue*. He must expect to be misrepresented, both as to his principles and his practice. *For the Son of man's sake*, because (or on account) of me; i. e., as being my disciples, or believers in my claims to the Messiahship, and therefore avowed subjects of my kingdom. Such is the treatment which He warns them to expect, as His professed followers, and such the consolation which He gives them. They must have tribulation in His service, but for that very reason He pronounces them *blessed*. "All who live godly must suffer persecution." The particular form of the opposition which wicked and worldly men make to the cause of Christ will depend on circumstances; but in all countries and in all ages it exists, and the followers of Christ should count on being exposed to derision, reproach, slander, and it may be evils of a more formidable kind, from ungodly men.

23. "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for "in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

¶ Matt. v. 12; Acts v. 41; Col. i. 24; James i. 2.

¶ Acts vii. 51.

The defamed and persecuted are not only pronounced "blessed," but called on to *rejoice*. It seems a strange exhortation for such, not merely to be patient and resigned, but joyful and glad. But when the whole of the case is taken into view, the command appears in the highest degree reasonable,

and the duty not only practicable, but easy. "This is the victory which overcometh the world," all difficulties, "even our faith." 1 John v. 45. Let a man but believe what Jesus reveals to him, and he will not feel it difficult to do what Jesus commands, or endure what Jesus appoints. The man who believes that his reward shall be great in heaven, will have no difficulty in rejoicing and leaping for joy amid those afflictions which, however heavy, he will in this case feel light, and which, however long-continued, he will regard as but for a moment, and which he knows are "working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. iv. 17. For the persecutions which *the prophets* referred to endured, see 1 Kings xiii. 4; 2 Chron. xxiv. 21, xxxvi. 16; Neh. ix. 26; Heb. xi. 32-38.

24. "But wo unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

<sup>u</sup> Amos vi. 1; James v. 1

<sup>x</sup> Luke xii. 21.

<sup>y</sup> Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16; Luke xvi. 25.

To four of the benedictions, as recorded in Matthew, Luke's report of our Lord's sermon contains four counter *woes*. We may suppose that Matthew, for some reason, omitted these woes, while Luke, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, saw fit to write them out. They are not imprecatory, but declarative. Our Lord is not here acting in the character of a judge, but as obliged by His zeal for men's good to give them warning. *Wo unto you*. This is the expression of one lamenting, (or bewailing the unhappy condition of another,) not of one inflamed with anger. It is like that used by our Lord, Matt. xxiv. 19, *Wo to them that are with child, &c., in those days*, an expression which no one can understand otherwise than as a declaration of the unhappiness of women in these circumstances, at such a time of general calamity as is referred to. The parallel passage in Luke xxiii. 29, where we have the same prophecy, makes this evident. We are not to understand our Lord here as denouncing riches as necessarily evil, or rich men as necessarily wicked. He would not thus have spoken of the rich Chuza with his wife, Luke viii. 2, 3, or the family of Bethany, Luke x. 38-42. His intention obviously was, to show His disciples the danger of riches, worldly indulgences, and all those ruinous advantages which men so eagerly pursue, and of that pride and self-sufficiency which are commonly increased by outward prosperity. Nor can it be wondered at that this was done, when even a Nicodemus ventured only in the night to come to Jesus, when the rich young man went away sad, and when the rich, for the greater part, were self-satisfied and proud characters, sumptuous liverers who suffered a pious Lazarus to pine away at their gate, unrighteous ones who stinted the wages of the poor. Luke xvi. 20; James v. 4. *For ye have received your consolation*; i. e., ye who love the good things of this world supremely, and trust in them, having chosen them for your happiness, shall not receive Divine comfort, or the heavenly reward.

25. "Wo unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. "Wo unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

<sup>a</sup> Is. lxx. 13.

<sup>b</sup> Prov. xiv. 13.

*Full*. Ye that abound in worldly goods, and take up with these things as your portion, *ye shall hunger*, ye shall fall into a state of great indigence and misery, aggravated by all the plenty which ye enjoyed and abused. The retribution which, in the verse preceding, is described only as a coming short of the expected consolation, is here represented as a direct feeling of hunger, pain, and sadness. Miserable are *you that laugh now*, that spend your lives in mirth and gayety, or are of a light, trifling spirit, for *ye shall mourn and weep*; you have reason to expect a portion in those doleful regions where,

without intermission and without end, ye shall be abandoned to weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Our Lord's declaration is not inconsistent with the Apostle's precepts, which command Christians always to rejoice. Neither is the mirth, against which the wo is here denounced, to be understood of that constant cheerfulness of temper, which arises to true Christians from the comfortable and cheerful doctrines with which they are enlightened by the gospel, the assurance they have of reconciliation with God, the hope they have of everlasting life, and the pleasure they enjoy in the practice of piety and the other duties of religion. But it is to be understood of that turbulent, carnal mirth, that levity and vanity of spirit, which arises, not from any solid foundation, but from sensual pleasure, or those vain amusements of life by which the giddy and the gay contrive to fill up their time, that sort of mirth which dissipates thought, leaves no time for consideration, and gives them an utter aversion to all serious reflections.

26. <sup>b</sup>Wo unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

<sup>b</sup> John xv. 19; 1 John iv. 5.

The phrase *all men* (like the term *world*) is used to distinguish the great ungodly mass, as opposed to the righteous few. The sentiment is not that it is a positive mark of evil to be spoken well of by a bad man; for Timothy "had a good report from those that were without." To be universally praised, however, is a most unsatisfactory symptom, and one of which a minister of Christ should always be afraid. Plutarch tells us that when Phocion in his orations had particularly pleased the multitudes, he used to ask his friends whether any thing wrong had been uttered in his address. So, the minister who is universally applauded, may well doubt whether he is faithfully doing his duty, and honestly declaring all the counsel of God; for, according to the old adage, "a compliant temper makes friends, truth excites odium." Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor John the Baptist, the prophet of the New Testament, nor Christ Himself, gained either the good will or the good word of that generation in which they lived. Universal popularity cannot be secured but by speaking that which is grateful to all, but that cannot be good which is grateful to bad men. There is as much hostility now against truth, and those who exemplify it in their lives and conversation, as there was in the days of open persecution; but the spirit of the age does not permit its open and violent expression, as when the disciples of Christ were hunted down like wild beasts, and ruthlessly put to death, oftentimes with the most cruel torture. "The friendship of the world worketh death." James iv. 4. *For so did their fathers to the false prophets.* The false prophets and teachers, whom the Jews commended, accommodated their sentiments and doctrines to the wishes and passions of their auditors. They spake to them smooth things, and prophesied lies, because *the people loved to have it so*; they prophesied of peace, when war was at hand; they strengthened the hands of evil-doers, Jer. xxiii. 14, and daubed the ruinous wall with untempered mortar. Ezek. xiii. 10, 11.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of hatred of Christ's disciples?
2. What is meant by "separate you from their company?"
3. What is the climax in verse 22?
4. What were the disciples called?
5. What is said of slander?
6. What are we to understand by "for the Son of man's sake?"
7. What is said about the persecution Christians must suffer?

8. What is said of the defamed and persecuted?
9. What is said of their being commended to rejoice?
10. What is said of the four woes mentioned in Luke's report of our Lord's sermon?
11. What is the meaning of "Wo unto you?"
12. Does our Lord denounce riches as necessarily evil?
13. What was His intention in regard to riches?
14. What is meant by "for ye have received your consolation?"
15. Who are the "full?"
16. How shall they hunger?
17. Who are meant by those "that laugh?"
18. How are they to mourn and weep?
19. Whom do the words "all men" distinguish?
20. What is the sentiment in ver. 26?
21. What is said of the minister who is universally applauded?
22. What is said of universal popularity?
23. Is there hostility now against the truth and those who exemplify it?
24. How did the false prophets and teachers do?

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### LESSON XLI.

vs. 27-31.

27. ¶ But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

• Exod. xxiii. 4; Prov. xxv. 21; Matt. v. 44; ver. 35; Rom. xii. 20.

*But I say unto you which hear:* the words were not addressed by the Saviour, as in ver. 26, exclusively to His disciples, but to all within His hearing, and, of course, to all who in future ages should hear His gospel.

This is the most sublime piece of morality ever given to man. The thought of requiting acts of enmity with acts of kindness could only arise in the heart of Him who has Himself prayed for the evil-doers. Such sayings of the Saviour, particularly, may well have elicited from even a godly man, on reading the sermon on the Mount, the exclamation, "Either this is not true, or we are no Christians." The precept is equivalent to a prohibition of malignant feeling towards any human being, a command to cherish kind wishes towards all mankind. Instead of warranting us to confine our benevolent regards to those whom we may consider our neighbors—our kindred or countrymen—our benefactors or friends—men of our own sect, or even religion—our Lawgiver commands us to embrace, in the widespread arms of our benevolence, all mankind—strangers, foreigners, heathens, even enemies. Every human being is to be regarded with good will, and, as we have opportunity, to be treated with kindness. It is quite obvious that we are not required to regard with precisely the same kind of feeling a Christian brother, and an openly profane and profligate person—a generous benefactor and a malignant, inveterate enemy. It is not possible, and, if it were, it would not be proper, to cherish the same tender regard for strangers as for "our own, those of our own household," the same gratitude to enemies as to benefactors, the same esteem for the bad as for the good. But we are to regard all men, even our enemies, with love, that

is, we are sincerely to wish them well, we are to desire their good, we are, as we have opportunity, to promote their happiness.

28. Bless them that curse you, and 'pray for them which despitefully use you.

d Luke xxiii. 34; Acts vii. 60.

The word *bless* does not mean, according to a common use of it in Scripture, to implore blessings from God upon them who are imprecating evils upon us, for then it would be synonymous with *pray* for them. It is quite parallel to the Apostle's injunction, not to "render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." Be civil and kind to those who are rude to you, and be ready, when you can do so with truth, to speak to the advantage of those who have, by malignant and untrue statements, endeavored to injure your reputation. *And pray for them which despitefully use you*, who are making continual war upon you, and constantly harassing and calumniating you. "Knowing that you can do but little to make them happy, call in the aid of Omnipotence. Instead of imprecating vengeance, pray for forgiveness, and for all heavenly and spiritual blessings to them, and do this for your most inveterate foes."

29. 'And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; 'and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.

e Matt. v. 39.

f 1 Cor. vi. 7.

30. 'Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask *them* not again.

g Deut. xv. 7, 8, 10; Prov. xxi. 36; Matt. v. 42.

*That smiteth thee, &c.* Christianity obliges us to bear many injuries patiently rather than revenge one privately: we must leave the matter to God and the magistrate.



COAT OR TUNIC, AND "ABA."

The *coat* here mentioned was a tunic, generally made of linen, worn next to the skin, with armholes or sleeves, reaching down, like a shirt, to the knees, and bound round the waist by a girdle. The *cloak*, called in modern times the "aba," was a large square piece, several feet in length and breadth,

and worn very much as an American Indian wears his blanket. *Take away*, in the parallel passage, Matt. v. 40, the words are, *see thee at the law, and take away*, &c. Manifestly the precepts in these two verses are not to be taken strictly, but restrainedly. They must not be so expounded as to contradict other portions of God's word. A literal interpretation of them would break up all the foundations of society, and destroy all control of personal property. Every man would be at the mercy of worthless and indolent vagabonds, and a premium would be offered for a life of violence and vagrancy. The command of our Lord, ver. 29, does not forbid the repression of crime, or declare the office of the magistrate and policeman unlawful. Nor does it declare all war unlawful, or prohibit the punishment of evil-doers, and disturbers of the peace and order of society. See Luke xxii. 36; Rom. xiii. 4. Mention also is made in the Gospels and Acts of several centuries, but we never find their occupations, as soldiers, condemned as unlawful. Neither does our Lord's command forbid us to defend ourselves when we are in danger, for this is one of the strongest instincts of our nature, the law of God written on our heart; or to avail ourselves of the protection which the law gives to property, for justice to our creditors, to the public, to our families, may require us to defend our estate. At the same time, this command condemns any thing like a pugnacious, revengeful, litigious, or selfish spirit. If a man give a disciple of Christ a contemptuous or painful blow on the cheek, it is his duty and wisdom to imitate his Master, and take it patiently, nay, to turn the other, and expose himself to a repetition of the insult or injury, rather than to begin a contest, by returning the blow, sending a challenge, or commencing a process at law—even though he should be ridiculed for his want of manly spirit, in consequence of his obedience to the laws of his Lord. If a man be sued at law, and be unjustly deprived of his "coat," which, though not of great value, he might be ill able to spare, he had better suffer himself to be defrauded of his "cloak," than be involved in the temptations and evils of seeking legal redress. He ought, also, to have resort to the tribunals of justice only when the cause is important and the call urgent—to prosecute his claims with humanity, moderation, and a spirit of peace, to be content with reasonable satisfaction, and to embrace every opportunity of terminating the contest. We are to be forbearing, patient, long-suffering under insults and injuries, conceding much, submitting to much, and putting up with much, rather than cause strife. The benevolence of the gospel, also, (ver. 30,) requires a free and cordial administering to the wants of others, whether they approach us as importunate mendicants, or even attempt by violence to despoil us of our possessions. We are, according to their necessities, and our own abilities, to give to every one that asketh of us, whether Jew, Samaritan, or Gentile. Our charity is to be bounded by no personal motives, and limited by the golden rule which follows.

31. <sup>h</sup>And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

<sup>h</sup> Matt. vii. 12.

We are not to do to others as they do to us, but *as we would that they should do to us*. In interpreting this rule we are to have regard to the following limitations: 1. We are not to overlook the difference which exists between ourselves and others in regard to the circumstances in which we are severally placed. For example, all that a father may expect from a child, or a master from his servant, or a magistrate from his subjects, is not, for this reason, to be done by such superiors in rank or relation to their inferiors. 2. What we would that others should do to us, is not to determine our duty to them, unless the thing we would they should do to us is right in itself. If a judge and a criminal should exchange situations, it does not follow that

because the judge in the character of a culprit would desire not to be condemned, therefore he must not condemn the criminal before him in the judicial capacity in which he is now called to act, for then would offenders go unpunished, and society be unhinged and ruined. 3. We are not obliged to do all that to others, which we might probably be glad they would do to us; that is, the rule does not apply to every thing that is lawful, but to what is reasonable. A poor man may desire that one who is wealthy should give him enough to make him rich, and it is likely that if the rich man were poor, he also might desire the same kindness; but he is not, for this reason, even though he might lawfully do it, required to make the poor man rich. *As ye would*, the rule embraces all things, small and great, seen and unseen, whether done when absent or present, and whether involving much sacrifice or little. This rule has the following, among other, points of excellence: 1. It is plain and concise. 2. It is admirably adapted to sudden emergencies, when there is not time for long deliberation as to what duty demands. 3. It is susceptible of universal application—to all persons, places and things. 4. It meets those cases in which self-interest and private feelings are likely to dim our perceptions of right and wrong. 5. Being founded in the reason of things, it is such a precept as approves itself to the mind of a reasonable creature, as soon as he hears and understands it, so as not to need any labored proof. It should be noticed that this rule holds negatively as well as positively. Though it wears only the positive form, we are as much bound not to do to others what we would not have others do to us, as to do to them what we would have them to do to us. To neglect to do what we would expect from others, is equally wrong in nature, though it may not be equally wrong in degree, as to do to them what we would not wish them to do to us.

### QUESTIONS.

1. Whom did Jesus address in ver. 27?
2. What is said of the morality taught in this verse?
3. What is the precept equivalent to?
4. What does it require and forbid?
5. What does the word "bless" mean?
6. How are we to act in relation to those who despitefully use us?
7. What is said of Christianity obliging us to bear injuries?
8. What is the coat here mentioned?
9. What is the cloak referred to?
10. How are the precepts in verses 29 and 30 to be taken?
11. Does our Lord forbid the repression of crime?
12. Is all war declared to be unlawful?
13. Is self-defence forbidden?
14. What do these precepts condemn?
15. What does the benevolence of the gospel require?
16. What does the rule in ver. 31 require?
17. What is the first limitation to be observed in interpreting this rule?
18. What the second?
19. What the third?
20. State the first point of excellence the rule has.
21. The second.
22. The third.
23. The fourth.
24. The fifth.
25. Does the rule hold negatively as well as positively?

## LESSON XLII.

vs. 32-38.

32. 'For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 46.

33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34. <sup>2</sup>And if ye lend *to them* of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 42.

In these verses our Lord beautifully shows that it is the duty of the Christian to be better than anybody else. "A Christian," says Cecil, "if he be a shoemaker, should be the best shoemaker in the town." The disciples of Christ are to exercise charity in giving, charity in forgiving, charity in lending. It is sometimes their duty (if they have ability) to lend such poor persons as they cannot expect will ever be in a capacity either to pay or requite them. Love for love is justice, love for no love is favor and kindness, but love and charity to all persons, even the undeserving and the ill-deserving, is a Christ-like temper. A man ought to tremble with fear, if, beside the external part of his religion, he finds nothing in his life but what may be found in a Turk or a heathen.

35. But <sup>3</sup>love ye your enemies, and do good, and <sup>4</sup>lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and <sup>5</sup>ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to* the evil.

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxxvii 26; ver. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. v. 45.

*Love ye your enemies.* This precept of our Lord cannot be understood, in its full force, without a reference to the low and narrow doctrines which were about this time inculcated by the Jewish teachers, and acted upon by the people. A limit was fixed, beyond which it was lawful to *hate* an offending brother, though he might be at first forgiven. Apostatizing or heretical Israelites it was lawful and meritorious to slay, openly, if opportunity served, and legally if expedient, but at all events to slay them, even if by subtilty and craft. As to the Gentiles, even those with whom they had no war or contention, there was no instruction to *plot* their death, but it was *not lawful* to deliver them from death. In the face of such facts, how noble does Christ's precept appear! See Notes on ver. 27. *Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great.* Confer acts of kindness, lend cheerfully, without fearing the loss of what shall be thus bestowed. It often happens that, even contrary to appearances, the loan is thankfully returned by the borrower, but should it not be, remember, (and let this silence all your doubts,) that God chargeth Himself with what you give from love to Him, and love to your neighbor. He is the poor man's surety. *And ye shall be the children of the Highest, rather, dear and acceptable to God, or, you*

*will be like unto God, for He is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil, bestows the gifts of common Providence on the worst of men, who are every day provoking Him, rebelling against Him, and using those very gifts to His dishonor.*

36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

• Matt. v. 48.

Be not satisfied with the low standard of publicans and other ordinary men, but make God your model. Follow not the example of unregenerated persons, but aim at an imitation of your Father. *Be*, literally, *become, merciful*; in Matt. v. 48, this is denoted by *perfect*. There is no difference in sense. Whoever has the grace of compassion and mercy, flowing from pure love to God and man, will be in possession of all the kindred graces, though destined to a higher development, which constitute the perfection of moral character. Let us not presume to call God our Father, if we do not labor to resemble Him, nor dare to claim the peculiar honor and privileges of Christ's disciples, if we do not distinguish ourselves from others by the charity of our tempers, and the usefulness of our lives, as well as by the articles of our faith, and the forms of our worship.

37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

• Matt. vii. 1.

The judging here forbidden is not self-judging, which is a great and necessary duty, or judging by civil magistrates in their spheres, or judging by ecclesiastical officers of applicants for admission to the communion, or that judgment which cannot but be formed of the state and character of men from their avowed principles and visible conduct, for Christ directs His disciples to judge by this rule. The judging referred to obviously respects personal actions and characters. We are not to be officious in our judgments, intermeddling with what we have no concern with; or rash, not deciding, even when called to judge, till we have carefully examined the subject; or presumptuous, pronouncing on things beyond our reach,—such as the views and motives of another, and acting as if our conjectures were infallible truths; or severe, but putting the best construction on doubtful actions; or partial, condemning in one what we approve, or at least pass by, in another, condemning in our neighbor what we overlook in ourselves; or hasty in pronouncing our judgment, because it is very difficult to obtain possession of all the materials that in any case are necessary to form a correct judgment, and to pronounce judgment without this, is to run the hazard, at least, of doing cruel injustice. *And ye shall not be judged.* It is not probable that these words refer to what a man may expect in the ordinary intercourse of life. Their *main* reference, at least, is to the judgment of God, and of eternity. Nor is their meaning, "if you are lenient, or severe, in your judgments of your fellow-men, God will be lenient, or severe, in His judgment concerning you;" but, "beware of wrong judgments, for all your judgments are to be reviewed, and by these judgments ye are to be yourselves then judged." *Condemn not, &c.*, expands and enforces the preceding command. It denotes a censorious, fault-finding spirit. *Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven*, not that a bare forgiving of others is all that God requires in order to our forgiveness, but it is one part of that obedience which we owe to God, without which it is in vain to expect forgiveness from Him.

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

q Prov. xix. 17.

r Ps. lxxxix. 12.

s Matt. vii. 2; Mark iv. 24; James ii. 13.

*Give* liberally to those that need your assistance, not out of mere human generosity, nor out of vanity, but for the sake of God, and it shall be given unto you, for your kindness and liberality will naturally gain you love and respect, and God also, by His grace, will influence men's hearts in your favor. Prov. xix. 17. *Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.* The figure is taken from a full measure of dry commodities, such as corn, fruits, &c. The whole appears to have been a proverbial expression among the Jews, to denote, metaphorically, abundant and exuberant liberality. There were, among the Jews, measures of various sorts, overflowing, abraded, heaped up, pressed, shaken, covered, &c. The representation here of a measure secured by pressing down such articles as lie light and loose in the vessel, shaking it up, and filling it to overflowing, brings into relief in a vivid manner, the riches of the Divine liberality. *Shall men give.* As the verb has no expressed nominative in the original, the Saviour does not say *whom* He uses for the impartation of such a recompense to His disciples, and hence it is not necessary to restrict the matter to the future life, and to understand it, as some do, of the angels, as almoners of God's bounty and love towards such as exercise the spirit here spoken of. *Into your bosom.* Almost all the ancient nations, and particularly those of the East, wore long, wide, and loose garments, and when about to carry any thing away that their hands could not contain, they used a fold in the bosom of their robe, nearly in the same way that women in this country use their aprons. The word "bosom" or "lap" frequently occurs in this sense in the best and purest Greek writers. *For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.* Amazing goodness! We ourselves are, as it were, permitted to tell God how much benignity He shall show us! Charities done in faith, in obedience to God, and with an eye to His glory, will produce a certain and plentiful increase. Liberality is the way to riches, giving is the best and surest way of thriving. A little charity from us, if we have but little, is looked upon by God as a great deal, but to do little when we have the ability to do much, is the greatest imprudence as well as impiety, for *as that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully.*

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is it the duty of the Christian to be?
2. What does Cecil say of a Christian?
3. What does our Lord show in vers. 32 and 33?
4. What are Christians to exercise?
5. How alone can the precept in ver. 35 be understood in its full force?
6. What were the doctrines the Jewish teachers inculcated?
7. What is meant by "do good, and lend," &c.?
8. What is meant by "be the children of the Highest?"
9. Are Christians to make God their model?
10. How is the word "merciful" given by Luke, denoted by Matthew?
11. Is there any difference of sense between the two Evangelists?
12. How are we to understand the precept?
13. What kind of judging is forbidden in ver. 37?
14. What does the spirit of this precept require?
15. What is the main reference of the words—"And ye shall not be judged?"

16. What is said of "condemn not," &c. ?
17. How are we to "give?"
18. What may we expect, if we give?
19. From what is the figure—"good measure, pressed down," &c, taken?
20. What is said of the phrase—"shall men give."
21. Explain the words—"into your bosom?"
22. What is said of the promise—"for with the same measure," &c. ?
23. What is said of this promise?
24. What is said of a little charity?

LESSON XLIII.

vs. 39-49.

39. And he spake a parable unto them, 'Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?

Matt. xv. 14.

This *parable*, or figurative saying, was spoken by our Lord to His disciples. It was introduced by Him as showing how they who are leaders, especially, should be examples of all that is good. It teaches us that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," that each individual of the human race has his foolish heart so darkened by sin as to be unable by any means to find his own way out of the labyrinth into which he has unhappily wandered. It is not a difficult thing generally to convince men that they need guidance regarding the things of God and eternity; yet, when thus convinced, they readily, alas, fall an easy prey to the first plausible guide that presents himself. *Both fall into the ditch.* Ignorant and unskilful instructors destroy themselves and others. "The candle of the wicked shall be put out." It is our duty to "beware of false prophets," Matt. vii. 15, to "prove all things," 1 Thess. v. 21, to "try the spirits whether they are of God," 1 John iv. 1. With the Bible in our hands, and the promise of the Holy Ghost to all who seek, we shall be without excuse if our souls are led astray.

40. "The disciple is not above his master: but every \*one that is perfect shall be as his master.

\* Matt. x. 24; John xiii. 16; xv. 20.

\* Or, shall be perfected as his master.

It cannot be expected that the scholar will excel his teacher, but the complete disciple will be as his teacher. If, therefore, men follow blind guides, in their religious inquiries, they must continue in ignorance, or be deluded into error, so that it is of the greatest importance for us to take care on what teachers we attend, lest our greatest diligence, and highest attainment, should leave us short of the saving knowledge of God and of ourselves. It must not be overlooked that an indirect intimation is here given to the Twelve to fashion themselves in all things after the character of their new Master.

41. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

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

<sup>y</sup> See Prov. xviii. 17.

*Mote* means a small bit of straw, or grass, or dry wood. *Beam* means a large piece of timber, such as is used for the rafter of a roof. A contrast is intended between little faults and great ones. The epithet *hypocrite* so frequently applied by our Lord to the Scribes and Pharisees does not always mean that they were always deceiving those about them by a profession which they *knew* to be hollow. The offer of the man to *pull out the mote* from his *brother's eye*, supposed him to have considered himself perfectly clear-sighted. The censorious are here condemned, and those, also, who, though never perhaps designated censorious, yet are lynx-eyed for all the blemishes and faults which disfigure their neighbors, and set themselves to the removal of what is wrong in others, without due consideration as to their own fitness for such duty. We are here taught the lesson of the true *relative* magnitude which our own faults, and those of our brother, ought to hold in our estimation. What is a "mote" to one looking on another, is to that other himself "a beam," just the reverse of the ordinary estimate. We are not to close our eyes to the defects of others, but first to be jealously anxious to obtain clear visions ourselves. *Cast out first*, &c. The reason of this requirement is obvious. Only the man who has learned to deal with his own heart unreservedly in the way of tracing out and bringing into the light of day all that would hide itself there, who has experimentally learned how deceitful as well as wicked that heart is, is prepared to deal wisely with others. Then only will he *see clearly to pull out the mote which is in his brother's eye*. Besides, the very process through which he has himself passed, will give a gentleness and tenderness to all that he may be called to do with others, which he never otherwise could have possessed.

43. \*For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. vii. 16, 17.

The word *for* indicates that this parabolic saying is connected with what immediately precedes. Here, as frequently elsewhere, the Saviour compares persons to trees. The law that like produces like, so immutable in the natural world, is applied to the law of moral likeness which exists between the state of the heart and the external acts of men. "Every teacher, who really knows and believes the truth himself, cannot but, in his teaching, declare that truth, and, in his character and conduct, exemplify its influence. On the other hand, a false teacher cannot but, in his teachings and conduct, exhibit what, to a careful observer, will be found a sufficient proof of his true character."

44. For \*every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they \*grapes.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xii. 33 \*Gr. a grape.

As men can always determine the nature of the tree, not by its appearance, leaves, or blossoms, but by its fruit, so the claims which religious teachers

have to our attention, faith, and obedience, can and are to be decided, not by their profession, but by their doctrine and their conduct. What is true of public teachers is equally so of private individuals. The habitual conduct of a truly pious man *must* be good, and the tendency of his example, conversation, and instructions, must be beneficial. But the habitual tenor of an unconverted man's actions must be evil, and the effect of his example and doctrine pernicious, however it may be disguised. The only satisfactory test of any man's religious character are his conduct and conversation.

45. <sup>b</sup>A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xii. 35.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xii. 34.

*A good man.* The Saviour regards no man as naturally good, in the Pelagian sense of the word, but speaks of the sinner who has become good through grace. Both the *good* and the *evil* man He sets forth as they commonly reveal themselves outwardly, without, however, denying that even the good has his weak and the evil man his better side. The heart of the one and of the other is, the magazine, or storehouse, out of which perpetually proceeds that therein was in no small measure hidden. *For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.* Out of the abundance of the thoughts and desires of the good man's heart he will bring forth whatever can conduce to the glory of God and the good of mankind; but wicked men have within them a treasury of pride, malice, impiety, and selfishness, from which they naturally educe evil things. A man's conversation is one indication of the state of his heart. It is not true, as some allege, that no one can know any thing of the state of another's heart, and that, although men are living wickedly, they have *good hearts*. If a man's conversation is carnal, worldly, irreligious, or profane, his heart is of a corresponding character.

46. ¶ <sup>d</sup>And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

<sup>d</sup> Mal. i. 6; Matt. vii. 21 and xxv. 11; Luke xiii. 26.

In Matt. vii. 21, it is: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord." To call a person lord is equivalent to acknowledging him as master. If there be any emphasis in the repetition of the word *Lord*, it is intended to express, not merely profession, but a decided, open, habitual profession. A profession of discipleship, an acknowledgment of our submission in mind and heart to Christ Jesus, is a solemn duty; but such profession, however necessary in connection with faith and obedience, is not enough for the purpose of salvation. *And do not the things which I say?* The meaning of Christ is: "Why are ye so inconsistent in your profession and practice, as to call me Lord, and yet persist in disobedience to my commands?" A few pious and devotional forms of speech are not enough for salvation, if our practice conform not to the Divine will. God judges of the heart, not by *words*, but by *works*. A good servant never disputes, speaks little, and always follows his work. Such a servant a real Christian is; such a faithful minister, always intent either on the work of his own salvation, or that of his neighbor. The inquiry in this verse constitutes the transition to the parable which follows.

47. <sup>e</sup>Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like:

<sup>e</sup> Matt. vii. 24.

48. He is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

The great purpose of this parable is, to show that we must "not be forgetful hearers but *doers* of the word," or, the folly of Christian profession unaccompanied by Christian practice, and the certain ruin to which such profession must lead if persisted in. The reason why Christ thus concluded His sermon, lies in the corruption of the human heart, which finds it easy to hear, but difficult to do. *Whosoever cometh to me, as a scholar.* These words are omitted in Matthew, but without impairing the sense. *And heareth my sayings,* by these we are to understand every thing contained in this sermon, yet this is equally true of all Christ's words, whether spoken by Himself personally, or made known through the medium of His inspired servants. To *hear* our Lord's sayings, is just to have them addressed to us, to have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with them. *And doeth them.* The man of whom this is true is the man who not only listens to Christ's sayings, and understands their meaning, but who, believing them, Rom. iii. 27, learns to think, feel, and act according to them, and who, through these sayings, understood and believed, repents, changes his mind, is "converted," is radically changed, is "born again," becomes "a new creature," being "transformed by this renewing of his mind." *He is like a man which built an house,* in Matt. vii. 24, called "a wise man." This man has wisely thought over the plan beforehand—seen the amount of expenditure it would require, and now he is *doing* his work. He is *building an house*—the image of desired felicity—that he may dwell in it quietly, comfortably, and securely, in the midst of tempestuous weather. By the building, we are to understand, 1. The character which He cultivates—the whole frame of his sentiments, affections, and active habits. He is moulded according to "the form of doctrine into which he has been delivered," Rom. vi. 17. 2. The hope he cherishes. He has a "hope of eternal life," a "good hope through grace," but that hope rests entirely on what Christ has said to him. *And digged deep.* He was not satisfied to begin his building "on the earth," just as he found it, or with lifting a spadeful here and there, but toiled and labored, and descended deeper and deeper through the soil. The lesson here taught is, that the study of piety should not be superficial, but a principle well founded and deeply rooted in the heart. *And laid the foundation on a rock.* This indicates the solidity of the work, and under it hearing and doing are to be understood. It is of essential importance to have a firm foundation. The man built, not on his own conjectures or reasonings, nor the conjectures or reasonings of other men, but on "the true and faithful sayings of God," in which Christ is represented as "the Lord, our strength and righteousness." It will be noticed that what our Lord contrasts, is not believing and doing, but hearing and doing; yet in the doing of Christ's sayings, believing them is of course necessarily implied. In this representation of the only foundation on which a character and conduct pleasing to God can be reared, we have a refutation of the opinion which some entertain, "that it matters but very little what doctrines we believe, if we have a good life." *And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it.* In Judea, as in other Oriental countries, the rains are periodical. When they descend, they often descend in torrents, and continue to do so, with unabated violence, for a number of days. In consequence of this, the most trifling mountain brook becomes a mighty river—a deluge rushes down with dreadful impetuosity from the high grounds to the plains, converting them into one wide waste of waters. The huts of the inhabitants, generally formed of clay hardened in the sun, are exposed to great danger, and, when

not founded on the solid rock, are often undermined and swept away by the resistless torrent. The Christian's edifice of faith and hope may be subjected to many trials, from Divine judgments expressed in various tribulations, persecutions from men, accusations of conscience, terrors of death and retribution, and false teachers, Eph. iv. 14, who seek to draw him away from Christ, and overwhelm him in sadness and despair, but they cannot succeed, Rom. viii. 33-39; John vi. 68, 69. Neither will the building be overthrown by the final trial at the general Judgment, which, we suppose, is here mainly intended by the *flood*. For it was founded upon a rock. In "the day of the Lord Jesus," the floods shall be let loose, "the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed," the tempest of Divine wrath against sin shall sweep resistlessly along, the streams of all-searching judgment shall beat vehemently on all that must be tested; but they shall not even *shake* a single stone in the building of the true believer, because it is founded on the Rock of Ages which can never be moved. There will then be found much wanting and much wrong, and that will be freely forgiven for Christ's sake, but the frame of character, of thought, feeling and action, formed by the faith of the truth, will meet with the unqualified approbation of God, and the hope founded on these sayings will prove to be a "hope that maketh not ashamed."

49. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Notice the points of similarity between these men. Each was a builder, and set to work. The object of both was the same,—shelter, pleasure, comfort. Both had time given them to build. Both had the choice of situation. Both took possession of their buildings. Both were tried. *Heareth, and doeth not*. The man heard what might have secured real, lasting work at his hands, if he had attended to it, but he did not. Many who hear Christ's words, make light of them; others listen to them with some degree of attention, and profess to inquire, but refuse to believe and obey them; others, still, profess to believe Christ's words, and declare their determination to obey them, but fail to do so. To this last class there is here a special reference. *Without a foundation built a house upon the earth*, in Matt. vii. 26, "upon the sand." Here is an image of deficient steadfastness. The man began on the surface, and perhaps prided himself on the skill with which he nicely adjusted his building to the ground just as it was. The building which he erected was not based upon Christ—the true and faithful sayings of the Saviour—though he heard them, he did not conform his mind to them—he did not believe them. His foundation consisted of false principles, and the edifice he built was just that character, that mode of thinking, feeling and acting which such false principles naturally produce. *Against which the stream beat vehemently, &c.* This "foolish" man's building was tested as well as that of the "wise" man, and though specious in appearance it proved baseless, and unable to endure the trial. "The fishermen of Bengal," says Mr. Ward, in his *View of the Hindoos*, "build their huts in the dry season on the bed of sand from which the river has retired. When the rains set in, which they often do very suddenly, accompanied with violent northwest winds, the water pours down in torrents from the mountains. In one night multitudes of these huts are frequently swept away, and the place where they stood is the next morning undiscoverable." *And immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great*,—the self-delusion vanishes, the man feels it is too late to correct his error, his past life is forever fled, his misery is boundless, the more so as he flatters himself with vain hopes. Character

and hopes must be subjected to the test of the Divine judgment. Then "that which was highly esteemed among men" will be found to be "abomination in the sight of God," Luke xvi. 15, and no character will stand but that which is formed in accordance with the sayings of Christ. May this beautiful and striking admonition which our Saviour gives us of the vanity of every profession which does not influence practice, be attended to with reverence and fear! We are *building for eternity*, may we never grudge the time and labor of a most serious inquiry into the great, fundamental principles of religion! May we discover the sure foundation, and raise upon it a structure which shall stand fair and glorious, when hypocrites are swept away into everlasting ruin! *Bunyan*, in his description of *Talkative* in *Pilgrim's Progress*, says: "The soul of religion is the practical part, James i. 27. This, Talkative is not aware of. He thinks that hearing and saying will make a good Christian, and thus he deceiveth his own soul. Hearing is but the sowing of the seed. Talking is not sufficient to prove that fruit is indeed in the heart and life. Let us assure ourselves, that at the day of doom men shall be judged according to their fruits. It will not then be said, Did you believe? but were you a doer or talker only? And accordingly they shall be judged. The end of the world is compared to our harvest, and you know that men at harvest regard nothing but fruit."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. When was this parable spoken by our Lord?
2. Why was it introduced?
3. What does it teach?
4. Do men fall an easy prey to plausible guides?
5. What is said of ignorant instructors?
6. What is our duty?
7. What is meant by verse 40?
8. What does "mote" mean?
9. What does "beam" mean?
10. What contrast is intended?
11. What is said of the epithet "hypocrite"?
12. What does the offer of the man to "pull out the mote," suppose him to have considered himself?
13. What is the lesson we are here taught?
14. What is the reason of the requirement—"cast out first," &c.?
15. What does the word "for" in verse 43 indicate?
16. Does the Saviour frequently compare persons to trees?
17. What is the ground of this comparison?
18. How are the claims of religious teachers and private Christians to be decided?
19. What is said about the phrase—"a good man"?
20. How does the Saviour set forth both the *good* and the *evil* man?
21. What is true of the hearts of both?
22. What is said of the phrase—"for of the abundance of the heart," &c.?
23. What is calling a person Lord equivalent to?
24. What are we to learn from the repetition of the word "Lord"?
25. Is a profession of discipleship a duty?
26. Is a mere profession sufficient for salvation?
27. What are we to understand by—"and do not the things," &c.?
28. How does God judge the heart?
29. What is the purpose of the parable in verses 47, 48?
30. Why did Christ thus conclude His Sermon on the Mount?
31. What is meant by "cometh unto me"?
32. What are the "sayings" referred to?
33. What do the words "and doeth them" signify?

34. To whom is such a man likened?
35. What is such a builder called by Matthew?
36. What are we to understand by the building?
37. What is said of "digged deep?"
38. What lesson is thus taught?
39. What do we learn from "laid the foundation on a rock?"
40. What is said of the rains in Judea?
41. What is said of the Christian's edifice of faith and hope?
42. State the points of similarity between these two builders.
43. Who is the man that "heareth and doeth not?"
44. Where did the second builder begin his edifice?
45. Of what did his foundation consist?
46. Was this man's building also tested?
47. With what result?
48. What is said of the fishermen of Bengal?
49. What is said of the ruin of the foolish builder's house?
50. What is said of character and hopes?
51. What does Bunyan say of "Talkative?"
52. What is said of hearing?

## CHAPTER VII.

### LESSON XLIV.

vs. 1-10.

JESUS proceeded continually from instruction to action, and from action to instruction. Words speak only to the understanding, works speak to the heart. This chapter opens with a memorable instance of His Divine power and compassion.

1. Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, <sup>a</sup>he entered into Capernaum.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. viii. 6.

*All his sayings.* His sermon in the hearing of the people of Capernaum, the centre of His operations, to which He frequently returned after His itinerant missions. Christ's doctrines assert their own intuitive truth, but it is the miracles of the preacher that attest that it is with a true Divine mission that He utters them.

2. And a certain centurion's servant, who was <sup>b</sup>dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Kings v. 1, &c.; Job xxxi. 16; Acts x. 7; Col. iv. 1.

A *centurion*, or captain in the army of Herod, who was at that time king of Galilee, but under subjection to the Romans. He was stationed with a hundred men under his command in the barracks at Capernaum. Herod, to support himself in his authority, and to enforce the payment of tribute, which he had to render to the emperor of Rome, had stationed large bodies of soldiers in various parts of the land. Like many other heathens of that

age, this centurion, unsatisfied with the old and worn-out popular religion in which he had been brought up, and his situation having brought him into such approximation to Judaism as enabled him to observe the great superiority of its moral and religious spirit, and the refreshing contrast which the simple purity of belief in one God offered, to the perplexing crowd of divinities which idolatry presented, he was led to believe in Jehovah, and to render to Him his worship. He was one of the proselytes, whom the providence of God had so wonderfully prepared in all the great cities of the Greek and Roman world as a link of communication between Gentile and Jew, in contact with both,—holding to the first by their race, and to the last by their religion, and who must have greatly helped to the ultimate fusion of both into one Christian church. *Servant*; the original word means literally *boy*, but still a *servant* is denoted, otherwise the statements, that he was very dear to the centurion, and was sick in his house, would have been superfluous. *Who was dear unto him*—literally, *whom he held in honor or esteem*, or highly valued. The centurion's feeling such a deep interest in the well-being of his servant, is a beautiful trait in his character, and highly creditable to him, especially when the temptations of military life are remembered. He did not act as many masters do when their servants are afflicted, have them, after profiting by their toil during the best period of their lives, immediately removed to a hospital, or sent home to friends or relatives, who probably either care nothing for them, or are unable to afford them any of the comforts of life. It is a great advantage to be connected with godly families. True religion binds the hearts of masters and servants together, and makes them brethren, beloved in the Lord,—both, in the sight of God, stand upon the same platform, and must be tried at the same tribunal. *Was sick, and ready to die*, of a paralysis. Matt. viii. 6. This is not contradicted by the fact that he is said to have been "grievously tormented," for paralysis or palsy, with the contraction of the joints, is accompanied with severe pain. United with tetanus, as it sometimes is in Eastern countries, extreme suffering and rapid dissolution are often the result.

3. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

c John iv. 47.

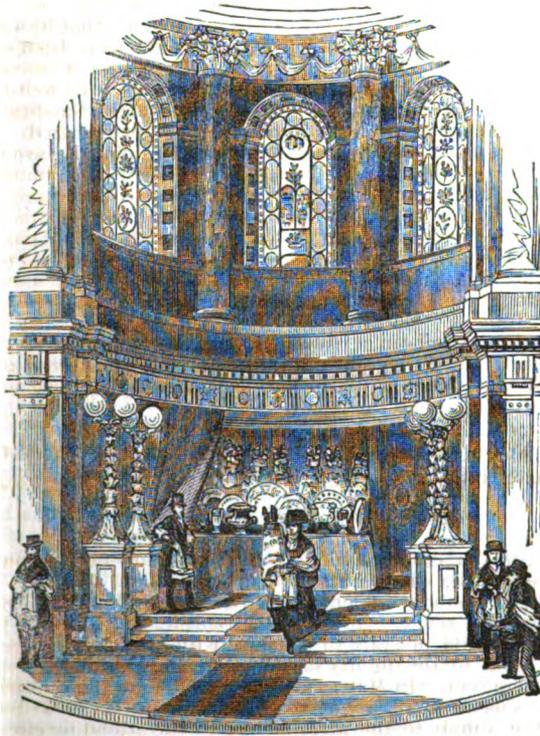
The report of Christ's miraculous powers was now in the mouth of men, and had reached the ear of this Roman centurion. *He sent unto him the elders of the Jews*, doubtless elders of the synagogue which the centurion had built for the Jews, ver. 5. As he was a Gentile, and Christ a prophet; he thought Christ would not care to converse with him, hence he sent persons in authority, that by the dignity of the messengers he might honor Him to whom they were sent. In Matt. viii. 5, it is said that the centurion himself came, but it is usual in all languages, when the speaker or writer wishes to direct attention simply to the act, and not to the attending circumstances, to ascribe to a person himself the things which are done, and the words which are spoken, by his order. It is a legal maxim that *he who does by another does by himself*. *Beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant*. *Beseeching*, here, is a participle, agreeing with the centurion, so that even according to Luke's language, the words were those of the centurion. The request was earnestly urged, and this furnishes another evidence of the master's regard for the servant.

4. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:

5. For *he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.*

*1 Kings v 1; Gal. v. 6; 1 John iii. 14.*

*Instantly, that is, with much earnestness. Saying, that he was worthy, &c.* We see here the force of real goodness to conquer the most inveterate prejudices, the elders of the Jews at Capernaum petitioners for a Gentile, for a Roman centurion: so may we disarm the violence of a party spirit, and conciliate the friendship of those who otherwise might have their eyes upon us for evil. The erection of a house of worship for the Jews by the centurion



JEWISH SYNAGOGUE.

had won the regard of these messengers. *For he loveth our nation, &c.* Here was an instance of marked generosity. Many a man is indifferent to the wants of others. He is in the midst of those who have no great claim upon him. He is too glad of the excuse or apology for steering clear of what would touch his means, invade his time, or burden him with new cares and responsibilities. Not so the centurion. Those acquainted with the Roman history know well with what cruelty, rapacity, and oppression, the governors and commanding officers in the conquered provinces too commonly behaved towards the people whom they were sent to keep in awe. So far were they from building them temples or synagogues, that they frequently invaded

those sacred retreats, and laid their sacrilegious hands on every thing that was valuable in them. In the midst of this brutality and insolence of power, this gallant soldier stood up to patronize and assist a distressed and an injured people, and it is a glorious testimony to his memory, that, after consecrating his own soul as a living temple of faith, love, and grateful obedience, he upreared a sanctuary, wherein his poorer fellow-citizens might serve the God of their fathers. There cannot be a stronger indication, both of love to mankind, and love towards God, than erecting places of worship where they are wanted. Without buildings to assemble in, there can be no public worship. Without public worship there can be no religion, and what kind of creatures do men become without religion! into what excesses of barbarity, ferocity, impiety, and every species of profligacy do they quickly plunge! It sometimes occurs, though not frequently, even in a Christian land, that a wealthy Christian man, with a liberality equal to that of this pagan convert, munificently builds a Christian church.

6. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: \*for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof;

\* Prov. xxix. 23.

7. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but 'say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

† Ps. cvii. 20.

8. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto \*one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant; Do this, and he doeth it.

\* Or, *this man*.

Far from being puffed up with a conceit of his own merit, in having built a synagogue, the centurion thought himself unworthy to come to the Saviour, or to receive Him beneath his roof; he even counted it a presumption to have asked, through the intervention of others, the presence in his house of so exalted and holy a personage. Humility, in the gospel sense of the word, is a virtue with which the ancients, and more particularly the Romans, were totally unacquainted. They had not even a word in their language to describe it by, their only word that seemed to express it signifying baseness, servility, and meanness of spirit. When, therefore, we see this centurion differing so widely from his countrymen in this respect, we may certainly conclude that his notions of morality were of a much higher standard than theirs. The best men have always the lowest thoughts of themselves; when we esteem ourselves unworthy of any favors, Christ accounts us worthy of all. Humility is that virtue which, more than any other, disposes the mind to yield to the evidences, and embrace the doctrines of the Bible, which the gospel was peculiarly meant to produce, on which it lays the greatest stress, and in which, perhaps, more than in any other, consist the true essence and vital principle of the Christian temper. While God "resisteth the proud," He "giveth grace to the humble." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "Learn of me," says Jesus, "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." *But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.* He had faith in Christ's Divine power, he believed that He was able, at a distance, and by a single word, to command this disease from his servant; that it required neither machinery, nor effort, but the briefest, slightest forth-putting of His will. He thought that Christ's power was equal to that of God, who said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

*For I also am a man set under authority, &c.* His profession as a soldier served him with arguments as a Christian. He argued from the less to the greater. "I am a subaltern, an under-officer, have such power that I can say to this soldier, 'Take up that position,' and to that soldier, 'Be sentinel there,' and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he doeth it—much more, surely, Thou, who art the Commander of all the armies of the skies, and the Ruler of all the inhabitants of the earth, hast but to speak the word, and my servant then will be instantly healed." One's profession may often be made serviceable to one's Christianity, and lessons may be gathered from domestic, private, and professional life, which will cast new lustre on the truths, and inspire with new force the precepts of the gospel. Humility is the concomitant grace of faith. As a tree sends its branches upwards in proportion as it strikes its roots downwards, so in proportion as a man is deep in humility, he is "strong in faith, giving glory to God." Faith deals with the distant, the unseen, the intangible. To the eye of sense we are now separated from the Saviour, but we can reach Him by faith and prayer—messengers which He has never yet sent empty away. What peace we should enjoy if in all our difficulties we felt that Jesus was able to deliver us! Whatever anxiety presses on our hearts, let us bring it all to Him, spread it before Him, and trust Him to do what will be best for us.

9. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

*Marvelled, wondered.* It is remarkable that of the only two occasions on which it is recorded that Christ wondered, one was at "faith," and the other at "unbelief," Mark vi. 6. What can be more wonderful than to see Christ wonder? The expression, *he marvelled*, is one of those which show the reality of our Lord's human nature. He was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. As man he grew in wisdom and stature, hungered, thirsted, was weary, ate, drank, slept, wept, sorrowed, rejoiced, groaned, agonized, bled, suffered, died, and so also as man He wondered. Yet all this time He was very and eternal God, one with the Father, and the Saviour of the world. This is a great mystery, and one which we cannot fathom. The union of two natures in one person is a thing passing our weak comprehension. We must believe, admire and adore, without attempting to define or explain. *I say unto you I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.* This was doubtless addressed to those who had followed Christ to the centurion's house, some from curiosity, and others to receive a confirmation of their faith. It is worthy of remark, that our Lord unites with the elders in praising the centurion, but for qualities wholly unnoticed by them, viz., his faith and humility. The faith of the centurion was great because he had to ascend from paganism to attain it; great because not purely physical, but spiritual, realizing his own unworthiness and the superiority of Jesus as the Holy One; great, because it realized the Divine mission of Christ from Jehovah, and expressed a sense of profound submission to His absolute word. It was a faith enabling him to accept all that Jesus should teach, and prompting him to aim at obedience to all that He should command. The unbelief of the entire chosen people of God was rebuked by the faith of this *stranger to the commonwealth of Israel.*

10. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

*Whole, restored to perfect health and vigor; there was not merely a remission of the strength of the disease, but it had altogether left him.*

This the word used in the original seems to import, nor did it suit the honor and goodness of Christ to leave the *cure incomplete*. This cure was the effect of the faith, prayer and humility of the centurion, through which the almighty energy of Christ was conveyed to the sick man. But these very graces in the centurion were the products of grace. It is God Himself who, by the gift of His mercy, disposes the soul to receive its cure, and nothing can contribute to the reception of His grace but what is the fruit of grace itself.

On this history, note, 1. Our Lord's miracles had the fullest credit given to them, by men of rank and character, who were perfectly competent to ascertain the truth of any facts presented to their observation, and not likely to be imposed upon by false pretences. 2. The profession of a soldier is not an unlawful one. It is never condemned in the Scriptures. On the contrary, it is placed by the sacred writers in a favorable and honorable light. Matt. xxvii. 54; Acts x. 2; xxvii. 43. 3. There is no situation in life that exempts us from the obligation to be Christians. Those who are not Christians because of their circumstances, will find the difficulty in their hearts, rather than in their circumstances. 4. We are to admire more the least measure of grace in a good man, than all the grandeur and glory of a great man. 5. Christ is most pleased with us when we put the most confidence in Him. We are not guilty of presumption on the one hand, or of rash and daring intrusion on the other, when we lay much upon the shoulder of Jesus to bear and endure for us. The more we trust Him, the more He feels He is honored by that trust.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of Capernaum?
2. What is the relation between Christ's sermon and His miracles?
3. What was the centurion named?
4. What is said of Herod?
5. What is said of this centurion?
6. What is meant by "servant"?
7. What is said of the centurion's interest in the well-being of his servant?
8. What is the effect of true religion on masters and servants?
9. What was the servant's disease?
10. What is said of paralysis when united with tetanus?
11. What did the centurion do?
12. Who were these elders?
13. Why did he send persons in authority?
14. To whom do the words "beseeching him" apply?
15. Do these words show the master's regard for the servant?
16. What is meant by "instantly"?
17. What does the language of these elders in ver. 4 show?
18. What instance of the centurion's generosity did they mention?
19. Why was the building of the synagogue an instance of marked generosity?
20. What is said of churches and worship?
21. Was the centurion proud of his generosity?
22. Had the Romans a word to describe humility?
23. What is said of the centurion's notions of morality?
24. What is said of humility?
25. What proof is there that the centurion had faith in Christ's Divine power?
26. What is said of his profession as a soldier?
27. What was the argument he used?
28. What are we taught by the use of this argument?

29. Can we still reach the Saviour by prayer and faith?
30. What is said of the fact that Jesus " marvelled?"
31. What does this fact show?
32. What is said of the union of the Divine and human natures in Christ?
33. What did Jesus say of the centurion's faith?
34. To whom did he say it?
35. Why was the centurion's faith great?
36. How did the elders, when they returned, find the servant?
37. What is meant by " whole?"
38. What was this cure the effect of?
39. Of what were the graces of the centurion the product?
40. Were our Lord's miracles credited by men of rank and character?
41. Is the profession of a soldier an unlawful one?
42. Is there any situation in life that exempts us from being Christians?
43. What is said of the least measure of grace in a good man?
44. When is Christ most pleased with us?
45. Is He the more honored by us, the more we trust Him?

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### LESSON XLV.

vs. 11-17.

11. ¶ And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain: and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

*The day after, the day succeeding the healing of the centurion's servant. Nain, which is now only a little hamlet, inhabited by a few families, was then a small town in the tribe of Issachar, hard by the source of the brook Kishon, not far from Endor. The name signifies the "Lovely," perhaps on account of the pleasant situation in the plain of Esdraelon. It does not appear that our Lord ever went to Nain, except on this occasion. Many of his disciples. Among these, doubtless, were the Twelve appointed to be Apostles, for it cannot be supposed that He would suffer the chosen witnesses of His miracles to be absent, when so great a miracle was to be performed as the raising a person from the dead, and to be performed so publicly, in the presence of all who were attending the funeral. Luke is the only Evangelist who records this miracle. Much people, consisting doubtless in part, at least, of hearers of the Sermon on the Mount.*

12. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

*Gate of the city. Most towns and villages were walled, for the sake of protection. Behold, there was a dead man carried out. The place of burial was outside the city, according to the universal custom of the East, both in ancient and modern times. Yet, though for this reason our Lord's meeting the funeral at the gate was a natural circumstance, and apparently accidental, still it is to be regarded as one of the wonder-works of God's grace, one of those marvellous coincidences which, though seemingly casual, are*

yet deep laid in the councils of His wisdom and of His love. *The only son of his mother.* The object of her fondest affections, and perhaps the support of her declining years. There is no one loss referred to in Scripture, which is spoken of as so deep, severe, and painful, as the loss of an only son. "Make thee mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentations." Jer. vi. 26. "They shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son." Zech. xii. 10. That the gracious Redeemer appreciated the bitterness of such grief is evident from the fact that of the three memorable instances, in which He exerted His power over death and the grave, and released their captives, one was the case of an only brother, another an only daughter, and this an only son. *And she was a widow.* This adds a still darker shade to the desolation of the scene. She had no one to help her to bear her loss, she had already followed her husband to the grave. Perhaps she had often thought that her son would supply the loss of his father, and at length he had arrived at an age to be her prop and comfort, but now he was dead, and with him had died her fondest wishes and dearest hopes, the name of the family would now perish out of Israel. A Jewish wife felt it a calamity not to have a son, but it was the most terrible calamity when the only son, the stay and the hope of the home, was removed by the hand of death. Well might this mother say, in the bitterness of her soul, Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow? *And much people of the city was with her.* We know such customs of the Jews as tend to illustrate this. An infant, less than a month old, was carried out in the bosom of a woman, and buried by her and two men. An infant above a month, but less than three years old, was carried out in a little coffin, not borne on men's shoulders, but in their arms. A person dying above that age, was borne out on a bed or bier, without any coffin. On this occasion doubtless the large attendance was an expression of the respect and sympathy felt for the bereaved and deeply distressed mother. We should show sympathy with those around us in their losses and calamities.

13. And when the Lord saw her, <sup>s</sup>he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

<sup>s</sup> Heb. ii. 17 and iv. 16.

Jesus, whose tenderness made Him susceptible of the strongest impressions from occurrences of this kind, was greatly moved with pity at the sorrowful scene. There was no solicitor for His gracious interposition. The centurion came to Him for a servant, the ruler for a son, Jairus for a daughter, the neighbors for a paralytic, but here He seeks the patient, and offers the cure unrequested. While we have to do with the Father of mercies, our afflictions are the most powerful suitors. *Weep not.* As with Jairus, his fear, so with this widow, her grief is first allayed, before the Lord displayed His miraculous power. What tenderness He showed in His manner of performing the miracle! He undertook the work of our redemption and salvation *in his love and in his pity.* Is. lxiii. 9. We should but mock the afflicted, if we were to say, "Weep not." We can only weep *with* those that weep. But Jesus could remove the cause of grief; hence the words "weep not" which would have been inappropriate in others, were perfectly becoming in Him. Though Himself a man of sorrows, He tasted the pure joy of comforting mourners. Though others may despise our grief, He does not. We are not to understand that Jesus intended here to condemn proper sensibility in our trials and sorrows. He shed tears Himself. We are not to forbid weeping on the part of those who are afflicted, but to "weep with them that weep," showing them that we have a fellow-feeling. Yet there is no reason for inordinate and excessive grief for those *that sleep in Jesus.* As they will rise

again, rise in glory, we must not *sorrow as those that have no hope.* 1 Thess. iv. 13.

14. And he came and touched the bier:\* and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, <sup>b</sup>Arise.

\* Or, coffin.

<sup>b</sup> Ch. viii. 54; John xi. 43; Acts ix. 40; Rom. iv. 17.

The people of the East bury their adult dead without coffins, but they carry them to the grave on a bier that is shaped like one. On this the corpse is laid, wrapped in folds of linen, and the bier is borne on the shoulders of four, sometimes six persons. Jesus *touched the bier*, as if to arrest it, and the bearers, obedient to that intimation, though they knew not why, *stood still*. Then came the majestic command—*Young man, I say unto thee, Arise*. Strange, mysterious address to the body lying cold, stiff, and silent, in the rigors of death! *I say unto thee*—I, that am the Resurrection and the Life, quickening the dead, and calling those things which be not, as though they were.”

15. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak: and he delivered him to his mother.

No sooner had Christ uttered the command, than it was obeyed. The utterance to the body was heard by the departed soul, and it returned to its tenement of clay. *Sat up*. The young man, without any human help, rose upon the bier, *and began to speak*, thus showing that he was really alive. What were his first words? We are not informed. Did he inquire who had restored him to life? He soon must have known; for He who had snatched him from the grasp of death, *delivered him to his mother*. This sweet office Jesus would perform Himself. O, what a solace it must have been to His loving heart to behold the joyful meeting of the parent and the child! He did not oblige this youth, to whom He had given a new life, to follow Him, as His disciple to minister to Him, much less, as a trophy of His dominion over death, to get honor by him, but presented him to his mother, to attend her, as a dutiful son, thus indicating that it was mainly in compassion of her affliction He had wrought the life-giving miracle.

16. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

<sup>i</sup> Luke i. 65.

<sup>j</sup> Luke xxiv. 19; John iv. 19, and vi. 14, and ix. 17.

<sup>k</sup> Luke i. 68.

17. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

The effect of the miracle upon the multitude was marked. *There came a fear on all*. A religious awe and reverence pervaded them. They felt that they were standing in the presence of some great one; *and they glorified God*, praised Him for His mercy in remembering and visiting His people Israel. Who knows how many true Christian converts remained faithful in this sweet Nain, and who knows what numbers now sleep in the many tombs that, at the present day, are found near to it, who in eternity shall rejoice over the mighty work of that day? *Saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us*. They concluded that no ordinary prophet was among them, but a “*great*” one, since none but the very greatest prophets of the olden times, an Elijah or an Elisha, had brought the dead to life. In their other exclamation, *God*

*hath visited His people*, lay no less an allusion to the long periods during which they had been without a prophet, so that it might have seemed, and many might have almost feared, that the last of these had arrived. *And this rumour of him went forth*. Wherever this miracle was reported, which was not only in Judea, but in all the neighboring regions, it produced the same opinion in those who heard of it, namely, that God had visited His people in an extraordinary way, and had raised up among them a very eminent prophet, which greatly heightened and increased the mighty expectations from Him, which long before they had begun to entertain.

From this narrative we may learn the following lessons: 1. The young may die. Their bloom and beauty do not shield them from the destroyer. 2. The tender compassion of the Saviour. He sympathizes with us in our sorrows. To Him we should go for succor and comfort in every time of trouble. 3. There comes a day, of which this was a foreshadow, when, for His people, "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Rev. xxi. 4. 4. The miracles of Christ were so peculiar as to attest His Divinity. How many times He may have raised the dead, we know not; we have record of but three cases; and these three cases form a striking contrast. The daughter of Jairus was raised from her *bed*, the son of this widow from his *bier*, and Lazarus from his *tomb*. Nor was this a *contrived* climax, but appears spontaneously, from a comparison of three Evangelists, and, thus appearing, it is deeply significant. 5. The soul separated from the body plainly lives independent of that body. 6. The fact that this young man began to speak, and yet nothing is said as to what the conversation was—this fact, as well as the sequel of the resurrection of Lazarus, and that of Jairus' daughter, are indirect evidences of the inspiration of the gospel. If these incidents were mere figments of the fancy, their authors would have given whole pages of the conversation of these persons on their return to this world; and this would have been done with greater boldness, because they knew that no wing could follow them to see the districts they described, or confront them with refutation. 7. This miracle is a pledge of the resurrection. It is as easy to raise a million of the dead as it is to raise one. 8. Jesus will deliver to us again our loved and lost ones who have died sprinkled with His atoning blood, and we shall recognize them, and dwell with them forever, where no grave is opened, and no tear is shed. 9. Christ has power to quicken dead souls. Eph. ii. 1. Let us never despair of any soul. Let us pray for our children, and faint not. Our young men and our young women may long seem travelling on the way to ruin. But let us pray on. Who can tell but that He, who met the funeral at the gate of Nain, may yet meet our unconverted children, and say, with almighty power, "Young man, arise!" With Jesus, nothing is impossible.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by the "day after?"
2. What is said of Nain?
3. Who accompanied Jesus to Nain?
4. Of whom did the "much people" in part consist?
5. Why were most towns and cities walled?
6. Where was the place of burial?
7. What is said of our Lord's meeting the funeral at the gate?
8. What is said of this widow's son?
9. What is said in Scripture of the loss of an only son?
10. What is said of the three instances in which Christ raised the dead?
11. What is said of this woman as being a widow?
12. What is said of a Jewish wife?
13. What is said of burials among the Jews?

14. What did the large attendance on this occasion show?
15. What is said of our Lord when He saw this woman?
16. Was He solicited to extend sympathy and restoring power?
17. What did Jesus say?
18. What is said of the words "weep not?"
19. Did Jesus intend to condemn proper sensibility in trials?
20. How do the people of the East bury their dead?
21. What did the bearers of the bier do when Jesus touched it?
22. What did our Lord then say?
23. What is said of Christ's command?
24. What resulted from this command?
25. What did the young man do?
26. How did he show he was really alive?
27. Are we told what were his first words?
28. Why must he soon have known who snatched him from death?
29. What is said of Christ's delivering him to his mother?
30. What was the effect of this miracle on the multitude?
31. What did the people say?
32. What did they mean by "God hath visited His people?"
33. Did this miracle produce the same opinion wherever it was repeated?
34. What is the first lesson we learn from this miracle?
35. What is the second?
36. What is the third?
37. What is the fourth?
38. What is the fifth?
39. What is the sixth?
40. What is the seventh?
41. What is the eighth?
42. What is the ninth?

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LESSON XLVI.

vs. 18-30.

18. <sup>1</sup>And the disciples of John showed him of all these things.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 2.

John was now in prison, Matt. xi. 2, where he had been confined for rebuking the adulterous intercourse of Herod with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. The prison, as we learn from Josephus, was the fortress of Machærus, on the border of Perea and the desert. It is very likely that John's disciples attended the ministry of our Lord at particular times. Though bigotry existed in its most formidable shape between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, yet we do not find that it had any place between Jews and Jews, though they were of different sects, and attached to different teachers. At this time, *the disciples of John*, who seem to have had free access to him, *showed him of all these things*, i. e., of Christ's teaching; His election of the twelve Apostles to preach the gospel, and His miracles, particularly His raising from the dead Jairus' daughter, and the widow of Nain's son.

19. ¶ And John, calling *unto him* two of his disciples, sent *them* to Jesus, saying, Art thou <sup>m</sup>he that should come? or look we for another?

<sup>m</sup> Gen. xlix. 10; Num. xxiv. 17; Dan. ix. 24; Zech. ix. 9.

20. When the men were come unto him, they said, John the Baptist has sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

*He that should come*, more literally, *the coming one*—the promised Messiah, or *look we for another*—under that character? They did well to come to their teacher to express their doubts. It is always well to confide such thoughts to those who are able to help us, for by hiding them in our own bosoms, we may often occasion ourselves much uneasiness, and expose ourselves to great danger. Considering what clear evidence John had received by a miraculous sign from Heaven that Jesus was the Messiah, John i. 33, and what express and repeated testimonies he himself had borne to this truth, it cannot reasonably be supposed that he now doubted of it. The utmost that we can suppose concerning him is, that, whilst not doubting the Saviour's person, he could not fully understand His mode of action. He was somewhat impatient. Matters moved too slowly for him, especially as he himself, as a prisoner, was now condemned to involuntary inactivity. He was anxious for some speedy and public declaration of the Lord in respect to His Messianic dignity—a declaration corresponding with the expectation which doubtless he had formed to himself of the Lord of the threshing-floor with His fan in His hands, Matt. iii. 11, 12. But John's disciples were unwilling to acknowledge Christ to be the Messiah who about that time was generally expected, because they had such a zeal for the honor of John, their master, that they were not willing to own any one greater than him. Probably also they were prejudiced against the Lord on account of His manner of life, which was very unlike that of John, for Jesus freely mixed with sinners, and was entertained by them, while John had always led a solitary life, and had lived upon the coarsest fare. John, therefore, to whom a delegation had been sent, to know from him whether he was the Christ, now sends two of his disciples to Jesus, that they might obtain further satisfaction as to His Messiahship, and have their faith confirmed in Him from whom they had otherwise fled, out of a preposterous emulation.

21 And in that same hour he cured many of *their* infirmities, and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many *that were* blind he gave sight.

What a view is here given of the number and variety of our Lord's miracles! By *plagues*, we are not to understand, as some do, palsies and leprosy, but more violent and active diseases. It will be noticed that Luke, the physician, distinguishes the demoniacs from naturally sick persons. *He gave sight* might be rendered, "he made a present of seeing," or, "he graciously gave sight." The words denote how highly gratifying the gift of sight was to those who had been blind, as well as the kind manner in which our Lord bestowed it. In all Christ's miracles, not only the *cure*, but the *manner* in which he performed it, endeared Him to those who were objects of His compassionate regard.

22. Then Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

• Matt. xi. 4.

• Is. xxxv. 5, and xlii. 7.

• Luke iv. 18.

It would seem, from the preceding verse, that the disciples of John found the Saviour in the midst of His miraculous activity. This explains why He gave to them just the answer that He did—taken from His employment at the time. He makes no formal declaration that he is the Messiah. He simply supplies the messengers with facts, for themselves and to repeat to their master, pointing to these as tokens of His Messianic dignity. Is. xxxv. 5, 6; lxi. 1. Thus, if John desired greater publicity, it was shown that it was already sufficiently attained; it was also shown that Christ was not yet minded to speak otherwise than through these miracles—miracles being the highest attestation, and the greatest external evidence and confirmation that can be given to the truth and divinity of any doctrine. *Go your way, and tell John*, the answer is addressed to John, from whom the question came, and therefore can determine nothing as to its true motive: *what things ye have seen and heard*, of which a specification is made in the remainder of the verse, not exhaustive but illustrative by means of a few signal instances. Christ would have men judge of Him and of others only by their works. This is the only safe way of judging. A man is not to be credited because he professes to know such and such things, but because he demonstrates by his conduct that his pretensions are not vain. *How that the blind see*. Our Lord here refers to Isaiah xxix. 18, and other passages where these works are made the proofs of the Messiah. *The lame walk*, literally *walk about*, showing their cure to be real: *the lepers are cleansed*, delivered from their disease and defilement: *the deaf hear*, their ears are unstopped; *the dead are raised*, perhaps the raising of the dead may have been among the miracles the messengers actually witnessed, or the reference may be to the resuscitation of the widow's son at Nain. *To the poor the gospel is preached*: this was a sign of Messiah's times, Is. xxix. 19. Contempt for the poor seems to have been very common in the times of the gospel. John vii. 49; ix. 34; and James ii. 24. Concern and tender interest about the poor was a distinguishing feature of our Lord's ministry, and that of His Apostles. *Then*, as ever since, the poor of the world have been more disposed, than other men, to hear and embrace the gospel. It will be noticed that the miracles here enumerated were not only the most convincing proofs of the supreme power of Christ, but were also emblematic of the work of salvation which He effects in the souls of men. Sinners are *blind*, their understanding is so darkened by sin, that they *see not* the way of truth and salvation. They are *lame*, not able to walk in the path of righteousness. They are *leprous*, their souls are defiled with sin, the most loathsome and inveterate disease, *deepening* in themselves, and infecting others. They are *deaf*, to the voice of God, His word, and their own conscience. They are *dead*, in trespasses and sins, God, who is the life of the soul, being separated from it by iniquity. As Christ would be known by His works and doctrines, so must true churches of Christ and true ministers of Christ. When the dead in sin are not quickened, and the blind are not restored to sight, and the poor have no glad tidings proclaimed to them, we may generally suspect that Christ's presence is wanting.

23. And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Jesus added this to correct the absurd emulation of John's disciples, who envied the honor of the Saviour, as eclipsing that of John, but lest any should suppose that He meant to censure John himself, He subjoined, ver. 28, a commendation of his office, which he placed in the middle between the prophets and His own coming. *Blessed*, truly fortunate or happy, with particular reference to the Divine favor. *Whosoever*, a contingent expression, not necessarily implying that any one had actually been, but simply that some one might thereafter be *offended*, or be *stumbled*, made to fall, *i. e.*, betrayed into sin and error. The warning thus given is just as needful now as when

it was delivered. Many are offended in Christ : some at the asserted divinity of His person, and the meritoriousness of His satisfaction ; some at the mysteriousness of His doctrine ; others at the sanctity and strictness of His laws ; some at the free dispensation of His grace, others that the terms of Christianity are too hard, humbling to proud and earthly hearts, and laying too great a restraint upon human nature ; others that the world does not believe in Him, that there are so many hypocrites and inconsistent professors of religion, and that His real followers are generally poor and unlearned. But those who believe in Him, notwithstanding all these hindrances, shall be in a happy condition here, and, at the judgment-day and beyond, learn the deep meaning of our Lord's words in this verse.

24. ¶ And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

¶ Matt. xi. 7.

As soon as the delegation John had sent to Jesus started back to their master, the Saviour proceeded to address the people, and this, mainly to remove the unfavorable impression which the question of the Baptist, ver. 19, had, perhaps, made upon the multitude, but also to anticipate further difficulties conceived as to His own person and works, as well as to show the people what benefit they *ought* to have received from John's ministry. *Unto the people.* Not before John's disciples, but before the multitude, Christ commended John, for as John's disciples had too high, so the multitude had too low an opinion of him, possibly because of his imprisonment and sufferings. Reminding the people of their visit to the wilderness of Judea, bordering on the Jordan, where John preached and baptized, He assured them they had gone there not to see a common sight, but an extraordinary one. This He did by a form of expression not uncommon in the Bible, by which a question is equivalent to a strong and positive affirmation. John, whom they had gone out to hear preach, was not a *reed shaken with the wind*, not as easily shaken as they, by every gust of rumor or prejudice, or every change of outward circumstances. He was not a man of an unstable and unsettled judgment, but fixed and steadfast. Convinced of the truth, he continued to believe and assert it. *Steadiness* is essentially necessary to every preacher, and to every private Christian.

25. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

It was unreasonable to expect to see in the desert a man clothed delicately and faring sumptuously, for such persons were rather found in kings' palaces, whereas John was a plain man, clothed in a camel's-hair garment, with a leathern girdle, and living on plain, coarse fare, and there was nothing to please the eye in his appearance. Here John is commended for his gravity and sobriety—his mortification to the glory, honor, ease, and pleasures of the world. The spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom is thus intimated. As Christ's forerunner did not resemble any of the officers who attend the courts of earthly princes, consequently Christ Himself was in no respect to be like an earthly prince. A minister of the gospel should have nothing about him which savors of effeminacy and worldly pomp.

26. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

Our Lord, with a fine climax in His questions, from a *reed* to a *man*, (intending by this that John was no weakling,) and then to a *prophet*, gave the people to understand that John, instead of having lost in any respect his claim to the name of a *prophet*, was even exalted above ordinary prophets. He was *much more than a prophet*, because he pointed out Christ more clearly and fully than any of the prophets before him. The ancient prophets beheld Christ afar off, but John saw Him face to face. *They* prophesied of Him, *he* pointed at Him, prepared His way, foretold that His kingdom was at hand, and had the honor of baptizing Him. He excelled in every thing peculiar to a prophet.

27. This is *he*, of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."

† Mal. iii. 1.

*This is he*, the clearer any ministry is in discovering Christ, the more excellent it is: *of whom it is written*. In the verse referred to, Mal. iii. 1, *Jehovah*, speaking of the coming of Christ, says "my face," and "before me." but it is here quoted as the language of the Father to the Son, and He therefore says, "before thy face," and "thy way before thee." so that, to prepare the way of Christ was "to prepare the way of the Lord Jehovah," for "He and the Father are one."

28. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

*Among those that are born of women*, that is, among the whole race of mankind in all former ages, *there is not a greater prophet*, &c. John was greater than any of the ancient prophets, on account of his wonderful conception and birth, his intimate knowledge of gospel mysteries, (see especially John iii. 27, &c.,) his express testimony to the Messiah, and his remarkable success in making way for Him. John was also himself the subject of ancient prophecies, and long expected by the Church. The world thinks that kings, generals and statesmen are the greatest of men. But God measures differently. The Divine head of Christ is the loftiest of all men's heads, and His nearest servant's is next. It was when John was in prison, that Jesus thus commended him. How precious is the thought, to faithful ministers, that though the world may slight and despise them, Jesus will maintain their honor, support their cause, and prove to them an unchanging Friend! How comforting is it also to all true Christians who are suspected, slandered and falsely accused, to know that Jesus will never desert any of His people! *But he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he*. Jesus here speaks of His disciples, not only so far as they appear as Apostles or Evangelists, but without any distinction. The humblest gospel minister who preaches Christ *as come*, is to be preferred before all the old prophets who prophesied of Christ *as to come*. That minister who sets forth the life and death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, is greater in the kingdom of God—that is, has a higher office in the Church, and a more excellent ministry—than all the prophets, yea, than John himself. Nor only this—the weakest believing hearers of Paul would understand things by the light of Christ's death on the Cross, which the Baptist could never have explained; and all who believed in a crucified Saviour would have, through the light of the experience of His redeeming power, deeper insight into the nature, blessings and course of development of the kingdom of God, than had been the portion of John. What a tremendous responsibility does living under the full dispensation of the gospel involve!

29. And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, \*being baptized with the baptism of John.

\* Matt. iii. 6; Luke iii. 12.

The people who flocked to hear the gospel message, even the *publicans*, who generally were esteemed notoriously wicked, on account of their injustice and extortion, *justified God*, that is, owned and approved His wisdom and mercy, in having called them to repentance by John's ministry, and prepared them for Him that was to come, and they testified their approbation by receiving baptism at John's hands.

30. But the Pharisees and lawyers \*rejected †the counsel of God †against themselves, being not baptized of him.

\* Or, *frustrated*.

† Acts xx. 27.

† Or, *within themselves*.

They who *esteemed themselves* good, and were generally regarded as learned, honorable men, *rejected the counsel of God*, &c., that is, despised, frustrated, and made of no avail the gracious offer of repentance and salvation which God sent to them by the Baptist. It is a fearful thought, that men have power to ruin themselves forever. God has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," Ezek. xviii. 32. Christ is willing to gather men to His bosom, if they will only be gathered, Matt. xxii. 37. But by continued impenitence and unbelief, by persevering in the love and practice of sin, by pride, self-will, laziness and determined love of the world, we may bring upon ourselves everlasting destruction.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What did the disciples of John do?
2. Where was John at this time?
3. Why was he there?
4. What does Josephus say of the prison?
5. Did John's disciples attend our Lord's ministry?
6. What did John do?
7. Did John now doubt that Jesus was the Messiah?
8. Why, then, did he send these two disciples?
9. What are we to understand by "plagues?"
10. What is said of "he gave sight?"
11. What, in Christ's miracles, endeared Him to the objects of them?
12. Where did the disciples of John find the Saviour?
13. What answer did He give?
14. What was the nature of this answer?
15. What did this answer show?
16. How would Christ have men judge of Him and of others?
17. To what did our Lord refer in the words—"the blind see?"
18. What is said of "the dead are raised?"
19. What is said of "to the poor the gospel is preached?"
20. What is said of the miracles here enumerated?
21. Why did Jesus add what is said in verse 23?
22. How did He avoid the appearance of censuring John?
23. What is meant by "blessed?"
24. What is meant by "offended?"
25. Is this warning just as needful now?
26. How are many offended in Christ?
27. As soon as John's delegation left, what did Jesus do?
28. Why did Jesus commend John before *the people*?

29. What did He say to the people?
30. What form of expression is not uncommon in the Bible?
31. Why was John not a reed shaken with the wind?
32. What was John commended for in verse 25?
33. What climax was there in our Lord's questions?
34. What did Jesus say of John as a prophet?
35. How was John much more than a prophet?
36. What is said of any ministry the clearer it is in discovering Christ?
37. What is said of the phrases "my face" and "before thee?"
38. What is meant by "among those that are born of women?"
39. How was John greater than any of the ancient prophets?
40. Where was John when thus commended?
41. Why is this comforting to faithful ministers?
42. What are we to understand by "he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he?"
43. How did the people and the publicans justify God?
44. What did the Pharisees and lawyers do?
45. How did they reject the counsel of God?
46. Have men power to ruin themselves?
47. Has God any pleasure in the death of the wicked?
48. How may men bring everlasting perdition upon themselves?

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LESSON XLVII.

vs. 31-40.

31. ¶ And the Lord said, "Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like?"

• Matt. xli. 16.

Our Lord now proceeds to describe and condemn the fickleness and perverseness of the Pharisees, whom nothing could induce to embrace the gospel, neither His own ministry nor that of John. *This generation*, i. e., of this age. The question is asked, as though it were difficult to find an object with which such men could be compared.

32. They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and, ye have not wept.

*The market-place.* In the earlier times of the Jewish history, the markets were held near the gates of towns, sometimes within, sometimes without, where the different kinds of goods were exposed for sale, either in the open air or in tents. But we learn from Josephus, that in the time of our Saviour, the markets, at least in cities, had become such as they now are in the East, where they are called "bazaars." These establishments are usually situated in the centre of the towns, and do not by any means answer to our notions of "a market," which is usually for the sale of articles of food, for in these bazaars all the shops and warehouses of the town are collected, and all the trade of the city is carried on, of whatever description it may be. It was

common for children in the market-place to play at rejoicing and at mourning. One party of children imitated the glad songs of the Jews at their marriages, and on other joyful occasions, while another party were expected to dance at the sound of their music. But sometimes sullen and wayward children would not join in the amusement. Then the other party would good-naturedly change the play, and imitate the mournful music of funerals, expecting their companions to use sorrowful gestures and to appear to weep, but the same froward children would object to this play also. In a matter of infinite importance the Pharisees had imitated this example. All the methods which Divine Wisdom had tried for their conversion had proved vain.

33. For 'John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

v Matt. iii. 4; Mark i. 6; Luke i. 15.

They had demanded cheerfulness of John, and as he led so solitary and so strict a life, being clad in skins, feeding on locusts and honey, and refusing to taste wine or strong drink, they accused him of being demoniacally possessed, saying, *He hath a devil*, he acts like a wild, distracted demoniac, whom an evil spirit drives from the society of men.

34. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

The severity of John's ministry proving unsuccessful, with respect to the conversion of the Scribes and Pharisees, God sent His own Son to address and conduct Himself toward them in a more free and familiar manner, but because Christ manifested a mild and joyous spirit, in no way despising the comforts of life, but temperately enjoying them, these same Pharisees, because they did not find in Him the austere, unbending sternness which they had not been able to endure in John, applied to Him the epithets, *glutton*, *wine-bibber*, and *friend of publicans and sinners*, in doing which, however, they did not consider, that these latter words indicated His highest titles of honor. Luke xv. 2. What a contradiction was this! Yet thus do men always and everywhere act, when left to themselves. The first and natural movement of the sinner's heart, when God speaks to him, is to question something regarding the mode, or even to doubt the reality, of the communication altogether. No matter how clear and convincing the evidence may be,—no matter how varied its attendant circumstances, as, for example, in the outward difference of life in the case of the Baptist and Jesus,—no matter how lavish God has been, in furnishing tokens of Himself, and of the reality of what He demands,—still the wicked heart craves for something more. "This is not the evidence exactly that convinces me," are practically its words. "If this single point had been different, or if some clearer statement had been made, or if I were to see with my own eye the miracles recorded in Scripture, I might believe." So, too, those who hate the gospel excuse themselves for not attending to it, by accusing those who preach it, of faults in their manner, or of errors in their life.

35. "But wisdom is justified of all her children.

v Matt. xi. 19.

Rather, *by all her children*. *Wisdom*, can here be no other than the Divine Wisdom which had been revealed by John and Jesus, and in Jesus was per-

sonally manifested; *her children* are those who are born of her, and possess a wise heart. The *justification* of Wisdom takes place, where she is acquitted of accusations of this kind, and acknowledged in her true character. Wise and good men, not only some, but *all*, admire the beautiful variety in the conduct of Providence, and in the methods of revealing Divine grace, approve religion in their judgment, honor it in their conversation, and adorn it in their lives.

God tries every means to turn sinners to Himself, in his holy Word sometimes using tender entreaties, and sometimes proclaiming awful warnings, sometimes depicting the glories of Heaven, sometimes describing the agonies of hell,—in His Providence, now heaping mercies on our heads, and then executing judgment. It is the duty of ministers to seek to please all men for their good: but after all their efforts to please all, if they strenuously oppose the errors and vices of the times, they shall please but very few. It is the old and settled policy of the devil, to hinder the success of the gospel, if he can, by exciting prejudice against ministers.

36. ¶ And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

z Matt. xxvi. 6; Mark xiv. 3; John xi. 2

The time and place of the occurrence of the things here related are not particularly indicated. In some respects the incident here recorded is similar to the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary, as narrated, Matt. xxvi. 7; Mark xiv. 3; John xii. 3; but must not be confounded with that event. We know nothing of this Pharisee, except his name, *Simon*, ver. 40. There is no proof that he was the same as "Simon, the leper," mentioned in Mark xiv. 3. He certainly was not Simon Peter, or Simon Zelotes. There is a little reason for ascribing his invitation to hostile intentions, as for believing that it sprang from esteem and affection. Perhaps pride itself impelled him to receive a Rabbi at his table, whose name was already upon so many tongues, and in respect to whom one did not know how high He might yet rise, and Christ readily accepted the invitation, never refusing any opportunity for doing good.

37. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

y Rom. v. 8; 1 Tim. ii. 9.

The article *the* prefixed to city may refer it to the city of our Lord's residence, Capernaum; some, however, make the article denote the city in which the woman had her residence, and where our Lord is supposed to have been then staying. This woman was not Mary, the sister of Lazarus. She was "a woman in the city," Nain or Capernaum, the only cities here mentioned, whereas Mary, the sister of Lazarus, was of the village of Bethany. After the collation, which is not styled a supper, our Lord "went through every city and village preaching the kingdom of God," Luke viii. 1, whereas, after He raised Lazarus, "Jesus walked no more openly," John xi. 54. And Mary's unction was made for Christ's interment, and but six days before His last Passover, when He continued in Bethany and Jerusalem. Besides, Mary was in all respects a person of approved character. Some old commentators, and the Romanist writers generally, identify this woman with Mary Magdalene, but there does not seem the least reason for this conclusion, for the following reasons: 1. Luke mentions Mary Magdalene a little ahead,

ch. viii. 2, as though he had never before mentioned her. 2. As the females there named as those who "ministered to Christ of their substance" were surely women of property, and as Mary is mentioned *first*, even before the wife of so considerable a person as Herod's steward, we may perhaps infer that she was a woman of superior station and wealth, and all the less likely to have been a *sinner* in the sense of unchasteness which seems to be here indicated. 3. Mary's surname of Magdalene probably denotes that she was a native of Magdala, near Bethsaida, on the coast of the Lake of Tiberias, whereas the present woman appears to have belonged to Capernaum. 4. There is not the least proof in Scripture that Mary Magdalene had ever been a *woman which was a sinner* against the Seventh Commandment, and hence, by the way, great injustice has been done to her memory, by the use of her patril name, to designate persons of her sex who have been rescued by the hand of Christian benevolence from a life of infamy. The reference, ch. viii. 2, to her possession by demons, and their expulsion from her, does not prove either wickedness, degraded character, or low rank. 5. The fact that till Jesus knew her, Mary Magdalene had been a demoniac, affords another and the strongest possible reason against identifying her with a woman who is supposed to have been a harlot until her heart received the pure and purifying doctrine of Christ.

The *woman* mentioned in this narrative is one whose name is, for wise and kind reasons, not stated. This is the view maintained by the great majority of all Protestant commentators. She is never again mentioned, that we are aware of, in the gospel history. *Which was a sinner.* That she was an unchaste woman can scarcely be doubted from the emphasis the word "sinner" receives from its connection, and from the reference made to her by the Pharisee, ver. 30. She *was* a sinner, but at the time here spoken of gave evidence that she had already learned to hate and forsake her sins, and to love dearly and tenderly the Saviour for whom she had forsaken them. *When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house.* This is additional proof that this woman was not, as some have strangely supposed, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, for Mary was well known to Christ, and had not come accidentally, but had been invited. John xii. 2. It also shows that the woman's heart had been touched by some previous attendance upon our Lord's ministry, inasmuch as she made preparations for what she was about to do, after she had learned that He was in the Pharisee's house. *Sat at meat:* reclined, which was the usual position at the table, and, as it appears from the sequel, without having his feet washed or being anointed. *Brought an alabaster box of ointment.* The alabaster box containing the ointment, or rather oil, is in the original called simply an *alabastron*, a name derived from the Alabastron in Egypt, where there was a manufactory of small pots and vessels for holding perfumes, made from stone found in the neighboring mountains, and which was thought to conserve, better than any other substance, the qualities of the precious unguents. The Greeks gave to these vessels the name of the town which produced them, and then to the species of stone of which they were made, and eventually to all perfume vessels of whatever form or substance. Ointments and oils were used in eastern countries to an extent we can hardly understand. The excessive heat of the climate made it almost necessary, to preserve the skin from cracking. See Ps. civ. 15.

38. And stood at his feet behind *him* \*weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment.

\* Is. lxi. 3; Matt. v. 4; 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11; James iv. 9.

It would appear that the meals at which Jesus took part had a somewhat public character. The entrance stood open to all, not because they were invited by Him, but because the concourse could not be hindered. Besides, in the East, the warm climate produces tents and open doors, destroying much of that exclusiveness which reigns in the close houses of more northern latitudes. The meals are often taken in the court, with one side perfectly open.



OINTMENT BOTTLES.

And even in the house, while the company are at table, persons will come in, and, uninvited and unchallenged, take their seat upon the divan or long sofa that lines the walls. *Stood at his feet behind him.* The guests at meal-time so reclined on couches that their feet were behind them, towards the open space or passage, between the couch and the wall, where the servants stood in attendance. Into this open place, to which access, without obtrusiveness, was easy, this woman came. Christ could not perhaps have seen her without turning His head. Hence, the force of the expression "behind him."

*Weeping* tears of penitence and love. *And began to wash his feet with tears.* From a deep conviction of her many sins, and of the obligations she was under to the Saviour for bringing her to a sense of them, she shed tears in such abundance, that they trickled down on His feet, which were then bare. Neither the Jews nor Romans wore stockings, and as for their shoes or sandals, they always took them off when they went to their meals. At feasts it was the custom of the entertainer to provide water, and direct his servants to wash the feet of his guests. In towns, however, the custom does not appear to have been invariably observed; for we see it was neglected by Simon, ver. 44, without the omission appearing to have been intended as a mark of disrespect, our Saviour's allusion to it being rather incidental than reproachful. It was, however, as might be expected, an invariable custom to wash the feet previously to being anointed. The word translated *wash* would be better and more literally rendered, *to wet, moisten.* *And did wipe them with the hairs of her head.* Observing that the tears she shed so freely wetted the Saviour's feet, she wiped them with her hair, which she now wore flowing loose about her shoulders, as mourners commonly did. When Hannibal drew near to Rome, the Roman ladies, as was their custom on such occasions, went to temples to supplicate the gods, washing the floors of them with their hair. *And kissed his feet with affectionate tenderness, or kissed them*

*again and again*, which is the true force of the original word. The *kiss* was used in ancient times as the emblem of *love, religious reverence, subjection, and supplication*. It has the meaning of *supplication*, in the way of *adoration*, accompanied with *subjection*, in 1 Kings xix. 18, Job xxxi. 27, and in Ps. ii. 12—*Kiss the son lest he be angry*. Close in with Him, embrace affectionately, the offers of mercy made unto you through Christ Jesus. Kissing the feet prevailed as a custom among the heathen, and was a mark of deepest reverence and humility. Xenophon says: "Then they affectionately kissed Cyrus' hands and feet, shedding many tears, and, at the same time, showing signs of joy." Seneca says: "C. Cæsar gave wine to Pompey Pennus, whom he had pardoned, and then, on his returning thanks, presented his left foot for him to kiss." Hence, the custom of kissing the Pope's foot. "Luke here indicates," says one, "that a greater honor was due to Christ than to the king of Persia, and, therefore, that He is not a mere man who gave his foot to be kissed, well knowing (as Christ must have done) that, by the Greeks and Romans, this honor was considered as equal to that which is paid to the Deity." *And anointed them with the ointment*. That which she had before used in self-adornment, she now poured out upon the feet of her Lord, as a token of her love, and a pledge that, thereafter, her chiefest beauty and ornament were to be a meek, penitent, and believing spirit.

39. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him, saw *it*, <sup>h</sup>he spake within himself, saying, <sup>h</sup>This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is that toucheth him*: for she is a sinner.

<sup>a</sup> Is. lxxv. 5.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xv. 2.

When Simon observed that Jesus permitted such a notorious sinner to approach, nay, and to touch Him, *he spake within himself*, he thought in his heart, *this man, if he were a prophet*, as he pretends to be, *would have known what manner of woman*, what a disreputable person, *this is that toucheth him*, thus familiarly; and, instead of allowing her to do so, would immediately have driven her away with just disdain, as the tradition of the elders directs, for it was a maxim with the Pharisees that the very touch of the wicked caused pollution. The discerning of spirits was, according to the Jews, one of the characteristics of the Messiah. Is. ix. 3, 4.

40. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

Though Simon did not declare his sentiments, they were not hidden from Christ, who, to show him that He was a prophet, and that He knew not only the characters of men, but the inward and invisible state of their minds, conversed with him on the subject of his thoughts. *Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee*, something demanding thy whole attention, applicable to thee, and important for thee. *Master, say on*. Though the Pharisee's heart had just pronounced his guest to be an impostor, the courtesy of the lip proclaimed Him "Master" still. If Jesus had directly attacked Simon in regard to his wicked and unreasonable pride, and unfeeling disdain of the poor, weeping penitent, he would probably have been only hardened and irritated by it. He therefore adopted a method adapted to convince, without offending him. He did not expose him before the company, by making what he said within himself public, but with great delicacy proceeded to utter a parable, to show that Simon erred in condemning a woman whom the Heavenly Judge had acquitted, and that it was well known to Him what both the woman and Simon were, not merely as to what is outward, but in the most secret recesses of the mind.

## QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of "the market-place?"
2. How had the Pharisees imitated this example?
3. What did they demand of John?
4. What did they accuse Him of?
5. What did they call Jesus?
6. Do men always and everywhere thus act when left to themselves?
7. What are we to understand by "Wisdom?"
8. Who are "her children?"
9. How are they "justified?"
10. Who was the "one of the Pharisees" referred to?
11. Was he the same as Simon the leper, or Simon Peter, or Simon Zelotes?
12. Why did he invite Jesus to eat with him?
13. What city is referred to?
14. What reasons are there for believing this woman was not Mary, the sister of Lazarus?
15. Why should she not be identified with Mary Magdalene?
16. Why is the name of the woman here mentioned not stated?
17. Is she ever again mentioned in the gospel history?
18. What had been her character?
19. Had she now learned to hate and forsake her sins, and love Jesus?
20. How had the woman's heart been touched?
21. What was the usual posture at the table?
22. What is said of the "alabaster box of ointment?"
23. What is said of the meals at which Jesus took part?
24. What is said of meals in the East?
25. How could the woman gain access to the feet of Jesus?
26. What is meant by "weeping?"
27. How did she bathe the Saviour's feet?
28. Did the Jews or the Romans wear stockings?
29. What was a common custom at feasts in reference to providing water?
30. What is said of the word "wash?"
31. How did this woman wipe the Saviour's feet?
32. What is the force of the original, "kissed his feet?"
33. What was the kiss an emblem of in ancient times?
34. How did the woman anoint the feet of Jesus?
35. What did Simon, when he saw it, speak within himself?
36. What did he mean by what he said?
37. What is said of the discerning of spirits?
38. What did Jesus answer?
39. Why did Jesus converse with Simon on the subject of his thoughts?
40. What is said of Simon's calling Jesus "Master?"
41. What would have been the effect if Christ had directly attacked Simon in regard to his pride and disdain?
42. What course did Jesus pursue?

## LESSON XLVIII.

vs. 41-50.

41. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

c See Matt. xviii. 28.

*Creditor*, a man who is accustomed to lend. *Five hundred pence*, about \$75, *fifty pence*, \$7.50. God is the creditor, men are the debtors, and sins the debts. The determinate numbers used can only be meant to indicate the great inequality of the debt of these two persons, and at the same time to teach, that whilst it is not true that any man's sins are *really* small, yet sinners, in the eye and according to the judgment of God, are not equal, but have different degrees of guilt; all are guilty, but not all alike.

42. And when they had nothing to pay, <sup>he</sup> frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?

4 Ps. xxxi. 1, & ciii. 3; Acts xiii. 38; Rom. iii. 24 and iv. 5, 8.

*Nothing to pay—he frankly forgave them both.* Here, on the part of the debtors, two things are evident: the certainty and greatness of the debt, and their utter incapacity to make restitution, being entirely insolvent; while on the part of the creditor there appears correspondingly in the remission of the debts, 1, a very great goodness, and, 2, that goodness perfectly free, depending simply on his own will, quite undeserved by the debtors, and never to be demanded by them as a matter of right. Such also is the relation of the sinner to God, that all sins require an exercise of grace that is perfectly free, and this also it is possible for them to find. *Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?* Both would love, for such a manifestation of love infallibly begets love in the heart of the receiver. It is also implied that the degree of the reciprocal love will be determined by the apprehension of the greatness of the received benefit. *Neither* of the debtors would love at all the creditor before he had forgiven them. An insolvent debtor, till he is forgiven, does not *love*, but shuns his creditor, apprehending severe treatment from him. It is entirely the same in the heart of the sinner. He learns from the Divine law, both his guilt and his liability to punishment, so that nothing but fear of God can take possession of him. But the sinner, in such a state, is met by God in the gospel with the gracious method of pardon for his sins, and this, in the believing heart, which appropriates to itself the word of God, becomes the means of rooting out fear, and implanting a principle of love, Rom. xv. 1, 8, 15; 2 Tim. i. 7; 1 John iv. 18, 19. The application of the parable, therefore, leads to the following conclusions: 1. Love to God cannot precede the pardon of sin. 2. And hence it cannot deserve this pardon of sin. 3. But infallibly marks an act of forgiveness, already past and experienced.

43. Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

*Simon answered, and said, I suppose, &c.* He surely who was forgiven most was under the greater obligations, and must reasonably be supposed to

feel the greater affection for his merciful and generous creditor. By this acknowledgment he was, unknowingly to himself, prepared to receive our Lord's reproof. And he said, *Thou hast rightly judged*, and the reflection is evidently suited to the case that we have before us.

44. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head.

45. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46. \*My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

• Ps. xxiii. 5.

Now follows the application of the parable.

*He turned to the woman*, who had been a notorious sinner, and was the greater, the five hundred pence debtor. The Pharisee, however, though the less, the fifty pence debtor, yet was a debtor too, which was more perhaps than he thought himself to be, judging rather that God was his debtor, chap. xviii. 10, 11. *Seest thou this woman*, afflicted and distressed as she is? and canst thou avoid taking notice of the extraordinary tenderness and affectionate regard to me that she has now manifested? *I entered into thine house*, as a guest, on thine own express invitation; *thou gavest me no water for my feet*, though that be so customary and necessary a refreshment on these occasions; but *she*, nobly supplying the lack of service, *hath washed my feet*, not with mere water, withheld by thee, but by something far more precious, *her tears*, and *wiped them*, not with a common napkin, but with the hairs of her head. *Thou gavest me no kiss*, as men do when they receive a guest, but *this woman since the time I came in* (some copies read, *she came in*) *hath not ceased to kiss* even my feet with the greatest humility and affection. *My head with even common oil thou didst not anoint*, though few entertainments fail of being attended with that circumstance, (see Deut. xxviii. 40; Mic. vi. 15; Ps. xxiii. 5, civ. 15, and cxli. 5;) *but this woman hath anointed*, not my head, but *my feet*, with precious ointment. This comparison, drawn so much to the advantage of the woman whom the Pharisee so thoroughly despised, must have put him to shame. Then comes the judgment pronounced by Christ—a judgment in which He furnishes His reply to the silent query of Simon, *whether this professed prophet discerns spirits*, by showing him that He did most truly discern both her spirit and his.

47. 'Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same loveth little*.

† 1 Tim. i. 14.

*Wherefore*, must not be coupled with *I say unto thee*, but with what follows, so that, *I say unto thee* should be placed in parenthesis. *I say unto thee*, I declare it openly, both for her vindication and for thy admonition, *her sins, which are many*, and exceedingly heinous, as I well know, *are forgiven*, freely and graciously, for, rather, *therefore she loved much*, as I have been the means of bringing her to repentance, and to enjoy pardon and peace, she has thus testified the great love and high regard she has for me, as being persuaded that she never can sufficiently express her sense of the obligation. From this woman's manifestations of love to me, thou mightest have drawn

the conclusion that her many sins have been forgiven her. There are three things in this passage which show that the forgiveness of sin is not, as Romanists contend it is, obtained through works or love. 1. Christ said to the woman, ver. 50, Thy faith hath saved thee; 2. In ver. 47, forgiveness of sin goes before love; and, 3. If we, as debtors, could, by any merit of our own, obtain forgiveness of sin, we should, then, in contradiction of the parable itself, *have something wherewith to pay*. But to whom little is forgiven, or who thinks his debt was but small, *the same loveth little*, is not much affected by the kindness of the creditor that forgives him, and feels but little gratitude and love to him on that account.

48. And he said unto her, <sup>a</sup>Thy sins are forgiven.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. ix. 2; Mark ii. 5.

The woman's sins were not now forgiven for the first time. She was really forgiven *before* she came to Christ. Now she received a public and authoritative declaration of it before many witnesses, as a reward for her open expression of love and gratitude. Before, she had hope through grace. Now, she received the assurance of hope. Before, she was justified before God; now, Jesus has justified her before men, before this Pharisaic company, by declaring that her sins had been forgiven. While the Pharisees murmured, the poor penitent rejoiced.

49. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, <sup>b</sup>Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

<sup>b</sup> Matt. ix. 3; Mark ii. 7.

*Began to say.* Just as in ch. v. 21. It would seem almost inconceivable that the same censure should have been already repeated, if we forget that a Pharisaic heart at all times remains the same; besides, these guests need not, of course, have been acquainted with that which had already taken place at the healing of the paralytic. *Sins also*; a better translation would be, *even sins*, the contrast being between the display of His power in curing physical infirmities, ver. 21, and the greater exercise of it in the forgiveness of sin, which was solely God's prerogative.

50. And he said to the woman, <sup>c</sup>Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. ix. 22; Mark v. 34 and x. 52; Luke viii. 48 and xviii. 42.

Our Lord rebuked not the insolent murmurers, but the more they murmured the more persistently did He assure the penitent. He did not say, "Thy *love* hath saved thee." Here, as in every other part of the New Testament, *faith* is put forward as the key to salvation. This woman had embraced our Saviour's invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest;" and in her case it was proved true that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Faith is the *instrument of receiving the salvation* which is promised to those who repent. *Go in peace*, was a phrase which was a common valediction among the Jews, like our "Good-bye," or "God be with you." Some suppose that Jesus thus gave the woman an intimation to leave the house before the peace which He had given her could be assailed and disturbed by any one; others think that He specially referred to that "peace," which is the fruit of faith, described in Rom. v. 1. The expression has been paraphrased thus:—"Go thy way, a blessed and happy woman, and in the view and sense of thine own blessedness, be not troubled at the censures and reflections of supercil-

ious persons, who may despise and overlook thee because thou hast been a great sinner."

The following lessons are taught by this narrative :

1. Men may show some outward respect to Christ, and yet remain unconverted. This Pharisee even desired that our Lord would eat with him, yet all this time he was profoundly ignorant of the nature of the gospel. 2. For great sinners there is a great Saviour. "This man receiveth sinners," which was the ironical taunt of proud and haughty Pharisees, is the Saviour's own motto, and the glorious peculiarity of His great salvation. 3. Love to the Saviour forms a necessary part of religion. It is not, as some maintain, enthusiasm, or the mere effect of a high-wrought imagination. It has its ground-work in the sober foundations of the word of God. That state of heart which the Saviour on this occasion prized so highly, He values still, for He is "the same yesterday, to-day and forever." Just in proportion to our love will be our obedience. 4. Toward a great sinner there ought to be great tenderness. However his sin may be rebuked, *he* should be deeply pitied. We should speak to him in terms of holy sympathy, and be ready to show the nature and issues of his transgression, and direct him to Jesus, who came into the world, "that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." 5. Our salvation is of grace. It is utterly impossible for any person of himself to pay the debt he owes to God's violated law. They that owe least stand in need of mercy and forgiveness, as well as they that owe most. Let us rejoice to know that God, the great Creditor, forgives freely, fully and *frankly*, not grudgingly or indifferently, but graciously, cheerfully, all who come to him through Jesus Christ,—who, though not the *cause* of God's love, is yet the expression of it, and the channel through which that love flows. 6. The knowledge of forgiveness, instead of leading to presumption or indifference to God's claims, will produce humility, and stimulate to obedience. That sinner loves Jesus most who is the most sensible of what Christ has done for him.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by a "creditor?"
2. How much were five hundred pence?
3. How much were fifty pence?
4. Who is the Creditor?
5. Who are the debtors?
6. What are the debts?
7. What is said of the determinate numbers used?
8. What two things are evident on the part of the debtors?
9. What two things appear correspondingly in the remission of the debts?
10. What do we learn from—"which of them will love most?"
11. To what three conclusions does the application of the parable lead?
12. What did Simon answer?
13. For what was he prepared by this acknowledgment?
14. What did Jesus say to Simon?
15. What application did He make of the parable?
16. How must this comparison have affected Simon?
17. What is said of "wherefore?"
18. What is the meaning of what follows in verse 47?
19. What three things show that forgiveness of sin is not obtained through works or love?
20. Were the woman's sins now forgiven for the first time?
21. What did she now receive?
22. What did those at the table say?
23. What is said of "sins also?"
24. Did our Lord rebuke the insolent murmurers?

25. What did He say to the woman?
26. What is the key to salvation?
27. How does faith receive salvation?
28. What is said of the phrase—"Go in peace?"
29. What is the first lesson taught by this narrative?
30. What is the second?
31. What is the third?
32. What is the fourth?
33. What is the fifth?
34. What is the sixth?
35. Is the deepest humility consistent with a sense of pardon?
36. What sinner loves Jesus most?

## CHAPTER VIII.

### LESSON XLIX.

vs. 1-5.

MUCH of what is contained in this chapter in relation to Christ's preaching and miracles is also recorded by Matthew and Mark. These portions of our Lord's history are here repeated, as well for their intrinsic importance, as that out of the mouth not only of two, but of three witnesses, every word may be established.

1. And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve *were* with him,

We have here a description of our Lord's diligence in doing good. *Afterwards*, after the laying of the platform of the new dispensation, by preaching the sermon on the Mount, and confirming it by miracles indicating His power over body and soul, or, as the original expression may be understood to imply, *in the order of His work*, for He went through it regularly, and the end of one good work was with Him the beginning of another: *he went through every city, &c.*, that is, of Galilee: *preaching and showing, &c., proclaiming, and evangelizing, or publishing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God*, the good news of the kingdom He was now about to erect among mankind. The Pharisaic instruction was conveyed in an exclusive manner, which disregarded the poor and degraded, and was confined principally to the rich; but Jesus proclaimed the good news of salvation in the most public and open manner. *And the twelve were with him*, that they might be further instructed for their work, and that their having been thus publicly seen in His train might promote their reception when they afterwards came to any of these places by themselves.

2. And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxvii. 55, 56.

<sup>b</sup> Mark xvi. 9.

3. And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

The *women* here mentioned seem for the most part to have been of some social standing and means. They were probably attached to Jesus and His company, by having been the subjects of remarkable cures. *Evil spirits and infirmities* : it is thus evident that the forms of affliction here denoted were not the same. Devils and diseases may combine, but they are not identical. *Mary called Magdalene*, so called from Magdala, now Medjil, a town on the west side of Lake Gennesaret, the patrilial name being given her to distinguish her from the other Marys in attendance on our Lord's ministry. She is mentioned here in a manner that does not betray the faintest consciousness of her having been mentioned before, and thus it is clearly implied that she is not the same as the sinful woman mentioned in the last chapter. *Out of whom went seven devils*. This phrase must here, as in every other passage, be taken literally, not figuratively for sins. It denotes an intensity of demoniacal possession. *Seven* may be a symbolical and indefinite number to indicate the malignant character of the possession. Instances of the indefinite use of the word *seven* may be found in Matt. xii. 45, and in Ruth iv. 15; 1 Sam. ii. 5; Is. iv. 1. Of Mary's life previous to her having thus become a miracle and monument of the Saviour's power and mercy, we know nothing. Very great injustice has been done by some to the memory of Mary Magdalene, in supposing her to have been, before her conversion, a prostitute. See Notes on Ch. vii. 37. The fact that she was possessed with *seven devils* is no evidence against her, for *Joanna* and *Susanna*, ver. 3, might as well, on this ground, be censured, for they seem to have been dispossessed likewise by Jesus. Then, again, such possession, instead of necessarily implying any peculiar criminality, seems to have been an *affliction*, for we never find that Jesus rebuked the *persons* who were possessed.

From the time she had experienced Christ's miraculous power, she became His devoted follower. She seems to have exceeded all the other women in duty and respect to our Lord's person. At this time she came forth from the retirement in which she had long kept herself, in gentle considerateness to minister to the indigence of her homeless Saviour, as she afterwards attended Him to His cross, embalmed His corpse, watched by His shroud, and wept at His grave. It will be remembered that she had the honor of being one to whom Jesus made His appearance on the morning of His resurrection, and that her name was the first word His risen tongue uttered. *And Joanna, the wife of Chuza*. Joanna is the feminine of John, and the same as Jane. *Herod's steward*, of whom she was the wife, was the manager of the property concerns and household affairs of Herod Antipas. The bad examples of Herod, and of Herodias, had not hindered her from embracing that gospel which her superiors despised. She also continued faithful to Jesus at His death, and at His grave, Luke xxiv. 10. Her case teaches us that not all our Lord's followers were poor. It throws light on Herod's anxiety to see our Lord, when He was sent to him by Pilate. He had probably heard of Him through his steward's family. It also suggests the pleasant idea, that John the Baptist's imprisonment by Herod led to the conversion of some of Herod's retainers. Even in the worst places God has some to stand up for His name, and bear witness for His truth : there was a Joseph in Pharaoh's court, an Obadiah in Ahab's court, a Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court, a church in Nero's house, and a Joanna in the family of the bloody Herod, who had put John the Baptist to death. *Susanna* means Lily. This is the only place in which we find this woman mentioned, but doubtless she was one of the noble band which exhibited their devotion and constancy in the time of Christ's passion. Who the *many others* were, we do not know. Their

names, we may hope, are in the Book of Life, and "the day will declare" them. *Which ministered unto him of their substance*, literally, *things on hand, possessions, property*. For the words "to him," many versions have "to them," i. e., our Lord and the twelve Apostles. No doubt the holy courage and liberality of these female followers of our Lord drew upon them jeers and scofs from many, for following the carpenter's son, and a few fishermen; but this, instead of cooling, inflamed their zeal. The world are astonished at the earnestness of devoted Christians, because they cannot understand their *motives*. Christ received these assistances and ministrations, to honor poverty by subjecting Himself to it, to humble Himself in receiving from His creatures, to teach ministers of the gospel to depend on the providence of their Heavenly Father, to make way for the gratitude of those He had healed, to keep from being burdensome to the poor to whom He went to preach, and to teach that universal charity required of us in His gospel. Gal. vi. 10.

What was true during our Lord's ministry has been, ever since: more women than men have been, and are, among the followers of Jesus. In many congregations, at most communions, at meetings for social worship, and in enterprises of Christian beneficence, the number of females largely preponderates. But why should not woman be deeply interested in the power and propagation of Christianity? How much has it done to wipe the tears from degraded womanhood, and raise her from the dust to which paganism had doomed her! What is the boasted chivalry of the Middle Ages but the legitimate effect of the elevating spirit of the gospel? Wherever Christianity is not, *there* is woman found with the curse of bondage and degradation resting upon her—the drudge and menial slave, instead of the helpmeet and companion of man.

4. ¶ And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

• Matt. xiii. 2; Mark iv. 1.

(We include in our exposition the explanation of the parable given of it by the Saviour in ver. 11-15.)

A *parable* is a form of speech in which something is presented to us in lieu of some other thing which it resembles, and which we wish to illustrate. It is derived from a Greek word signifying to *compare together*. This first of the parables which Jesus uttered is recorded also by Matthew xiii. 3-8, and Mark iv. 8. It is generally called the "Parable of the Sower," but among the Germans has the title of "The four kinds of ground." In relation to the multitude in attendance, the three Evangelists complement one another. According to Luke, the cities of all Galilee furnished their contingent to swell the company of the hearers of the Lord. According to the other two, the concourse was so great that He had to ascend a ship on the shore, in order there to be heard better. The delivery of this very heart-searching and conscience-rousing parable, when the crowd of hearers was greatest, shows that our Lord was far from flattering men, and speaking smooth things; and teaches that ministers should always denounce sin most plainly when their churches are most full, and their congregations largest.

5. A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

It is probable that Christ saw, at no great distance from where He stood addressing the multitude, a husbandman, who, having no time, as he supposed, and perhaps no inclination, to drop work, and join the crowd, was

scattering seed in the furrows of his field; from this familiar doing of common life, therefore, He derived a medium for the exhibition of certain great spiritual truths which He wished to present. *A sower went out to sow.* It cannot be doubted our Lord intended to set Himself forth as the Chief Sower, though nowhere, in the three interpretations of the parable, has He announced Himself as such. His entrance into the world was a-going forth to sow. *Others* were only able to sow, because He had sown *first*; they did but carry on the work which He auspicated and begun. By the *seed* is meant the word of God in general, but, pre-eminently, His gospel, His gracious message by Christ, His gift of grace and glory, His testimony and invitations concerning the kingdom of heaven. It should be noted that, whilst the seed is the Word, the Word is Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, . . . . and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." John i. 1, 14. Christ is the living seed, and the Bible is the husk that holds it. The husk that holds the seed is the most precious thing in the world, next after the seed that it holds. The Lord Himself precisely defines, from this point of view, the place and value of the Scriptures: "They are they which testify of me." John v. 39. The seed of the kingdom is Himself the King. Nor is there any inconsistency in representing Christ as the seed, while He was, in the first instance, the Sower. Most certainly, He preached the Saviour, and also was the Saviour. See, for an example, the incident in the synagogue at Nazareth. Luke iv. 16-22. "*His seed.*" The fields must all be sown with Christ's own seed, with no mixed grain. Woe unto the minister who sows his own seed, and not Christ's. It will be observed that Christ sows the seed upon all soils; He gives to all opportunity of knowing Him; if any perish, it is not because the Sower withheld the seed, or because the seed was not good, but because their own hearts were not ready and open to receive it.

*And as he sowed, some fell by the way-side,* that is, some fell on the hard foot-path which skirted the edge of the field, or, perhaps, ran by way of short cut through the middle of it, where the glebe was not broken, and so it could not sink down in the earth, but lay exposed on the surface to the feet of passers-by, till at length it became an easy prey to the birds, such as in the East are described as following in large flocks the husbandman, to gather up, if they can, the seed-corn which he has scattered. Those here represented are such as, by deep-rooted prejudices against Christianity, have minds which are impenetrable, and inaccessible to conviction; also, the thoughtless, the inattentive, the inconsiderate, the trifling, the gay, who think of nothing beyond the present scene, and who do not consider themselves as in the smallest degree interested in a higher invisible world. Those last described, though not formally rejecting the gospel, yet do in fact never concern themselves about it. They *hear* the word, ver. 12, but here the matter ends; the truth never goes beyond the surface, never penetrates into their hearts, but lies on the hard beaten highway. As an effect of the refusal of the hard heart to let the seed penetrate into it, or to "understand" it, Matt. xiii. 19, the good word of God, being exposed to the scorn and contempt of others, is *trod-den down*: nor only this, it is also *decoured by the fowls of the air*. "The wicked one," Matt. xiii. 19, "Satan," Mark. v. 15, here, *the devil*, ver. 12, *cometh, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.* The kingdom of darkness fights against the kingdom of God, which is built up within us through the word of God, and there is still permitted to exist a secret power of Satan, which, through much cunning, and all kinds of wicked artifice, draws from the heart the preached word, Eph. ii. 2; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. So it happens, that such hearts do not "understand," Matt. xiii. 19, or, which is all one, they do not believe, Luke v. 12, and hence do not attain to salvation. The expression, *then cometh the devil*, ver. 12, is one of many, which prove the existence, personality, and agency of the devil, as distinct from man, and operating powerfully

on man's heart, and to man's injury. Satan comes through his emissaries, symbolized by *the fowls*. Temptations have wings, and they come in flocks, and they have open beaks to snatch up the word of life and carry it off or *devour* it. And how easily the seed of the word does go! People on Monday have forgotten both the sermon and the text of the Sabbath. The birds have come and devoured them up.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of much that is contained in this chapter?
2. What is said of "afterward"?
3. Through what did Jesus go?
4. What did He do?
5. What is said about His preaching?
6. Who were with Him?
7. Why were the Twelve with Him?
8. Who were the women mentioned?
9. Why were they probably attached to Jesus and His company?
10. Were "evil spirits" and "infirmities" the same?
11. Why was Mary called "Magdalene"?
12. What is said of the manner in which she is mentioned here?
13. What is said of "out of whom went seven devils"?
14. What is said of "seven"?
15. Where may instances of the indefinite use of "seven" be found?
16. Do we know any thing of Mary's life previous to this miracle?
17. What injustice has been done her by some?
18. Is the fact that she was possessed with seven demons any evidence against her?
19. When did she become Christ's devoted follower?
20. In what particulars does she seem to have exceeded all the other women?
21. How did she at this time come forth from long retirement?
22. What is said of her subsequent history?
23. Who was Joanna?
24. What is said of "Joanna"?
25. What was Chuza's office of steward?
26. What is said of the bad examples of Herod and Herodias?
27. Did Joanna continue faithful to Jesus?
28. What does her case teach and suggest?
29. What does "Susanna" mean?
30. Is this woman mentioned elsewhere?
31. What is said of her?
32. Who were the "many others"?
33. What is meant by "substance"?
34. Why did Jesus receive these ministrations?
35. What is said of women as the followers of Jesus?
36. Why should not woman be interested in the propagation of the gospel?
37. What is a parable?
38. From what is the word derived?
39. Is this the first parable Jesus uttered?
40. By whom else is it recorded?
41. What does the delivery of this parable show?
42. Who was the chief Sower?
43. What is meant by the seed?
44. What is meant by some falling by the way-side?
45. Who are here represented?
46. How is this seed "trodden down," and devoured by the fowls of the air?

## LESSON L.

vs. 6-15.

6. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

Here again we include in our exposition the explanation of the parable given by our Lord in ver. 11-15.

*Upon a rock.* This explains what is designated in Matthew, *stony places*, and in Mark, *stony ground*, reference being had, not to a field abounding in small stones, for then would seeds germinate in the crevices between, but to one, underneath which were large flat rocks, covered with a thin surface of earth, which prevented the seed from having any depth of root. The rocky soil of many parts of Palestine makes the circumstances here mentioned far more likely than they appear to be in a country like ours. The *rock* is the earthly, sinful nature of man. *And as soon as it was sprung up*, &c. In such a soil as has been described, because the seed had not fallen into deep earth, the plant the sooner appeared above the surface, and while the rock below hindered it from striking deeply downward, it put forth its energies the more luxuriantly in the stalk. It sprung up without delay, but was not rooted in that deep moist soil which would have enabled it to resist the scorching heat of the sun, and being smitten by that, withered and died. The persons here represented *are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away*, ver. 18. They *receive the word with joy*, with delight—it is not, however, a joy springing up from the greatness of the benefit, even after all the counterbalancing costs and hazards are taken into account, but a joy arising from an overlooking and leaving out of calculation those costs and hazards. The word to which they have listened with delight, makes an impression upon them. And this impression passes into expression, they move out of the passive into the active state, making a profession, and entering on the practice of religion. They are also often marked by the outward evidences of precocious piety, and a forward, flaming zeal. But after all, there is in them no real, thorough change. Whilst there is no conscious, intentional deceit, there is no radical renovation. The sad mistake in all such cases is, that convictions are mistaken for conversion, admiration of the preacher's eloquence for attachment to the Saviour, Ezek. xxxiii. 30-32, an appreciation of the moral beauties of the gospel for an appreciation of its holiness, and the pleasures of emotion, or such gratification as taste enjoys in a beautiful discourse, for the pleasures of piety. *And these have no root.* How beautifully does this figure show, that, as from the roots which are out of sight, a tree derives its stability and firmness, so, upon the hidden life of the Christian, that life which is out of the sight of other men, his firmness and stability depend. The word has never gone down into the hearts of the persons referred to, their roots lie along in their profession of religion. They have *no root in themselves*, Matt. xiii. 21, such as had Peter, who, when many others were offended, and drew back, exclaimed, "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," such as the Hebrew Christians had, who "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance," and such as Paul had, in that faith in the unseen eternal things, which enabled him to count the present affliction light, and to endure to the end. *Which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall*

*away.* The striking characteristic here, is the rapid change from bloom to decay, from the reception of the word to the renunciation of it. Divine truth has produced no deep or permanent effect, for while the hearts are soft and susceptible, they are, at the same time, weak and inconstant. Just as the sun scorches the plants which have not sufficient depth of earth or moisture, whilst it contributes to the growth of plants which are not destitute of these conditions, so the troubles, afflictions and persecutions which will strengthen a *true* faith, cause a faith which is *temporary*, to fail. It is not here, as in the last case, that Satan can merely come and take the word out of the heart without further trouble; the word has found some place there, and it needs that he bring some trying, if not directly hostile, influence to bear upon it. Nor need this influence be as cruel as the persecution which the saints and prophets of old experienced, Heb. xi. 37, for, let it be accounted for as it may, experience incontestably establishes the fact, that a sneer from some leading spirit in a literary society, or a laugh raised by a gay circle of pleasure-seekers in a fashionable drawing-room, or the rude jest of scoffing artisans in a workshop, may do as much as the fagot and the stake to make a fair but false disciple deny his Lord.

7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

The portion of the seed here referred to wants neither root nor depth of earth. It grows up, but the misfortune is, that the thorns grow up with it. The fault of the soil is not that of bearing nothing, but of bearing too much, of bearing what it ought not, of exhausting its strength and nutrition on vile and worthless productions—*thorns*, (under which term may be included all rank weeds, varying with countries and climates, which infect the soil and hurt the harvest,) the roots of which drank up the sap of the ground, while their branches veiled off the sunlight, so that the good seed, starved beneath and overshadowed above, although it made a fair promise in the Spring, produced nothing in the Autumn. *And that which fell among thorns, &c.*, ver. 14. Many persons in their youth receive religious instruction, they imbibe right principles, and listen to good advice, but no sooner do they *go forth*, no sooner do they leave those persons and places from which they received them, than they take the road either of business or of pleasure, pursue their interests, their amusements, or their guilty indulgences with unbounded eagerness, and have neither time nor inclination to cultivate the seeds of religion that have been sown in their hearts, and to eradicate the weeds that have been mingled with them. The consequence is, that the weeds prevail, and the seeds are choked and lost. All classes and ranks are on this side exposed to danger. As principal antagonists to the efficacious working of the Divine word, Christ mentions *cares*—care for our present livelihood—the pressure of an earthly existence—*riches and pleasures of this life*, which riches procure, the glittering side of this life, both with poor and rich, with those who are in quest of them, and those who already have them; because both look upon them as the highest good, and put their confidence in them. So that, be it woman's household cares, or the anxieties and annoyances of man's business, the harassments of poverty or the enticements of wealth, the pursuit of fame or power, whatever it be that engrosses our attention, and, stealing our thoughts from God, and our hearts from heaven, counteracts the holy influences of Bibles, churches, Sabbath, sermons, and sacraments, it is *choking the word*. The Saviour warns us against the danger which proves fatal to those in this third condition of heart and mind, in Luke xxi. 34, 1 Tim. vi. 9, Matt. vi. 25-34. It should be remembered, however, that *only where the seed and the thorns grew together*, was the mischief done. There is a place for cares, and for riches,

too—a place in which they help and do not hinder the kingdom of God. Kept in its own sphere, the lawful business of life becomes a protecting fence round the tender plant of grace in a Christian's heart. We should not permit the thorns, or noxious weeds, to occupy the position which is due to the good seed. Not as rivals in the field, but as guards around it, earthly affairs are innocent and safe. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

8. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The fourth class of hearers, here, as well as in Matt. xiii. and Mark iv., are represented by certain salient distinctive points of character, which are as touchstones, by which every man may, and should try himself. They *hear* the word willingly and with attention, and *understand* it, receive it in faith, obey it, and thus experience its power, in which respects they are distinguished from the first class. They also *keep* it in a pure, good heart, often meditating on it, and laying it up in the deepest recesses of the mind, which constitutes their distinction from the second class. They *bring forth fruit*, in them are manifested the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22; 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7, *with patience*, persevering with unshaken steadfastness against opposition and difficulties, under the reproach of the world, in the storm of persecution, and this patience which they exercise distinguishes them from the third class. The expressions, "good ground" and "an honest and good heart," do not imply that any one's heart is naturally good, or even can become so without the grace of God. The *ground*, here, like the *tree* in another analogical lesson, is not good until it is *made* good. The fairest sense of these expressions is, "an unprejudiced heart, willing to be taught," such as was peculiarly lacking among the Jews in our Lord's time. The Bereans are an illustration of the expression *good ground*, Acts xvii. 9. The good heart is good by reception of the truth. It does not receive the truth because it is good. There is no regeneration of heart, except by the power of the Spirit of God, and generally through the instrumentality of the truth. *Bare fruit a hundred-fold*. Luke only mentions summarily the hundred-fold increase, while Matthew and Mark speak of the "thirty" and "sixty-fold." The return of a hundred-fold for one is not unknown in the East, though always mentioned as something extraordinary. If there be no fruit, there can be no Christianity. Fruit is the test of the tree, character the symbol of principle. That some portions of the *good ground* produced a larger return than others, corresponds with the fact in the spiritual sphere. There are diversities in the Spirit's operation, diversities in natural gifts bestowed on men at first, and diversities in the amount of energy exerted by believers as fellow-workers with God in their own sanctification, and diversities, accordingly, in the fruitfulness which results in the life of Christians. While all true believers are safe in Christ, each should covet the best gifts; and no true disciple will be contented with a thirty-fold increase of usefulness, if, through prayer and watching, if, by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, if, by sternly crucifying the flesh, and trustfully walking with God, he may rise from thirty to sixty, and from sixty to an hundred-fold, in that holy obedience which grows on living faith. *And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. This expression is especially recorded by all the three Evangelists, and seems to point out the special importance of the parable. The verb rendered *cried*, implies an utterance in loud and distinct tones, so that all could hear. This method of announcement Christ often adopted, when uttering some important and mighty truth.

9. "And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?"

<sup>d</sup> Matt. xiii. 10; Mark iv. 10.

They wished to understand the meaning of the parable. We should earnestly desire to know the true intent and full extent of the word we hear, that we may be neither mistaken nor defective in our knowledge.

10. And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; \*that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

<sup>e</sup> Is. vi. 9; Mark iv. 12.

*Unto you it is given, &c.*, as a reward of your diligence, and desire to be informed, these things shall be explained to you, but the rest shall be left in darkness, and shall have their voluntary ignorance punished with judicial ignorance. *Mysteries of the kingdom of God*; things respecting the Messianic kingdom, things which cannot be known until they are revealed. *But to others, &c.*—"but to them that are without, all these things are done in parables." Here observe, 1. That the doctrines of the gospel are great mysteries. 2. That it is an invaluable privilege rightly to understand them. 3. That in this privilege all are not sharers, but only those to whom *it is given*. 4. That whilst God does not arbitrarily aim to confirm any in judicial blindness, it is, nevertheless, a righteous thing with Him to leave to farther blindness and ignorance in spiritual things, those who, as the Pharisees in Christ's time did, wilfully reject the truth, and shut their eyes against the evidence of it.

11. "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. xiii. 18; Mark iv. 14.

Our Lord, in this case, gave both the parable and its explanation. He became His own interpreter. The Master takes us, like little children, by the hand, and leads us through all the turnings of His first symbolic lesson, lest in our inexperience we should miss our way. The Son of God not only gave Himself as a sacrifice for sin, He also labored as a patient painstaking teacher of the ignorant. He is the Apostle as well as the High Priest of our profession. His instructions have been recorded by the Spirit in the Scripture for our use. We may still sit at His feet and listen to His voice. See Notes on verse 5.

12. Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. [See Notes on verse 5.]

13. They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, and these have a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. [See Notes on verse 6.]

14. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

*Bring forth no fruit to perfection.* In Matthew and Mark, *becometh unfruitful*. See Notes on verse 7.

15. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. [See Notes on verse 8.]

Concerning this parable, let the following things be observed: 1. It is addressed to *hearers* of the gospel: those who *refuse to hear* are elsewhere in the Scriptures noticed and condemned. 2. The four classes of hearers described include the whole mass of hearers. It is impossible to find any hearer who does not come under one of these descriptions. 3. As there never yet has been in the history of the world an assemblage of mixed hearers which might not be resolved into these four divisions, we have here decisive proof of our Lord's power of foreseeing future events. 4. It is a solemn thought, that only in one, out of the four classes of hearers, the seed brought forth fruit. 5. It is not enough merely to *admire* this parable. If a traveller, who possesses an accurate map of his route, turn aside from it and perish in a pit, it will not avail him in his extremity to reflect that he carries the correct track in his hand. 6. The minister receives the seed which he sows from Christ, but it must also have become, through spiritual experience, his own possession; for it must be taught of faith. Ps. cxvi. 10; 1 John i. 1-3. 7. The minister's vocation is one involving much labor, and requiring patience. 8. The work of spreading Divine truth is not confined to those who are formally set apart to it. As every leaf of the forest and every ripple on the lake, which itself receives a sunbeam on its breast, may throw the sunbeam off again, and so spread light around: in like manner, every one, old or young, who receives Christ into his heart, may and will publish, with his life and lips, that blessed name. 9. It is not the fault of the seed, or of the sower, if men do not bring forth fruit unto eternal life. The difficulty is with the soil. Men will not receive with meekness the ingrafted word, as an Apostle exhorts, James i. 21. The gospel is always fruitful seed in regard to its Divine virtue, but not in regard to its actual effects. 10. There is not a uniform proficiency in holiness among Christians. None are destitute of fruit; but it is not always the same, even in the same person, nor is it so in different persons—it varies, according to their respective powers, the relations of life, the spheres of operation in which the Lord has placed them, and *especially* according to their degrees of fidelity in the cultivation of their hearts.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Did some seed fall upon a rock?
2. What is meant by "stony ground?"
3. What does the rock represent?
4. What is said about "as soon as it was sprung up," &c.?
5. Who are the persons here represented?
6. What is said of "receive the word with joy?"
7. What is said of "these have no root?"
8. What is meant by "which for a while believe," &c.?
9. Did some fall among thorns?
10. What is said of the portion of seed here referred to?
11. What are we to understand by "thorns?"
12. What is said of many persons in their youth?
13. What are the cares referred to?
14. What are "the riches and pleasures of this life?"
15. What may choke the word?
16. What is said of the fact that the seed and the thorns grew together?
17. By what points are the fourth class of hearers represented?
18. When is the "ground" "good?"
19. Who were an illustration of the "good ground?"

20. What is said of the return of a hundred-fold for one ?
21. What is said of some portions of the good ground, as compared with others ?
22. What did Jesus do after He had delivered the parable ?
23. What is said of "cried?"
24. What of "He that hath ears," &c. ?
25. What did the disciples ask Jesus ?
26. What did they desire ?
27. What did Christ reply ?
28. How are we to understand "unto you it is given," &c. ?
29. What are the "mysteries of the kingdom of God?"
30. What is said of "but to others," &c. ?
31. What are we asked to observe ?
32. Did our Lord become His own interpreter ?
33. What is said of the Son of God ?
34. What are we to understand by "with patience?"
35. To whom was this parable addressed ?
36. Whom do the four classes of hearers include ?
37. What proof have we here of our Lord's foreknowledge ?
38. What is said to be a solemn thought ?
39. Is it enough to *admire* this parable ?
40. Whence does the minister receive the seed he sows ?
41. What is said of the minister's vocation ?
42. What is said of the work of spreading Divine truth ?
43. Whose fault is it, if there is no fruit ?
44. Is there a uniform proficiency in holiness among Christians ?

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## LESSON LI.

vs. 16-25.

16. ¶ "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth *it* under a bed ; but setteth *it* on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

‡ Matt. v. 15 ; Mark iv. 21 ; Luke xi. 33.

*Lighted a candle*, or lamp. *Covereth it with a vessel*, &c. From some ancient writers we learn, that only those who had bad designs hid a candle, that, in the dead of the night, when all were asleep, they might rise up, and have a light at hand to effect their bad purposes. *But setteth it on a candlestick*, &c. "As men do not light a candle that they may cover it, so I have not communicated my truth or my grace unto you, my Apostles and disciples, merely for your own use, but for that of others." Ministers and disciples of Christ, shining by light derived from Him as the "Light of the world," are, in a subordinate sense, the "light of the world," also, and diffuse His truth and salvation where darkness and wickedness would otherwise reign. It is their duty, and should be their grand object, so to recommend the truth by pious, edifying conversation and conduct, that men may see their good works and be led to glorify God. Every Christian should strive to be a *burning and shining* light. Heavenly good things are lost by parsimony, and increase by liberality.

17. <sup>b</sup>For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither *any thing* hid, that shall not be known, and come abroad.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. x. 26; Luke xli. 2.

What is committed to you in *secret*, should be *made manifest*, or, rather, *become manifest*, by you. Your Master did not give you talents to be buried, but to be traded with. Ye shall teach publicly, and explain and illustrate what I now teach you in private.

18. Take heed therefore how ye hear: 'for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he \*seemeth to have.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 12 and xxv. 29; Luke xix. 26.

\* Or, *thinketh that he hath.*

*How ye hear.* In Mark, *what ye hear.* The same general idea of care and caution, in regard to the reception of truth, lies at the basis of both directions. Take heed that you attend to my words, for they must be listened to studiously, with teachableness of disposition, and with diligence, since they are symbolical and sublime, and not spoken at random, or by chance. Every advantage bestowed on us by Providence, and religious instruction especially, is a trust, of which we must hereafter give account. We should therefore hear the words of eternal life with attention, impartiality, and seriousness of heart, mixed with faith, not a mere historical persuasion of the truth of the gospel, though with this we are to begin, but a deep sense of the need of God's mercy promised in it, a thankful acceptance of the terms on which that mercy is offered, and an humble reliance on a crucified Saviour for pardon, grace, and strength. *For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.* The words *which he seemeth to have*, throw light upon the phrase *what he hath*, in the parallel places, Mark iv. 25; Matt. xiii. 12. The gifts we have, will either be continued to us, or taken from us, according as we do, or do not, employ them for working out our own salvation, for promoting the glory of God, and for the edification of our brethren. Men only *seem* to have what they do not *use*, and mere shows of religion will be lost and forfeited. It is not that which a man does really possess, of which he can be deprived, but of that which he *seemeth* to have, *i. e.*, of which he has got a temporary or imaginary possession, like the stony-ground hearers, who at first received the word with joy, but falling away, were stripped of every semblance of a belief in Christ. There is no surer way to thrive in grace, and increase in gifts, than to exercise and improve them. It is of vast advantage to cultivate and cherish a willing and receptive disposition and purpose in relation to the gospel.

19. ¶ Then came to him *his* mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. xii. 46; Mark iii. 31.

The earnestness and assiduity of Christ in teaching the people notwithstanding the opposition of the Pharisees, gave disquietude to His friends. They wished Him to desist from His labors, and they seem to have engaged Mary to concur in the design, which was doubtless reprehensible, as it implied sentiments of Him, derogatory to His perfect wisdom and excellence. *His brethren*, or near relations. Some think the word means the children of Joseph by a former wife, or His cousins. For the wide signification of "brethren," see Gen. xxi. 40; Matt. xiii. 55; xxvii. 56; Mark iii. 18; Gal. i. 19.

20. And it was told him *by certain* which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

As the crowd was so great as to render it impossible for any one on the outside to directly address Jesus, the report of His mother and brethren being present, and desiring to speak with Him, was passed along through the crowd, and thus communicated to Him.

21. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

Christ here reaffirms the sentiment uttered while sitting in the temple in the midst of the doctors, that He has higher affinities and relationships than those of an earthly nature. We must not suppose from this answer that He intended any disrespect to, or felt no regard for; His mother, or any of His relations, for we know that He bore to His mother such affection, that, when hanging on the cross, He commended her with His expiring breath to the care of His beloved disciple. John xix. 27. *My mother and brethren are these*, the pronoun having a strong demonstrative force, as though He pointed with His finger to His disciples who were present. As the Saviour speaks alone of *mother* and *brethren*, it is probable that Joseph was now dead. The fact that our Lord, among the possible relations which human beings can sustain to Him, does not include that of father, may, however, also be well explained from His unwillingness to attribute to any human being the relation which God alone sustained to Him.

Observe, 1. That those united to Christ *in spirit*, are nearer to Him than those related to Him in the *flesh*. With what sacred dignity does this invest all true believers! Although we cannot *see* our Lord, yet we may love Him; and although His bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, His spiritual presence is not denied. Though not ours in affinity, and consanguinity, yet He is or may be ours, in faith, in love, and in service. 2. All true Christians are obedient to God. As soon as any one is converted, He begins to desire to do the will of God. David said, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" Ps. cxix. 5. "I delight," said Paul, "in the law of God after the inward man." Yet the sin of his nature troubled him. He said, "I see a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." All the children of God endure the same struggle that Paul and David endured. Each of them can say:

"Though I fail, I weep,  
Though I halt in pace,  
Yet I creep  
To the throne of grace."

But though they do not keep the Divine commandments perfectly, as Jesus did, John vi. 38, they are comforted by knowing that He loves them.

22. ¶ Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

† Matt. viii. 23; Mark iv. 35.

This beautiful and instructive incident is also recorded by Matt. viii. 18-27, and Mark iv. 35-41. The time of it is here left indefinite, but Mark tells us that it was the same day in which He pronounced the parables of the sower, the tares, the grain of mustard-seed, &c., by the lake of Galilee. Jesus wished to visit the region that lay east of the southern extremity of this lake, and embarked with his disciples in a *ship*, or large boat, for that purpose.

*The lake.* See Notes on Ch. v. 1. *And they launched forth*, probably as the bright sun was setting, and with the prospect of a fair wind, and prosperous voyage. Thus many launch forth into the world, with fair appearances, and high-raised expectations.

23. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled *with water*, and were in jeopardy.



SEA OF GALILEE.

*He fell asleep.* Fatigued with the labors of the day, Jesus had withdrawn Himself to the hinder part of the vessel, and composed Himself to sleep. We have here evidence of His humanity. Though Christ's Godhead is the Rock to which we must all fly for hope and help, and in the clefts of which we must seek to be secure, yet it is, as it were, through His human nature that we have to enter into those clefts. What comfort does it afford to see Him who is all our hope and confidence, so truly a partaker of our necessities and sinless infirmities, as to need the repose which we ourselves require! The humanity of Jesus is here shown to be pure and perfect. Jonah once slept in a storm, but his sleep was the result of the opiate of a dead and benumbed conscience. The sleep of Christ in the tempest, was because of a pure, innocent, and holy conscience. Another truth taught by the sleep of Jesus in the storm is, that even when the case of His people may *seem* most desperate, He has not forgotten them. He may shut His eye, but not His heart. *And there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.* A sudden and violent squall, such as those small inland seas, surrounded with mountain gorges, are notoriously exposed to, descended on the bosom of the lake: and the ship which bore the Saviour of the world appeared to be in imminent peril, as, humanly speaking, no doubt it was, for the disciples, exercised to the sea, many of them from their youth,

would not have been terrified at the mere shadow of danger. Thus they who in such favorable circumstances had set sail, were suddenly overtaken with a storm. "Judge not according to the appearance." "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." There is neither room nor reason to doubt that Jesus is with us, because in temporal or spiritual things, trouble and sorrow assail us. We may encounter storms when sailing with the Son of God Himself. "In the world," says our Lord, "ye shall have tribulation." "We are they," say the saints in glory, "who have come out of great tribulation."

24. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

How much was there to sustain the disciples with a sense of security! Jesus was in the same vessel with them, and exposed to the same peril; and if He perished not, their safety was surely guaranteed. Yet, for the moment, fear overwhelmed them. We see their terror in the double *Master, Master*, and in the words of almost rebuke, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" with which, according to Mark, they addressed Jesus. *We perish*; according to Matthew, "Lord, save us, we perish!" One advantage of trials is, to make us know our weakness, so that we shall apply to God by faith in Christ. It is by *faith* alone that we may be said to approach Him, by *love* we are united to Him, and by *prayer* we awake Him. All good perishes in us without Christ; without His grace we are in momentary danger of utter ruin. *Then he arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.* The word *rebuked* is one which we apply to living and intelligent creatures only. We talk of rebuking a servant, or a child, but not a tree, or a stone. It is possible, therefore, that in this case there is not a mere historical personification, but a recognition of a malignant agency to which the word is spoken. There may have been demon-spirits giving strength to the hurricane—mustering, in diabolic rage, the destructive forces of nature, under some mad delusion, that they might possibly effect the ruin of the voyagers, and thus prevent the discomfiture they seem to have known too well was at hand. Jesus needed not, as Moses, to stretch a rod over the deep; He needed not an instrument foreign to Himself to do His mighty work. Calm and collected He went upon the deck, and addressed His reproof to the *wind* and the *water*—the wind as the cause, and the raging billows as the effect. Nature yields obedience to Him of whom the Psalmist prophetically sung: "Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them." The sea, no longer, as after a storm, rises, and falls, and frets, but at once becomes smooth and tranquil. This scene strongly resembles that which the commencement of the sacred volume supplies: "And He said, Light be; and light was." And the analogy of the two examples is nearer than might at first appear; for He who now rebuked the wind and the raging of the water is He "by whom also God made the worlds," He "without whom nothing was made that was made." We have in this scene an instance of the juxtaposition of lowliness and greatness which is so often observable in the history of our Lord.

25. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

The disciples had faith, for they turned to Christ in their need; but it was not quick and lively: it was imperfect, as was evident in their excess of terror, in their counting it possible that the ship which bore their Lord could ever truly perish, for they doubtless meant to include Him in their *we*. The haste, agitation, and weak faith of the disciples, drew forth from Jesus the gentle, tender, yet faithful words: *Where is your faith?* There is no reproach for that rude *awaking* from slumber He so much needed. But, gazing with earnestness upon them, He asks, (as in Matthew,) "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" What encouragement is here given to feeble Christians, from the fact that even the disciples themselves possessed but "little faith!" A true and living faith, although it cannot be too large for God's glory, and for our own comfort, cannot be too small for the purpose of salvation. *What manner of man is this!* &c. By the miracle the disciples were led into thoughts, even higher and more awful, of that Lord whom they followed, and were brought more and more to feel that in nearness to Him was all safety and deliverance from every danger. Their faith was disciplined, and they were prepared for sterner moral storms yet in reserve for them. God has a kind design in *all* the afflictions which befall his people. Happy are those for whom all the hurricanes of life's unquiet sea have the effect of making Jesus more precious.

This miracle may be regarded as symbolical of the Church—the Church *in* the world, and yet not *of* the world, subject to the storms of persecution. From all these storms she shall be delivered, as she ever has been, by Christ, who is in her, being roused by the cry of His servants. "God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved: THE LORD shall help her, and that right early." This miracle was not a mere miraculous feat, but also a prophetic fact. It was not finished when it was done, but a foreshadow, as all Christ's miracles were, of a grand result yet to be. That clear dominion of man's spirit over the material universe which Christianity gives, the calm courage which it inspires, and the lordship over the winds and waves, and over all the blind uproar of nature which it secures, is the appointed sequence of the calming of the storm on the Galilean lake. It is also a part of the recuperative and restoring process which is going forward under Him "by whom and for whom are all things." It is an advance toward the time of the promised "restitution of all things."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What do we learn from some ancient writers?
2. What was the meaning of this saying of our Lord?
3. What is said of ministers?
4. What is meant in ver. 17?
5. How are we to understand "take heed," &c.?
6. What is said of "whosoever hath," &c.?
7. What is said of the words, "which he seemeth to have?"
8. What is said of the gifts we have?
9. What do men only *seem* to have?
10. What is the surest way to grow in grace and in gifts?
11. What did Christ's friends wish in regard to His labors?
12. Who were his "brethren?"
13. How was the report of His mother and brethren being present communicated to Jesus?
14. What does Christ reaffirm in ver. 21?
15. What must we not suppose from this answer?
16. What is said of the pronoun "these?"
17. Is it probable Joseph was now dead?
18. Why did not Jesus include among the possible relations, which human beings can sustain to Him, that of father?

19. What is said of those united to Christ *in spirit*?
20. What is said of all true Christians?
21. What can each of God's children say?
22. By whom is the incident in ver. 22 also recorded?
23. When did it occur?
24. What did Jesus wish to visit?
25. What kind of a ship did He and His disciples embark in?
26. What evidence does Christ's sleep furnish?
27. What is said of our Lord's humanity?
28. What kind of a storm arose?
29. Did the ship appear to be in peril?
30. What is said of doubting that Jesus is with us in the storm?
31. What did the disciples do?
32. In what do we see their terror?
33. What is one advantage of trials?
34. What did Jesus do?
35. What is said of the word "rebuked?"
36. How did Jesus calm the winds and waves?
37. Did the sea at once become smooth and tranquil?
38. What does this scene strongly resemble?
39. What did Jesus say to the disciples?
40. What is said of their faith?
41. What is said of feeble Christians?
42. What effect had the miracle on the disciples?
43. How may this miracle be regarded?
44. What is said of this miracle?

## LESSON LII.

vs. 26-40.

26. ¶<sup>m</sup> And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

<sup>m</sup> Matt. viii. 28; Mark v. 1.

We have just seen Jesus show Himself the controller of the elements by which our world is assailed. We now come to contemplate Him in a light still more glorious, as the Lord of the inner storms—the moral hurricanes by which the human mind and heart are deranged. *The country of the Gadarenes.* The city of Gadara, which was one of the ten cities called Decapolis, was on the east of Jordan, in the vicinity of the lake of Gennesaret, beyond the brook Jarmuk, about eight miles above its junction with the Jordan. This city gave its name to the district or canton of which it was the chief town—*Gadarene*. *Gergesa* was another city in the same neighborhood, which gave to another district the name of the country of the *Gergesenes*, so that the region generally might be designated by either name.

27. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in *any* house, but in the tombs.

In describing this fearful scene, each Evangelist that records it, has some

touches which are peculiarly his own, Matt. viii. 28-34; Mark v. 1-20. *A certain man which had devils long time*, was long demoniacally possessed. See Notes on Ch. iv. 33, &c. He was no madman or maniac bereft of reason, the victim of a disordered fancy or bewildered imagination; a deeper and darker woe brooded over him. A careful observation of the narrative shows us, that in that tempest-tossed spirit there was a strange, mysterious blending of human consciousness and fiendish hate—an interweaving of truth and error—a confounding of his own personality with that of the devils. His own nature was crushed to the dust by some savage tormentor, lording it over him, yet the overmastered soul (the nobler being of the man) seems ever and anon to rise to the surface, and to utter longings for emancipation. *And ware no clothes*, he was naked, for he tore off whatever was put upon his person. *Neither abode in any house, but in the tombs*. There are in the part of the country referred to, and especially near the ruins of the city of Gadara, still to be seen numerous old sepulchres hewn in the sides of the hills, some of which are occupied as residences of poor families. These places of tombs being outside the towns, and being avoided by the Jews, for fear of contracting pollution from contact with human bones, formed secluded retreats, acceptable to those who, from demoniacal possession, madness, or crime, or other causes, shunned the society of men. These things still happen, and Mr. Warburton, in the *Crescent and Cross*, relates the following case: "On descending from these heights, (those of Lebanon,) I found myself in a cemetery, whose sculptured turbans showed me that the neighboring village was Moslem. The silence of night was now broken by fierce yells and howlings, which I discovered proceeded from a naked maniac, who was fighting with some wild dogs for a bone. The moment he perceived me, he left his canine comrades, and bounding along with rapid strides, seized my horse's bridle, and almost forced him backward over the cliff, by the grip he held of the Mameluke bit." Though men are not literally possessed of devils, all are by nature the slaves of sin, and led captive by the great adversary at his will. How frequently does sin cut off men from social happiness and God! Hemmed in by deeds of moral turpitude, sinners live on, shut out from Heaven's own joys. Their home is but a tomb—a dark, cold place, though songs and revelry, and thoughtless mirth are often found within.

28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

The man may have rushed down from his dismal dwelling-place, to encounter with hostile violence the intruders that had dared to set foot on his domain. Or it may have been that he was drawn to Christ by the secret instinctive feeling that He was his helper, and driven from Him by the sense of the awful gulf that divided him from the Holy One of God. At any rate, if it was with purposes of violence, ere the man had fully reached Jesus, his mind was changed, "for he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man," ver. 29. *Jesus, thou Son of God most high*. Perhaps the demoniac was a Jew not wholly unacquainted with the Messianic hope, but certainly it is in the spirit of the Evangelists if we believe that the knowledge of the Lord which the demons usually exhibited had been attained in a supernatural way. *What have I to do with thee?* These are the words of the devil by whom the man was possessed, rather than the man himself, and they mean, "What have we in common? Why interferest thou with us? Why wilt thou not let us alone?" *I beseech thee, torment me not*. How torment him not? It has been alleged that in this entreaty the possessed man identi-

fied himself with his demon, dreading the pains and convulsions of the casting out, but if that had been meant, the possessed man would have distinguished himself from his demon, and not identified himself with him, for in that identification he would have felt the nearness and supremacy of Jesus itself a torment, and still more banishment into the abyss. These words, as well as those in Matthew, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" are a striking incidental proof that there will be a judgment and a hell. The devils believe this, if men do not.

29. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

*For he had commanded, &c.* See Notes on ver. 28. *For oftentimes it had caught him,* therefore our compassionate Lord had made the more haste to cast it out. *And he was kept bound, &c.,* he was possessed of that extraordinary muscular strength which maniacs so often put forth, Acts xix. 16, and thus all efforts to bind him had proved ineffectual. *Into the wilderness,* where he found a congenial habitation, howling amid the barren and dreary solitudes.

30. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

When Christ commanded the unclean spirit to come out, the demoniac consciousness in the man was shaken to its depths, but still he felt himself to be possessed of a legion of evil spirits, and hence our Lord proceeded to perfect the cure, by asking him his name. Jesus did not ask the name because of His own ignorance of the state of this demoniac, but in order to show to those around Him, how malignant was this Satanic possession, and the mighty power demanded to effect the cure of the afflicted man; also, to restore the man, before his last and most fearful paroxysm, to personal consciousness—to the remembrance of his earlier history and better times. Anticipating the reply to the question *What is thy name?* as if it had been addressed to *him,* the indwelling demon said, *Legion.* Legion is a well-known name, by which a division of the Roman army was designated, and which is supposed to have contained 5,000 or 6,000 men. The word is here evidently used indefinitely to express a great number, and it was used to intimidate Christ, as though it had been said, "Don't interfere with us; you will find that we are not one that you can easily crush, but a mighty multitude, that will rush upon you and destroy you also." What a horrible representation does this word *Legion* make of this demoniac!—his whole inner being invaded, wildly torn, and dislocated, by a host of infernal fiends—the spirits of darkness running riot within him!

31. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

• Rev. xx. 3.

*They besought him, &c.* In Mark the singular is employed; in the narrative before us one of the demons is, ver. 28, speaking for himself and companions; *here, all,* uttering themselves through one, unite in *beseeching* Jesus not to send them *into the deep.* *The deep* here means, not the sea, but the *abyss* or pit of hell. It is the same Greek word which is five times translated "bottomless pit" in the book of Revelation: for instance, xx. 1, 3; xii. 11. Evil spirits have their wishes and understand their interest as well as man.

32. And there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

The demons, in this ever-intensifying conflict between themselves and the Messiah, becoming aware that they must in some way yield before Him, entreat at least to be handled in the mildest way. They had great objections to being in the abyss, and much preferred to wander about. But it was held that they could only do this within the vehicle of some body—human or animal, divested of which they returned to the abyss. To avert this the demons implored permission to enter a herd of swine that was feeding near, knowing that it would be in vain to ask leave to enter into any other man, or into any lawful beast of the country. It should be remembered that to keep swine was a breach of the Mosaic law, swine being unclean animals. If, therefore, the Gadarenes were Jews—and there seem strong reasons for supposing they were—they were committing an habitual sin. And *he suffered* them, permitted the fiends to enter the swine.

33. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

A large herd of swine were feeding on the neighboring cliffs; into these the demons entered, and the herd rushed headlong in frantic rage over the crags or slopes overhanging the lake, and were engulfed in the waters below, thus showing the extraordinary malice, hatred and love of mischief, which are attributes of Satan, and which extend their operation beyond *men*—even to *brutes*. The destruction of the swine does not, as some have imagined it does, present any serious difficulty. A man is of more value than many swine; and if the Lord that made all things could do man good morally, physically, or otherwise, by sacrificing these swine, He only did then and in that act what is done every day when the innocent lamb, the unoffending bird, the patient ox, are slaughtered for man's nutriment. In relation to the loss incurred by the owners of the swine, (at which some have cavilled,) it is no more open to objection than every murrain that causes cattle to die, or inundation that destroys the fruits of the field, or other natural calamity with which God chastens His children, punishes, or seeks to make contrite the hearts of His enemies. For oftentimes the taking away by God is, in a higher sense, a giving. It is the taking away of the meaner thing, for the purpose of making receptive of the higher.

34. When they that fed *them* saw what was done, they fled, and went and told *it* in the city and in the country.

35. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

36. They also which saw *it* told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

They that fed the swine fled in consternation to the adjoining city. The inhabitants hurried out to verify with their own eyes the strange report they had heard. And not only did they find the herd perishing in the waters, but, stranger than all, the scourge and terror of the region *sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind*—clothed, doubtless, by the interven-

tion of the disciples. It is likely that the one-sided report of the swineherd, in justifying themselves to the owners of the swine, had filled the latter with hostile intentions against Jesus for the loss they had sustained. But when they came to the spot, and saw the demoniac thus quiet as a child, and heard from the keepers of the swine, as actual spectators, by what means he was healed, *they were afraid to molest Christ*. The *sitting at the feet of Jesus* implies that the man, as a disciple, was ready and anxious to receive and obey His instructions. The mercy of Jesus is the only medicine of the soul. When Jesus forgives a man his sins, He enlightens his mind, and thus is he brought to take the lowest place, while his chief anxiety will be to put the crown upon the head of his redeeming Lord. Christ also clothes the pardoned soul with righteousness—a righteousness which His own hands have wrought, which outshines the heavens in their brightness, and which shall never decay.

37. ¶ Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about <sup>p</sup>besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

<sup>o</sup> Matt. viii. 34.

<sup>p</sup> Acts xvi. 39.

The whole multitude, gathered from the entire country round about to see the strange sight, having learned, by what they heard and saw, of the wondrous miracle, were seized with superstitious and half-heathen fear, and dreading further destruction of their property, they besought Jesus to depart out of their country, and he returned to the boat. What a contrast to the entreaty of the Samaritans! John iv. 40. How seldom are the first offers of a Saviour cordially heard, and immediately accepted by those who have lived in ignorance of God! Many a repulsive feeling, many a rebellious thought rises up within them, and though few will emulate the open opposition of the Gadarenes, and say, "depart from us," how many there are who put the word of salvation wilfully from them, rush into the world, give way to folly, yield to sin, and in their days of darkness seek any and every master, rather than commit themselves at once to the Shepherd of their souls, and give themselves up to be guided, governed, sanctified and saved by the God of their salvation! How awakening the reflection, that we, like the Gadarenes, may be permitted but once to have the offers of a Saviour's presence and a Saviour's love!

38. Now <sup>q</sup>the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,

<sup>q</sup> Mark v. 18.

39. Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

The prayer with which the recovered demoniac followed the departing Saviour, may serve as an unequivocal proof of the completeness of his healing, as well as the warmth of his thankfulness. The man had friends at home. Probably he was now in danger of despising his own people. Perhaps the fact that Jesus, who, in the case of those who were healed elsewhere, imposed silence, appointed this man to be a living memorial of His own saving manifestation for that entire district, is a proof that He had not

the intention of returning into the land of the Gadarenes. At all events, Christ's refusal to let the recovered demoniac accompany Him, may teach, that true rest and repose in a Saviour's presence is reserved for Heaven, that life has great duties and great responsibilities, that religion is not a thing to be thrust into a corner, the joys of which are to be selfishly appropriated, without one effort to impart them to others, but home, friends, country, human kind, are the successive spheres for the operation of our Christian influence. Shining first and brightest in our own dwelling, the light of truth must radiate to the earth's circumference.

There is no revelation of Christ as the King of the world of spirits which contains so much that is obscure as that made in the miracle we have just considered. In relation to such miracles the Saviour's own words hold good, Luke vii. 23.

40. ¶ And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people *gladly* received him: for they were all waiting for him.

At landing, He met with a better reception than among the Gadarenes, for the multitude gathered around him to hear him preach, many having waited there in expectation of His return.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. In what aspect are we now to contemplate Jesus?
2. What is said of the city of Gadara?
3. What of Gergesa?
4. What has each Evangelist said who describes this scene?
5. What is said of this "certain man"?
6. Why was he naked?
7. What is said about his dwelling in the tombs?
8. What case does Mr. Warburton relate?
9. How did this man fall down before Jesus?
10. What did he say to our Lord?
11. How did he know Jesus was the Son of God most high?
12. Whose were the words—"What have I to do with thee?"
13. What did these words mean?
14. What was meant by the request, "torment me not?"
15. Are these words proof that there will be a judgment and a hell?
16. Why did our Lord command the unclean spirit to come out of the man?
17. What is said of "he was kept bound," &c.?
18. Where was he driven?
19. What did Jesus ask him?
20. Why did He ask his name?
21. What did the indwelling demon reply?
22. What is said about the word "Legion?"
23. For what did the demons beseech Jesus?
24. What is meant by "the deep?"
25. What did the demons next ask of Christ?
26. Why did they ask this?
27. What is said about keeping swine?
28. What is said about the destruction of the swine?
29. What is said of the malice and hatred attributed to Satan?
30. What became of those that fed the swine?
31. What did those in the city do?
32. How did they find the man out of whom the devils were departed?

33. How was this man clothed?
34. What effect was produced upon those who came out of the city?
35. What does "sitting at the feet of Jesus" imply?
36. What did the multitude beseech Jesus to do?
37. What did He do?
38. How are the first offers of a Saviour generally heard?
39. What did the man from whom the devils were departed ask of Jesus?
40. What did Jesus say to him?
41. Why did He refuse to let him accompany Him?
42. What does this refusal teach?
43. What is said of this miracle?
44. With what reception did Jesus meet after landing?

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### LESSON LIII.

vs. 41-56.

41. ¶ And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue, and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house:

† Matt. ix. 18; Mark v. 22.

There were no less than three persons in Capernaum, to which Christ had now returned, for whom our Lord wrought special miracles: The nobleman whose son was healed, John iv. 46; the centurion, whose servant was healed; and now, Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. All the three Evangelists who record this miracle, Matt. ix. 18-26, Mark v. 22-43, introduce it with, *Behold!* The expression seems intended to call our attention to the greatness of the miracle, and partly to the singular goodness of God in raising up friends to the gospel even in the synagogues. *Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue*, doubtless the synagogue of Capernaum, where Jesus now was. His duties were to direct the performance of Divine worship, and to govern the affairs of the synagogue. There were commonly several of these officers in every town, but one ranked higher than the rest, and was called the president, or "father of the synagogue." Such, it is thought, was Jairus. It is most probable that he was one of that deputation which came to the Lord to intercede in behalf of the centurion's servant. Luke vii. 8. He was there pleading for the restoration of another—one ready to die; he is here pleading, if it be possible to conceive that he realized the idea of a resurrection of his daughter from the dead, for the restoration of his own. And what does this contrast teach us? That sympathy with others in their trials is the earnest of success to us in ours. *Jairus fell down at Jesus' feet*—a revelation of the life of faith in the president of a synagogue certainly not too friendly to Jesus, of no mean significance—and *besought him that he would come into his house*, although he did not, like the centurion of Capernaum, say that Jesus could cure his child at a distance, yet he held that he could by a touch of the hand.

42. For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went, the people thronged him.

Luke is the only one of the Evangelists who uses the pleonasm—*one only daughter*—the statement of the age is also confined to him—facts, both of which show that he drew his materials from an independent source. The expression “little daughter,” Mark v. 23, is, according to the Talmud, thus explained:—A daughter, till she had completed twelve years, was called “little,” or, “a little maid,” but when she became of the full age of twelve years, and one day over, she was considered “a young woman.” *And she lay a dying.* Matthew makes the ruler say, *even now dead*; Mark and Luke make him say, *is at the point of death, is a dying.* The different accounts admit of easy combination, if we only consider the excited state of the speaker, who certainly did not weigh his words in a gold-balance. He left the child as one who was dying, and having no certain notices since of her actual condition, he was perplexed whether to speak of her as departed or not, and thus at one moment he used one expression, at the next another. The variant statements just referred to, constitute one of those apparent discrepancies in the Gospels, which prove that there was not, as has been alleged, a conspiracy among the Evangelists to write the same thing, and thus to palm a joint imposture on a credulous world—that they were the independent witnesses of facts, and the independent recorders of the performance of them—and that what *appear* to be discrepancies or discords in the Gospel narratives, are found, when really and thoroughly understood, to be only grander harmonies. *But as he went, the people thronged him.* The Saviour did not allow Himself to be kept back by the imperfect form of Jairus’ faith, as shown in conceiving of the miracle under one form, and stipulating that the Saviour must Himself come and lay His hands on His little daughter, instead of entreating, “Speak, in a word:” and as He went the people crowded upon Him, as the original verb rendered *thronged*, signifies, even to suffocation, to witness what the issue would be.

43. ¶ And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

• Matt. ix. 20.

44. Came behind *him*, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd.

*A woman having an issue of blood, &c.* To realize the greatness of the miracle here recorded, we should read Lev. xv. 19. The woman’s disease rendered her ceremonially unclean. This helps to explain her desire to avoid publicity and observation. Her case was very grievous, and of long standing. *Which had spent all her living upon physicians, &c.* Her suffering was much aggravated by many fruitless efforts she had made to be relieved,—efforts which were not only painful, but had also brought her to poverty. Yet it is right, when we are sick, to use the means which appear likely to restore our health, for if we say we trust in God, while we refuse those means which are suited to our case, we only tempt Him, while to depend on them alone, is to dishonor Him. *Came behind him.* In her hopeless state, this woman heard that Jesus was near, and forming her resolution in faith, hastened to join the multitude as they passed along. The crowd heedlessly thrust her aside, but she struggled on until she was by the side of our Lord. *And touched the border of his garment.* Possibly she had heard of “the multitude” who, a short time before, “sought to touch him, for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.” Luke vi. 19. Reaching forth her trembling hand, she silently and secretly touched the border, or fringe of His outer garment—the square mantle, or vesture, thrown over His shoulders. As the subjects of an eastern prince, when presenting their petitions, touched the end of his robe, as an act of submission, this woman in like manner

expressed her reverence and faith, and in a moment *her issue of blood was stanch'd*, not only the blood ceased flowing, but she experienced the healthy feeling of a new life. Her faith had peculiar strength and energy. Many had believed that a command of Christ was sufficient to heal the worst maladies, but none, that we are aware of, ever had faith to believe, as this poor woman did, that a single touch of His garment, even of the hem of His garment, would be superior to all the physicians upon earth. In every Christian congregation there are some happy few, whose cases are remarkably analogous to this. They make no public displays of their deep conviction, of the plague which lies at their hearts' core; they have in vain tried many methods for relief; they come at length to Jesus in the crowd, their malady unknown even to those who follow in the same throng, or worship in the same temple. Thus all unknown, and all unseen to others, they draw near by faith to the Saviour, and not only touch His garment, but hide themselves, and their own corruptions, and their wo, beneath it, even the garment of a Saviour's righteousness, and find there, where alone it can be found, their healing and their cure. These are they whom David calls "the Lord's hidden ones." Ps. lxxxiii. 3. The multitude of people who fill the churches, and make the crowd at sermons, and yet cease not to go on in their usual course, in following the world and their own passions, throng and press Christ, but do not touch Him.

45. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

*Who touched me?* more literally, "who is the person that touched me?" Not that Christ needed to be informed, for He knew who had received the benefit. Nor was He about to chide the trembling woman for her boldness. The sequel of the history in which the woman was obliged by this repeated question of the Lord, to own that she had come to seek, and had found health from Him, abundantly proves that there was a purpose in the question. *Peter and they that were with him said.* The reply of Peter, which has in it a shade of censure, that his Master should ask who touched Him, when such numbers were pressing upon Him, is entirely in agreement with Peter's forward and precipitate character. *Master.* The word thus translated, is only used by Luke in the New Testament, and is only applied to Christ. It signifies literally, "one who is set over any thing to take care of it." It is a title of respect, and an acknowledgment of authority.

46. And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that 'virtue is gone out of me.

† Mark v. 30; Luke vi. 19. .

*Virtue*, i. e., the healing power. *out of me*, literally, *away from*, external rather than internal separation being denoted by the Greek preposition. Of the going forth of this miraculous power, the Saviour had an intellectual knowledge, He knew it within Himself. And that this virtue proceeds from the Lord need occasion as little perplexity as that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. John xv. 26.

47. And "when the woman saw that she was not hid, 'she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

† Ps. xxxviii. 9; Jer. xxxi. 18; Hos. v. 3. † Is. lxvi. 2; 2 Cor. vii. 16; Phil. ii. 12; Heb. xii. 28.

*Not hid.* See Mark v. 82. *Came trembling, &c.* She desired to remain in concealment out of a shame which, however natural, was untimely here in this crisis of her spiritual life: and this her loving Saviour would not suffer her to do; by a gracious force he drew her from it, yet even here He spared her as far as He could. For not before, but after she was healed, did He require the open confession from her lips. *She declared unto Him before all the people, &c.*, in contrast with the great pains which she had previously taken to promote the concealment of her action. Silence, which, in the first instance, was a proof of her modesty, would, if persevered in, now have been culpable. Though Jesus healed her upon her *secret* application, He desired her to make a *public* acknowledgment of her cure. He desires every sinner to do the same. "With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness, and with the *mouth* confession is made unto salvation." The feeblest believer must not be ashamed to stand forth and acknowledge his obligations to the Saviour. The Christian may not be required to do this at the very beginning of his course, but neither will Christ permit him to be long concealed. He must own his Redeemer, and for his Redeemer's glory. In this will he resemble the saints above, who are not ashamed to acknowledge the blood by which they were redeemed.

48. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

Her faith had made her whole, and Christ's virtue had made her whole: it is as when we say that faith justifies; our faith is not itself a blessing, but it is the organ by which the blessing is received, it is the right hand of the soul, which lays hold upon it. *Go in peace.* This is not merely, go with a blessing, but go into the element of peace as the future element in which thy life shall move. The words, *Daughter, be of good comfort; go in peace,* express the one great privilege of the gospel. Take this from the believer, this spirit of adoption, this assurance of his sonship, and he is left poor indeed. For there is no middle state here on earth, as there shall be no middle state throughout eternity, between those who are the children of God through Christ Jesus, having been reconciled and brought near by the blood of the cross, united to Himself and carried into His family by the Spirit of adoption—and those who are outcasts and rebels, neither partakers of God's grace, nor preparing for His inheritance.

It furnishes us with some little idea of the abundance of the miracles of our Lord, of which comparatively so few have been recorded, when we find one so remarkable as that just noticed conveyed thus, as it were, merely in a parenthesis, and so little dwelt upon, that had it not occurred during Christ's passage to the ruler's house, it seems probable it never would have been narrated.

49. ¶ While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.

¶ Mark v. 35.

*While He yet spake, &c.* From this it appears that Jairus had come forth with the knowledge and approbation of his family to call the Master. It would seem also from this messenger, who probably was sent by the distressed mother, that no further benefit was expected from the *Master* or *Teacher*, (the Greek word here translated the *Master* not being the same as that used in the 45th verse, but signifying "the teacher,") that, however efficient Jesus might be as a physician, it could not be expected that He had power to call back the pulsation of blood into the still and silent heart of her that was *dead*.

50. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: <sup>x</sup>believe only, and she shall be made whole.

<sup>x</sup> John ii. 25-40; Rom. iv. 20.

*It—the messenger's report. Fear not, believe only, &c.* Jesus gave this prescription for hope and victory. The delay with the cure of the woman had been for Jairus a trial of fire, his just awakened faith had been most intensely shaken, but now, when about to succumb, he is strengthened by the Saviour. In his earlier ministry Christ allowed His miracles to *precede* the faith in order to create faith, but in His advancing ministry, He had a right, from His past works, often to require faith *before* the miracle, and then the miracle justified and rewarded the faith.

51. And when he came into the house, he <sup>y</sup>suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

<sup>y</sup> 2 Kings iv. 33, 36; Ia. xlii. 2; Acts ix. 40.

*He suffered no man, &c.* It was the Saviour's intention to keep the miracle as much as possible concealed. That He admitted into the house with Himself the three Apostles, who had a clearer revelation of His Divinity, humanity, power, and compassion towards the sorrowful and sinful, and who were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the garden of Gethsemane, is a proof of the high significance which He Himself attributed to the raising of the dead.

52. And all wept and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not, she is not dead, <sup>a</sup>but sleepeth.

<sup>a</sup> John xi. 11, 13.

Notice the quiet power and calm self-possession of Jesus. In the midst of great distress He was unmoved and composed, and that, too, though performing a deed which, in dignity and power, might rival the creation of a universe. Thus quietly, calmly, unobtrusively, Christ often still acts by His Divine Spirit, when the yet greater work of the spiritual resurrection of a soul, dead in trespasses and sins, is to be perfected. A single discourse, a sentence, yea, even a word, has been blessed to this great and wonderful end—no effort visible, no display of majesty and power, except to the happy soul thus raised to spiritual life. All truly great men are quiet men. Evidence of power is self-composure, self-possession. All the greatest forces in nature make the least noise. The light descending from the sun has infinitely greater power than the flashing lightning and rolling thunder.

*Weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth.* By this our Lord meant, *not* that she was in a state of suspended animation, or in a swoon, or a trance, which He *would* have said, if He had meant this, but, "To you this is indeed death without hope of resurrection, but with me, in power and in purpose, it is but a *sleep*, from which she is now to be awakened."

53. And <sup>a</sup>they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.

<sup>a</sup> Job xli. 4; Pa. xxii. 7.

Who shall complain that they are subjected to the ridicule of the world, when they behold their Lord, thus, at the very moment of exerting the highest attribute of Deity, "quickenng whom he will," calling the breathless corpse to life again, laughed to scorn by these poor fallen sons of earth?

54. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, <sup>b</sup>arise.

<sup>b</sup> Luke vii. 14; John xi. 43.

The words, *he put them all out, and they laughed him to scorn*, should be read together. It seems a rule in Christ's dealings with men not to force evidence upon them, but rather to withhold from scorners and scoffers those proofs of His own mission which he affords to others. And *now, as then*, the scoffing spirit is the spirit which is often left to itself.

55. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.

*Her spirit came again.* This shows that the soul is a thing distinct from the body in which it sojourns. *Commanded to give her meat.* This was intended to strengthen that life which was come back to her, and to prove that she was indeed no ghost, but had returned to the realities of a mortal existence. Luke xxiv. 41; John xxi. 5; Acts x. 41. This precaution was the more necessary, as the parents in that ecstatic moment might easily have forgotten it.

56. And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

c Matt. viii. 4; and ix. 30; Mark v. 43.

The astonished parents were not to make the miracle known beyond the circle of those who, of course, would know that the once dead maiden still lived, thus giving it an unsafe notoriety. The command of Jesus to this effect was occasioned by the intense expectation of the people at the time, (among whom were Scribes and Pharisees, who would not be convinced,) who might easily have given themselves up to insurrectionary commotions. Besides, as respects the little daughter awakened to new life, who does not feel how injuriously the continual questions and expressions of astonishment and curiosity would have worked upon the higher and inner life in her case? Then, again, it was the will of God that the Divine glory of Christ should not be manifested to the world all at once, and suddenly, but, little by little, during His state of humiliation; for His resurrection was the time appointed by God for the full manifestation of Christ's Godhead. Rom. i. 4.

*Practical Lessons.* 1. Affliction often is the means of awakening to an appreciation of Christ. But for sickness, sorrow, and trouble, many had never sought or found the Saviour of the world. 2. All are exposed to bereavement. Death is a cruel enemy. He makes no distinction in his attacks. He comes to the rich man's hall, as well as to the poor man's cottage. He does not spare the young, the strong, and the beautiful, any more than the old, the infirm, and the grey-haired. Our blessed Redeemer knows our trials when sorely bereaved, and sympathizes with us under them. Of the three memorable instances in which He brought the dead to life, one was the case of an only brother; another, an only son; and this an only daughter. 3. Prayer is of great comfort in the hour of sickness and death. Our prayers, like that of Jairus, should be marked by faith, fulness, earnestness, and importunity. Faith is of vast importance. 4. Let the convinced and anxious sinner only believe, as he gazes upon Jesus on the cross, and his heavy burden will fall at his feet, to oppress him no more forever: let the discouraged Christian do this, and perplexities and obstacles will disappear, or he will be strengthened to encounter them: let the dying saint do this, who has, for a moment, amidst the clouds that overhang him, lost sight of the Star of Bethlehem, and the shades of darkness will disperse, the scales will fall from his eyes, the anguish be removed from his soul, and all will be peace. 5. Jesus is the great vanquisher of death. The death of Christians is like a quiet sleep. Soon the morning hour shall strike, the waking time of immortality arrive, and the voice of Jesus be heard saying, "I go that I may awake them out of sleep." Let us take comfort in the thought that

there is a limit to death's power. Thanks be unto God, there is one stronger than death, who has said, "O death, I will be thy plagues : O grave, I will be thy destruction." Hosea xiii. 14. That One is the Friend of sinners, Christ Jesus the Lord.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Who were the three persons in Capernaum for whom Christ wrought miracles?
2. What is meant by "Behold?"
3. What office did Jairus hold?
4. What were his duties?
5. What else is said of Him?
6. What did Jairus do?
7. What did he beseech Jesus to do?
8. What is said of "one only daughter?"
9. What is said of "she lay a dying?"
10. Did Jesus go to the house of Jairus?
11. Who thronged Him?
12. What occurred on the way to Jairus' house?
13. What is said of this woman's case?
14. What aggravated her suffering?
15. What did she do to Jesus?
16. Of what had she possibly heard?
17. What did her touching the hem of the garment express?
18. What is said of her disease?
19. Was her faith peculiarly strong?
20. What is said of some in every Christian congregation?
21. Why did Jesus say, "Who touched me?"
22. What did Peter reply?
23. What was the nature of his reply?
24. What is said of "Master?"
25. What does "virtue" signify?
26. What is said of this virtue proceeding from the Lord?
27. Was the woman's desire to be concealed proper?
28. What did she declare?
29. Does Jesus desire every converted sinner publicly to acknowledge his conversion?
30. What made this woman whole?
31. What is said of faith?
32. What are we to understand by "Go in peace?"
33. What is said of "Daughter, be of good comfort," &c.?
34. What is said of the abundance of Christ's miracles?
35. What is said of ver. 49?
36. What did Jesus say to Jairus?
37. Did faith precede or follow the miracle?
38. Did the Saviour intend to keep the miracle concealed? Why?
39. What is said of Jesus?
40. What did He say?
41. Why was Christ laughed to scorn?
42. What seems a rule in Christ's dealings with men?
43. What is said of the scoffing spirit?
44. What is said of the daughter's spirit?
45. What does this return of her spirit show?
46. Why did Jesus command meat to be given to her?
47. What is said of her parents?
48. Why were they charged to tell no man what was done?
49. What is the first practical lesson given?
50. State the rest in their order.

## CHAPTER IX.

## LESSON LIV.

vs. 1-9.

IN Ch. vi. ver. 13, we saw the Saviour's choosing of His twelve Apostles to their work and office, and their several names. They were first chosen disciples to be with Christ, and learn of Him, and be witnesses of what He did. Now they are sent forth to execute their office. Our Lord deemed it fit, that those who were thereafter to carry on His work on earth, should learn to act without His personal presence, and that through them the Gospel of the kingdom should be more extensively proclaimed by their dispersed and separate condition than it could otherwise be.

1. Then <sup>a</sup>he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. x. 1; Mark iii. 13 and vi. 7.

Jesus qualified His Apostles to authenticate their mission by miracles. What an evidence of His power! He could not only work miracles Himself, but could enable others to work them. He *gave them power and authority over all devils*, i. e., to be exercised over or upon all devils, of whatever malignity and potency. "Though ministers," says an old divine, "cannot be expected to cast out evil spirits, they may fairly be expected to resist the devil and all his works, drunkenness, blasphemy, uncleanness, fighting, revelling, and the like, faithfully reproving them." *And to cure diseases.* In performing miracles, the Apostles no doubt acted vicariously, as in later times, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

2. And <sup>b</sup>he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. x. 7, 8; Mark vi. 12; Luke x. 1, 9.

Preaching the kingdom of God was the prime object of the mission of the Apostles, healing of diseases and ejection of demons were the credentials of their Divinely appointed ministry. None ought to take upon them the office of preaching, or any other ministerial function, until thereunto called by Christ Himself. His ministers are now called mediately, they receive their authority from Christ by the hands of the officers of His Church. If ministers do not take a special interest in all sick people, visit them, sympathize with them, and help them, if needful, as far as they can, they are not true to their office as pastors. Yet *preaching* is the great work to which they are called. This they are to make their main business. The pulpit is the place where the chief victories of the gospel have always been won.

3. <sup>c</sup>And he said unto them, Take nothing for *your* journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. x. 9; Mark vi. 8; Luke x. 4 and xxii. 35.

They were to go forth to the discharge of their office, without any anxious

care for the future. They were going forth on God's work, and they might rely upon it, that God would provide for all their wants. They were to make no provision for their wants, to take no money in their purses or girdles, no food in their scrips or bags, and no new clothes to supply the place of the old when worn out. If they had a staff, they were to go forth with it, Mark vi. 8, as they had it at the time, but they were not to seek one carefully, or make it a condition of their travelling. The fundamental idea is this, that they were to go forth with the slightest provision, and in dependence upon being provided for by the way.

4. <sup>d</sup>And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. x. 11; Mark vi. 10.

In every place to which they came, they were to accept the first hospitality that offered, and having thus attached themselves to one household, that would become the centre of operations, they might go out of it for the purposes of their mission, but not shift their quarters so as to subject themselves to the imputation of being difficult to be suited, or of preferring the hospitality of the more affluent to that of the poor. They were there to *abide*, until they departed from the place, like men who regarded all the world as an inn, heaven as their home, and were content with any lodging, and any kind of entertainment.

5. <sup>e</sup>And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, 'shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

<sup>e</sup> Matt. x. 14.

<sup>f</sup> Acts xiii. 51.

*And whosoever will not receive you.* Our Lord prepared His Apostles to find some who would refuse to hear their message. The sin of rejecting the gospel is far greater than any sin that the heathen can commit. Men may think the idolater who leaves his aged parents to starve, or who cruelly slaughters the innocent children of his enemies, is the most wicked of the human race. But the Bible declares that the man who refuses to accept the merciful offer of the Son of God is far worse than any of the heathen, and that he shall suffer the hottest wrath of his insulted Redeemer. Shall God speak, and man refuse to listen? Shall God stretch out His hands in merciful entreaty, and shall man turn away and despise the gracious invitation? How awful is the threatening denounced against such scorers! "I will also laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." Prov. i. 26.

*Shake off the very dust from your feet.* This symbolical act would be perfectly intelligible to the Jews, as a declaration that they were excommunicated—"no better than heathen"—and that the Apostles would have no further intercourse with them. *For a testimony against them.* Wherever the word is preached, it is for a testimony, either for or against a people. And if the dust of a minister's feet whilst alive, and the ashes of his grave when dead, do bear witness against the despisers of the gospel, their sermons will do much more.

6. <sup>g</sup>And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere.

<sup>g</sup> Mark vi. 12.

*Preaching the gospel* is expressed in the original in one word. In Mark it is "preached that men should repent." The promises and blessings of the gospel are theirs only, who truly repent of their sins. Preaching the gospel em-

braces the preaching of repentance, the part is included in the whole. *Everywhere*, in all the towns and villages to which they came. Ministers of the gospel stand in great need of help and comfort, of the assistance and encouragement of each other in the weighty duties of their calling, and, like laborers in the same vineyard, should extend to one another sympathy, the strong endeavoring to strengthen the hands of the weak. How sad it is, to say nothing of its sinfulness, to see one of God's servants show envy, jealousy, or contempt for another! It is a very awful thought, that one of the twelve who preached the gospel, was Judas Iscariot. There seems no reason to suppose that he preached less faithfully or powerfully than the other Apostles. Yet his heart was all the time wrong in the sight of God. Preaching the gospel, in itself, is no proof of conversion. See Phil. i. 15. A man may preach Christ from false motives. It must not surprise us if we sometimes see unregenerate men ministers of the gospel. Our Lord permitted one of this character to be in the number of His Apostles, in order to show that we must expect to see the evil mingled with the good in this world. *And healing everywhere.* The healing activity for which power was bestowed upon the Apostles, is a striking symbol of that which evangelization and missionary labor must even now everywhere accomplish wherever it directs its steps. Missionaries who are also physicians, other things being equal, have the largest success in winning souls to Christ.

Notwithstanding the instructions Jesus gave to His Apostles, vs. 3, 4, 5, applied peculiarly to the period in which they were given, yet they contain a lesson for all time, and their spirit is meant to be remembered by all ministers of the gospel. Ministers are to free themselves as much as they possibly can, from worldly incumbrances, which may hinder them in performing the duties of their office. 2 Tim. ii. 4. They are to avoid worldliness and luxurious habits. They are to study simplicity in their mode of life, confidence in God, contentment with such things as they have, not being unwilling to accept gifts, in imitation of the humility of their Master, who received the donations of His pious followers. When visiting abroad, they must, as they are always bound to do, beware of appearing changeable, fickle, fastidious, and hard to please, and avoid all show of levity and inconstancy, as well as exhibit becoming gravity and stability of character. Such a spirit is not only important, but essential, in order that ministers may win respect for their persons and reverence for their office. Men will never be able to establish the kingdom of God in the hearts of people, so long as they do not appear fully persuaded themselves of those truths which they preach. And how can they appear so, if they plainly contradict them in their practice and behavior? In order to persuade others to be unconcerned for superfluities, or a luxurious life, a man must not himself appear to be too much concerned, even about necessary things. They who preach the love of eternal possessions, and an indifference to all perishing enjoyments, ought to do it by their life and conversation. Love to a soft, convenient life, is especially a great hindrance to the work of God in an evangelist, for it is generally with the poor, who cannot afford it to him, he has most to do, Luke vii. 22, and the rich are far more likely to draw him into such a life than he to draw them from it. The world must know that one does not seek it for its goods, and that he has no communion with it but for its salvation.

7. ¶ <sup>h</sup>Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that Johu was risen from the dead ;

<sup>h</sup> Matt. xiv. 1 ; Mark vi. 14.

8. And of some, that Elias had appeared ; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.

9. And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? 'And he desired to see him.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xxiii. 8.

Very little is related concerning the events that happened while the Apostles were absent from the Lord. This, however, we know, Jesus continued to preach, and to perform miracles. His fame was so great that it reached the ears of Herod, the governor. See Notes, Ch. iii. 1. *And he was perplexed, &c.* It immediately occurred to him that he had himself, not long before, most cruelly and wantonly put to death an innocent, virtuous, and holy man, whose reputation for wisdom, integrity and sanctity of manners, stood almost as high in the estimation of the world as that of Jesus, and who had even declared himself the herald and forerunner of that extraordinary person. See Notes on Ch. iii. 19-20, also, Matt. xiv. 1-12, and Mark vi. 14-29. This instantly suggested to him an idea, the most extravagant that could be imagined, that this very person who assumed the name of Jesus was (though some were of the opinion that Elias, and others that one of the old prophets, had appeared) in fact no other than John the Baptist himself, whom he had beheaded, and who was now risen from the dead, and was endowed with the power of working miracles. Doubtless also Herod also imagined that John would exercise this power for the purpose of inflicting exemplary vengeance upon him for the atrocious murder he had committed, as well as for his adultery, incest, and all his other crimes, which now probably presented themselves in their most hideous forms to his terrified imagination, pursued him into his most secret retirements, and tortured his breast with unceasing agonies. *Who is this, of whom I hear such things?* "Having just gotten rid of John, has he returned? or who is this of whom I hear such mighty works? What am I to think of him, or fear from him?" With these feelings *he desired to see Jesus*, that his doubts and fears might be removed. *Was risen.* It will be noticed that this expression is not employed of Elias, as of John and one of the old prophets, inasmuch as he did not suffer death, but was taken bodily up to heaven. 2 Kings ii. 11.

There is here exhibited the power of a bad conscience. Amid all his splendor and power the wicked monarch could not forget his faithful reprover. He had silenced the *prophet* by decapitation, but he could not silence his own *conscience*, which upbraided him with the murder of the holy man. "The way of transgressors is hard." If, *before* sin was perpetrated, it could be known what would be the state of mind *afterward*, many would tremble to do the deed. A bad man is a terror to himself, and needs no further disquietude than what his own guilty conscience occasions him. "Which way I fly is hell, myself am hell." Conscience cannot save the soul. Herod's fear was not followed by repentance. When at last he did see Jesus, Ch. xxiii. 6-12, it was to insult Him, and to array Him, just before His crucifixion, with a gorgeous robe that ill became his wounded, bleeding form.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What reference is made to chapter vi.?
2. To what are the Apostles now sent forth?
3. Why were they sent forth alone?
4. How were the Apostles to authenticate their mission?
5. What is said of Christ's power?
6. How did the Apostles act in performing miracles?
7. What were they sent to do?
8. What is said of the office of preaching?
9. What is said of ministers taking an interest in the sick?
10. How were the Apostles to go forth to their office?
11. What was the fundamental idea of the instruction given to them?

12. What hospitality were they to accept?
13. What were they to do in regard to the house they entered into?
14. For what did our Lord prepare His Apostles?
15. What is said of the sin of rejecting the gospel?
16. What is said of "shake off the very dust," &c.?
17. What, of "for a testimony against them?"
18. What is said of "preaching the gospel," &c.?
19. What do ministers of the gospel greatly need?
20. What is a very awful thought?
21. What must not surprise us?
22. What is said of "healing everywhere?"
23. Do the instructions Christ gave to His Apostles contain a lesson for all time?
24. What is said of ministers?
25. What is said of an Evangelist?
26. What events happened during the Apostles' absence?
27. Did Christ then continue to preach, and to work miracles?
28. Whom did His fame reach?
29. Why was Herod perplexed?
30. What extravagant idea was suggested to him?
31. What did Herod also probably imagine?
32. Explain "Who is this," &c.
33. What is said of "was risen?"
34. What is said of the power of a bad conscience?
35. Can conscience save the soul?
36. Was Herod's fear followed by repentance?

## LESSON LV.

vs. 10-17.

10. ¶ <sup>1</sup>And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. <sup>1</sup>And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert-place belonging to the city, called Bethesda.

<sup>1</sup> Mark vi. 30.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiv. 13.

Ministers must report their labors to God, by whose authority they preach. The excitement among the people concerning Jesus was very high when the Apostles returned to Capernaum, and it was so much increased by their return, when they reported to Him how they had executed their office, that it was impossible to obtain in the city the rest and repose so much needed. With a view to the enjoyment of Himself and His disciples, Jesus withdrew with them privately into a secluded place from the multitude. Occasional retirement, self-inquiry, meditation, and secret communion with God, are absolutely essential to spiritual health. "If a man is always driving through the business of the day," says an old writer, "he will be so in harness, as not to observe the road he is going."

11. And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

When the crowd were aware of Christ's withdrawal, they flocked after Him. Some have thought that the quiet spot to which Jesus repaired was on the other side of the lake; others, on the same side across a bay. He went by water, and the fact that the crowd was able in a short time, and without apparent instruction, to reach the same place by land, is in favor of the latter opinion, as the Upper Jordan (which in the other case must have been crossed by them) is, as well as the Lower, in flood, and unfordable at and about the time of the Passover, which was then at hand. *And spake unto them of the kingdom of God, &c.* Unmannerly and uninvited as this intrusion of the multitude on the privacy of our Lord and His Apostles seems to have been, it elicited no rebuff from Him. On the contrary, He whose meat it was by day, and sleep by night, to do good, embraced the opportunity for bestowing upon their souls instruction, reproof, and counsel, and upon their bodies, health and healing, thus teaching us by example, that no occasion for a good work should be unacceptable to us, and that spiritual alms should be mixed with bodily relief. Mere spiritual counsel cannot be expected to produce much good effect in the case of those who are suffering physically from causes which we could, but are not willing to, remove, or at least abate.

12. "And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert-place.

▪ Matt. xiv. 15; Mark vi. 35; John vi. 1-5.

The miracle, the record of which properly begins here, is one of the few which are recorded by all the Evangelists. They narrate it with that variety of manner, yet agreement in fact, that evinces independence of relation, with common truth at bottom.

"A great multitude" of people, John vi. 2, were present, and composed partly of Capernaïtes, and partly of passengers to the approaching Passover at Jerusalem. John vi. 4. *The twelve*, who were frequently distinguished thus from the other disciples, after their call to the Apostleship, suggested that Jesus should dismiss the crowds, and let them seek for the refreshment which they required, in the neighboring hamlets and villages. This proposal implied that the people had not brought provision with them, which, indeed, was true, except in the case of the lad, who had five barley-loaves and two small fishes. John vi. 9. But as Jesus knew that mere love of wonder-working was the low motive of the great number, John vi. 2, He determined to perform upon the whole mass a compassionate miracle emblematic of His mission to the world, seeking on this bridge, as it were, to bring them up to higher views.

13. But he said unto them, Give ye them <sup>to</sup> eat. And they said, "We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

14. For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down by fifties in a company.

15. And they did so, and made them all sit down..

▪ 2 Kings iv. 42, 44.

◦ Num. xi. 21, 23; Prov. xi. 24, 25.

¶ 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

*We have no more but five loaves and two fishes, &c.* When Jesus commanded the multitude to be furnished with food, the Apostles, ignorant of their Master's will, alleged their inability to comply with His order, in view of the scantiness of their supply of food, unless they should go and buy, thus

showing a most pitiable perplexity, which had no other means at command. These loaves, which were of barley, were the kind of bread then and still eaten by the poor of Palestine. What a slender provision for *about five thousand men*, besides women and children, Matt. xiv. 21—a whole number, probably, of not far from ten thousand persons! With this small stock of homeliest fare, the Lord undertakes to feed all the multitude, and bids His disciples to make them all recline on the “green grass,” at that season of the year a delightful resting-place, and which both by Mark and John is noted to have abounded in the place, for though this was a *desert-place*, in the sense that there was no possibility of making a purchase there, it was not a desert in the sense that nothing grew upon it. The people were to recline *by fifties in a company*, the separate companies, looking, in their symmetrical arrangement, like so many garden-plots. In this subordinate circumstance we behold the wisdom of Him who is the Lord and lover of order. Thus all disorder, all noise and confusion were avoided; there was no danger that the weaker, the women and the children, should be passed over, while the stronger and ruder unduly put themselves forward; thus the Apostles were able to pass easily up and down among the multitude, and to minister in orderly succession to the necessities of every part.

16. Then 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.

What a scene was then presented! The ranks of guests rising in lines on the ascending slopes—their canopy the evening sky—their table, the green earth. Order and silence prevail. There stands the Master of the feast, majesty and benevolence beaming in His countenance, as He looks around on the gathered throng. Before him are laid *the five loaves and the two fishes*. By His side stand the disciples, with their eyes directed to Him, awaiting His command.

In the distance a few fishing-boats are gently making their way on the lake. And now the Saviour, taking the scanty and humble provision into His hand before them all, *looking up to heaven, he blessed them*. It was customary with the Jews at every meal to offer a prayer commencing with the thankful words, “Blessed be God.” Hence the Hebrew to *bless*, which originally had for its object God as the author of the meal, took as its objective case the food itself, and thence arose the phrase, to bless the food, or to ask a blessing on the food. *And gave to the disciples to set before the multitude*. Having blessed the food before Him, and broken it, Jesus delivered it to the Apostles, who in their turn distributed it to the different tables, if such they might be called. The employment of the disciples in the service of distributing was doubtless intended, in part, to gain respect to them from the people; the marvellous multiplication taking place, as many say, first in the hands of the Saviour Himself, next in those of the Apostles, and lastly in the hands of the eaters, yet at all events so that all were satisfied—the fact that the hunger of the multitude had been fully satisfied being evident by the gathering by the Apostles of what remained. That which the Apostles thought an impossibility, became a palpable fact—they fed the thousands with the few loaves and fishes. What does this teach us? That to use what we have is the way to get more. The man who will make good use of the little religious light he has, is sure to get more.

We are not told how the food was multiplied on this occasion. As it is not possible for us to realize to ourselves any act of creation, it was wisdom in the sacred narrator of this miracle to leave the description of the indescribable unattempted. His appeal is to the same faith which believes “that the worlds were formed by the Word of God.” Heb. xi. 3. All that we can do is, simply to behold in this multiplying of the food an act of

Divine Omnipotence, not, indeed, now, as at first, of absolute creation out of nothing, since there was a substratum to work on in the original loaves and fishes, but an act of creative accretion, the bread growing under Christ's hands, so that from a little stock all the multitude were abundantly supplied. Wonderful as this miracle was, the same power that was seen in it is displayed every day. In the seed of the corn that shoots into the stalk, the blade, and the ear, and in the acorn cast into the earth, that develops itself into the gigantic and overshadowing oak, we have processes just as marvellous as turning the few barley loaves into a bountiful and gracious supply. But we are so accustomed to these things that we call them natural occurrences, and only when the same result is achieved by a more rapid, or a more startling process, do we call it a miracle. It may be observed here that our Lord never performed a miracle without laying hold of a substratum to work upon, and certainly this seems by analogy to teach us that God is not going to supplant this earth by another earth, and to supersede our present bodies by other bodies, but out of the present earth to constitute a glorious one, and out of our present bodies to raise incorruptible from corruptible, and immortal from mortal, till death is swallowed up in victory.

17. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

*They did eat, and were all filled.* None of our Lord's miracles were better attested than this one. Five or more thousand witnesses could not be deceived, for the miracle was done openly, and was easy to be observed. The want of food was known to them all, they were in a desert where it could not be obtained, there was no delay to allow the disciples to buy it in the distant villages, and no secret supplies could have been obtained without detection. The senses of the people convinced them it was real, they *saw* the small provision enlarged more than a thousand fold, they *heard* the blessing given, they *felt* the food in their hands, they *tasted* it, and were satisfied that what they received was real fish and bread. This miracle is, as it were, a revelation of the Creator. The impenetrable and mysterious veil which conceals God from the creature in the midst of His creation is drawn aside, and we see, not indeed sunshine and showers, sowing and reaping, but Christ the compendium of them all, and from whom all of them issue, the Lord of the sunshine and the shower, the Lord of the Spring and of the harvest, the Lord of the fertility of the soil, and the produce of the earth. We are here taught confidence in the providence of God. "It is a greater miracle," says Augustine, "to govern and provide for the whole world, than to feed five thousand men with five barley loaves of bread." God will supply the wants of them that trust in Him, and withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. *Baskets.* The Greek word thus translated is only used in the New Testament, in the accounts given of this miracle. It means a wicker basket such as the Jews were remarkable for carrying with them, as remarked even by the Roman poet Juvenal. It was in just such a basket that Paul was let down from the wall, Acts ix. 25. The twelve basketsful of fragments gathered by the Apostles were a greater quantity than the original five barley loaves and two fishes. It will be noticed that there was one basket for each Apostle. In the increase of the loaves and fishes, notwithstanding the large distribution, we have an apt symbol of that love which exhausts not by loving, but really grows after all its outgoings on others, and of the multiplying which there ever is in a true dispensing, 2 Kings iv. 1; Prov. xi. 24. By feeding the hungry we shall often enrich ourselves, for God will bless our earthly substance. How much more will He bless those who feed souls with Divine truth! The teachers of Sabbath-schools who in an humble spirit search the Scriptures, that they may scatter the crumbs among poor little ignorant children, and those

missionaries who go abroad to point the perishing to the Redeemer, find that the Christian receives in the ratio in which He gives, so that the greatest giver is always the greatest receiver, and that the Christianity that unfolds itself in liberality or labor for others, by a beautiful reflex operation, becomes deeper and richer in the heart of him that has it.

*Fragments that remained.* From John vi. 12, we learn that the fragments were gathered at the command of Jesus, that nothing might be lost. In performing this miracle Christ moved in the orbit of a God; in giving this command, He reassumed His place, reaccepted the laws, and re-entered the domain, of man. We see at once the mighty God and the dependent man. How strange the combination—bounty the most profuse, economy the most rigid! The gathering of the fragments by Christ's command shows us how precious He esteemed even the least works of God, that we may not dare to waste the food that our Heavenly Father has provided. If earthly bread is too precious to be wantonly trampled under foot, how inestimably precious must heavenly bread be! Yet how much of the Divine Word is suffered to fall to the ground! How carelessly we sometimes read the Scriptures! How many heart-stirring sermons have we heard, and then immediately forgotten! We should gather up all the fragments that can be made conducive to God's glory. "If," says an old divine, "the great Housekeeper of the world is so particular about saving fragments, what account will they give at the day of judgment, who think nothing of wasting time, money, health and strength, in the service of sin and the world?"

The bread which Jesus multiplied was an emblem of His own flesh, which He gave for the life of the world. The Apostles were appointed to proclaim the crucified Saviour to perishing sinners. It was necessary that they should believe that He could save by His death the souls of all believers. They now saw with their own eyes that He could make a *little* bread sustain a *vast* multitude. They would remember this in future days when preaching His name to assembled thousands. This lesson of Christ's ability to supply our spiritual wants is as precious now as it was then. We are poor sinners in the midst of a dreary and wicked world, without strength or power to save ourselves, and sorely in danger of perishing from spiritual famine. But He who said of the starving multitude in the desert-place, "give ye them to eat," is ever pitiful, ever kind, ever ready to show mercy, even to the unthankful and the evil. He is not changed. He is just the same now that He was eighteen centuries ago. The simple truth that Jesus gave His flesh for the life of the world, has fed innumerable souls, and will feed innumerable more, till the multitude without number are gathered around the throne, and then the Lamb *Himself* will feed them through eternity with food which we know not of. See John vi.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Why did Christ with His Apostles withdraw to a desert place?
2. Where was that desert place?
3. What did Christ do to the multitude that followed Him?
4. What does His example teach?
5. What is said of the recording of the miracle of the loaves and fishes?
6. Of whom were the multitude present composed?
7. Why did Jesus work this miracle?
8. What is said of the loaves used?
9. How many persons probably were present?
10. What did our Lord bid the disciples to do?
11. What kind of a desert place was it where this miracle was performed?
12. What does the arrangement of the people in companies show?
13. What did Christ do before distributing the food?
14. What was the custom of the Jews at every meal?

15. When did the food multiply ?
16. How did it multiply ?
17. What does the obedience of the Apostles to Christ's command teach ?
18. What is said about the wonderfulness of this miracle ?
19. Did our Lord ever work a miracle without a substratum ?
20. What does this fact seem to teach ?
21. How was this miracle extraordinarily attested ?
22. Was this miracle a revelation of the Creator ?
23. How does it teach us confidence in Divine Providence ?
24. What kind of baskets was used ?
25. What do we learn from the increase of the food notwithstanding the large distribution ?
26. What was to be done with the fragments that remained ?
27. How do we see Christ's Divinity and humanity in this miracle ?
28. What does the gathering of the fragments teach ?
29. What is said about the wasting of heavenly bread ?
30. What is said of those who waste all in the service of sin and the world ?
31. Of what was the bread Jesus multiplied an emblem ?
32. What effect would this miracle have on the disciples ?
33. Is Christ able now to supply our spiritual wants ?
34. Who will feed the redeemed in heaven, and how ?

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### LESSON LVI.

vs. 18-27.

18. ¶ <sup>q</sup>And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am ?

<sup>q</sup> Matt. xvi. 13; Mark viii. 27.

The word *alone*, in the original, is *by himself*, or *apart* from others, and has reference to absolute retirement. The words *his disciples were with him* may be taken, therefore, in the general sense, *were in his company*, not implying that they were associated with Christ in the act of prayer. Probably they had found Him praying in solitude, as in Luke xi. 1, yet, from ver. 23, it appears that, besides the Twelve, other listeners had soon approached, so that He, in a few moments, found a wider circle gather around Him, to which He could address His words. Our Lord's habit of private prayer is frequently mentioned in the Gospels. He sets an example to all who work for God. Much private prayer is one secret of success. Some of the most glorious acts and manifestations of Jesus were made in connection with a season of prayer. Together with the revelation which He here made of Himself to the disciples, as a suffering, dying, and rising Messiah, we might include in these seasons of prayer, the descent of the Spirit at His baptism, the ordaining of the Twelve, and the Transfiguration. *And He asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am ?* Not that Christ was ignorant of, or vain-gloriously inquired after, the opinion of the multitude; but, as the time had now come when He must speak more openly than He had to His disciples of His approaching suffering and death, before He would grant them a deeper view into the nature of His *work*, He designed to establish them more firmly in their faith in His *person* and His character. Though the world fluctuates amidst various errors, the truth must not, on that account, be despised, but

rather the knowledge of it should be the more diligently sought, and the profession of it made with the greater constancy.

19. "They answering said, John the Baptist; and some *say*, Elias; and others *say*, That one of the old prophets is risen again.

\* Matt. xiv. 2; ver. 7, 8.

The opinions of Himself reported to Jesus by His disciples, though different, are yet fully explicable. That *John the Baptist* had risen was perhaps an echo of that which was talked of at Herod's court, ver. 7, 8, 9; as to *Elias*, or *Elijah*, comp. Mal. iv. 5; and as to *one of the old prophets*, men believed, from Mic. v. 5, and other passages, that they were warranted to conclude that at the time of the Messiah different prophets would again appear. It will be observed that no one took the Messiah for an ordinary or insignificant person. It should not surprise us to find the same variety of opinions about Christ and His gospel in our own times. God's truth disturbs the spiritual laziness of men. It obliges them to think. It makes them begin to talk, reason, speculate, and invent theories to account for its spread in some quarters, and its rejection in others. Talk and speculation about Jesus and His gospel are one of Satan's great traps for ruining souls. Many a man cloaks his indolence about religion under a pretence of the variety of opinions and the difficulty of knowing who is right.

20. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? \*Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

\* Matt. xvi. 16; John vi. 69.

Having heard the echo of the people's views concerning Himself, our Lord will now hear an expression of the living, personal, and independent faith of His disciples, to whom He had given occasion to mention the several errors of the world in relation to His person, that they might be the more fully convinced that their faith did not proceed from themselves. Matt. xvi. 17. *The Christ of God*. This reply of Peter was in his own name, and in that of his brethren. Some make the words, *of God*, equivalent to *the Son of God*; others interpret the whole expression, as "the Messiah sent of God." Matthew has it: "The Christ, the Son of the living God." Matt. xvi. 16. Mark: "The Christ." vii. 29. All are varied forms of expression for the Messiah. The veil of Christ's human nature did not prevent the eye of the disciples' faith discerning Him in His true character. What a noble confession was that by which, notwithstanding the great, and wise, and learned, of the nation to which the disciples belonged, saw no beauty in their Master, they acknowledged Him *the Christ of God!* See Dan. ix. 21. We make a proper use of those mistakes and false conjectures which prevail in the world, when we make them contribute to our establishment in the truth. It is of great significance that Peter does not in his Epistles once mention a word of Christ concerning *his* own personal priority among the Apostles, least of all as the institution of an official primacy.

21. 'And he straitly charged *them*, and commanded them to tell no man that thing;

\* Matt. xvi. 20.

*Tell no man that thing*. The premature and unreserved avowal of this truth must, without perpetual miracles, have excited the ill-judging multitude to such measures, as would have given the Scribes and priests an occasion against Jesus, and even rendered the Romans jealous of His popularity,

and thus He might have been cut off before His time. It was, therefore, highly proper that He should, in the most peremptory manner, forbid the disciples to declare openly that He was the Messiah. There is a time to speak, and a time to be silent, concerning the Divine mysteries.

22. Saying, "the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and Scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

¶ Matt. xvi. 21 and xvii. 22.

The disciples being now in a measure prepared to receive the great and mysterious truth, that Jesus was to suffer and die for the sin of the world, He made it known to them. This was done, 1. To prevent that offence which otherwise they might have taken at His sufferings. 2. The better to prepare them for the great trial when it should come. 3. To correct the error which they had entertained of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah. Let it be noted that our Lord makes known, 1, who the accomplishers of His suffering should be; 2, in what form it was prepared for Him; 3, the necessity of this suffering; and, 4, the issue of this suffering, namely, His resurrection. By the necessity of Christ's suffering, just referred to, we mean becomingness, for the Greek word translated *must* in this verse, does not quite bear the sense of force and necessity which our English word "must" conveys. It rather means, "It is becoming, it is suitable, it is necessary for certain great ends and purposes." In ch. xxiv. 26, the same expression is rendered "*ought not Christ to have suffered?*"

23. ¶ And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

¶ Matt. x. 38 and xvi. 24; Mark viii. 34; Luke xiv. 27

In Mark viii. 34, we are informed that our Lord addressed these words to the people, as well as to His disciples. This shows that He had reached some town or village in this northern extremity of the land, and, according to His custom, was teaching the multitude who came to Him. What is meant by the connection of this verse with the preceding one, if not that the mysteries of the Head must be accomplished likewise in the members, and that those who have by the baptism of the Spirit been made partakers of the Divine nature in Christ, are one day to partake of His resurrection, but not unless they have partaken of His sufferings and death? *Will*, here, and in the following verse, must be interpreted as, "wills to," or "is willing to." It is not a future tense, but the same Greek word that is used in John v. 40: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," which means, "Ye have no will, or wish to come." Thus our Saviour recommends His religion to every man's choice, not attempting by force or violence to compel any to the profession of it. *If any man will come after me*; that is, if any man choose and resolve to be a Christian. Observe our Lord's terms of discipleship. An impostor would have made easy conditions, and promised a prosperous and pleasant career to induce people to follow him, but Jesus pursued the opposite course. His terms are, 1. *Let him deny himself*. By self-denial is not meant that we are to ignore reason altogether in matters of religion, but that we should be willing to part with our earthly comforts, and abandon all our temporal enjoyments, for the sake of Christ and His religion. We are to deny ourselves, our earthly desires for ease, pleasure, riches, esteem. We are to habituate ourselves to give a flat denial to the most clamorous solicitations of our pride, ambition, avarice, and carnal self-love, and to curb every sensual inclination to submission. The injunction does not solely or mainly refer to the renunciation of vice, which, of course, is to be renounced,

but to the advantages of this life, of which the followers of Christ must be prepared to suffer the loss with an undisturbed mind. Even if those to whom we bear the greatest natural affection, or any authority on earth, should tempt us to do what Christ forbids, Christ must be loved and obeyed before all these. 2. *And take up his cross daily.* By this is meant gospel-suffering. There is here an allusion to a Roman custom, that the malefactor who was to be crucified, took his cross upon his shoulders, and carried it to the place of execution, and an obscure intimation of Christ's own approaching suffering on the cross. The duty enjoined is, not the making of the cross for ourselves, but the patient bearing of it when God lays it upon our shoulders. The Christian is to be prepared even to die for Christ's sake. He is to have the *spirit* of a martyr, and to be *ready* to give up all things, even life itself, for Jesus. *Daily.* This word is peculiar to Luke, and has not only the sense day by day, but through the entire day, and also implies, that as day succeeds day, so would one cross follow another. Particular notice of the word, *daily*, and of the three words, *to them all*, should be taken. No person is excused, and no day is excepted. Of what, therefore, do those think, and what have they reason to expect, who make every day a day of pleasure, luxury, and diversion? 3. *And follow me.* By this is denoted gospel-service. *Let him follow me*, says Jesus; that is, obey my commands, and imitate my example. He must set my life and doctrine continually before him, and be daily correcting and reforming his life by that rule and pattern.

24. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

In order to make evident the indispensable necessity of self-denial, our Lord presents a motive in verses 24-26. *Whosoever will save his life*, &c. The meaning of this apparently paradoxical expression is, "Whoever will preserve his natural, selfish life, walking in accordance with his natural inclinations, may reckon upon it that he loses his true, his proper life; but those who, for the sake of Christ and His cause, set at stake the possession of life and the enjoyment of life, in the common sense of the word, will, through this very temporary perishing, become partakers in perpetually richer measure of the true and higher life of the spirit." This was a truth of infinitely deep significance for the first Apostles of the Lord, who, for His sake, left all, yet not less significant is it for the history of the development of the Christian life of each one. It is evident that the word *it*, occurring twice, refers to the life or salvation of the soul, else how can he who *loses his life for Christ's sake, save his life?*

25. \*For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

\* Matt. xvi. 26; Mark viii. 36.

In Matt. xvi. 26, and Mark viii. 36, the same word here translated *advantaged* is rendered, as it should have been in this place, "profited." The equivalent expression to *himself*, also in those Evangelists, is "his soul." *Lose himself.* What can this mean but final perdition? *Be cast away*, literally, *bring loss upon himself.* If a man should save his life, and gain the whole world, by apostasy from Christ, or rejection of Him, and thus lose the happiness and insure the destruction of his soul, where would be his gain? Nothing can compensate the loss sustained by him who loses his soul. Let us but weigh the gain and the loss which there is in following or not following the rules of the gospel, and we shall soon be convinced that it is no better than madness to be in the least doubt or suspense what to do.

26. \*For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words,

of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

† Matt. x. 33; Mark viii. 38; 2 Tim. ii. 12.

*Whosoever shall be ashamed, &c.* "Whosoever shall deny and disown me, either in my person, in my doctrine, or in my members, through the influence of shame, he shall be disowned by me, and rejected by me, at my second coming to judge the world." Three kinds of glory are mentioned here, as accompanying the second advent of Christ: His own, the Father's, and the glory of the angels. *In his own glory.* This, as distinguished from "the glory of the Father," denotes the glory of Christ as Mediator, exercising all Divine perfections through the medium of His human nature, in accomplishing and perfecting the grand purposes of His incarnation. Besides the *glory* which the *human nature of Christ* habitually wears in heaven, some additional splendor shall be given Him by the Father, when sent with *His commission* on an occasion so august as the *universal judgment*. Whosoever is ashamed of the truth while it is humbled and oppressed in this world, shall be humbled and confounded before truth itself, glorious and triumphant, in heaven.

27. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

† Matt. xvi. 28; Mark ix. 1.

These words are interpreted in three ways. 1. As referring to the times of the gospel after Christ's resurrection and ascension, when the gospel was propagated far and near, and the kingdom of God came with power. 2. As referring to Christ's coming and exercising His kingly power in the destruction of Jerusalem, which some of the Apostles then standing by lived to see. 3. The right view, however, appears to be that which connects the verse with our Saviour's transfiguration, and regards the glorious vision of the kingdom, which the transfiguration supplied, as the fulfilment of the promise of the verse.

*Practical Reflections.* 1. Self-denial is an absolute necessity. It is not a mere accident of Christian character, but essential to it. Without it, and without following Jesus, our claim to discipleship is vain. 2. The soul is of unspeakable value. Other losses can be comprehended, and often repaired, but the loss of the soul is inconceivable, incalculable, irrecoverable. It is the loss of God, and Christ and heaven, and glory, and happiness to all eternity. A sermon preached on Matt. xvi. 28, first led an English missionary to care for his soul. He was an ungodly youth at the time he heard it, but afterwards he gave up the world, took up his cross, and followed Christ. At length he lost his life in His service. Having landed upon the island of Erromango, in the New Hebrides, hoping to preach the gospel there, he was pursued by the natives. He had just reached the sea, when he fell down, was overtaken, and bruised to death by the clubs of the savages. His blood was mingled with the waves, his flesh was devoured by cannibals, and his bones made into fish-barbs. But will he regret the choice he made in the day when the Son of man shall come in His glory? 3. There is, perhaps, no sin, to which every convert to true Christianity is more powerfully tempted, than being ashamed of Christ and His words, and no temptation which induces such large numbers to act habitually against the light and conviction of their own consciences in order to escape the reproach and scorn of men, and often of their dependents and domestics. The wickedness of being ashamed of Christ is very great, and the fear lest the Saviour and Judge should at last be ashamed of us, is the proper preservative from yielding to this temptation, in all those who desire above every thing else to have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. 4. The most eminent servants of Christ, for faith, holiness, and service, must at

length, in God's appointed time, taste and have experience of death, as well as others. Yet although they must taste, they shall but taste of death, they shall not drink of the dregs of that bitter cup; though they fall by the hand of death, yet shall they not be hurt by it, but in the very fall be victorious. They shall "conquer though they die." The valley through which they pass shall be "the valley of the shadow of death"—the substance being gone, and the shadow only remaining.

## QUESTIONS.

1. How was Christ alone in prayer?
2. What does His example teach?
3. What is said of some of the most glorious acts and manifestations of Jesus?
4. Why did Christ ask whom the people said He was?
5. What did His disciples answer?
6. Why were these various opinions entertained?
7. What is said about God's truth?
8. What is said about talk and speculation about Jesus?
9. Why did Christ ask His disciples who He was?
10. What reply was made?
11. In whose name did Peter reply?
12. How has his answer been understood?
13. What is said of Peter's confession?
14. Does Peter, in his epistles, ever mention his priority among the Apostles?
15. Why were the disciples to tell no man of the Messiahship of Christ?
16. Why did Jesus now make known to His disciples that He was to suffer and die?
17. State the points our Lord made known in ver. 22.
18. What does the word "must" mean?
19. To whom did Christ address the words beginning at ver. 23?
20. What is meant by the connection of this verse with the preceding one?
21. What does the word "will" signify?
22. State and explain the first term of discipleship Christ gives.
23. The second.
24. What is meant by "daily?"
25. State and explain the third term of discipleship.
26. What is the meaning of verse 24?
27. Was this truth intended for the Apostles only?
28. What is said about the word "advantaged?"
29. What does the phrase "lose himself" signify?
30. What is the truth taught in verse 25?
31. How may we be ashamed of Christ?
32. What shall result from being thus ashamed?
33. How many kinds of glory will mark Christ's second coming?
34. What are we to understand by Christ's "own glory?"
35. What, by "His Father's glory?"
36. What coming of Christ is referred to?
37. In how many ways is verse 27 interpreted?
38. What is the first way?
39. What, the second?
40. What is probably the right view?
41. State the first practical reflection.
42. The second.
43. What is said of an English missionary?
44. State the third practical reflection.
45. The fourth.
46. What is said of the death of Christians?
47. What is said of the valley through which they are to pass?

## LESSON LVII.

vs. 28-45.

28. ¶ <sup>a</sup>And it came to pass about an eight days after these <sup>\*</sup>sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xvii. 1; Mark ix. 2.

<sup>\*</sup> Or, things.

The Transfiguration is also recorded by Matthew (xvii. 1) and Mark (ix. 1). According to them it occurred *eight days* after the just mentioned conversation. If we assume that Luke has reckoned in the day of the discourse and a second day for the transfiguration, which had perhaps already taken place in the morning, the difference is then almost reconciled. The expression, *after these sayings*, seems to make it plain that the words "see the kingdom of God," in the preceding verse, were spoken with special reference to the vision of the Transfiguration.

*He took Peter and John and James.* Why three witnesses? and why these three? As the Law required no more than two or three witnesses to constitute a regular and judicial proof, our Saviour frequently chose to have only this number of witnesses present at some of the most important and interesting scenes of His life. The three disciples whom He now selected were those that generally attended Him on such occasions. They were chosen witnesses at the raising of Jairus's daughter, of the agony in Gethsemane, and of the Transfiguration. *And went up into a mountain to pray*—most probably *Tabor*. This mountain stands alone, and its top is not pointed like that of most mountains, but hard and flat, and therefore well suited for a resting-place. Its height is not great. In one hour it may be ascended.

29. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment *was white and glistening*.

Here, in this retired and lovely spot, our Saviour was *praying* with the three disciples named. *And as he prayed* His form underwent a most glorious alteration. *The fashion of His countenance was altered*, more literally rendered, "other," that is, His appearance was changed, "other than it generally appeared," (see Mark xvi. 12,) but His bodily form remained the same, without which the witnesses could not have identified Jesus. *And his raiment was white and glistening.* The word *glistening* is only used once in the New Testament, and is explained as meaning, "to emit flashes of light, to shine or glisten as lightning." See Nahum iii. 8. As the conjunction is not found in the original, the words *white* and *glistening* are highly intensive, literally, *whitely glittering*. There is here evidence of the fulness of the Spirit which, from within, over-streamed the Saviour's whole being.

30. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

*Two men.* Jesus was not alone. The two men who appeared beside Him were Moses and Elias, the chiefs of the Law and the Prophets, who came, as

it were, to give testimony and homage to the Consummator, who had, in these latter days, appeared to finish the work which they had, in their day, been employed to advance and prepare. Moses and Elias *appeared in glory*, a glory somewhat similar, we may suppose, though far inferior, to that with which Christ was invested. Like Him, they were probably clothed in raiments of unusual whiteness and splendor, and the fashion of their countenances might also be changed to something more bright and illustrious. Like their Lord, both these holy men, when on earth, had fasted forty days in the wilderness. But all *their* sufferings were over, while the bitterest sufferings of Jesus were yet to come. Hence they were well prepared, by what they had themselves endured, to comfort their Lord in the prospect of His agonizing death. That death, as Luke alone informs us, was the subject of their discourse. *And spake of his decease which he should accomplish or fulfil at Jerusalem*, literally, "His exode or departure." It is remarkable that in Acts xiii. 24, we have a Greek word used for our Lord's "coming" to take the office of a Saviour, which might be translated literally His "entrance." Both expressions are singularly applicable to Him who came into the world, and was made flesh, and after doing the work He came to do, left the world and went to the Father. It is noticeable that Peter (2 Pet. i. 15) calls his own death also, to which he is looking forward, an *exode*. The word *accomplish*, used in reference to Christ's death, is a very peculiar form of speech. To depart from life is the common lot: but to *fulfil* His decease or departure from the world was peculiar to Christ, because His death was the grand subject of prophecy, and the event upon which the salvation of the earth was suspended.

32. But Peter and they that were with him *were heavy with sleep*; and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

\* Dan. viii. 18 and x. 9.

*Heavy with sleep.* It should be observed that the very same disciples who here slept during a vision of glory were also found sleeping during the agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Flesh and blood does, indeed, need to be changed before it can enter heaven. Our poor, weak bodies can neither watch with Christ in His time of trial, nor keep awake with Him in His glorification. The grandeur and solemnity of a scene may induce drowsiness. (Dan. viii. 18; x. 9.) Perhaps the cause just mentioned united with the long-continued watching and fatigue of the disciples, to throw them into a deep slumber. This slumber accounts for the fact, that there was no ill-timed interruption of the heavenly converse by the disciples, until at or near its close. *When they were awake, &c.* The disciples awoke of their own accord, or, more probably, were aroused by the flashing upon them of the glorious light which emanated from Jesus, for the bright cloud, the Shechinah of God's presence, had not yet overshadowed them, as appears from verse 34. *Saw his glory*, which was so great, that the glory of the two men that stood with him is not here mentioned as being observed by the disciples.

33. And it came to pass as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.

*It is good for us, &c.* The first feeling which animated the disciples in the view of the heavenly spectacle was naturally fear. (Mark ix. 6.) But

scarcely had they recovered from that, when an indescribable feeling of felicity-filled them, to which Peter, almost with child-like transport, gave expression. The full meaning of Peter's exclamation, uttered, perhaps, with a mingled feeling of joy and awe, was, "What greater happiness, Lord, can we experience than to continue here in the presence of three such great and excellent persons! Here, then, let us forever remain! Here let us erect three booths; for Thee, for Moses, and Elias, that you may all make this the constant place of your abode, and that we may always continue under the protection and government and united empire of our three illustrious lords and masters, whose sovereign laws and commands we are *equally* bound to obey." It is evident that Peter's words were an utterance of immediate feeling, and an expression of a state of perfect complacency. They were spoken by a man who was wholly taken captive by the extraordinariness of the whole scene, hence the remark of Luke, *not knowing what he said*. That Peter's request was improper and unwise is evident, for these reasons: 1. He placed Moses and Elias on a level with his Divine Master. 2. Peter himself was not fit to continue in such a scene; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. 3. He forgot the unwelcome truths lately revealed by his Master, that He must be offered as a sacrifice for sin before He could enter into His glory, and that His disciples must *partake* of His *sufferings*, before they could partake of His *glory*. 4. He forgot also that there was much work to be done in the world. But though Peter's request betrayed an ignorant mind, it showed an affectionate heart, and we cannot but admire his delight in the company in which he found himself. It is a sign we have made one step in religion, if we really prefer the society of the godly to any other pleasure.

34. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

*There came a cloud, &c.* The cloud of light which formerly filled the Sanctuary of the Lord now received the three (Christ, Moses and Elias) as into a tabernacle of glory, and withdrew the end of the manifestation from the eyes of the disciples, as its beginning also had remained hidden from them—they again being agitated with fear as they witnessed the overshadowing process.

35. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear him.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. iii. 17.

<sup>c</sup> Acts iii. 22.

*And there came a voice, &c.* The same voice which was heard before on the Jordan consecrating Christ as King of the Kingdom of Heaven, and afterwards (John xii. 28) as the High Priest of the New Testament, here attests His supreme Prophetic dignity. *This is my beloved Son: hear him.* This is an echo of an utterance of Moses, (Deut. xviii. 15; comp. Ps. ii. 7; Isaiah xlii. 1,) "This is my beloved Son, (not as Moses and the prophets were, my *servants*,) Him, and Him only, shall ye now and henceforth hear." Thus are we placed under Christ's tuition alone, and commanded from Him alone to seek the doctrine of salvation, to depend upon and listen to One, to adhere to One—in a word, as the terms import, to hearken to One only. See Notes on Ch. iii. 22.

36. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. <sup>d</sup>And they kept *it* close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. xvii. 9.

When the words referred to were uttered, and the cloud of light melted into thin air, *Jesus was found alone*, and had resumed His ordinary appearance, except that, perhaps, a Divine effulgence lingered on His face, as on that of Moses when he descended from the Mount. The disappearance of Moses and Elias, and the fact that Jesus was *alone*, together with the words *hear him*, show that the law of ceremonies was about to pass away, and that the true Lamb of God and true Prophet was come. This seems to have been *one* of the great things the Transfiguration was intended mainly to teach. *Another* was, that the sufferings and death of Jesus were not, as the disciples and Jewish converts in general inclined strongly to think, incompatible with His dignity and glory.

From this scene of the Transfiguration, observe, 1. The value of prayer. God's people have many of their happiest experiences, and make many of their nearest approaches to heaven, in prayer. 2. The appearance of those departed saints on the Mount is calculated to comfort *us* also in the prospect of death. Moses had been dead nearly fifteen hundred years. Elijah had been taken up by a whirlwind from the earth more than nine hundred years before this time. Yet here these holy men were seen once more alive, and not only alive, but in glory. Is it not evident from the appearance of these saints, and their recognition by Peter, that the spirits of the saints do *immediately* pass into glory, not waiting for the general resurrection to be introduced into the presence of Christ, and that we shall *know* the saints in glory, not only our *own* friends, whom we loved upon earth, but *all* the saints? 3. The Old Testament saints in glory take a deep interest in Christ's atoning death. It is a grave error to suppose that holy men and women, under the Old Testament, knew nothing about the sacrifice which Christ was to offer up for the sin of the world. Their light, no doubt, was far less clear than ours; but there is not the slightest proof that any Old Testament saint ever looked to any other satisfaction for sin, but that which God promised to make by sending the Messiah. 4. The glory which Christ will have at His second coming. To this scene on the Mount, Peter, who witnessed it, refers as a symbol of our Lord's second coming 2 Pet. i. 16, 17. 5. The reason why heaven is not revealed to us fully is, the disclosure of its glory would be insupportable. As there was necessity for a cloud to be put before the disciples' eyes, so we must be content in this world to see God through a cloud darkly: we could not bear an unveiled view. 6. Whilst enjoyment of the privileges of religion is proper, this must not be allowed to conflict with the claims of duty: we must often descend from the Mount to work for God. 7. The obedient ear honors Christ more than either the gazing eye, the adoring knee, or the applauding tongue. 8. Let us learn to bear with ignorance in others, and to deal patiently with beginners in religion. If Jesus could endure so much weakness in His disciples, we may surely do likewise. 9. Let us not fail to notice the difference between the manifestation of the Divine presence *here*, and *that* at the giving of the Law. On *Sinai* there was a *cloud*, but it was *dark* and *thick*, and there were thunders and lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, and all the people that were in the camp *trembled*. Exod. xix. 16. On *Tabor*, the *cloud* was *bright*, the whole scene was luminous and transporting, and nothing was heard but the mild, paternal voice of the Almighty.

37. ¶ And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.

• Matt. xvii. 14; Mark ix. 14, 17.

38. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.

39. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.

40. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out: and they could not.

*Next day.* When our Lord descended from the mountain, a scene of sin, sorrow, and suffering, met His eye. There were the scornful Scribes, the weak and wavering disciples, a poor demoniac, and his afflicted father, with the wondering multitude gathered around them. How unlike was this scene to that which the three Apostles had just witnessed on the top of the mountain! There all was light, and love, perfect bliss, and ineffable joy. Angels beheld the same painful contrast; for, as they gaze upon the glory of God, they also watch over the sorrows of men.

*Master, I beseech thee, &c.* The appeal of the distressed parent to Jesus is peculiarly tender and touching. And as we notice the painful peculiarities of his affliction, we shall not wonder that when he came to Jesus, he *cried out*, beseeching Him to deliver him from it. Not only was the son an *only child*, but he was a lunatic, in the bloom of youth deprived of reason, and, instead of being a comfort to his parents, was a continual cause of care and distress. Alarming fits often seized him, and so suddenly, that sometimes he fell into the fire, and at other times into the water, Matt. xvii. 15, so that his life was always in danger. Nor, at any intervals of reason, could he pour his sorrows into the ears of his parents, or hold affectionate communication with them; for, alas! he was dumb. Mark ix. 17. And what was worse than all, he was possessed by an evil spirit, who, acting on the disease, grievously increased his sufferings. When this spirit took him in its might, then in these paroxysms of his disorder he *suddenly cried out*, (an expression not inconsistent with Mark's statement that he was *dumb*, for his dumbness was only in respect of articulate sounds; he could give no utterance to these,) and it *tare* him, till he foamed and gnashed with his teeth, and *bruised* him, reluctantly leaving him, so that altogether he pined away (Mark ix. 18) like one the very springs of whose life were dried up. Besides, the application of the father to the disciples had been unsuccessful, and thus his hope was covered with a still darker cloud, by being made to know that the case of his son was one of such a degree of Satanic possession, and of so long-standing, as to baffle them. Perhaps the sight of the fearful condition of the boy had filled the disciples with mistrust as to their own powers; perhaps they had also become lately weary in fasting and prayer, (Matt. xvii. 4;) at all events, the attempt had failed: the evil spirit had not yielded to their word.

41. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

Our Lord's rebuke was designed, not for the father of the lad, but for the surrounding multitude, and the term *generation* seems to point to them as specimens and representatives of the whole Jewish nation: it was intended also for the disciples, in whom, so brief an absence from Him, had produced weakness of faith, and whom it had shorn of their strength, and left powerless against the kingdom of darkness. Matt. xvii. 20. *How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?* are words not so much of one longing to put off the coil of flesh, as of a master, complaining of the slowness and dulness of his scholars. *Bring thy son hither.* This command was intended to contribute towards awakening the believing expectation of the father.

42. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare *him*. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

*As he was yet a coming, &c.* As the first bringing of the child to Jesus caused another of the fearful paroxysms of his disorder, so the kingdom of Satan, in small and great, is ever stirred into a fiercer activity by the coming near of the kingdom of Christ. Satan has great wrath when his time is short. *And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, &c.* There was nothing intermediate, as usual in such cases—none of the customary appliances and seeming instrumentalities. He did not take the lad aside—He did not touch him—He made no application to his mouth, but covering the failure of His disciples with the glory of His own acts, He commanded the unclean spirit to quit the child, and enter him no more. The parting throes was indeed terrible, and the boy lay as dead upon the ground. But Jesus raised him by the hand, and delivered him, perfectly restored, to his father. (See our Notes on demoniacal possession, iv. 33, 41; vi. 18; viii. 29.)

43. ¶ And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples.

44. 'Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

† Matt. xvii. 22.

45. \*But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

‡ Mark ix. 32; Luke ii. 50 and xviii. 34.

The people were *all amazed at the majesty of God*. Here, as often in Luke, the glory redounding to God by the healing is the crown of the Saviour's miracle. Jesus was not to be misled by any false appearances, and hence, whilst the multitude were wondering at His mighty deeds, He proceeded to speak of His coming sufferings. *Let these sayings, &c.* By this Christ most probably meant, that they should take heed to those intimations which He had made to them from time to time respecting His sufferings and death, and which He was now just about to repeat. We are disposed to pass over lightly those things which we do not wish to hear. The disciples could not bear to hear of their Lord's painful and ignominious death. Each display of His power and glory filled them with fresh hope that nothing but success and triumph awaited their beloved Master. Therefore, after every such display, He reverted to the unwelcome but profitable subject.

*But they understood not, &c.* The disciples seem to have understood the saying which Christ had just uttered, in a degree, for "they were exceeding sorry," Matt. xvii. 23, but it was in a very faint degree. The reason of this was, that their minds and hearts were still too full of worldly desires—they were yet too much under the notion of Christ as a temporal, reigning, victorious Messiah. They could understand all *joyful* truths concerning Jesus, because they *loved* them; but they could not understand *mournful* truths concerning Him, because they *did not* love them. This explains the clause, *and it was hid from them*, showing that the hiding of the *saying* was entirely the result of their own worldliness of heart and dulness of understanding. And this is the more evident from the fact that the word "*that*" is to be regarded here as equivalent to *so that*, or *insomuch that*, and not, *in order*

*that*, as if it was the intention of Christ that the disciples should not understand His words; for if He so intended, why did He speak to them at all on this subject? It will be noticed, that they did not venture, through fear, to interrogate personally their Master, who alone could have cleared up the obscurity of *that saying* for them, and hence remained much in the dark concerning it.

If Satan opposed a youth who was brought to Christ to obtain a bodily cure, how much more will he strive to prevent the young from seeking the salvation of their souls! Many have found that Satan has pursued them with the most painful temptations, just as they were escaping from his bondage.

Through the *father's* faith this son was healed, (as in the history of the nobleman, and of the Canaanitish woman.) Here is an encouragement for parents. If Jesus showed so much compassion to one who prayed for a *bodily* cure for his son, how much more must He feel for those who implore *spiritual* blessings for their children?

As Jesus, in order to preserve His disciples' faith from failing at that very time, showed them that He knew beforehand all He should suffer, in the same way He now seeks to preserve the minds of His followers from discouragement. Does it perplex a young convert to find that true religion is despised by the great and learned? Is it not written, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called?" Is he staggered when he detects hypocrites among the professed followers of Christ? Is it not written, "Not every one that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven?" Is he dismayed by meeting with numerous temptations and difficulties in his own path? Is it not written, "In the world ye shall have tribulation?" Thus the Lord has mercifully prepared His people for every trial of faith that can come upon them.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. By what other Evangelists is the Transfiguration recorded?
2. What is said of "after these sayings?"
3. Whom did Christ take up into the mountain?
4. Why did he take three witnesses?
5. Why these three?
6. What mountain is probably referred to?
7. What is said of Tabor?
8. What is said of "the fashion of his countenance," &c.?
9. What of "his raiment was white," &c.?
10. What two men talked with Jesus?
11. Why these two?
12. How did they appear?
13. What was the subject of their discourse?
14. What is said of "his decease?"
15. What of the word "accomplish?"
16. In what state were the disciples?
17. Why were they drowsy?
18. How were they aroused?
19. What was their first feeling?
20. What did Peter say?
21. What did his exclamation mean?
22. Why was his request improper?
23. What is said of the cloud?
24. What is said of the voice issuing from the cloud?
25. What is the meaning of what the voice said?
26. State the lessons we learn from the Transfiguration, in the order they are given.

27. What scene met our Lord's eye when He descended from the Mount?
28. What is said of this scene?
29. What is said of the appeal of the distressed parent?
30. What is said of his child?
31. Was he a lunatic?
32. Was he dumb?
33. Was he possessed by an evil spirit?
34. How did he cry out?
35. What did Jesus answer?
36. For whom was His rebuke intended?
37. What kind of faith did the father exhibit?
38. What is meant by "generation?"
39. What is meant by "how long shall I be with you," &c.?
40. What occurred when the boy was coming?
41. What did Jesus do to the unclean spirit?
42. What is said of this rebuke?
43. What effect had the healing of the child upon the spectators?
44. What did Jesus say to His disciples?
45. What did this injunction mean?
46. Why was it necessary?
47. What are we to understand by "they understood not this saying," &c.?
48. Will Satan try to keep the young from coming to Jesus?
49. What encouragement is here given to parents?
50. How does Jesus now seek to preserve His followers from discouragement?

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LESSON LVIII.

vs. 46-50.

46. ¶ Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.

↳ Matt. xviii. 1; Matt. ix. 34.

The frequent announcement by our Lord to His disciples, that His kingdom was not of this world, made but little impression on them. They still held the expectation of a temporal and earthly kingdom. *There arose a reasoning*, or, more literally, *a dialogue*—one inquired, and another answered, and so on. *Which of them should be greatest.* Strangely enough, when we remember that Christ had just predicted to them His approaching sufferings, it was with reference to offices and position in an earthly kingdom that the question of their relative greatness was started. Probably the occasion for this strife, although the germ of rivalry must have been in their hearts before, was found in the singling out of the three intimate disciples to be present at the Transfiguration, &c., &c. Alas, the best and holiest of men are too subject to pride and ambition, too disposed to covet worldly dignity and superiority. There is no sin against which we have such need to watch and pray, as pride. It is a pestilence that walketh in darkness, and a sickness that destroyeth at noon-day. No sin is so deeply rooted in our nature. No pope has ever received such honor as pope "self." How displeasing must it have been to our Lord, especially at such a time, to find that His disciples were disputing about personal preferment! Yet how gentle His reproof.

47. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him.

48. And said unto them, 'Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 40; xviii. 5; Mark ix. 37; John xii. 44; xiii. 20.

J Matt. xxiii. 11, 12.

*Perceiving the thought of their heart.* Their words spoken among themselves could not escape Him, who knew their thoughts, or reasonings. Took a child, and set him by Him, i. e., by the side of Jesus, and said unto them, &c. As in John xiii. 1-11, so did Christ here give force to His instruction by a symbolic act. By the fact that He shows how high He places the child, He commends to the disciples the child-like mind, and in what this consists appears from Matt. xviii. 4. The point of comparison therefore is formed, not by the receptivity, the striving after perfection, the absence of pretension in the child, but most decidedly by its humility, which was so entirely lacking in the disciples. By this humility the child's understanding was yet free from vain imagination, its heart from rivalry, its will from stubbornness. Great as was the affection our Lord showed to young children, we must beware that we do not wrest His language about them here and elsewhere into the false notion that they are naturally innocent and without sin, ver. 48. *In my name*, i. e., acting from Christian principle. Not only did Jesus here show His love for little children, but also and mainly for such as resemble them in a child-like spirit, and those who receive them, resting upon His name, as a principle of action. For the attainment of this child-like spirit, there must be an entire transformation of the inner man. Matt. xviii. 3; John iii. 3. It is strong evidence of the tender interest and attachment cherished by Christ towards His followers who resemble children in their humility, that He regards the kindness and respect shown to them, for His sake, as shown to Himself. If we wish to please our Lord, we shall show great tenderness to His disciples who are least in their own eyes. God shall exalt, and men will honor, them that stoop to the meanest services for the good of souls.

49. ¶ \*And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.

\* Mark ix. 38 See Num. xi. 28.

It seems much to the credit of the disciples, that the word and conduct of Jesus commanding humility, instead of wounding their self-love, awakened their conscience. *John answered and said*, &c. John had a fact in his mind which he must bring into the light of this act of Christ. It was frank and ingenuous in the Apostle to open up this matter to his Master. He suspected that he, with his colleagues, had acted wrong, but he did not on that account conceal their conduct. How apt are we to hide from the friends we most revere those actions which we fear have been faulty! Yet if we were frankly to acknowledge them, we might obtain valuable counsel. *We forbade him.* The disciples had hindered one who in the name of Jesus was receiving the miserable, and doing works of mercy. This man was not a deceiver, for if he had been, he would not have been able to cast out demons by the name of Jesus, for this name wrought no magical effects. Acts xix. 3. He was one who, though he may not have been a decided believer, and thus known to John as such, yet had in him a measure of trust in the name of

Jesus, a germ of true faith—one who, at a time when all the rich and great were joined against the Son of God, was not ashamed to acknowledge Him, and who, though not having a commission to work miracles as the disciples had, yet attempted to cast out devils, and sometimes had success, God granting this success for the honor of His Son. He belonged to those servants of our Lord who were not required, or even *permitted*, to follow Him, as the Apostles did, yet *they* also were dear to Him. And yet this man, because he did not stately follow with them, and was not regularly sent forth as they had been, was forbidden to cast out devils, by the disciples (“we”), nine of whom had themselves, very lately, from unbelief, failed in working a miracle; thus interdicting one whose faith was at least equal to their own! Perhaps, indeed, this prohibition in some measure grew out of the failure of the nine in the healing of the lunatic boy, rendering them unable to bear that another should succeed in this respect better than they. It arose, mainly, however, from the assumption by the disciples that the Messiah’s kingdom was to be essentially like human governments, that they were to form the regal court, and hence, that they, to whom the command, “cast out devils,” had been given, were to be the sole medium of the Messianic blessings to the people at large, and that no one had a right to usurp their prerogatives. The reason of the prohibition given, let it be observed, was not “because he followeth not with *These*,” but “because he followeth not with *us*”—certainly the utterance of an excited human party feeling. They signified that the man should either follow Christ *as they did*, or abandon all working in the name of Jesus.

50. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid *him* not: for he that is not against us is for us.

! See Matt. xii. 30; Luke xi. 23.

*Forbid him not.* By this command our Lord assured His disciples that the man in question would not dishonor His name; his experience would prevent him from turning round and going over to His enemies. Had not Christ secretly and effectually wrought by the man, he could not have succeeded in the attempt to cast out devils in His name. Acts xix. 19-20. And as the disciples could hardly have been unaware of this, they should have regarded the favorable result of this man’s endeavor as a proof, at least for the time, that they had to do with no enemy of the cause of the Saviour. They were therefore reprehensible in prohibiting him, especially without so much as asking their Lord’s advice. Hence Jesus warned them not to forbid any such an one, for the reasons which they gave for their action in this case. *Is for us*, Mark ix. 40, “is on our part,” *i. e.*, on our side, is our friend and co-worker. All who were not engaged *against them* were to be considered as *for them*. The rule given by Jesus here is not in the least conflict with His saying, Matt. xii. 30. *That* rule is applicable in judging our *own* temper; *this* one must guide us in our judgment respecting *others*. The one shows the *tolerance* of the gospel; the other its *intolerance*.

“In extraordinary cases, we should not rashly either condemn or approve.” This is an observation of no little importance, for, on the one hand, precipitate and harsh condemnations of extraordinary appearances of a revival of religion, when it afterwards appears that God was eminently prospering His gospel by those who followed not with these rash censurers, are very common; and so, on the other, is an indiscriminate sanctioning of all that is done or observed on these occasions, as *divine*, when the event shows that human infirmity and depravity, and Satan’s artifice, in various ways, concurred to disgrace, if possible, and stop, the good work of the Holy Spirit. To wait, to examine, and observe, and impartially to distinguish between what is scriptural and what is unscriptural, in these extraordinary events, and not to give our opinion till the whole be maturely weighed, so as to

leave but little danger either of condemning the work of God, or of sanctioning the delusions of the devil, is a chief point of heavenly wisdom. We should be extremely careful never to discourage the least of God's servants. Instead of crushing or subjecting them to severe exaction, we must honor and protect beginnings or germs of faith, wherever they are found, either in the Church or in the world. Men may have a weak faith, and not be of *our* party, and yet belong to Christ. They *do* belong to Christ, if, instead of speaking lightly of Him, they take delight in praising Him before an ungodly world, and especially if, by the power of His word, they release sinners from the bondage of Satan. We must wish those to prosper who convert sinners from the error of their ways, save souls from death, and hide a multitude of sins, whether they work precisely in our way or not. We must not limit the Holy One of Israel to the blessing only of the methods of doing good which *we* choose to employ. Almighty God may, and sometimes does, give success to such actions and enterprises as are good in themselves, though undertaken by persons who have no regular call or warrant from God to do them.

Our Lord's answer to John, in reply to his inquiry respecting the exorcist, is an admirable proof of His holy mildness. Most probably the reprehension of the arbitrary conduct of the disciples would have been sharper had not they thus voluntarily and humbly acknowledged to Him their perverse behavior. This answer furnishes a standard, according to which in every case the philanthropic and Christian activity of those must be judged respecting whose personal life of faith we have not as full evidence as we could desire. It must be regarded in the spirit which hopes for the best.

There is no neutrality in the cause of Christ. All men are on one side, or the other. Man is so constituted that he cannot be neutral in regard to any thing that touches his interest, and Christianity must be to him either *the savor of death unto death, or, of life unto life*. Many persons *wish* to be neutral on the subject of religion. They are afraid of being on the side of Satan, but they have not resolved to be on the side of Jesus. The devil reckons these among his most trusty servants; such cowardly spirits are *less* likely to escape from him than those who openly expose his cause and do his work.

Bigoted exclusiveness is to be eschewed. The words of Jesus, *he that is not against us is for us*, embody a solemn and most important lesson for all God's people. They are not to exhibit the spirit of unholy rivalry or contend with one another, but to rejoice in any good that is doing in the world, by whomsoever, and by whatsoever means, it may be done. We do not understand the passage as at all intended to sanction such indifference to sound doctrine as would lead to the belief that it matters not of what religious faith men are, Jewish, Socinian, Papist or Protestant, so long as they seem earnest-minded men. The persons to whom the passage applies, as will be noticed, are persons who do apostolic work in the name of Jesus, who labor to pull down the kingdom of Satan by the use of gospel weapons. We must beware how we ever forbid such persons, or hinder them in their work. As has been well remarked, a right understanding of these words of our Lord will prove most useful to us in these latter days. The divisions and varieties of opinion which exist among Christians are undeniably great. The schisms and separations which are continually arising about Church-government, and modes of worship, and the sectarian jealousies which it requires no practised eye to discern, are very perplexing to tender consciences, and exceedingly embarrassing to those who look at the Church from without. Is this the normal condition of the Church? Is it that state of believers for which Jesus prayed, in those tender words, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me?" (John xvii. 21.) Is it not true, as intimated in the last clause of the verse just

quoted, that disunion is one cause of the slow progress of Christianity? And may it not be feared that this cause will operate still more fearfully in the future? Certain it is that those evangelical denominations which agree in very many points, and differ only in a few—the former essential, and the latter not only non-essential but practically admitted even by those who insist on them to be so—have a solemn responsibility resting upon them in view of their continued separation. Whatever may become of existing divisions, in union there is strength. And it should not be forgotten that men may be true-hearted followers of Jesus Christ, and yet for some wise reason may be kept back from seeing all things in religion just as we do. When we attempt to stop any such an one from doing service for Christ, because he does not wear our uniform, and fight in our regiment, and do battle in our way, we may be sure that Jesus is saying to us, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of our Lord's announcement concerning His kingdom?
2. What was the "reasoning" that arose?
3. What did this question of greatness refer to?
4. What was probably the occasion for the strife?
5. What is said of the best and holiest of men?
6. What sin needs to be specially guarded against?
7. Must this strife have been specially displeasing to our Lord?
8. What was the nature of His reproof?
9. Did their thoughts escape Christ's notice?
10. What did Jesus do?
11. By whom did He set the child?
12. What did He commend to the disciples?
13. How is the point of the comparison formed?
14. What is said about little children?
15. What is meant by "in my name?"
16. For whom did Jesus here show His love?
17. What is necessary to the attainment of the child-like spirit?
18. What will we do if we wish to please our Lord?
19. What did John say?
20. What seems much to the credit of the disciples?
21. What is said of John in relation to the fact he mentioned?
22. Whom had the disciples forbidden?
23. What kind of a man was he?
24. To what servants of our Lord did he belong?
25. What was strange in the fact of this man's being forbidden?
26. What did this prohibition probably in some measure grow out of?
27. What did it mainly arise from?
28. What is said of the reason of the prohibition given?
29. What did this reason imply?
30. What did Jesus say?
31. What did our Lord teach His disciples by this command?
32. How should the disciples have regarded the casting out of devils by this man?
33. What is meant by "is for us?"
34. What is said of the rule given by Jesus here?
35. What is said of judging in extraordinary cases?
36. What is said of weak faith?
37. What must we do toward those who convert sinners, &c.?
38. What is said of our Lord's answer to John?
39. What is said of neutrality in the cause of Christ?
40. What is said of bigoted exclusiveness?
41. What do the words, "he that is not against us is for us," teach?

## LESSON LIX.

vs. 51-62.

51. ¶ And it came to pass, when the time was come that <sup>m</sup>he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

<sup>m</sup> Mark xvi. 19, Acts 1. 2.

We have now arrived at an extended passage, (including ix. 51-xviii. 15,) which may be called *THE Great Lukean Section*, comprising Luke's largest independent contribution to gospel history. It embraces the portion of our Lord's history developed during His last journey to Jerusalem. Matt. xix. 1; Mark x. 1. The journey was not a direct or continuous one to Jerusalem, but very circuitous, and embraced the interval of time, from the Feast of Tabernacles in October, (to which He went up privately, John vii. 10,) to just before the Passover, at which time He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It was a journey which the Saviour, on the approach of the end of His life, had entered upon with His view directed to His exaltation. At the same time, in the whole narrative of the journeying, different details do not appear in their strict historical sequence, which was the more to be expected as our Lord's whole public life might properly be called a journey to death.

*When the time was come that He should be received up, &c.* This clause, which refers to Christ's *assumption* into heaven at His ascension, is very erroneously translated, and gives the idea that the time of the ascension had fully come, whereas, it wanted nearly or quite six months to the time of His crucifixion. It should be rendered, *when the days were being fulfilled*, that is, *during the period or stage of our Lord's earthly ministry, which was closed by His death*. Having now, at the beginning of the last six months of His life, left Galilee for the last time, the mission of Jesus thereafter was in Peræa and Judea, and during this period Jerusalem was the centre towards which, how often soever He diverged, He must ever gravitate until His final hour there. *Steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.* Though Jerusalem was the place of residence of many of Christ's enemies, and where His bloody sufferings were to be endured, He resolved with an invincible courage and fortitude to go. The fact that there is here no mention made of Christ's death, but of His ascension only, as if all thought of death were swallowed up in His victory over death, teaches us, by His example, to overlook our sufferings and death, as not worthy to be named or mentioned with that glory we are to be received into after death, in the heavenly Jerusalem.

52. And sent messengers before his face, and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

*And sent messengers, &c.* The large number of persons forming our Lord's retinue rendered it necessary to make some provision beforehand for lodging in the towns and villages through which they were to pass. Some have conjectured that these messengers were James and John. *A village of the Samaritans.* The central province or section of the land of Canaan, having Galilee on the north and Judea on the south, was called, in the time of Christ, Samaria. As but a single village is mentioned as thus rejecting Jesus, it would seem that His journey was generally pleasant.

53. And "they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

• John iv. 4, 9.

The Samaritans of the time of our Lord sprang from the colonists with whom the King of Assyria peopled Samaria after the ten tribes were carried away. 2 Kings xvii.; Ezra iv. A captive priest was sent to them, and though at first they regarded God as a kind of tutelary Deity, and much of their religious system was corrupt, yet they afterwards sought to be united with the Jews. With this view, Sanballat, the Cushite, (not the Sanballat of Neh. xiii. 28,) obtained the aid of a Jewish priest, Manasses, whom the Jews forced into banishment. With him, a numerous train of followers settled in Samaria. They then erected on Mount Gerizim an independent temple, which remained till the days of John Hyrcanus, B. C. 109, and established what they deemed a more orderly observance of the Mosaic Law. Their faith and practice they founded on the Pentateuch alone, and rejected the whole of the other inspired writings. Their separation from the Jews in their place of worship rendered the animosity between them very bitter. Matt. x. 5; John iv. 9. Believing that their own temple, on Mount Gerizim, was the place to which all worship should tend, their zeal and the bitterness of their hate was particularly excited against those Jews who, on the periodical occasions, passed through their lands to worship at Jerusalem, at the Pass-over and other public festivals. And of all the festivals, the one most likely to excite their animosity was the Feast of the Dedication of that Temple, which was to them so obnoxious, and which some suppose to have been the very festival which Jesus and His disciples were now proceeding to attend.

54. And when his disciples, James and John, saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as °Elias did?

• 2 Kings i. 10, 12.

*Lord.* The exasperation of these disciples was probably associated with their recollections of the scene of the Transfiguration. They had seen the Lord upon the Mount where Moses and Elijah did Him homage; shortly after, a conversation of high moment had directed their attention to Elijah and his relation to the kingdom of God. It may be, therefore, that an image from the history of this prophet came up before their souls, and a spark of his fiery zeal set their hearts into a flaming glow. 2 Kings xix. 12. Possibly, they saw some insult of manner, or natural refusal to allow the Lord to enter the village. However this may have been, their fiery zeal was aroused at the inhospitality of the inhabitants of this village to one for whom they felt so much love and veneration. They did not say, "Master, will it please thee, who art Lord of the creature, to command fire to come down?" Nor did they say, "If it be thy pleasure, command us to call down fire;" but, *Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?* referring to lightning, which comes from clouds in the atmospheric heaven. This savored too much of pride, cruelty, and revenge. *Even as Elias did.* They so entirely overlooked the distinction between the Old and New Testament, that they, in the service of the mildest Master, continued to believe that they could act as was permitted Elijah in calling fire from heaven; forgetting, too, that his office was that of a stern judge and reformer, and that he was the vicegerent of an avenging Deity, to execute judgment upon the worship of Baal, which had almost wholly superseded that of Jehovah.

The spirit exhibited by these two disciples, on this occasion, shows us that it was not without good reason that our Lord called them Boanerges, or Sons of Thunder, when He first ordained them to be Apostles. Mark iii. 17. The

wonder which some have expressed that a person of so mild and sweet a disposition as John could have made such a proposition, as the one recorded here, rests upon a mistake as to John's temperament, and upon an overlooking of the circumstances of the rejection of Jesus by these Samaritans. John, as the title, *Son of Thunder*, given him, implies, was of an ardent and impetuous disposition, and his Epistles indicate that he was a prompt, decided, outspoken man, who would sacrifice himself and others rather than that his Master should receive insult or harm. It was commendable on the part of these men that they had so much love to Jesus as to feel indignant at a churlish denial of an act of kindness towards Him; but their fault was, that they were so carried away with passion and revenge, as to desire the destruction of the uncivil Samaritans. It is also evidence of the transforming power of the grace of God, in John's case, that though we find him three times guilty of sins against charity; once when he asked to sit at Christ's right and left hand in His kingdom, and to be preferred before all the Apostles; another, when he forbade a man to cast out devils, because he did not follow the Apostles; and here again showing a fierce and cruel spirit against the Samaritan villagers for not receiving our Lord; yet this was the Apostle who proved at last most remarkable for preaching love and charity. No change is too great for the Lord to work.

55. But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

56. "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

p John III. 17 and xii. 47.

Whilst the disciples were indulging their proud, passionate, and revengeful spirit, Jesus felt compassion for the Samaritans, notwithstanding, in their ignorance of His true character, they refused to receive Him into their houses. Hence He rebuked the revengeful spirit of the disciples, as contrary to the design of Christianity, and as proceeding from ignorance of the dispensation under which they lived, of themselves, and of Him as their Lord and Master. *For the Son of man, &c.*, i. e., the proper intent and design of Christ's coming was to save, and not to destroy, though the accidental effect of it may be otherwise, through the malice and perverseness of men. *Another village*, where the friends of Jesus may have been numerous. A mild, merciful, and forgiving spirit, should be cultivated and cherished by all Christians. God loves more to hear His people intercede for perishing sinners, (as Abraham did for Sodom,) than to hear them plead for their destruction. It better becomes a creature, who deserves himself to be consumed, and who has been snatched by the arm of Divine mercy as a brand from the burning, to ask for *mercy* for his fellow-sinners, than to invoke vengeance. How important it is that our zeal for God should be "according to knowledge!" It is possible to mean well and have good intentions, and yet make most grievous mistakes in our actions. It is possible to fancy that we have Scripture on our side, and to support our conduct by quotations from God's word, and yet to commit serious errors. It is an interesting fact, that, at a later period in his life, John came down to Samaria in a very different spirit from that manifested on this occasion. He came with Peter on a special mission from Jerusalem, to confer spiritual blessings on Samaritan believers. And we are told that he "preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans." Acts viii. 25. Our Lord's rebuke to His disciples plainly expresses His entire disapproval of all persecution for religion's sake. Whatever we may think of men's doctrines or practices, we are not to persecute them.

57. ¶ And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

q Matt. viii. 19.

58. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

A resolution to follow Christ is a good one, if made deliberately, and not rashly, nor for sinister and secular advantages, which, it is to be feared from the answer our Saviour gave, was the case here. The title, *the Son of man*, which Christ here gives to Himself, is, 1, an intimation that He who requires so much self-denial, also fully deserves it; 2, shows the truth of His humanity, for the Son of man must be man; and, 3, indicates the depth of His abasement, Christ humbled, yea, emptied Himself, when, being the Son of God, He submitted to be made man. Had this *certain man* truly loved Jesus, he would not have been deterred by any prospect of privation from following His steps. As no further mention is made of him, it is most probable that he was discouraged by the reply Jesus gave.

59. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

r Matt. viii. 21.

60. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

Though Jesus deterred the former man who had offered to follow Him, He *calls* this man to do so. If the first was too sanguine and inconsiderate, the second was too melancholy, even in the most immediate neighborhood of the Prince of Life, finding himself pursued by the gloomy images of death, and therefore requiring encouragement. Those who cannot read the heart might have thought that this man was *unwilling* to follow Jesus. But the Lord judged differently. He saw in him the spirit that He approved. It was not *unwillingness* to obey His call, but a sense of duty to an aged parent, whose funeral he wished to attend, or whom he wished to take care of during the infirmities of his latter days, until he should die, that prompted the request. The Lord replied, *Let the dead bury their dead, &c.* This, certainly, has a singular sound, and has taken its place among the *difficult* passages of Scripture. But to a Jew, who was familiar with the idea involved, its meaning must have been instantly clear. The term *dead* is here used both in its figurative and literal acceptation. It was common among the Jews to describe an ungodly or sinful person as one dead, though alive. Our Saviour therefore means to say that one who had an urgent call to follow Him, might leave even his dead father to be buried by his other sons or other relatives who were "dead" to the great concerns of eternal life. By this remarkable instance—strong even to seeming harshness—our Lord did most pointedly indicate the superior object and higher duty to which *all* others must give place. Such as are called by Christ to preach the gospel, must mind that alone, and leave inferior duties to inferior persons, as if Christ had said, "Others will serve well enough to bury the dead, but thou that art called to minister unto God, must do that unto which thou art called."

61. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

s See 1 Kings xix. 20.

62. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

It is not stated definitely in the case of this person whether the initiative proceeded from the Saviour or himself. He declared his willingness to go with Jesus, but asked permission to delay his coming for a little while. It is probable that the words, *bid them farewell*, imply more than appears. It has been suggested that they should be translated, "suffer me first to go and give my commands" to them at home, as if the man was about to die or take a long journey. Had the desire to bid farewell been like the simple wish of Elisha, "to kiss his father and mother," when Elijah called him, our Lord would hardly have said what He did. (1 Kings xix. 20.) It is evident at any rate that in this case the *motive* was wrong. The Lord's answer showed that *this* man, like the *first*, was not prepared for the service he seemed willing to engage in.

*Put his hand to the plough, and looking back.* This proverbial expression derived from the labors of agriculture, has been illustrated by parallel citations from the heathen poets. It was necessary that the ploughman should give his undivided attention to the work before him, that his furrow might be kept straight. This therefore aptly inculcates that he who would be a spiritual ploughman should not "cast one long, lingering look behind," upon the world and its concerns. If he does so, his work will be toilsome, ill-regulated, and insignificant. Such a man is not *fit*, literally, "well-placed or well-disposed," *for the kingdom of God*, or gospel work, any more than a man looking behind him is rightly placed for ploughing. It is not merely that he may not turn back or withdraw his hand. There must be no back *glances* of his eye, no turning of his head, but the forward thrust of the man with all his might. It was by such a winnowing that our Lord selected His seventy. How hardly did even they fulfil the high office.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. To what have we now arrived ?
2. What does this section embrace ?
3. What is said of the journey ?
4. What is said of "when the time was come," &c. ?
5. Where was the mission of Jesus after this point ?
6. What is said of Christ's resolution ?
7. Why did our Lord send messengers before His face ?
8. What have some conjectured about these messengers ?
9. Where was Samaria ?
10. Was Jesus rejected by more than a single village ?
11. Who were the Samaritans in the time of our Lord ?
12. Where did they erect an independent temple ?
13. How long did it remain ?
14. What did they establish ?
15. On what were their faith and practice founded ?
16. What rendered the animosity between them and the Jews bitter ?
17. Against what Jews was the hate of the Samaritans particularly excited ?
18. What did James and John say ?
19. With what was their exasperation probably associated ?
20. Why were they exasperated ?
21. What did they not say ?
22. What did they say ?
23. What did they mean by "fire" ?

24. What is said of their request?
25. Against what should our wrath be incensed?
26. What does the spirit of these two disciples, at this time, show us?
27. What is said of the wonder by some that John could make such a proposition?
28. Of what disposition was John?
29. Was it commendable in these men to love Jesus so much as to feel indignant at unkindness toward Him?
30. What was their fault?
31. What evidence of the power of the grace of God is seen in John's case?
32. What did Jesus say to James and John?
33. What was the meaning of His rebuke?
34. How did Christ feel toward the Samaritans?
35. What is meant by "the Son of Man is not come to destroy," &c.?
36. What is said of a merciful and forgiving spirit?
37. Does the Bible sanction a revengeful spirit?
38. What is said of persecution for religion's sake?
39. What did a certain man say unto Jesus?
40. What, is it to be feared, was his motive?
41. What did Jesus say to him?
42. What is intimated by the title, "the Son of Man?"
43. What did Jesus say unto another?
44. What difference is noted between this man and the first mentioned?
45. What did the man reply?
46. What was the meaning of his reply?
47. What did Jesus answer him?
48. What does our Lord indicate in this answer?
49. What did still another say to Jesus?
50. What is the meaning of what he said?
51. Was this man's *motive* right?
52. Whence is the proverb in verse 62 derived?
53. What does this proverb inculcate?
54. What are we to understand by "not fit for the kingdom of God?"

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## CHAPTER X.

### LESSON LX.

vs. 1-12.

OUR Lord having finally withdrawn His rejected ministry from Northern Palestine, and having arrived at the northern boundary of Judea on His last setting His face in that direction, proceeds to perform, in the midst of apparent dejection, a public symbol of future triumph, by selecting a body of *seventy* to perform a mission of heralding His name and preaching through city and country.

1. After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

• Matt. x. 1; Mark vi. 7.

*Other seventy also.* Of the commissioning the seventy Luke gives the sole account, and his narrative is limited to three paragraphs. We do not know the names of any of these disciples. Their subsequent history has not been revealed to us. The seventy were probably selected from the *messengers* mentioned in the last chapter, from the candidates so well sifted in its closing verses, and from some of our Lord's friends in Judea.

Inasmuch as it was necessary that the twelve Apostles should be generally with their Master, especially when every thing was now verging towards the last great events, His crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension to glory, they were excused by Him from this mission, and the seventy were sent forth to prepare the way for the coming of the Saviour in whatever towns or villages He might choose to visit. But why the precise number *seventy*? For this several reasons have been assigned. Grotius tells us that as the Jews, for smaller bodies of select men, customarily used the number *twelve*, so in the larger they used the number *seventy*. The number seventy was that of the heads of the families of Israel, (Gen. xvi. 27,) and of the palm-trees at Elim, (Exod. xv. 27.) The Jews supposed that the languages of the world were seventy. Seventy was the number of the Jewish Sanhedrim. Seventy being a multiple of the perfect number *seven* is supposed to have symbolized the full and complete offer of salvation. Assuming that the *twelve* had reference to the tribes of the Jews, it has been alleged by some that the seventy were the symbol of the preaching of the universal gospel to all the nations of the earth. The most common opinion is that as the number twelve had a reference probably to the number of the patriarchs, intimating the Lord's provision for His Israel, so seventy may have reference to the Elders chosen by Moses to aid him in the government of the people. Num. xi. 16, 25.

*After these things.* What precedes in the narrative. *Appointed.* The Greek word so translated is only found in one other place in the New Testament, (Acts i. 24,) where it is rendered "*show.*" It signifies, "to mark out, or appoint to an office by some outward sign;" and as ministers were so *set forth* or *publicly inducted* into their office, the word becomes synonymous with *ordain*. *Other seventy also*; more literally and correctly, *others, seventy* (in number.) *Two and two.* It has been remarked that reformers in different ages seem to come in pairs: as Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, Huss and Jerome, Luther and Melancthon. The disciples were sent forth, *two and two*, to make their message of more authority, and to encourage, strengthen, and assist each other. Thus they went forth, heralding Christ's name, and preaching through city and country.

2. Therefore said he unto them, <sup>b</sup>The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. ix. 37, 38; John iv. 35.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 1.

As seventy men were too few to instruct all those who were perishing through ignorance, Jesus commanded them to pray that God would send forth laborers into His harvest. A similar declaration was made on the sending forth of the Twelve. Matt. ix. 37, 38. So, in John iv. 35, our Lord exclaimed in a similar figure to His disciples: "Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest." Let it be observed, 1. That the world is an harvest-field. 2. That ministers are laborers in this field. 3. That it belongs to God alone to send forth laborers into His harvest. 4. That the number of faithful laborers is comparatively small. 5. That it is the duty of the Church to pray earnestly and incessantly to the Lord of the harvest to send forth an increased number of faithful laborers. The Greek word translated *send forth* conveys the idea of

*urgency*. Literally signifying, as it does, "to cast forth," or "send forth with a degree of force," it implies that nothing but God's powerful and constraining call will ever move men to become ministers and laborers in the gospel harvest. This declaration of Jesus to His disciples loses none of its force, in its application to the spiritual harvest, which is now in readiness for laborers in almost every portion of the world. How small the number of ministers and missionaries scattered over the world! When the Sabbath dawns, how few rejoice to see its beams! It is the duty of Christians to pray for an increase of laborers. For though it be the act of God to *send forth laborers*, He has been pleased to connect this with the prayer of man. Divine operation will not dispense with human co-operation. God will do, in answer to prayer, what will not be done without prayer. Low faith in the Church produces slow development of the work of salvation. Prayer is a means for helping forward the cause of Christ in the world, within the reach of all who have the Spirit of adoption. Not all Christians have money to give to missions, very few have intellectual gifts, or extensive influence among men; but all believers can pray for the success of the gospel, and they ought to pray for it daily. Prayer has power with God. (James v. 16.) Especially, is it the duty of the minister of the gospel to use this weapon. He must give himself to prayer as well as to the ministry of the Word. (Acts vi. 4.) He must not only use the sword of the Spirit; but pray always, with all prayer and supplication. (Eph. vi. 17, 18.) This is the way to win a blessing on his own ministry, and this, above all, is the way to procure helpers to carry on Christ's work.

3. Go your ways: "behold I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. x. 16.

It is noticeable how the admonitions given by the Saviour to the seventy agree with the precepts which He gave to the Twelve in sending them forth, (Luke ix. 1-6.) Comparing this address of Christ with that in Matt. x., we find the following points of difference: here there is: 1, No limitation to the house of Israel; 2, No prohibition from Samaria; 3, The power of working miracles is less extended, 4, The prediction of persecution is briefer. *Go your ways*, literally, *depart*, take your various routes, a word of dismissal, with the slight additional notion of haste. *Behold, I send you*. The Greek for "I" is here emphatically inserted, as if to show the dignity of the disciples' office. *As lambs among wolves*. In Matt. x. 16, the word *sheep* was used. Either word is a most impressive image of the contrast between the meek messenger of the gospel and the persecutors by whom he will be surrounded; helpless, unarmed, undefended, and, to all appearance, his only destiny, destruction. This prophecy of persecution had a special reference to the life-time of those to whom it was spoken. We see its fulfilment in the many persecutions described in the Acts of the Apostles. But the spirit to which it refers still exists, and ever will, as long as the Church stands. Christians must make up their minds to be hated, persecuted, and ill-treated by those who have no real religion. (1 John iii. 13; 1 Pet. iii. 8.)

4. "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

<sup>e</sup> Mark vi. 8; Luke ix. 3.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Kings iv. 29.

Notwithstanding the dangerous character of their mission, the disciples were commanded to make no provision for their necessary wants. *Purses*—the folds of the *girdle* served as a Jewish purse to carry money. *Scrip* was a wallet slung by thongs upon the person, to contain provisions or other neces-

saries. They are merely the skins of kids stripped of wool and tanned by a very simple process. *Nor shoes.* In Mark vi. 9, it is stated that when the Apostles went forth, our Lord commanded them to be "shod with sandals," which were a less expensive and luxurious thing than shoes—the sandal only covering the sole of the foot, and being fastened about the foot and ankle with straps, whilst the shoe covered the whole foot. In the passage before us the prohibition is only against shoes, and not against sandals. In this fearless reliance upon Divine support and protection, the disciples were to go forth, deterred by no danger, nor depressed by the apparent power of their enemies. *Salute no man by the way.* In their salutations on meeting, much time is often consumed by the Orientals in mutual inquiries and compliments, manual and oral. They are also fond of inquiring into all the business, such as the name, native place, residence, and present object, of persons they meet on the road, and who return their salutation. In this no offence or impertinence is intended or taken. It is the habit of the people, and the custom of the country. But a stranger not familiar with the custom, or, from the more reserved habits of his own country, not disposed to disclose himself fully to every one he meets, is apt to be much annoyed, and finds it difficult to get rid of the questioner without exciting suspicion. The Orientals, who in general have little idea of the value of time, do not mind the loss of it which is thus involved. Yet they were so far sensible of it, that it appears to have been the practice to inculcate upon messengers, who were sent upon business which required despatch, that they should not salute any one by the way, (compare 2 Kings iv. 29.) The restriction on this point will be the better understood, when it is stated that it was a maxim among the Jews to salute every one by the way. Exceptions were, indeed, made with respect to such as were mourners, and those who fasted, these not being expected to offer or return any salutation. That our Saviour did not intend to intimate any objection to proper salutations of civility and respect, appears clearly enough from the courteous salutation enjoined in the next verse. At the same time, whilst ministers and all Christians are to obey the command, "Be courteous," (1 Pet. iii. 8,) they are not to waste their time in useless and empty ceremonies, as others do who have nothing better to do with their time. On the contrary, they are to beware of allowing the world to eat up their time and thoughts. They are to remember that care about money, concern about external comforts, and excessive attention to what are called "the courtesies of life," are mighty snares, into which they must take heed lest they fall. They must show to the men of the world that they find life too precious to be spent in perpetual feasting, and visiting, and calling, and the like, as if there were no death, or judgment, or life to come.

5. "And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

f Matt. x. 12.

6. And if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

The disciples when they entered any house were to salute those who resided in it, in the customary manner among the Jews, wishing that the peace and blessing of God might be communicated to them, and proposing the gospel of peace and salvation. And if the family, or any person in it, was so disposed to receive the truth, as to be worthy of the salutation with which the disciples entered the house, then the blessing would permanently abide on him, (Phil. iv. 7,) and the messengers of Christ would further instruct and pray for him: but, where this was not the case, the prayers and endeavors of the disciples would return in blessings on themselves. The

conclusion of ver. 6 is like the expression in the Psalms, "My prayer returned into mine own bosom." Ps. xxxv. 13.

7. <sup>h</sup>And in the same house remain, <sup>i</sup>eating and drinking such things as they give: for the <sup>k</sup>labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

<sup>h</sup> Matt. x. 11.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Cor. x. 27.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. x. 10; 1 Cor. ix. 4, &c.; 1 Tim. v. 18.

The disciples were to abide in the same house which they had entered, partaking of such entertainment as their host might give them. *For the laborer, &c.* This is the great principle on which they were to freely partake of the hospitalities of those for whose good they were ministering. This expression is a proverbial one. It is remarkable as being the only expression in the Gospels which is quoted in the Epistles. Paul uses it in writing to Timothy, in connection with the expression, "the Scripture saith." 1 Tim. v. 18. *Go not from house to house*, be content with such lodgings as have been provided for you, and be not hard to please either in the matter of bed or board. Spend not your time in convivial feasts. Show the people that you are seeking *them*, and not *theirs*. Dr. Thomson (Land and Book) says, in reference to the injunction now before us, "The reason is very obvious to one acquainted with Oriental customs. When a stranger arrives in a village, or an encampment, the neighbors, one after another, must invite him to eat with them. There is a strict etiquette about it, involving much ostentation and hypocrisy, and a failure in the due observance of this system of hospitality is violently resented, and often leads to alienations and feuds among neighbors. It also consumes much time, leads to levity, and every way counteracts the success of a spiritual mission."

Instructions, such as have been noticed, have a primary and special reference to ministers of the gospel. They are the men above all who, in their style of living, ought to be careful to avoid the spirit of the world. Simplicity in food and household arrangements, and readiness to put up with any accommodation, so long as health can be preserved uninjured, should always be the mark of the "man of God." Not ministers alone, however, but all believers are here reminded of the necessity of simplicity and unworldliness in their daily life. We must beware of thinking too much about our meals, our furniture, and our houses, and all those things which concern the life of the body. We must strive to live like men whose first thoughts are about the immortal soul, and who realize that they are pilgrims and strangers in the world.

8. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

9. <sup>l</sup>And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, <sup>m</sup>The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

<sup>l</sup> Luke ix. 2.

<sup>m</sup> Matt. iii. 2 and iv. 17; and x. 7.

10. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

11. <sup>n</sup>Even the very dust of your city which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

<sup>n</sup> Matt. x. 14; Luke ix. 5; Acts xiii. 51 and xviii. 6.

Our Lord concluded His instructions by denouncing woes upon the three favored cities in Galilee, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Why did

He speak to the seventy concerning the guilt of those cities? To remind them how He Himself, the Son of God, had been rejected by the cities in which He most frequently preached, and thus to prepare them for similar treatment. Our proud hearts are ready to rebel when we find that our instructions produce no effect upon the hearts of men. But can we repine at want of success, when we remember how our *Lord*, in general, seemed to toil in vain? See Notes on ix. 1-6.

12. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

• Matt. x. 15; Mark vi. 11.

According to the common conception, the judgment of retribution has already smitten Sodom and Gomorrah, which is added by Matthew, x. 15. The two places are generally named in connection. According to the steady teaching of the New Testament, on the other hand, this judgment, terrific though it was, is only a foretaste of that which is to be expected at the end of days. Comp., for instance, Jude, ver. 7, where it is affirmed that the miraculous fire by which these cities were destroyed for their sins was but a symbol of eternal wrath, by which they were set forth as *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*. The terrible judgment, moreover, with which the Lord here threatens those who reject His servants, is an unequivocal proof of the high rank which He ascribes to them, compared with the most eminent men of God, and indirectly, at the same time, a striking revelation of His own self-consciousness that He was Divine. *More tolerable*, because that city was more highly favored with spiritual privileges. From this verse, in which our Lord is not threatening the innocent bricks and walls, but the guilty inhabitants of the cities which reject His gospel, it is evident, 1. That there shall be a day of judgment. 2. That then some sinners shall fare worse than others. 3. That sinners are not to be annihilated, for then how could it be "more tolerable" for some than others? Where there is no consciousness there can be no degrees of suffering. 4. That there will be degrees of guilt and suffering among the lost. 5. That of all sinners, the condition of those will be the saddest at the day of judgment, and beyond, who, living under the gospel, die after all in impenitence and unbelief.

### QUESTIONS.

1. By whom is the sole account of the sending of the Seventy given?
2. Do we know their names or subsequent history?
3. From whom were they probably selected?
4. For what purpose were they sent forth?
5. Why were precisely seventy chosen?
6. What is the meaning of *appointed*?
7. Why were the disciples sent *two and two*?
8. What is said about reformers in different ages?
9. What did Christ command His disciples to pray for?
10. What do we learn from this command?
11. What is said about the words *send forth*?
12. Is this declaration of Christ to His disciples equally applicable now?
13. What are the reasons given why Christians should pray as commanded?
14. What is said about the instructions given to the Seventy, and the precepts given to the Twelve, Matt. x.?
15. What is the import of the word *lambs* as used here?
16. Are Christians to expect persecutions now?

17. What were *purses*?
18. What was *scrip*?
19. How did sandals differ from *shoes*?
20. What is said about the phrase—*salute no man by the way*?
21. What does it forbid, especially in ministers?
22. What were the disciples to do on entering any house?
23. What is meant by *son of peace*?
24. What was to be the result if no son of peace was found?
25. What was the principle on which the disciples were to partake of hospitality?
26. What is said about *the laborer is worthy of his hire*?
27. What was meant by the prohibition *to go from house to house*?
28. What do Christ's instructions to the Seventy teach ministers, and all Christians?
29. Why did our Lord speak to the Seventy concerning the three cities of Galilee?
30. What connection is there between verse 12 and Jude 7?
31. What does verse 12 teach?

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LESSON LXI.

vs. 13-16.

13. <sup>p</sup>Wo unto thee, Chorazin! Wo unto thee, Bethsaida! <sup>q</sup>for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

<sup>p</sup> Matt. xi. 21.

<sup>q</sup> Ezek. iii. 6.

14. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.

*Chorazin.* This place is nowhere mentioned but in this and the parallel texts, and in these only by way of reference. It would seem to have been a town of some note, on the shores of the lake of Galilee, and near Capernaum, along with which and Bethsaida its name occurs. When Dr. Richardson was travelling in that region, and came near the village of Mensura, about six miles west of the lake, he asked some natives if they knew such a place as Capernaum. They answered, "Cavernahum va Chorasi,—they are quite near, but in ruins." This is an important circumstance, from their joining Chorazin, which the Dr. had *not* named, to Capernaum,—as did our Saviour in this denunciation, and from their adding, that they were in ruins, whereas they could not have known but that the inquirer had in view an existing town or village.

*Bethsaida* was in the same region with Chorazin. It was the birth-place of Andrew, Peter, and Philip. Mark xiv. 70; John i. 44. *Tyre.* This celebrated city, the commercial emporium of ancient Phœnicia, was founded two hundred years before the time of Solomon. It stood on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, about midway between Egypt and Asia Minor. It was one of the wealthiest and most celebrated cities of antiquity. *Sidon*, or *Zidon*, was a still more ancient Phœnician city, standing on the same shore,

about forty miles north of Tyre. It was situated within the limits of the tribe of Asher, but was never conquered by Israel. It was celebrated for commerce and manufactures. Against these two cities Ezekiel prophesies. Ezek. xxxviii. They are now little better than ruins. There must, undoubtedly, have been so many miracles performed as well at Chorazin as at Bethsaida, that the judgment here denounced against them was fully deserved, and yet the Evangelists relate nothing whatever of them, a proof certainly that they have been rather frugal than lavish in writing their accounts of miracles. Comp. John xxi. 24, 25. Of the precise position of Chorazin and Bethsaida no infallible account can be given, as no certain traces of them now exist.

*They had a great while ago repented, &c.* Here is confessedly a difficulty. It is affirmed elsewhere, that "Jesus is exalted to give repentance," and that "no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him," and yet it is said in this passage, that if the miracles done in certain cities had been done in other cities, the inhabitants of those cities would have been led to repentance. Would the mere miracles have been able to produce this effect? And if repentance could thus have been produced in those cities, why was it not? We are not competent to solve these difficulties. It suffices, that Christ knew the hearts of the impenitent Jews to be more hardened in rebellion and enmity, and less susceptible of suitable impressions from His doctrine and miracles, than those of the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon would have been, and therefore their final condemnation would be proportionably more intolerable.

But another and still greater difficulty, connected with this subject, presents itself, and must not be evaded. It is declared that if certain things had been done, an effect *would* have resulted (repentance) which, however, *did not* occur. And in the parallel passage, (Matt. xi. 23,) it is said that if the mighty works which were done in one town had been done in another town, that other town, instead of being destroyed, as it was by Divine visitation, "would have remained until this day." How is this? Has God any plan for the government of the world, and, if so, is that plan susceptible of different issues? Can events be *certain*, and at the same time *contingent*? On these difficult questions we submit the following remarks: It is impossible to conceive of an infinite Law-Giver, the Maker, and Sovereign of all things, without ascribing to Him an all-comprehending view of all things. The whole system of prophecy assumes that all events in all future times have a present existence, a fixed certainty of taking place, in the Divine Mind, else how could they be predicted? If even only the *presence* of God is admitted, the certainty of all events must also be, unless it be possible to *foreknow* that which is *uncertain*. Whilst the Bible asserts the certainty of all future events, it also declares, with equal plainness, that we are entirely, and justly accountable, that we act freely in view of motives, and that neither the Divine foreknowledge, nor any other attribute or act of God, puts any restraint at all upon our choice and determinations. And every man knows this is absolutely true. In every mind there is a consciousness of complete freedom of purpose and action. The pangs of remorse which follow crime clearly prove that the transgressor has an inward assurance he has acted freely, voluntarily, and wickedly. Thus the certainty of all events, and the perfect freedom of human agency, are both revealed.

Now, what if we cannot grasp this revelation so as fully to understand it? What, if we cannot grapple with the problem, how an event can be *certain*, and yet there be a possibility of it *not occurring*? What, if we cannot conceive how, in a world of fixed certainties, Sodom and Gomorrah *could* have remained nineteen hundred years longer, and *did not*? And how the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida could and would, with certain surrounding conditions, have repented, and yet did not repent? Are we, then, forced to the reception of the doctrine of fatalism, on the one hand, or, on the other,

to believe that the world is subject to a random government, in which there is neither law nor certainty? Evidently not. It is our duty to receive what God has revealed concerning Himself and us, (and simply *because* it is revealed,) whether we can or cannot reconcile the certainty of future issues, which His very Omniscience implies, and our uncontrolled and voluntary volitions and actions. Take a case in illustration of our meaning. Look at Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. Was not the destruction of that city a fore-known and settled event? Yet this did not prevent the Saviour bringing the appliances of salvation to bear upon its inhabitants, and weeping over the destruction that awaited them—a destruction not merely of their magnificent buildings, which would soon at any rate have had to perish, and their bodies, soon to be the food of worms, but, infinitely worse, of their accountable and immortal souls. Neither did it prevent Him saying in a tone of tenderest lamentation, “*If thou,*” (or in the optative form which the phrase admits,) “*O thou that hadst known,*” “*often would I have gathered thee together, but ye would not.*” Here, then, in the man Christ Jesus weeping over those exposed to an impending doom, fixed beyond recall, (“*but now they are hidden from thine eyes,*”) with an earnestness drawn from a past possibility of their avoiding their doom, we find, in our judgment, the clearest of all solutions of the consistency of the fixedness of all things, and the free agency, and consequent responsibility of man. And just here, we ought to desist from endeavor to comprehend this great mystery. A full demonstration of it is only to be looked for in another and higher state of existence. It is a depth which we cannot now fathom. We may enter into

“reasonings high,  
Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,  
Fix’d fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,”

and yet we will

“Find no end in wandering mazes lost.”

“Secret things belong unto the Lord, but the things which are revealed, to us and our children.” We cannot comprehend the union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Immanuel, yet we regard Him as the God-man, and the only Mediator. We cannot fathom the depth of the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, and these three the same in substance, and equal in power and glory, yet we believe it because “*thus it is written.*” We cannot understand our own compound being: how matter and spirit can coexist in our mysterious personal constitution. Neither should we insist upon understanding, before we will act upon it, the reconcilableness of the certainty of all events and man’s free agency. Enough for us that whilst we know that “*God doeth His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth,*” and that “*His counsel shall stand to all generations,*” we know also that “*whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;*” that “*He is not willing that any shall perish;*” and that every sinner is not only invited to Jesus, but urged to seek salvation with all the ardor and hope of one who is convinced that he cannot perish, except by his own fault, and confident that, unless he fits himself for destruction, he will not be found among those who go away into *everlasting punishment.*

15. ‘And thou Capernaum, which art ‘exalted to heaven, shall be thrust down to hell.

† Matt. xi. 23.

• See Gen. xi. 4; Deut. i. 28; Is. xiv. 18; Jer. ii. 53.

† See Ezek. xxvi. 20 and xxxii. 18.

*Thou Capernaum.* It is noticeable that the Saviour, among the towns whose judgment He denounces, does not speak expressly of Nazareth. This,

say some, was to avoid the appearance of a personal revenge. But may we not rather suppose that it was a manifestation of human tenderness for the home of His mother and of His own childhood? Of the precise position of Capernaum, as of Chorazin and Bethsaida, no certain traces now exist. It was a prosperous city, where Christ had chiefly resided after His entrance upon His public ministry; and as it had, by His presence, preaching, and miracles, enjoyed privileges far above other places, so, by reason of its misimprovement of those privileges, its condition would be far sadder than that of those who had never heard of a Saviour. The words, *heaven*, and *hell*, are here to be understood, in a literal sense, as the abode of the blest, or that of the cursed. The figure, if there be any, is in the *exaltation*. Learn, hence: 1. That the enjoyment of gospel-ordinances is a great honor to the obscurest people and place. 2. That gospel-ordinances enjoyed, but not improved, provoke God to inflict the sorest judgments upon a people. 3. That man is accountable for his belief, and that not believing the gospel is a sin which leads to hell as really as not keeping the ten commandments. 4. That the clearness of the light against which sin is committed aggravates the guilt. The higher a people rise under the means of grace, the lower they fall if these means are not improved. They that have been nearest to conversion, being not converted, shall have the greatest condemnation when they are judged. 5. It is not alone the seeing of miracles that is necessary to convert souls. 6. Cities are difficult fields for the spiritual laborer to cultivate. Even Jesus, whilst He met with eminent success in preaching in numerous country villages, and among the hamlets of the poor, yet encountered peculiar obstacles in Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Jerusalem. Far stronger is the likelihood, humanly speaking, that the mind will be led to receive the truth, and to live in communion with God, in the quiet village where there is time for meditation and worship, and where nature is constantly exerting her elevating influence upon the heart, and calling it to adore its bountiful and benignant Creator, than in the city, where vice extensively prevails in its producing causes and sad effects, where business presses with unremitting demand, where pride and poverty both have their strongest temptations, and where the whole system of things strongly tends to hurry and hollowness, to superficial acquaintance with one's self and with others, and to the subordination of the eternal future to the life that now is. A city, too, unites in itself the extremes of population. On the one side are the low, sunken, and degraded, whom the gospel cannot reach, and on the other side are the gay, giddy, and godless, for whom the gospel has no attraction. It can scarcely be wondered, therefore, that when Christ "beheld the city," (Luke xix. 41,) "He wept over it," nor can any one who sympathizes with the Son of God in the work of saving a lost world, fail to feel at times an emotion of sorrow rising in his bosom, as he gazes upon a teeming population among whom the difficulties of salvation, mighty at best, are greatly multiplied and magnified.

16. "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

• Matt. x. 40; Mark ix. 37; John xlii. 20.      • 1 Thess. iv. 8.      • y. John v. 23.

The vital and indissoluble union, subsisting between Christ and His followers, rendering every act of love or hatred exercised toward them the same as done to Him, is here asserted in the fullest and most explicit terms. The union also between Christ and the Father, affirmed in Matthew, (x. 40,) is here reiterated, as a ground of assurance in times of peril and persecution, and as giving dignity and authority to the message, which the disciples were to convey to their fellow-men. Men may think it no great matter to slight

or neglect the message and messengers of Christ, but that contempt extends beyond them to Christ Himself who gave them their commission, and beyond Him to God the Father who gave Him His commission; accordingly ministers are called God's mouth, (Jer. xv. 19,) their message and their mission being both from Him.

There is probably no stronger language than this in the New Testament about the dignity of a faithful minister's office, and the guilt incurred by those who refuse to hear his message. It is language, be it remembered, not addressed to the Apostles, but to seventy disciples, of whose names and subsequent history we know nothing. It is one thing to regard the minister's office with idolatrous and superstitious reverence. It is quite another thing to despise it, and regard his warnings and exhortations as of no importance. Both extremes are wrong. The faithful minister is one whose words cannot be disregarded without great sin. He is an ambassador from the court of heaven. He is the bearer of a flag of truce. This is his true character, how much soever the rich may trample on him, the pleasure-lover be annoyed at him, the wicked hate him, or the covetous be vexed by him. To refuse to hear him, therefore, or to despise him or his message, is to treat thus Christ and His Father, by whom He has been sent, and in the name and by the authority of whom He speaks. And oh, how solemn the thought that the mere neglect of this message is enough to ruin the soul! We need not run into any excess of riot. We need not openly oppose true religion. We have only to remain cold, careless, indifferent, unmoved, and unaffected, when the gospel is pressed on our acceptance, and ours will be the perdition of ungodly men.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is said about Chorazin?
2. Where does it seem to have been located?
3. What is said of Dr. Richardson?
4. What is said of Bethsaida?
5. What of Tyre?
6. What of Sidon?
7. What is said of "they had a great while ago repented," &c.?
8. What is Jesus exalted to give?
9. Would mere miracles have been able to produce repentance?
10. Are we competent to solve the difficulties here presented?
11. What still greater difficulty presents itself?
12. What is said in regard to it?
13. What furnishes the clearest evidence of the fixedness of all things and the free agency and responsibility of man?
14. Why did not Jesus mention Nazareth among the towns whose judgment He denounces?
15. What is said of the precise position of Capernaum?
16. What is said of this city?
17. How are the words *heaven* and *hell* here to be understood?
18. What does the figure, if there be any, consist in?
19. What is the first lesson we here learn?
20. What is the second?
21. What is the third?
22. What is the fourth?
23. What is the fifth?
24. What is asserted in verse 16?
25. What union is here reiterated?
26. Why is it mentioned?
27. To whom does slight or neglect of the message or messengers of Christ extend?

28. What are ministers called?
29. Why are they so called?
30. What is said of the minister's office?
31. How is it to be regarded?
32. What two extremes in relation to it are wrong?
33. What is a minister?
34. Will mere neglect of the gospel message ruin the soul?
35. Is mere carelessness enough to bring on the perdition of ungodly men?

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### LESSON LXII.

vs. 17-20.

17: ¶ And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

\* Ver. 1.

The exact period of the return of the seventy is uncertain. It would seem that their mission was of short duration. As they received their commission some time before the Feast of Tabernacles, and as it was the custom of the Jews to go up to the Feast, it is probable that they met our Lord returning from the Feast, in consequence of the opposition of the Jewish rulers to His person and teaching. It can hardly be supposed that the seventy returned in a body, but at short intervals, one after another.

*With joy.* They were jubilant at their success according to their Master's commission, but especially in the subjection of demons to their authority. If we consider that a command to cast out demons had not been expressly given them, and that this attempt a little before had failed even when made by nine apostles, (Luke ix. 37, et seq.,) we can still better understand this joy of the seventy, and must, at the same time, entertain very favorable ideas of their courage and of their strength of faith. And yet it may not be denied that, in comparison with the conversion of souls, or any permanent gain they brought to the kingdom of God, they gave undue prominence in their joy to the new power given to them over demons. Hence it was, our Lord deemed it necessary to caution them against making this a principal source of their joy, (verse 20.) There was much false fire in that joy. There was evidently self-satisfaction in their report of their achievements. Here, then, is a lesson which those who work for Christ should mark and remember. It is right and commendable in all such to long to see Satan's kingdom pulled down, and souls converted to God. But let them remember that success, no less than failure, in the good work, carries with it danger. There is such a thing as "being lifted up with pride." (1 Tim. iii. 6.) We are all inclined to sacrifice to our net, and burn incense to our own drag. (Hab. i. 16.) We are ready to think that our own might and our own wisdom have procured us the victory. In the midst of our triumphs, let us cry earnestly, "Lord, clothe us with humility."

*Even the devils:* Rather *demons*, which in Greek is properly a different word from *devil*. The word *devil* is seldom used in the original in the plural, and commonly signifies Satan, the prince, while all the inferior evil spirits are *demons*. The *demons*, it was, who possessed men. *Are subject unto us:* not merely cast out, but *subdued*, subdued and tamed. *Through thy name,*

literally, *in thy name*, i. e., clothed with thy authority. They confessed that it was only in Christ's name they could do such a work. The laborer for Jesus may rejoice in the happy effect of his efforts, if he ascribe the glory to his Master, and not to himself.

18. And he said unto them, \*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

\* John xii. 31 and xvi. 11; Rev. ix. 1 and xii. 8, 9.

Several interpretations are given of this verse. Some regard the words as a secret rebuke from Christ to the seventy for the excess of joy, and mixture of vain-glory they exhibited on account of the devils being subject to them. "Beware of being puffed up with pride on account of those endowments I have conferred upon you; remember Lucifer, the prince of pride, how he fell from heaven by his arrogance, and labor you to ascend thither by humility." (1 Tim. iii. 6.) Others understand Christ as saying, "Why surprised and elated with your success in the conflict with Satan? this is part of my work, and belongs to my plan to vanquish him entirely by the power of the gospel—a plan the consummation of which I have seen. I beheld the prince of devils fall, and it is no wonder that his servants now fall before you." It cannot be doubted that the verse, as a triumphal declaration, of which the report of the seventy was suggestive, is to be regarded as setting forth the total downfall of the prince of darkness, as it passed before our Lord's prophetic sweep of spiritual wisdom, and is destined to go on and be consummated in the future history of the Church. *Behold*, here, is in the Greek imperfect, *I was beholding*, embracing the past as well as the future, the entire downfall of Satan from the loss of his first estate, to his future overthrow in the great contest of Heaven and Hell on earth. *I was beholding*, the verb grammatically describes the action as *going on* while another action is being performed. We may properly call the whole inner life of Jesus a continuous spiritual beholding of the discomfiture of the kingdom of darkness, one which is to be restricted to no particular time. By Christ's words the seventy would understand that they had by no means deceived themselves, since He, accompanying them in spirit, had seen the downfall of Satan, whose servants the demons were. It will be observed that *Satan* is here referred to as a real and personal being. The words, *as lightning*, (see Zech. ix. 14,) express not only the suddenness of his fall, long since, but the fact that he was an angel of light. The words, *from heaven*, may refer to his original state of glory and bliss, or the greatness of his fall from such a height of power and glory. From this verse we are to learn, that the powerful and efficacious preaching of the gospel is the special means ordained and appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ for the subversion of Satan's kingdom in the world: as the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe and obey it, so it is the power of God unto destruction to Satan, and all that fight under his banner against it.

19. Behold, †I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

† Mark xvi. 18; Acts xxviii. 5.

Our Lord, finding that His seventy ambassadors had managed their former commission so well, here enlarges it, extending the promise of miraculous power, at first limited to the healing of the sick, ver. 9. *Power to tread on serpents and scorpions*. Are these words to be interpreted figuratively or literally? In favor of the literal view, may be placed our Lord's promise in Mark xvi. 18, and the fact that Paul took up a viper, and was unhurt. Acts

xxviii. 56. In favor of the figurative view, may be placed the fact, that Satan is called the "old serpent," that his agents partake of his nature, and that there is a promise in Genesis iii. 15, that "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," in which all Christ's members are interested. See also Ps. xli. 14. The probability is, that both interpretations are true. Undoubtedly such miracles as are here specified were plentifully performed in the early Christian Church, but the scantiness of the historical record furnishes no narratives of some of them. The only miracle recorded similar to that before us is that already referred to, Acts xxviii. 56. Were not the casting out of demons by the seventy, and the fall of Satan, which Christ saw, both actual and physical realities? How, then, can *treading on serpents and scorpions* be otherwise regarded? Yet these realities were symbols of the spiritual. *Serpents* are the well-known emblems of Satan's power, and part of the curse in the animal creation. *Scorpions* (poisonous insects about four inches long, with a sting in their tails, and found in tropical climates) are often put figuratively for crafty, wicked, and malicious men. Ezek. ii. 6. The disciples were to go forth under the promise of Divine protection, assured that neither strength nor stratagem should overcome them. They were not only to be unharmed by poisonous reptiles, Ps. xci. 8, but to cast down all might in the spiritual world which exalted itself in hatred against Christ. *Over all the power of the enemy*: this shows that spiritual evil is mainly referred to, it is supplementary and explanatory of what goes before, and includes every form of evil: *and nothing shall by any means hurt you, literally, in any respect.* The form is intensive. Neither the power, presence, nor protection of God shall be wanting to any of Christ's ministers or members, who go forth in His strength against the spiritual enemies of their salvation. Nothing shall really hurt them. Faithful Christians will be enabled by God's powerful grace to tread unharmed on the evil things of this life, and perform its secular business, which bite other men and kill them. To such faithful ones will be fulfilled the promise, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James iv. 7.

20. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

c Exod. xxxii. 32; Pa. lxiix. 28; Ia. iv. 3; Dan. xli. 1, Phil. iv. 3; Heb. xli. 23; Rev. xlii. 8, xx. 12, and xxi. 27.

In these words of our Saviour to the seventy, there is something corrective, and something directive. The corrective part lies in the first words, in which Christ checks their excess of joy for victories gained over evil spirits: *in this rejoice not, &c.*, let not your hearts too much overflow with joy upon this occasion. The negative is not absolute, but comparative. Christ does not forbid, but only qualify and moderate their joy. One might cast out devils, and yet himself be still a child of darkness. Matt. vii. 22. Then, again, that joy must of necessity be ill-founded and defective, which arises solely from the success that attends labor for Christ. It might easily and unconsciously be joined with self-seeking and pride. It must, too, be fitful and irregular in its exercise, rising high with every external indication of success, and depressed to an equal degree, when unsuccessful in the object of pursuit. Our Lord, therefore, gave a better direction to the joy of His disciples. He called upon them to exercise that spiritual joy which springs from an assurance of personal acceptance with God, which will always be permanent, well-regulated, and productive of all the Christian graces, and in which there is no selfishness, inasmuch as to rejoice in one's own personal union with Christ, is to rejoice in every thing pertaining to a profession of His name, the salvation of men, the progress of truth, and the downfall of error: *but rather re-*

*joyce*—let this be your chief rejoicing—it is a far higher privilege to be converted and pardoned men, and to have your names written in the register of saved souls, than to be allowed to cast out devils: *because your names are written in heaven.* It was the ancient custom that citizens in every commonwealth should be enrolled in a book, and when any were admitted to the rights of citizenship their names were registered on this list. “Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven.” Heb. xii. 23. The seventy knew undoubtedly, as we also do, the beautiful figure of the Old Testament, which depicts to us the Eternal One with a book before His face, wherein are recorded the names and deeds of His faithful servants. Exod. xxxii. 33; Mal. iii. 16; Est. v. 1, 2; Ps. lix. 28; Dan. xii. 1. See also Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 5, xiii. 8, xx. 12. The assurance to them was: “You are registered in heaven as citizens of God’s kingdom, and persons who by God’s eternal love have been brought to salvation through Christ, pardoned, accepted, and saved.” Thus they were given to understand that their own deliverance from the power of the devil ought to dispose them far more to thankful joy than their most glorious triumph over His disarmed servants.

In this verse the important difference between grace and gifts is presented. Gifts, such as mental vigor, vast memory, striking eloquence, ability in argument, power in reasoning, are often unduly valued by those who possess them, and unduly admired by those who possess them not. These things ought not so to be. Men forget that gifts without grace save no one’s soul, and are the characteristic of Satan himself. Grace, on the contrary, is an everlasting inheritance, and, lowly and despised as its possessor may be, will land him safe in glory. Our Lord declares, that many in the solemn day of final account and retribution, even of such as have preached the gospel, prophesied in His name, wrought miracles, cast out devils, will be rejected by Him. Not only one Balaam who prophesied, or one Judas an apostle, will be condemned, but *many* will plead in vain their profession, gifts, and services, and the miracles which they have wrought in the name of Christ. He will then, before commanding them to depart from Him, disavow all knowledge or approbation of them, as His disciples and servants, saying, “I never knew you.”

*Your names are written in heaven.* O, how precious the truth that the Lamb has a Book of Life, (Rev. iii. 5,) in which are written the names of all who shall never taste the second death! It contains not only the names of the *Seventy*, but of all who love Jesus. As a father writes down in his great Family Bible the names of all his children, so God writes down in the Book of His remembrance the names of all *His* children. A father may some day have to read, with a sigh and with a tear, the list of his family, but Jesus shall never lose one of the members of *His* family, *they* shall live forever, who are written in the Book of Life. That it is possible to *know* that our names are written in heaven is plain, because otherwise we could not *rejoice*, for no man can rejoice over an unknown good. How may we have this knowledge for ourselves? Is it our chief desire to have our names written there? If this be our *supreme* desire, we must be saved. Those who perish, perish because they *will* not come and ask for life. “That man’s heart is comfortless,” says one, “who makes his own assurance of salvation depend upon his attainments in holiness, instead of resting in simple faith in the consciousness that he has committed himself to Christ.” Says another, “Who will ascend up into heaven to see whether his name be written there? or who can send a messenger thither to search the records? I answer, Turn thine eyes inward: if the name of God be written in thy heart, thy name is certainly written in heaven; if you in your daily actions write out a copy of God’s book (the blessed Bible) here below, assure yourself the hand of God has written your name in His book above, that is, you shall certainly be saved.” No one should ever rest until he has the witness of the Spirit within him that he is “washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of

the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 11.) All should strive to be "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men," and to show by their meekness, and charity, and faith, and spiritual mindedness, that they are the children of God. This is true religion. These are the real marks of saving Christianity.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of the return of the Seventy?
2. What is said about their meeting our Lord?
3. Did they return in a body?
4. In what spirit did they return?
5. Why did they rejoice?
6. To what did they give undue prominence in their joy?
7. What is said about self-satisfaction?
8. What lesson is here for all who work for Christ?
9. What are we to understand by "the devils"?
10. How were the demons subject unto the Seventy?
11. What is said of "through thy name"?
12. What did Jesus say?
13. What did Christ mean in verse 18?
14. What does that verse set forth?
15. What is said of the word "beheld"?
16. What would the Seventy understand by Christ's words?
17. How is Satan here referred to?
18. What do the words "as lightning" express?
19. To what may the words "from heaven" refer?
20. What do we here learn about the preaching of the gospel?
21. What did our Lord do to the commission of the Seventy?
22. Are the words "power to tread on serpents," &c., to be understood literally?
23. What is said of serpents?
24. What is said of scorpions?
25. How were the disciples to go forth?
26. How are we to understand "nothing shall by any means hurt," &c.?
27. What is said of verse 20?
28. In what does the corrective part consist?
29. What is meant by "in this rejoice not," &c.?
30. In what does the directive part consist?
31. How are we to understand "but rather rejoice," &c.?
32. What was the ancient custom of enrolling citizens?
33. What is said of the beautiful figure of the Old Testament?
34. What were the Seventy assured of?
35. What important difference is noted in verse 20?
36. What is said of gifts?
37. What is said of grace?
38. Whose names are written in the Book of Life?
39. Is it possible to know that our names are written there?
40. How may we know this?
41. Should any one rest satisfied till he has the witness of the Spirit?
42. What should all strive to be?

LESSON LXIII.

vs. 21-24.

21. ¶ <sup>4</sup>In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xi. 25.

*In that hour*—at the season of that transaction. If from the preceding words, ver. 20, it might appear as though the Saviour did not wholly share the transport of His disciples, and regarded the joy which they reaped in their work with less satisfaction than they themselves, we see here the contrary. *Rejoiced in spirit*, literally, *exulted*, the word being expressive of the most intense joy. (See Acts ii. 26; 1 Pet. iv. 13; Rev. xix. 17.) Three times we are told in the Gospels that our Lord Jesus Christ wept. Once only are we told that He rejoiced. And what was the cause of His joy? It was the conversion of souls. It was the manifestation of the abundant grace of God, in gathering around Him this little band of disciples, as the messengers of His love, and endowing them with such power against the adversary. It was the reception of the gospel by the weak and lowly among the Jews, when the “wise and prudent” on every side were rejecting it. Our Lord no doubt saw much in this world to grieve Him. He saw the obstinate blindness and unbelief of the vast majority of those among whom He ministered. But when He saw a few poor men and women receiving the glad tidings of salvation, even His heart was refreshed. He saw it and was glad. A man’s character is shown by the causes of his grief and of his joy. We might learn to know ourselves better than we do, if each would inquire, “What are the things that please, and grieve me most?” We shall find that we are by nature selfish—that we are too much concerned about the events that befall *ourselves*, and too little about those that befall our fellow-creatures. Above all, we are naturally indifferent to the glory of God. None, except those who are converted, care in the least degree whether souls are saved or not, or whether God is honored or despised, but all such, in this respect, sympathize with Jesus.

*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, &c.* Christ addressed the Father, as the proprietor and governor of the universe, who “doeth whatsoever pleaseth Him” in heaven and on earth; and He *thanked* or *adored* Him, and professed an entire acquiescence in His wisdom, equity and goodness, which were worthy of all adoration, in that He was pleased to conceal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven from the learned and wise men of the nation, and at the same time to reveal them to the poor and unlearned, to men of weak capacities and limited education, to those, who were despised for their ignorance and inexperience, but who were also simple, humble, and teachable as children. For these were the two classes of persons intended to be described:—not the *really* “wise and prudent,” but those who called themselves so, and who, for this world, might be called so, men with a swelling conceit of their proficiency in wisdom, but whose proud and carnal hearts, however sagacious in carnal things, were not favorably disposed toward, and understood not, the things of the Spirit—not only the statesman, the general, and the prince, but the Scribe, the Pharisee, the rabbi, the priest, and the pontiff:—not *really* “babes,” either, but such persons as, being humble,

modest, and having a low esteem of their own wisdom, gave themselves up to the Divine wisdom, and being free from carnal and worldly affections, were fitted to embrace it when it was revealed—those whom, from the very fact that they received the truth in its simplicity, the statesmen of Rome, the philosophers of Greece, and the Sadducees of Judea, would style *babes*; persons such as the fishermen, the publicans, and other Jews, who were either unlearned, or did not *trust* in their own wisdom, but came like babes to learn of Jesus, and followed Him, when the majority of the nation would not believe.

*That thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* We are not to understand that God did, by any *positive influence*, hide the proofs of Christ's mission from the wise and prudent they had the Scriptures in their hands; they saw or heard of His miracles, and heard, or might have heard, His doctrine; but they were blinded by pride and carnal prejudices, and He was pleased to give them up to be judicially blinded. God did not put darkness into their minds, but He left them to their own darkness, or denied them that light which they had no desire to see. By the very fact that God has constituted His kingdom a *spiritual* kingdom, eyes that wickedly persist in being gross and carnal cannot see spiritual realities. The plainest Divine truths, though placed before them, are *hid*, as the plainest objects by daylight are hid from the eyes of the owl: only the owl's blindness is natural and innocent, theirs is voluntary and guilty. But there *was* a *positive influence* employed in making known the truth to the minds of the disciples, as there is to all who become true Christians. Till God reveals Himself, His nature and will, no man can know either what He is, or what He requires. See Matt. xvi. 16, 17. There the word, "revealed," does not appear to mean the immediate communication of knowledge by inspiration, for that would not have insured Peter's happiness; but the removing of those proud and carnal prejudices which *veiled* the hearts of others, that they could not understand what was in itself most plain. (See also 2 Cor. iii. 12-16.) Peter was "taught of God," and "his understanding" as to this subject was "opened to understand the Scriptures." Are we to believe that the thanks of our Lord rested upon the fact that the gospel was *hid*? This is by no means probable. They appear to have rested upon the fact that the gospel having been hid, or, *though* it was hid, it was wisely and graciously *revealed* to its spiritual receivers. The same kind of expression is found in Rom. vi. 17: "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine." The thanks are not given because they were the servants of sin, but because they had obeyed the gospel. The same kind of expression may be found in Isaiah xii. 1, which, literally rendered, would be: "Lord, I will praise thee, because thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away." *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* This God had done for wise and gracious reasons, which He was not pleased to assign. (See Ephes. i. 9-12.) *It seemed good*, it seemed right to the Infinite Mind. As though Christ had said: "Father, thy choice pleases me, as being the choice and good pleasure of thy wisdom." The truth which this verse embodies is deep and mysterious. "It is high as heaven: what can we do? It is deep as hell: what do we know?" Why some around us are converted and others remain dead in sins, we cannot fully understand. Why America is a Christian country and India buried in idolatry, is a problem we cannot solve. We only know that it is so. We can only acknowledge that the words of our Lord Jesus Christ supply the only answer that mortal man ought to give: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." At the same time, it should be remembered that God's offers of salvation are free, wide, broad, and unlimited; and that the same God who does all things, according to the counsel of His own will, always addresses us as accountable creatures—as beings whose blood will be on their own heads, if they are lost. We cannot understand

all His dealings. We see in part, and know in part. Let us rest in the conviction that the judgment-day will clear up all, and that the Judge of all will not fail to do right.

22. \*All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *him*.

\* Matt. xxviii. 18; John iii. 35, and v. 27, and xvii. 2.

† John i. 18 and vi. 44-46.

This verse expresses the Divine correspondence between the Father and the Son which had been implied by the thanksgiving of the previous verse. It is a very remarkable declaration of our Lord's personal and mediatorial dignity. The Father *had delivered all things unto Him*: the whole system of salvation, all power, authority, and judgment over all creatures. None knew Jesus as the Son of God, but the eternal Father; even as none knew the Father, except the Son: neither could any man truly know the Father, except as the Son revealed His nature and glory to Him: for this was committed to Him as Mediator, in respect of all the sinful race of men. This represents Christ as coequal with the Father, and is an argument for His Divinity. See Matt. xi. 25, 27.

23. ¶ And he turned him unto *his* disciples, and said privately, \*Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

‡ Matt. xiii. 16.

24. For I tell you, †that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

§ 1 Pet. i. 10.

Thus far the face of Jesus has been toward the face of the Seventy, but now He so turns as to address the disciples who had gathered around, *privately*, i. e., *separately*. He congratulates *them* particularly on the blessedness of the gospel revelation to them in connection with the Seventy. This is one of our Lord's sublimest utterances. He proclaims Himself as Him in whom alone not only the expectation of the earlier time is fulfilled, but in whom also the ornament and crown of mankind has appeared. *Blessed are the eyes, &c.* Your blessed eyes see not only the outside shell of truth, but the inner kernel. *Many prophets*, as Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel, and many *kings*, as David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, and Josiah, and the other Old Testament saints represented by them, to whom the times of the Messiah, His character and kingdom were all a matter of profound interest, had earnestly longed to see and hear the things which the disciples and Apostles were seeing and hearing, but were denied the privilege. The men of old saw them only by faith in types, shadows and dim intimations, but the disciples saw them with their bodily eyes, as living and present realities. *They* looked forward to the Redeemer, who was in due time to appear, and rested their hopes on Him; they had their light from this Sun, before He arose above the horizon, and they longed to see Him already risen, but this was reserved as a peculiar blessing for the Apostles and disciples, whose light was proportionably more distinct and clear. "The scenes of the gospel revelation are unknown and unappreciated by the great ones of the day, but the holier spirits of past ages had, and the unborn spirits of future ages will have, their eyes fixed on them. There was for the former a *Christ in Prophecy*, for whose form they had looked with anxious expectation, and there is a *Christ*

in *History* for the latter, on whom the best thinkers look back with wonder." The word *kings* is here substituted for *righteous men*, in Matt. xiii. 17, and this was probably done, to give emphasis to the sovereign grace of God, in revealing these great truths to those of lowly condition; also, to magnify the dignity of those to whom the revelation of the Son in the flesh is vouchsafed.

We have probably a most inadequate idea of the enormous advantages enjoyed by believers who have lived since Christ came into the world, compared to those of believers who died before Christ was born. It is the difference of twilight and noon-day, of winter and summer, of the mind of a child and the mind of a full-grown man. The humblest Christian believer understands things which David and Isaiah could never explain. Let us see that we make a good use of our high and holy privileges, never forgetting that in proportion to our advantages will be our responsibility.

### QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by "that hour?"
2. What is said of "rejoiced in spirit?"
3. What was the cause of Christ's joy?
4. How is a man's character shown?
5. How did Christ address the Father?
6. What was the nature of His address?
7. Who are meant by "the wise and prudent?"
8. Who are meant by "babes?"
9. Did God by any *positive* influence hide the proofs of Christ's mission from the wise and prudent?
10. What is said of the fact that God's kingdom is a *spiritual* one?
11. Was there a positive influence employed in making known the truth to the disciples?
12. Can we know God until He reveals Himself to us?
13. Did our Lord's thanks rest upon the fact that the gospel was hid?
14. On what did they rest?
15. What are we to understand by "even so, Father," &c.?
16. What is said of the truth which verse 21 embodies?
17. Can we understand why some around us are converted, and others remain dead in sins?
18. What is said of God's offers of salvation?
19. How does God always address us?
20. What does verse 22 express?
21. What is the meaning of "all things are delivered," &c.?
22. Explain "no man knoweth who the Son is," &c.
23. How is Christ here represented?
24. Whom did Jesus address in verse 23?
25. What is meant by "privately?"
26. What did our Lord say to the disciples?
27. Explain "Blessed are the eyes," &c.?
28. Who were meant by "prophets?"
29. Who by "kings?"
30. Were the times of the Messiah a matter of profound interest to all these?
31. How did the men of old see the things the disciples and Apostles were seeing?
32. From whom had they their light?
33. What is said of a *Christ in Prophecy*?
34. What of a *Christ in History*?
35. What is said of the word "kings?"
36. Why is it here substituted for "righteous men" in Matt. xiii. 17?
37. What is said of the advantages of believers living since Christ came?
38. What is said of the humblest Christian now?
39. What is said of our responsibility?

## LESSON LXIV.

vs. 25-32.

25. ¶ And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, 'Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 16 and xxii. 35.

At some pause in our Lord's discourse, while the multitude still remained on the spot, expecting further instruction, a certain lawyer, or one who devoted himself to the study of the law of God, who was watching his opportunity, interposed with the demand, *Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Of all questions this is infinitely the most momentous for every man; and the wonder is that men generally can let so many far less important questions agitate and vex them, whilst this one is regarded with indifference. Though it is said that the lawyer *tempted Christ, yet to tempt*—as when it is said that God tempted Israel, which, in a bad sense, we know He could not do—is simply to *try*; and by the law of charity, which thinketh no evil, as well as from regard to his answers and whole bearing, this man is entitled to a favorable construction, both of his motives and object. He had heard of Him whose fame filled the whole land, and to ascertain whether He was as great a teacher as fame—prone to exaggerate—reported, to measure His ability, perhaps to try His soundness, he tested Him by this fair and momentous question.

26. He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

This reply of our Lord is as much as to say, the question you ask is already answered. What need to make further inquiries, when the answer is contained in the words of that very law, of which you profess to be a searcher and expounder? What is written there concerning this great question? A very strong testimony to the excellence and perfection of Scripture is found in the simple fact, that the Author of Scripture ever appealed to it for answers to all questions that were addressed to Him. Our blessed Lord might have answered the question now proposed, by saying, "I am One in whom is all the fulness of Deity, and in whose mind are the depths of Omniscience. I tell you that you are to do this, or to believe that." But He did not. Neither did He reply by saying, "What does the Jewish Church say about eternal life? What do the Scribes, and Pharisees, and priests think? What is taught on the subject in the traditions of the elders?" But he sent the questioner at once to the Old Testament. The Bible, then, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, should be the rule of our faith and practice. Holding this principle, we travel upon the King's highway. The road may sometimes seem narrow, and our faith may be sorely tried, but we shall not be allowed greatly to err.

27. And he answering, said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.'

<sup>2</sup> Deut. vi. 5; Heb. viii. 10.

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xix. 18.

That the lawyer should at once quote, as he did, the great commandment, from Deut. vi. 5, in connection with Lev. xix. 18, proved that he was superior to the common range of his countrymen. This reply was an answer to his own question. For there is no entrance into life, or inheritance in heaven for an unloving spirit. Whatever be the means by which that love to God and man are to be produced, one thing is clear, that unless they do exist, there can be no eternal life, for "God is love," and to love God is to live.

28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this <sup>1</sup>do, and <sup>2</sup>thou shalt live.

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xviii. 5; Neh. ix. 29; Ezek. xx. 11, 13, 21; Rom. x. 5.

In the view just given, our Lord's answer here is to be accepted in all simplicity as the great universal cardinal truth in the case. Life was offered at first, and life is offered still, as the reward of obedience. It is not safe, it is not needful to apologize for this statement, or to explain it away. It is not in any sense contrary to evangelical doctrine. It is really true that the fulfilling of God's law will secure His favor. Nor is this a thing merely to be admitted in its own place when it comes up. It is the truth that lies at the foundation, and on which all other truth leans. The basis of all is, obedience deserves life, and disobedience deserves death. Mankind have disobeyed; we all have sinned, and are, therefore, all under condemnation. Nothing but a perfect obedience can gain God's favor. Hence the covenant, and hence the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ; hence the substitution of the just for the unjust. The gospel is not an exception to the law, "This do and thou shalt live." the gospel is founded on that law. This law Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil. In these words, *Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live*, there is concealed the secret charge, that the lawyer was more concerned about knowledge and book-learning than to exercise himself unto obedience, and that he had almost wholly neglected this: *this do*, which is as much as to say, Lo, thou hast never done, or fulfilled it, *this do, and thou shalt live*, as though Christ had said, "Your knowledge is correct and admirable, just convert it into action. You have plenty of light, now let it shine and glow through every act of your life and every utterance of your lips. Your answer is admirable; only let your head, and your heart, and your hand be in perfect harmony, and the whole law will attest that you have fulfilled it. If you do perfectly fulfil it, you shall live, but this cannot be done by you, nor by others, and therefore life must be sought elsewhere." Well is it for those to whom the Law, by convincing them of sin and misery, and teaching them their inability to obtain salvation by its works, has been a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ.

29. But he, willing to <sup>1</sup>justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvi. 15.

Whether by an emphasis placed by Jesus on the words "*this do*," or by an expressive glance at the moment in His eye, or by the simple majesty of the truth declared, the Scribe's conscience was aroused and arrested. He well knew at that moment that he had not done what his lips confessed he should do, he had not loved God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. Much as he might have deceived himself as to his loving God, he knew and remembered—as we all do—many cases in which he had not loved his neighbor as he loved himself. How could he escape from the dilemma in which he was placed? He wished to *justify himself* in regard to these violations of law, and remove the blame from himself, on the ground that it might be

laid upon the law itself and its Divine author, who had not sufficiently explained what He had meant by the term *neighbor*, and had hence given occasion to disobedience against this command. He knew that if he could confine the term *neighbor* within very narrow limits, he might evade the difficulty pressing upon him, and, though he had failed doing to many what he would have wished them to do to him, still satisfy himself that he had kept the whole law—hence the question, *Who is my neighbor?*

It is instructive to note how one and the same evil-working of the human mind makes itself seen and known from time to time under different forms. Thus, when Cain said, contemptuously, "Am I my brother's keeper?" he but expressed in strong and repulsive language the very sentiment which the lawyer clothed in a more plausible guise when he asked, "And who is my neighbor?" Both questions indicate the rupture which sin has made between the heart of man and the objects of its love, compassion and care. And though we may not hear now such language used, or such questions in so many words asked, yet is the spirit which pervades them both widespread and general. It has well been remarked in relation to this question of the lawyer, (v. 29,) that he who asked, "Whom shall I love?" proved that he understood not what that love meant of which he spake, for he wished to lay down beforehand how much he was to do, and where he should be at liberty to stop, who had a claim and who had not upon his love; thus proving that he knew little of that love whose essence is that it has no limit, except in its own inability to proceed further, that it receives a law only from itself, that it is a debt which we must be content to be always paying, and not the less still to owe. (Rom. xiii. 8.) Especially wonderful is the reply which our blessed Saviour makes to him, wonderful, that is, in its adaption to the need of him to whom it was addressed, leading him, as it does, to take off his eye from the object to which love is to be shown, and to throw it back inward upon him who is to show the love; for this, let it be observed, is the key to the coming parable, and with this aim it was spoken. The lawyer is not permitted to ride off upon a speculative inquiry about the abstract rights of other men; he is pinned down to a personal, practical duty. The question is not, *Who is my neighbor?* but, *Am I neighborly?* This is the line in which the parable proceeds, showing that it is not the object of our love about which we are to busy ourselves, but the love itself.

How beautiful was our Lord's response to the questioner! He might have reproved him, but He knew that gentle consolatory treatment might teach the lesson with no less efficacy, and with much less offence to the prejudices of him that needs it. If we can convey a truth to mankind by awakening their preferences and extinguishing their prejudices, we should try to do so; if it be necessary that we should crush the one, and scatter the other, we must not hesitate, but, if it be possible to put the strongest truths in vehicles the best and most penetrating—if it be possible not to blunt the arrow, but while it is sharp as sharp it can be, to feather it with love and Christian affection, we may expect that what is spoken in love will not only pierce the deepest, but remain also the longest.

30. And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead.

*A certain man.* Evidently a Jew. It could not have been said of a Samaritan, who was not permitted to go to Jerusalem, that he was departing thence to another place. Besides, unless we suppose this man to have been a Jew, having acknowledged claims upon the kindness and protection of the priest and Levite, the point of the parable is lost: namely, the striking

contrast between the hard-hearted selfishness of these persons, and the great benevolence of the Samaritan. Indeed the whole complexion of the narrative assumes that this unfortunate sufferer was a Jew, and we think his nationality is not stated precisely, because it could not be mistaken.

*Went down*—or, “was going down,” not merely because Jerusalem, from the heights of the mountains on which it was built, was considerably more elevated than Jericho, which stood in the vale of the Jordan, but because the going to Jerusalem, as to the metropolis, was always spoken of as going up. (See Acts xviii. 22.) The distance between the two places was eighteen miles. Jericho was at this time an important city; indeed, it would seem from Josephus to have been next in consequence to Jerusalem itself.

How fitly the road from one of these cities to the other was made the scene of this interesting story, will appear when it is understood that this road has always been infested by numerous daring and desperate robbers. Josephus intimates, and Jerome says, that the savage, mountainous wilderness through which this road passed had acquired the name of *the bloody way*. The monks, however, have restricted this name, or rather that of the “Valley of Abdomin,” (blood,) to a small, round, grassy valley, which they have fixed upon as the place where the supposed facts of this parable took place. “We then prepared to descend,” says Dr. Thomson, in a graphic description of this dismal and dangerous road, “for you remember that we we must go ‘down to Jericho.’ And, sure enough, *down, down* we did go, over slippery rocks, for more than a mile, when the path became less precipitous. Still, however, the road follows the dry channel of a brook for several miles farther, as if descending into the very bowels of the earth. How admirably calculated for robbers! After leaving the brook, which turns aside too far to the south, we ascended and descended naked hills for several miles, the prospect gradually becoming more and more gloomy. Not a house or even a tree is to be seen, and the only remains are those of a large khan, *said* to have been the inn to which the Good Samaritan brought the wounded Jew. Not far from here in a narrow defile, an English traveller was attacked, shot, and robbed in 1820. As you approach the plain, the mountains wear a more doleful appearance, the ravines become frightful, and the narrow passages less and less passable.” “If we might conceive the ocean,” says Professor Hackett, “as being suddenly congealed when its waves are tossed mountain-high and pitching in wild confusion against each other, we should then have some idea of the scene of the desert in which the Saviour has placed so truthful a parable as that of the good Samaritan. The ravines, the almost inaccessible cliffs, the caverns, furnish admirable lurking places for robbers; they can rush forth upon their victims unexpectedly and escape as soon almost beyond the possibility of pursuit.” *Fell among thieves*, not merely robbers, but men whose trade it was to take life with as little compunction as they would take money. *Which stripped him of his raiment*, i. e., despoiled him of every thing he had on or about his person, and because, perhaps, he made some slight resistance as they were despoiling him, or out of mere wantonness and cruelty, “*wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*”

31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

o P's. xxxviii. 11.

*And by chance*: this is an unfortunate translation. Strictly speaking, nothing happens by chance. It was not by chance that the priest came down by that road at that time, but by “coincidence,” that is, by that *concurrency* of events which is so often to be seen distinguishing the acts of God's providence. Many good opportunities are concealed under these

events which appear to be *fortuitous*. If we happen to come in view of a man in distress, that is just the intimation of God that we must help him as much as we can. (Matt. x. 30.) And not to regard such an intimation is not the humane and child-like disposition which our Lord so highly praises. Twelve thousand priests and Levites were stationed at Jericho with a view to the rotation of service at Jerusalem. Hence the peculiar propriety with which our Lord introduces the priest and Levite as passing this way. Whether the *priest* was travelling to discharge his office, or returning from the performance of its duties, we are unavoidably led to expect, on account of his standing and office, that he would be disposed to manifest a compassionate feeling. (Mal. ii. 6, 7.) But although he was a man consecrated to the service of God, and even now on his way from his turn of office in the temple, the sight of his countryman and fellow-worshipper moved in him no compassion—he passed by cold and unconcerned, without so much as coming near to help or even console the unhappy sufferer. *He passed by on the other side*, marks an intentional turning away and going past on the other side, in order not to permit himself to be moved by a nearer view, or to suffer any sort of detention. We are not informed what his excuses were, but we may be quite sure he had plenty, and that they were very good. Those who seek a good excuse for neglecting the labor of love always find one. He was alone, he could neither cure the unfortunate man there, nor carry him away. To make the attempt might bring the robbers down from their fastnesses upon himself, and thus he should throw away a good life after a damaged one. Love saw no excuses for leaving the man lying in his blood, for it was not looking for them; but selfishness saw them at a glance, and would have created them in plenty if there *had been none at hand*.

32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

*Levites* were a class who served at the temple, assisting the priests in sacrifices and other services. They belonged to the tribe of Levi, which was set apart to religion. (Num. viii. 5-22.) Priests were of the family of Aaron in that tribe. The Levites performed the humble services of the temple, as cleaning, carrying fuel, and acting as choristers. They were also writers, teachers, preachers, and literati. This Levite was probably returning also from the temple service to Jericho, when he fell in with this wounded man. Curiosity led him near, to look upon the unhappy object, but though he obtained a more exact knowledge of his helpless position, he yet passed by without helping him, and thus manifested a still more inhuman heart, a still more criminal conduct, for whilst the first exhibited selfishness instinctively, the second did so upon calculation.

Thus did the priest and the Levite, who made their boast in, and were the express interpreters of, that law, which was so careful in pressing the duties of humanity, that twice it had said, "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass, or his ox, fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again." (Deut. xxii. 4; Exod. xxxiii. 5.) Here not a brother's ox or his ass, but a brother himself, was lying in his blood, and they hid themselves from him. (Isaiah lviii. 7.) These men had not learned that God "will have mercy rather than sacrifice;" they had not yet felt that to pour oil into the wounds of the sufferer is nobler and more acceptable to God than to raise the richest incense, or to perform with the most mechanical precision all the rites and ceremonies of the temple worship. How prone is religion to become a religion of rites and ceremonies, of fasting and feasting, and not a religion of mercy, of love, and of good will! And how apt, as experience shows, are those, who, according to their office and

calling, ought to be best, if they are bad, to be not merely in their depravity similar to others, but to go beyond and exceed all others.

We have, in the striking description before us, an exact picture of human nature. The Jewish economy is gone, its temple is a ruin, its priests and Levites have passed from the stage of time, but the same spirit of hateful and ungodly selfishness still walks the world, and though it exhibit itself in less tragic circumstances, wearing a new face, perhaps a fair mask, it is the same old enemy of God and man. This spirit is the leading characteristic of the great majority of mankind. That cheap charity which costs nothing more than a trifling subscription or contribution, is common enough. But that self-sacrificing kindness of heart, which cares not what trouble is entailed, so long as good can be done, is a grace which is rarely met with. There are still thousands in trouble who can find no friend or helper. And there are still hundreds of "priests and Levites" who see them, but "pass by on the other side."

Let us beware of expecting much from the kindness of man. If we do, we shall certainly be disappointed. The longer we live, the more clearly we shall see that few people care for others except from interested motives, and that unselfish, disinterested, pure brotherly love, is as scarce as diamonds and rubies. Happy are they who have learned to say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God, my expectation is from Him." (Ps. lxi. 5.) The spirit of selfishness belongs to our fallen nature. Nor will it ever be eradicated till God pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and Christian love, in millennial days, reigns over a regenerated world, and crime and selfishness, if not all suffering, banished from earth, the golden rule shall be universally owned and acted on—"Do unto others as ye would have others do unto you." Even so come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What did the lawyer ask Christ?
2. Who was this lawyer?
3. What is meant by "tempted"?
4. What was our Lord's reply?
5. What testimony is here to the excellence of Scripture?
6. What is said of the lawyer's quotation of the great commandment?
7. Was this reply an answer to his own question?
8. What did Jesus say unto him?
9. What is said of our Lord's answer?
10. What secret charge is concealed in the words—"Thou hast answered right," &c.?
11. What is said of the law as a schoolmaster to bring to Christ?
12. Why was the lawyer willing to justify himself?
13. Why did he ask, "Who is my neighbor?"
14. What is it instructive to note?
15. What did the lawyer's question prove?
16. What is said of the reply our Saviour made to his question?
17. How was it wonderful?
18. In what line does the parable proceed?
19. What is said of our Lord's response?
20. Was this "certain man" a Jew?
21. What is said about "went down"?
22. What was the distance between Jerusalem and Jericho?
23. What is said of Jericho?
24. What is said of the fitness of the road for such a scene?
25. What does Dr. Thomson say?
26. What says Prof. Hackett?
27. Who are meant by "thieves"?

28. What did they do to this man?
29. What is said of "by chance?"
30. If we happen to see a man distressed, of what is that an intimation?
31. What is said of priests and Levites at Jericho?
32. Was the priest going to, or returning from, the discharge of his office?
33. What are we to understand by "he passed by on the other side?"
34. Had he any excuses for doing so?
35. Who were the Levites?
36. Where was this Levite probably returning from?
37. What did *he* do to the unhappy sufferer?
38. What aggravated the conduct of this priest and Levite?
39. What is said of religion as prone to become a religion of ceremonies?
40. What have we here an exact picture of?
41. What is said of cheap charity, and self-sacrificing kindness?
42. What is said about expecting much from the kindness of man?
43. What is said of the spirit of selfishness?

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LESSON LXV.

vs. 33-37.

33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*.

p John iv. 9.

34. And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

q Exod. xxiii. 4, 5; Prov. xxiv. 17; Rom. xii. 20; 1 Thess. v 15.

35. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him: Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

God's eye was on the sufferer, and He raised up one who would look upon and pity him. *A certain Samaritan*. His name is not mentioned, but he has left a broad footprint on the sands of time. The Samaritans sprung from the mixture that took place at the time of the captivity, between the Jews who still remained and the heathenish Assyrians and Babylonians. National hatred kept them still apart, even at the time of Christ. (John iv. 9, 20.) Samaritan was among the Jews a word of contempt and reproach, and designated a heretic. (John viii. 48. See also our Notes on ch. ix. 52.) That a Samaritan is here represented as the deliverer was directed against this national hatred, and was meant to teach that one often finds in men utterly despised, and from whom nothing was expected, more humane feeling and truer love than in hypocritical believers. (See also Luke xvii. 11-19.) The force and appositeness of the parable is enhanced by contrasting the conduct of the despised Samaritan with men of such public reputation as a priest and Levite. How many excuses might this Samaritan have framed

for neglecting the sufferer before him ! He might have pleaded the traditional enmity between the Jews and Samaritans, and alleged, that he, instead of returning leisurely to his home in Jericho, was on a journey, and could comparatively ill afford the expense or loss of time to which his benevolence subjected him, and that he, as much as others, had reason to apprehend danger from robbers lurking in the vicinity, and that, whatever he did for the sufferer, he would get no thanks, for the man was a Jew, and *he* was a Samaritan, and that the sufferer was beyond the help of man, and that he who was found near him might be accused of having been his murderer. But, instead of doing this, conquering his prejudices, and those fears for his safety which, amid such scenes, and with such a sight before him, were not unnatural, he hastes to the rescue. He first *saw* him at a distance, as lying in his blood, yet living, then *had compassion on him*, then *went to him*, and bending over the bleeding form, applied such remedies as circumstances permitted and his skill suggested. He closed the lips of his gashes, and bound them up, doubtless with strips from his own garments, then *poured in oil and wine*, a common remedial application at that time for wounds, with which, as a traveller, he seems to have been provided, (Isaiah i. 6,) the wine probably to cleanse the wounds, and the oil to allay the pain. It was common with travellers in the East to carry oil with them, the expressed juice of the olive, that they might anoint and strengthen their limbs, wearied with continued heat. (Gen. xxviii. 18.)

There are many persons who, on beginning a good work, go at it at first with zeal, but lacking perseverance, and loving change, they soon turn to something else. But the Samaritan stuck by the cause on which he had embarked : he did not bind up and anoint the wounded man, and then think that his work of benevolence was done, but he *set him on his own beast*, no doubt with great difficulty, *and brought him to an inn*, over rough and steep declivities, probably being obliged to sustain and support him, to prevent his falling, through weakness, from the animal, *and took care of him* ; the residue of that day, and the whole of the following night, he attended to the wants of the wounded man, denying himself the usual repose so necessary to a traveller. The *inn* to which the patient was conducted must have been more than a khan built on the wayside, and left empty, a free shelter to each party of travellers who chose to occupy it for a night. It must have been something more nearly allied to our modern system, for there was a resident manager or landlord, who kept in store such provisions as travellers needed, and supplied them to customers for money. But the Samaritan was not satisfied with conducting the wounded man to the inn. Mark the beautiful climax. First, the compassionate heart, then the helping hand, next the ready foot, finally the true-hearted charge. About to depart, next morning, as business required, he leaves the unhappy man in rest. He takes out of a girdle, *two-pence*, which, being the amount of a fair day's wages, was more than as many dollars' worth in our time, (Matt. xx. 2,) gives them to the innkeeper, engaging him to take care of the sufferer, and pledging his credit for the balance, when he next came that way, if the expense should ultimately exceed the amount of his deposit. Thus was he wise as he was humane, provident as he was generous—qualities that commonly shine in conjunction.

36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves ?

37. And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Here the tables are turned upon the questioner. In his question, (ver. 29,) the lawyer, or Scribe, contemplated other people, and speculated upon who had the right to receive kindness : the answer of Jesus, on the contrary,

(ver. 36,) contemplates the Scribe himself, and inquires whether he is prepared to bestow kindness. The point on which attention is fixed is not, Who, of all mankind, have a right to receive kindness? but, Are you willing to show kindness, as far as you have opportunity, to every human being who is in need? It will be noticed that in his answer the lawyer did not mention the name of the Samaritan, but adopted the circumlocutory phrase, *He that showed mercy on him*. This answer, drawn by our Lord from him, was, virtually, *The Samaritan is my neighbor*; since, if this man's compassionate service to the Jew was such as to entitle him, in the lawyer's estimation, to be regarded as the Jew's neighbor, then, by a parity of reasoning, the conduct of the lawyer to a Samaritan should answer to the relationship which he had just acknowledged. In other words, the obligation and exercise of kindness was to be mutual. Hence, our Lord closes with the brief but pertinent direction, *Go, and do thou likewise*. Deal with a Samaritan as this Samaritan deals with a Jew, and so you will, Jew and Samaritan, be neighbors. And then the lawyer finds himself placed upon that high platform by which the Divine law of love, ignoring the divisions of race, nation, and color, unites mankind into one neighborhood and brotherhood. It is not without propriety that Luke, a Gentile, should furnish this most beautiful parable.

Many expositors find in this parable another and hidden sense—an allegorical representation of the world's lost state and Christ's redeeming work. They suppose the *certain man* to signify Adam; *went down from Jerusalem*, his fall; *thieves*, sin and Satan; *half-dead*, dead in the spirit, his better part; the *priest*, the moral; the *Lerite*, the ceremonial law, which could not afford relief; *a certain Samaritan*, Christ; the *inn*, the Church; *the two pence*, the law and the gospel, (or, as others conjecture, the two sacraments;) the *host*, the ministers of the gospel, with this promise, that whatever they shall spend more, in health, or life, or exertion, shall be amply repaid, when Christ, the *good Samaritan*, shall come again in glory. We are free to confess that this interpretation is, in our judgment, without sufficient ground or warrant. From the nature of the things, there must be some likeness to our Redeemer's mission, wherever a loving heart pities a fallen brother, and a strong hand is stretched out to help him, but beyond this general analogy we see nothing.

In addition to the lessons drawn from the parable, as the exposition of it has proceeded, let the following, which are plainly deducible from it, be considered:

1. It is perfectly possible to be acquainted with all the truths of Christianity, and not to feel them. The lawyer knew the law in all its force; he had practised none of it; and if there be a responsibility more dreadful than another, it is to know duty, and do the reverse; it is to know the truth that can save us, and cleave to the lie that must inevitably condemn us. None plunge into so deep a ruin as those that have been placed upon the loftiest pinnacle of human privileges.

2. We need to know the requirements of the law, before we can appreciate the provisions of the gospel. It was Christ's aim to bring the lawyer to a confession of his own impotence, that, having seen how much God required, and being conscious to himself how far he had come short of such a full and constant love, he might implore the aid of the Holy Spirit, without which such love could not be entertained in the soul. The effect that was aimed at in the lawyer must be produced in us, if we would be saved. As we try ourselves by the law, do we find that we love God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and our neighbor as ourselves? Where is the person that could say, with perfect truth, "I do?" Where is the man that ought not to lay his hand on his mouth, when he hears these questions? Verily, we are all guilty in this matter! Thus, then, is it, that passages such as the lawyer quoted teach us the need of Christ's blood and righteousness. They make us feel our utter inability to obey a law, perfect obedience to which

would be perfect happiness, and set us to inquiring if there be one from whom perfect happiness can be realized. They point us to Christ who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, and from whom we must seek grace, that the love of God and man may become ruling principles of our lives. (See Gal. iii. 15-22.)

3. We are to do good to all men as we have opportunity. We are not to ask querulous or small questions when we see objects which we know to be suffering with hunger, cold, &c. We are not to ask, Can you pronounce my shibboleth? are you a member of my sect, or party, or denomination? Not that we are to love less the truth, but that our love is to go beyond the limits of our sect, and to express itself wherever suffering is found. If any man in distress needs our sympathy and aid, we must no more think of asking him whether he belongs to our country, or family, or church, than if we saw him stretching out his hands from the windows of a burning house, or found him, like this object of the Samaritan's kindness, expiring in a pool of blood. Wherever through the wide world we see any human creature suffering *temporal* distress which we have it in our power to relieve, we must take heed that we pass not by it. And wherever through the wide world we behold our fellow-creature suffering under the greater and more appalling calamity of *spiritual* distress, bleeding and dying of the wounds inflicted by sin, asking, as it were, in piteous wailing, whether no man will care for his soul, there, too, we must give good heed that we be like the Samaritan, stranger as he was, rather than as the priest and Levite, who, by their wicked neglect, trampled on the union which binds all mankind in a common brotherhood, for mutual kindness, benevolence, and charity.

And this love, which we are bound to cherish towards others, must not be in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth. Our love must be practical, entailing on us self-sacrifice and self-denial, in money, time, and trouble. Our charity should be seen not merely in our talking, but in our acting—not merely in our profession, but in our practice. We should think it no misspent time to work as hard in doing good to those who need help, as others work in trying to get money. We should not be ashamed to toil as much to make the misery of this world rather smaller, as those toil who hunt or shoot all day long. We should have a ready ear for every tale of sorrow, and a ready hand to help every one in affliction, so long as we have the power.

There is a special distinction to be made between Christian love of the *brethren*, which is commended in John xiii. 34, and the general love of our *neighbor*, which is commended in this parable. The first has for its object the fellow-believer, the love of Christ for its standard, and faith on Him as its condition. The second embraces all men, loves them as one's self, and is grounded in the natural relation in which all the sons and daughters of Adam stand to each other as members of one great family here on earth.

In the vast mass and complicated relations of modern society, says an eminent divine, it is extremely difficult to apply right principles in the department of material benevolence. On the two opposite sides we are liable to err, and we ought on either side to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. (1.) It would be a mischievous mistake to give money, food, and clothes to every importunate beggar who contrives to cross our path and present an appearance of distress. There are men, women, and children in our day, who trade upon their sores, and even make sores to trade upon. To give alms indiscriminately, in these circumstances, is both to waste means and propagate improvidence. But, (2,) it is not enough to resist importunities which may proceed from feigned distress. Shut your hand resolutely against the whine of trained, unreal pauperism, but, at the same time, diligently search out the true sufferers, and liberally supply their wants. If from defective knowledge errors must sometimes be committed, better far that now and then a dime should be lost, by falling into unworthy hands, than that

our hearts should be drained of their compassion and dried hard by the habit of seeing human suffering and leaving it unrelieved. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth;" it is better that his abundance should be diminished by an occasional excess of disbursement, than that love, in which his life really lies, should wither in his breast for want of exercise. "The milk of human kindness" this compassion has been called, but let us remember, that if no needy child is permitted to draw it, this milk will soon cease to flow.

It is a point worth considering, whether the modern method of allowing benevolence to vent itself in contributions for the support and comfort of the suffering, unaccompanied with personal visits to the distressed, and personal care for them, either bestows the best culture on the heart, or meets the demands of this parable.

We are so much accustomed, says one, to look upon the Good Samaritan as a model of excellence, as to forget that he was a heretic, not in the Jewish notion merely, but in reality, and that our Lord, in His conversation with the Samaritan woman, (John iv. 22,) distinctly and severely condemns his heresy. This parable, therefore, teaches us not only that true love to man knows no distinction of nationality or creed, but that this genuine philanthropy may be exhibited by one involved in grave speculative errors, and neglected by those whose speculative belief is sound. We have here Heterodoxy with Humanity, and Orthodoxy without Humanity. Our Lord has shown elsewhere, abundantly, that He has no thought of conniving at Heterodoxy, or of disparaging Orthodoxy. Only, He teaches that Humanity is better than Orthodoxy, if only one may be had, and that Inhumanity is worse than Heterodoxy, if one must be endured.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What did God do for the sufferer?
2. Is the Samaritan's name given?
3. What is said of the Samaritans?
4. Why was a Samaritan here represented as the deliverer?
5. What excuse might this Samaritan have urged for neglecting the suffering?
6. What course did he pursue?
7. What is said of the oil and wine?
8. What is said of many persons in relation to a good work?
9. Did the Samaritan persevere in his kindness?
10. How did he show his kindness?
11. What must the "inn" have been?
12. What beautiful climax is mentioned?
13. What did the Samaritan do when about to depart?
14. What is said of the "two pence"?
15. What did he pledge for the balance?
16. What is said of verse 36?
17. How did the lawyer, in his question, verse 29, contemplate other people?
18. What does the answer of Jesus, verse 36, do?
19. What is the point on which attention is fixed?
20. Did the lawyer, in his answer, mention the name of the Samaritan?
21. What was virtually the answer drawn by our Lord from him?
22. What is the import of "go, and do likewise"?
23. What is said about this most beautiful parable being furnished by Luke, a Gentile?
24. What do many expositors find in this parable?
25. What do they suppose it allegorically represents?

26. Is it possible to be acquainted with the truths of Christianity, and not to feel them?
27. What do we need to know before we can appreciate the gospel?
28. What is said about doing good unto all men?
29. Must we minister to *temporal* as well as *spiritual* distress?
30. What is said of the love of the *brethren*, and the love of our *neighbor*?
31. What is said of applying right principles in the department of material benevolence?
32. What is a point worth considering?
33. What is said about genuine philanthropy being exhibited by one involved in grave speculative errors?

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### LESSON LXVI.

vs. 38-42.

38. ¶ Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named 'Martha received him into her house.

† John xi. 1 and xii. 2, 3.

It is not quite clear at what period of our Lord's ministry the history here recorded comes in, nor what is the connection between it and the preceding passage. It has been suggested that one object is to supply a serviceable caution against the idea that active working charity, like that of the good Samaritan, was the only way to serve Christ, and to show that sitting still and hearing is just as useful in its season as relieving distressed people; that outward performance must be based upon an inner work.

*He entered into a certain village.* This was Bethany, on the southeast side of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem. It was the scene of some of the most interesting events of Christ's life. (Matt. xxi. 17; xxvi. 6; Mark xi. 11, 12; xiv. 3; John xi. 1-46, and xii. 1-3.) Our Lord did not often himself enter a village, in the latter days of His ministry, when the increasing jealousy and hostility of His enemies rendered it prudent for Him to avoid the more public places.

*And a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.* This is a common expression to denote a hospitable reception. (See xix. 6; ix. 53.) Martha, it is evident, not only from this place, but from her name being mentioned first in John xiii. 5, was the housekeeper. Whether she was a widow or maiden lady, we know not: we only know that she was mistress, if not proprietor of the house. From the fact that Bethany is called the town of Mary and Martha, (John xi. 1,) it has been inferred by some, that the sisters were large property-holders, and yet, though this may have been the case, all that is probably meant by this expression is that they were permanent residents of the village. That the whole family was one of some consideration is evident from the fact that many persons came even from Jerusalem to condole with the sisters after the death of their brother. (See John xi. 9.)

39. And she had a sister called Mary, 'which also 'sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

\* 1 Cor. vii. 32, &c.

† Luke viii. 35; Acts xxii. 3.

*A sister.* Probably her only sister, *which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.* May not "also" imply that Martha sat there too till household claims called her away? In the East, it is the custom to sit upon the ground, or on low couches. Disciples sat near to the feet of the teacher or rabbi: so young Saul sat at the feet of Gamaliel. (Acts xxxii. 23.) There was, therefore, nothing unusual in Mary's posture, as she listened to the Saviour's instruction on things relating to His kingdom and, possibly, to His approaching death. It will be noted that as soon as Christ entered this house, He began to preach; whilst bodily food was being provided for Him, He was preparing spiritual bread for others. O that, in our place and measure, we might all imitate Jesus in this respect! Can we come into any house or company, and find nothing to say or do for God?

40. But Martha was "cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

• John vi. 27.

*But Martha was cumbered about much serving.* She was over-occupied, deeply absorbed, (the Greek word means "was drawn about distracted,") in efforts to make suitable provision for Christ and His friends—prepare, what she supposed to be demanded, a suitable entertainment for so illustrious a guest and His disciples—make ready their lodging apartments, &c. Thus was she anxious to show her respect and affection for her Lord. Was there any thing censurable in this? Certainly not. Jesus is entitled to the best we have; our most valuable possessions must be laid at His feet. But there *was* something censurable in the spirit and manner in which Martha approached and addressed our Lord. Perhaps, as we have hinted already, Mary had at the beginning, before the Saviour's arrival, also assisted in the domestic labors, but soon afterwards had seen that she could now use the precious time more profitably, and therefore left her sister. *Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me;* as if Martha had said: "Is it right that both thyself and all this company should not be provided for? or is it reasonable that the whole responsibility and labor should devolve on me, whilst Mary sits still utterly neglectful of household duties? send her, therefore, back to her post, which she has left too early, since she can no longer be spared there." What infirmity and weakness intermix with the virtues and graces of the best Christians, especially when they give way to unhallowed passion! Here was fretfulness of temper, and may there not have been something of domestic vanity? Martha's anxiety to make suitable provision for her Lord was commendable, but that anxiety was excessive, as her concern for the entertainment was, compared with that which she manifested for the Saviour's teaching at that time. This is evident, not only from the whole tenor of her complaint, but particularly from the fact that, instead of telling her sister she wanted help, she sought, in a difference with that sister, to win the Saviour as her confederate—using, indeed, a sort of two-edged form of speech which bore, with some almost rebuking force, upon our Lord and Mary. It will be observed that Mary was silent under her sister's complaint. She did not defend her course, but left it to her Lord to answer for her. When we are complained of for well-doing, it is our duty, and may it be our prudence, to seal up our lips in silence, and to expect our vindication from above.

41. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

How contrary to her expectation was our Lord's answer to Martha! She thought that her sister would have been sent away with a check, and herself with thanks; but instead of this, and that, too, notwithstanding the provision she had made for His comfort, Jesus failed not to tell her of her fault. No obligations to any particular persons, even our best friends, should keep us from reproving their faults. The double utterance of the name, as also afterwards, "Simon, Simon," "Saul, Saul," was meant to express the dissatisfaction of the Saviour, not so much with the act as rather with the disposition of Martha. *Thou art careful and troubled about many things*, thou art solicitous and disquieted (as the waters when agitated by a violent storm) about a variety of interests comparatively unworthy of regard. Christ condemns not her hospitality, but her solicitude and superfluity, her distraction and perplexity. O how prone we are to exceed in things lawful and necessary! Martha's entertainment of Christ was a noble service, but she was too anxious and solicitous about it. One duty is to be limited by another, and each is to receive its just proportion of interest and attention.

42. But 'one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

▼ Ps. xxvii. 4; John xvii. 3; Gal. v. 6; Col. ii. 10, 14; 1 John v. 11, 12.

*But one thing is needful.* The term *needful* in the Greek is a noun—*necessity*. "Of one thing, even of salvation, there is necessity." This is the thing which ought first and principally to be regarded by us—the well-being of our immortal souls. Other things are needful to *some*, this is so to *all*; other things are needful *in a measure*, this is *infinitely* so; other things are needful *occasionally* and *for a season*, this is so *always* and *forever*. And wherever this interest is properly attended to, all other matters will be used, or pursued in subserviency to it. *Mary hath chosen that good part.* It is not affirmed that Martha's occupation was wrong, but that, for the time, Mary's occupation was better than Martha's. The phrase, *that good part*, is a general expression, and meant to be interpreted with a reference to the conduct of Mary at the time when her sister interposed. She was choosing soul-benefit. She was seeking more grace. She was striving after nearer and closer communion with God and His Christ. This was the portion which she preferred to every thing else, and to which she was willing for a time to postpone all earthly care. *That good part, or portion*, of the heavenly inheritance which Mary was by faith in Jesus receiving into her soul, in comparison with the excellence of which nothing else deserved to be named. *Hath chosen* refers to Mary's own voluntary choice and agency in receiving the blessing. It was her wise and happy choice to "sit at Christ's feet, and hear His words." She was not to be drawn into a neglect of His instructions, by any secular cares and encumbrances; and as neither life, death, nor eternity would deprive her of her interest in His salvation, so our Lord would by no means consent to her being deprived of her present satisfaction of listening to His discourse, in order to assist in providing a *needless* entertainment for its plenty and variety.

It will be observed that our Lord, in His declaration that Mary *had* chosen the good part, does not imply that Martha *had not* so chosen. Nor is there any reason to think that this was the case. On the contrary, the indication is quite clear that she was possessed at this time, as we know she was afterwards, (John xi. 27,) of vital piety. She erred, but rather from a mistaken view of the true mode of honoring Christ, than from any real disrespect manifested toward Him. She committed a mistake, which was very natural in the circumstances in which she was placed, but which, when enlightened in reference thereto, she was doubtless ready to acknowledge and renounce with tears of penitence. Martha was a true believer, and did not, in her

general conduct, neglect "the one thing needful." In the day of affliction her grace shone clearly and brightly. There is hardly any confession, in all the four Gospels, of our Lord's office, which will compare with that which she made in the eleventh chapter of John.

This interesting narrative suggests the following reflections :

1. It is possible now to sit at Jesus' feet. This may be done by thinking over His words in faith and prayer. Christ is not far from any one of us, and to the humble, waiting spirit, will make known His love, though now enthroned above. It is not God's will that we should wander through the universe like orphans, uncertain, neglected, sad. There is a place where He unveils His love, reveals His face—a Father's heart—and speaks in language we can understand, where His great mind spreads out its ample stores to satisfy the longing soul. The feet of Jesus is this place. There Mary placed herself. She *sat*—she stayed a while, she waited on His words. With open heart, like Lydia's, she listened anxious to learn, and held her memory, like a golden vase, to catch each precious fragrant drop of truth which came distilling from His lips. Many, alas, rush into the presence of Christ with steeled hearts, and ears half-closed, attention fast asleep, and reason's eye filmed o'er by prejudice, and rush away again, and wonder they are not wise. If we would know the Lord, we must stay with Him for a time, ponder His words, until their *meaning* makes them sweet to us ; we must hide the precious grain within, and give it time to fructify. Thus, by communion with Christ, we shall know of things this godless, idle, thoughtless world sees not, of joys, and peace, and rest, and which lie far away beyond the reach of all its noise, its teaching, and its praise.

2. Let us not suppose that our Lord would not have persons attend to their own household affairs. It is a duty to superintend our domestic concerns with watchful care and diligence. And we can serve God in the family, as well as in the closet and the sanctuary, if only we are actuated by the right spirit. We may and should commune with our Lord in our common employments. Thus will they be sanctified, and become to us means of grace. The great danger is from the cares of this world. They come insensibly to eat up our spirituality, and bring leanness on our souls. It is far more frequently an excessive attention to things in themselves lawful that leads men to eternal ruin, than open sin, or flagrant breaches of God's commandments. It seems so right to provide for our own ! It seems so proper to attend to the duties of our station ! But it is sad when the ambition of a secular duty crowds out important spiritual thoughts and engagements, allowing no time for the cultivation of those germs of spiritual life which are the commencement here of a heavenly life hereafter, and when, reversing Christ's rule, it is practically made the one thing needful, to zealously regard the external duties of life, and give to the preparation for eternity only now and then a moment of attention, as the mind is temporarily relieved from its overwhelming cares and anxieties.

3. We must take *temperament* into account in judging of religion. Looking at these two sisters, we might be tempted to infer that the care for eternal things existed in Mary alone. But it was not so. Both were friends and disciples of Christ. As water is colored by the soil over which it flows, so religion is modified in its features and development by the peculiar temperament of the individual in whose heart it has found a place. Martha and Mary both loved Jesus, and Jesus loved both of them, but they were evidently of very different turn of mind. Martha was active, stirring, and impulsive, feeling strongly, and speaking out all she felt. Mary was quiet, still, and contemplative, feeling deeply, but saying less than she felt. It was the heartfelt pleasure of both to serve Christ according to their best ability, only each had her own idea how this must be done. Martha is of the opinion that the Saviour would be best served by a carefully prepared entertainment ; Mary, longing for salvation, hears the words of His mouth.

With Martha the pleasure of giving Him much is pre-eminent; Mary feels the necessity of receiving much. With Martha, productivity, with Mary, receptivity, stands in the foreground. Martha is the Peter, Mary the John, among the female disciples of Christ. Martha's character was one-sided, in attaching too much importance to the external, to outward activity; Mary also would have had something one-sided, if she regarded every work of Martha without restriction, as unworthy of her attention and below her dignity. We must not expect all believers in Christ to be exactly like one another. We must not set down others as having no grace, because their experience does not entirely tally with our own. "There is one Spirit, but a diversity of operations." All true Christians agree in the principal things of religion. All are led by one Spirit. All feel their sins, and all trust in Christ. All repent, all believe, and all are holy. But in minor matters they often differ widely. Let not one despise another on this account. There will be Marthas and there will be Marys in the Church until the Lord comes again.

4. The true Christian's possession shall never be taken from him. He alone, of all mankind, shall never be stripped of his inheritance. Kings must one day leave their palaces. Rich men must one day leave their money and lands. They only hold them till they die. But the poorest saint on earth has a treasure of which he will never be deprived. The grace of God, and the favor of Christ, are riches which no man can take from him. They will go with him to the grave when he dies. They will rise with him in the resurrection morning, and be his to all eternity.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. At what period of our Lord's ministry does this history come in?
2. What has been suggested in regard to it?
3. What village is referred to?
4. Where was it situated?
5. What is said about our Lord entering villages?
6. How is Martha's hospitality to Jesus expressed?
7. What is said of Martha?
8. Was the whole family one of consideration?
9. Was Mary probably Martha's only sister?
10. What may "also" imply?
11. What is the sitting posture in the East?
12. What did Christ do as soon as He entered the house?
13. How was Martha cumbered about much serving?
14. What was she anxious to show?
15. Was there any thing censurable in this anxiety?
16. What *was* censurable?
17. How did Martha approach and address our Lord?
18. What was the meaning of her address?
19. What is said of the intermixture of infirmities and graces of Christians?
20. What is evident from the tenor of Martha's complaint?
21. Was Mary silent under her sister's complaint?
22. What did Jesus say to Martha?
23. What is said of reproving the faults of our friends?
24. What was meant by the double utterance of Martha's name?
25. How was she "careful," &c.?
26. Did Christ condemn her hospitality?
27. What is said about the limitation of duties?
28. What is said about "needful"?
29. What was said of Mary?

80. Was Martha's occupation declared wrong?
81. How are we to understand the phrase—"the good part?"
82. What do the words "hath chosen" refer to?
83. Did our Lord imply that Martha had not chosen the good part?
84. Is there any reason to think this was the case?
85. How did Martha err?
86. What is said of her Christian character?
87. Is it possible now to sit at Jesus' feet?
88. Is it wrong to attend to household affairs?
89. What must we take into account in judging of religion?
40. What is said of the true Christian's possession?

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## CHAPTER XI.

### LESSON LXVII.

vs. 1-4.

PRAYER is one of the great laws of natural religion. That man is a monster, that never prays, that never gives glory to his Maker, nor feels His favor, nor owns his dependence on Him. One great design, therefore, of Christianity is to *assist us in prayer*, to enforce the duty on us, to instruct us in it, and to encourage us to expect advantage by it.

1. And it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

*As he was praying in a certain place.* It is not easy to determine the time or the locality here referred to. The circumstance recorded may have occurred very soon after the domestic scene in the house of the sisters in Bethany, and since we know from other passages that the Saviour was especially accustomed to pray on the summits of mountains, we are almost spontaneously brought to think here of the Mount of Olives, the subsequent theatre of His conflict and of His coronation. Comp. ch. xxi. 87. *When he ceased.* These words do not simply indicate that the disciples, instead of interrupting Jesus, waited until He had finished His prayer, but convey the idea that when He ceased praying, there was a profound silence. How sublime and mysterious the scene here presented! The Son of man—the Son of God in our nature—is praying to the Father, and His followers are standing near. They bate their breath till the prayer is done, then one of them, as spokesman for the others, eagerly requests their Lord to teach them to pray. They observed in their Master while He prayed a strange separation from the world, a conscious nearness to God, a delight in the Father's presence, and a familiarity in communion with the Father, which seemed to them like heaven upon earth. Fondly desiring to partake of these blessed privileges, they besought their Master to show them the way. *Lord, teach us to pray, &c.*—teach us the body of blessings we may hope to receive, and therefore what object is right, and not presumptuous to ask. It was well in the disciple who offered this request, not only to attach importance to prayer, and to feel his own ignorance and insufficiency in the

performance, but to address One who is always able and willing to hear and help us. None teach like Him. Four ways He teaches to pray: 1, by His word; 2, by His example; 3, by His providence; 4, by His Spirit.

2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

• Matt. vi. 9.

This was not the first occasion on which Christ gave "The Lord's Prayer" to the disciples. It is embodied, with very slight variations, in the Sermon on the Mount, (Matt. vi. 9-13,) which belongs to an earlier date. Twice the Lord God wrote the Ten Commandments on tables of stone, Deut. x. 10; x. 4. Twice the Lord Jesus delivered the Lord's Prayer. Why the repetition of this Prayer? The disciples were defective both in understanding and memory, and the Master gave them "line upon line."

In relation to this prayer Luther remarks: "It is the very best prayer that ever came into the world, or was ever invented by man, because God the Father has given it through His Son, putting it into His mouth; we cannot, therefore, doubt that of all others it pleases Him best. And it is a very good practice, particularly among uneducated persons, for the children and people in the house, that the Lord's Prayer should be daily prayed through, both morning and evening, and at meat, and also at other times, that men may thus present before God their common wants." "Think of and utter aught which it is in thy will or thy power to ask," says Stier, "and thou wilt find it already spoken for thee in this prayer of prayers. Whatever from the beginning, since men first, on account of sin and evil, lifted their heart and hands to heaven, has been in their minds to ask, is here reduced, in the simplicity of the new and everlasting covenant, the last utterance of God to us in His Son, to one word, which will remain man's last utterance also to God, until heaven and earth are divided no more. All the cries which go up from man's heart upon earth to heaven, meet here in their fundamental notes, and are gathered into words which are as simple and plain for babes as they are deep and inscrutable for the wise, as transparent for the weakest understanding of any truly praying spirit as they are full of mysterious meaning for the mightiest and last struggles of the spirit into the kingdom and glory of God." "A form," says Bishop Newton, "little in words but great in substance, so short that the weakest memory may retain it, and yet so full, that it comprehends all things which relate either to ourselves or others, to our bodies or souls, to time or eternity—proper for all exigencies and occasions, as well for the last ages of Christianity as the first, as well for the private devotions of the closet as the public service of the temple, including every part of religious worship, supplication and intercession, confession and deprecation, resignation and thanksgiving, adapted to all capacities, and suited to all conditions, equally proper for high and low, rich and poor."

The existence of a progressive sequence in the prayer is seen, even on a casual view. At the outset the suppliant appears lost in the contemplation of the Being to whom his spirit ascends; next, he turns his thoughts upon himself and his own wants. Further, it is not difficult to recognize a progression in the first three petitions, and in the three (or four) last. The recognition of the name of God is the basis on which alone the kingdom of God can be established, and again, this kingdom is the sphere in which the will of God is fulfilled. Further, the prayer for the maintenance of the life of man precedes the prayer for the forgiveness of his sins; and again, it is only when the guilt of the past is removed that the thought is directed to the temptations of the future. The thoughtful reader, who has derived

from other sources the knowledge of the Trinity, will also find a reference to that truth in the scheme of this prayer. The petitions of the first and second parts refer to God as Creator and Preserver, the second petition of either part refers to God as Redeemer, whilst the third of either part relates to God the Holy Spirit, by whom the Divine will comes to be fulfilled, and through whose power temptation is overcome.

*When ye pray, say:* in Matt. vi. 9, "after this manner therefore pray ye." No rational man can think that it was our Lord's meaning that we should use these words exclusively. The prayer, as we suppose, was intended as a model rather than a mould. It was given rather as a specimen, by the spirit and order and proportion of whose several parts, we should guide our own spontaneous petitions, than as a rigid and imperishable enclosure in which all our pious acknowledgments and supplications should be compressed. It was intended not so much as a sacred formulary, as for Divine instruction as to what petitions are universally good, universally necessary, universally acceptable, as well as to inculcate simplicity and brevity in the expression. It is the brief germinal directory which has ever since been the treasure of the Church—a recorded pattern and summary of the permanent objects of prayer, and it is delightful to feel that it has served to establish a harmony of prayer among all true Christians (as those whom Jesus here teaches to pray) through all the world.

*Our Father which art in Heaven.* Jehovah cried upon Sinai amid the thunders of His majesty—Thou shalt be holy! Jesus on the Mount of Blessedness gives to the people, who sit down at His feet and receive of His words, (Deut. xxxiii. 3,) the word of living power from His own mouth: Ask and it shall be given you to become holy, yea, finally to be holy forever in your finished redemption to the glory of God! Against Atheism, which teaches that there is no God; against Pantheism, that teaches that God is not a person, but identical with nature; against Epicurism, which teaches that God cares nothing for his creation; against Polytheism, which teaches that there are many gods; and against Fatalism, which renders the hearing of prayer an impossibility—our Saviour teaches that our one God is a personal, living, freely-working God, who projects and executes His counsel, not without, but with reference to the praying man—even a *Father*. We have here grouped together the three principles which settle man's just relations to this and to the next world: 1. The *Filial*. We see in the Most High a Father. This representation of God as Father of those who worship Him, teaches us that He stands in a relation towards them similar to that in which a father stands to his children, and that He regards them, in a manner similar to that in which a father regards and acts towards his children—really loving them, and disposed to bestow on them every thing that is necessary to their true happiness. 2. The *Fraternal*. We come not with our private needs and vows alone, but with those of our race and brotherhood. "*Our Father*." Believers, in all their prayers, should think of others as well as themselves. They should remember all their brethren in Christ, and all their brethren of mankind. 3. The *Celestial*. Though we are now of the earth, and attached to it by these mortal and terrene bodies, we are not originally from it, nor were we made to be eternally upon it. We are of Heaven, and for Heaven, for there and not here our Father is, and where He is our true *Home* is. God, though omnipresent, has heaven as His special residence. The clause, *which art in heaven*, directs our thoughts to the difference between earthly fathers and this Father. "We are to have no earthly thoughts respecting the heavenly majesty of God." The very commencement of the prayer assumes in the suppliant a spirit penetrated with reverence and love and confidence—a spirit which, like the Psalmist, thinks of God as the highest and best portion, Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. "Every Christian," says an eminently holy man, "has a share in all the

prayers of all the rest, he is a partner in every ship of that kind that goes to sea, and has a portion of all their gainful voyages."

*Hallowed be Thy Name.* It will be noticed that our first concern is to be for what relates to God, before what respects ourselves. The first part of the prayer begins with the riches of God :

*Thy name be hallowed,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done.*

In the second part, on the contrary, it commences with the poverty of man :

*Us give daily bread,  
Us forgive our debts,  
Us lead not into temptation,  
Us deliver from evil.*

By the *name* of God, we are to understand His revealed character and attributes—even all that is implied in the appellation by which He is known among men. (See Ex. xxxiv. 5-7.) The word *hallowed* is nearly synonymous with "sanctified," or "glorified." God's name may be hallowed by us in three ways : 1. In our hearts, by entertaining suitable conceptions of Him ; 2. By our lips, when we acknowledge His divine perfections, and tell of all His wondrous works ; 3. In our lives, when the consideration of these divine perfections engages us to suitable obedience. In offering this petition, we pray that all atheism, infidelity, idolatry, impiety, superstition, ignorance, and false religion, may be banished from the world, and that the only living and true God may be worshipped and honored all over the earth, and by every intelligent creature. This, in fact, is the very petition which the Lord Jesus himself put up, on another occasion, "Father, glorify Thy name." (John xii. 28.)

*Thy kingdom come.* (Ps. xxii. 28 ; Dan. ii. 44.) The plainest and simplest sense of *thy kingdom* is, the promised kingdom which God is one day to take to Himself over all the world, foretold by Daniel and the other prophets, when Satan shall cease to be "prince of this world," and the millenium shall begin. This petition implies an earnest desire that the kingdom of God may be set up in our own hearts, reducing all within us to entire subjection to Christ, our king, that it may be set up in the hearts of our children, relatives, servants, friends, neighbors, that the word of the kingdom may, in all nations, "be preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," that Christian churches may be established in every region of our earth, and that "the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ," that every opposing power may be put down, and God be all in all. The final setting up of this kingdom has been long predicted. (Gen. iii. 15 ; Rom. viii. 22 ; Rev. xi. 15, and xxii. 20.)

*Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.* (Ps. xl. 8 ; ciii. 20.) God's will may be considered either as preceptive or providential. To the former, reference is here made, for God's providential will is done in earth, equally as in heaven. Or, if the latter is also referred to, that submission, acquiescence, and satisfaction in it, which angels feel and express, may be intended. It ought to be the prayer and care, the study and endeavor of every Christian, that the commanding will of God may be done by himself, and by all men on earth, as it is by the saints and angels in heaven, with entireness, harmony, cheerfulness, diligence, constancy, and ineffable delight. (Hab. ii. 14 ; Heb. viii. 11.) It is, indeed, in the highest degree reasonable, that not our will, but God's, should be done by us. Ours is all humor and caprice, all irresolution and weakness, all vanity and sin. His is just and perfect, fixed and unchangeable, directed by infinite wisdom, supported by infinite power, and recommended by infinite goodness ; and besides, compliance with the blessed will of God is the best, the only means of making us happy here and hereafter. Nor should the knowledge of the fact that in this life, through the imperfection of our nature, we never shall do the will of God in the same

absolutely perfect way as it is done in heaven, be regarded as a reason why we should lower the object of our desires, or the aim and earnestness of our endeavors. The restriction of this petition to resignation to the will of God greatly limits and enervates its weighty and extensive import. It is instinct with the very life of missionary enterprise, and the Church cannot offer this clause of the divine prayer in the full spirit of its power, without becoming a missionary church. What an amount of blessings is wrapped up in this petition! Were it fully granted, earth would almost become heaven; for what makes heaven what it is, but that there the will of God is the will of all intelligent beings? Perfect holiness and perfect happiness are necessarily implied in perfect conformity to the will of God.

### 3. Give us \*day by day our daily bread.

\* Or, *for the day.*

*Daily bread.* The bread which is convenient, or sufficient for our daily subsistence. Bread is one principal part of the things which are needful for the body, and here, as is often the case, it is put for the whole. By the use of this word, therefore, we are taught to ask only things that are necessary, without craving superfluities, and to refer it to our Heavenly Father to determine what things are necessary, according to our station in life, our families, and various other circumstances. We are to ask "day by day" the supply of the *needs* of life. Not being warranted to ask, even of the necessaries of life, very large supplies, which may serve for weeks, months, or years to come, but as children, continually exercising the spirit of entire dependence on, and complete confidence in, our Heavenly Father's care. The "our" gives rise to two very important thoughts: It points to necessary *labor*, the true way of asking and receiving, according to God's original appointment for man, in Gen. iii. 19, independently of which we eat not *our own bread*, (2 Thess. iii. 12; 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12,) but another's. Similarly, it points to the obligatory communication and fellowship, since as we in "our" and "us," pray with and for one another, so we may not hold any thing that we receive exclusively and covetously, for ourselves alone. (Isa. lviii.; break thy bread to the hungry—comp. 1 Sam. xxv. 11.)

"Our Lord," says Stier, "does not bid us pray *merely* for the need and nourishment of the body, but speaks also of the *bread* which the Father giveth from heaven, just as in John vi. 27-33, iv. 34." He also adds: "As the first table of petitions is from above downwards, invoking all from heaven, to which *he who prays has risen in his invocation*, until the earth, in re-established obedience, becomes like heaven, so now the prayer returns back, rising from the confessed and expressed necessity, into which the Lord's merciful answer descends, towards full satisfaction and accomplishment, and, indeed, in the order of a sacred three, corresponding to the former. Our *trespass* is, that we have not done the *will* of the Father, and reconciliation is the bread which we first and most inwardly need; then comes *temptation*, opposing, through the might of the wicked one, the coming of the *kingdom*; then the *evil*, under which we sigh, to the very last opposing the full glorifying and hallowing of the *name* of God in His saints."

4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

*And forgive us our sins.* Lev. xix. 18. In this petition the following things are supposed: 1. That we are all sinners, and, as such, stand in need of forgiveness. 2. That we are obliged to pray every day for pardon, as we do for daily bread, for our sins are many and daily. That

man is a sad self-deceiver, dreadfully ignorant of God's law, and of himself; who does not see that there is much, very much, both wanting and wrong in him, and that he needs to say every day, "forgive me my sins." Nor is there any thing in this view inconsistent with the important doctrine of the perfection and the perpetuity of justification. The moment a man believes on Christ, he is as much justified as Paul or John, and cannot be more justified if he lives to the age of Methuselah. But all this is no reason why he should not daily confess his sins, and daily seek fresh application of Christ's blood to his conscience. In fact, it is the life of faith to do so. The truth, "he that believeth in Christ shall never come into condemnation," instead of leading to the conclusion, "I need not pray for the forgiveness of my sins," suggests the strongest encouragement to present such a petition. 3. That since we are to pray for pardon of sin, it is impossible for us ever to satisfy the justice of God for sin. *For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.* The willingness of the suppliant is by no means a ground upon which God can bestow on him forgiveness, but rather a subjective condition without which he has no boldness to entreat the forgiveness of his own sins. Comp. 1 John iv. 18, 19. This condition, or qualification, let it be observed, requires: 1. That our minds be full of charity, free from rancor and ill-will, and all desire of revenge and secret grudge against another. 2. That we stand ready to help, and to do any office of love and service for him that has offended us. 3. That we admit our offending brother into friendship and familiarity, which is called a *forgiving him from the heart*; our heart must be toward him as formerly. It is a very striking consideration that this petition is so framed that, if presented in an unforgiving spirit, it is, indeed, an imprecation of Divine vengeance. He who does not forgive his neighbor his trespasses, when he uses this prayer, in effect asks God not to forgive him his trespasses, and, if he continue in his present temper, there is no doubt that his prayer will be answered.

*And lead us not into temptation.* (Gen. xxii. 1.) As the prayer for daily bread raises us above care for *to-day*, and the prayer for *the forgiveness of sins* is meant to quiet us concerning the past, so is the prayer against temptation a weapon for the uncertain future. The Greek word rendered "lead" is only used seven times in the New Testament. Excepting in the Lord's Prayer, our translators have always rendered it "bring into." (Luke v. 18, 19; Acts xvii. 20; 1 Tim. vi. 7; Heb. xiii. 11.) "Temptation" means "trial." God never put evil into our hearts, or stirs it up there by any positive influence: in the former respect, "a man is tempted by his own lust and enticed," in the latter, by Satan or wicked men. But Providence may permit us to be brought into such circumstances, as have a tendency to give our inward corruptions, and the temptations of Satan and his agents, peculiar advantage against us. This the Lord sometimes does, to prove the reality or power of our grace, the sincerity or hypocrisy of our profession, or the remaining prevalency of sin. This petition asks that God would graciously prevent us from being brought into circumstances of strong temptation, that He would not leave us to struggle with temptation in our own strength, that He would instruct us to avoid, that He would enable us to overcome, our temptations. He who would honestly and acceptably present this petition, must guard against going into temptation.

*But deliver us from evil.* (Ps. 1. 15.) This may mean, either from that which is evil, or from him who is evil—from the evil thing or from the evil one. We prefer the first sense as the more comprehensive one, and as including the second. It is a prayer to be preserved from every thing that is really prejudicial to us, especially from sin, that evil in which there is no good. In this petition we confess that ever since the fall, the world "lieth in the wicked one." (1 John v. 19.) We confess that evil is in us, and about us, and near us, and on every side, and that we have no power to deliver our-

selves from it. We apply to the strong for strength. We cast ourselves on Him for protection.

It will be observed that Luke omits the doxology appended to the prayer. Matt. vi. 13. In this very significant doxology is expressed the certain hope that the prayer will be heard, a hope which is found on the nature of the unchangeable God Himself, who, as the highest good, will realize the good at His appearance, in the universal and perpetual establishment of His kingdom. We have something like a parallel to this doxology in the rapturous thanksgiving of David, 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of prayer?
2. What is one great design of Christianity in regard to it?
3. When may the circumstance here recorded have occurred?
4. What is said of "when he ceased?"
5. Explain the words "Lord, teach us to pray," &c.
6. Was this the first time the Lord's prayer was given to the disciples?
7. Why was it repeated?
8. What does Luther say about this prayer?
9. What does Stier say?
10. What does Bishop Newton say?
11. Is there a progressive sequence in the prayer?
12. Trace this sequence.
13. What is meant by "When ye pray, say?"
14. What is taught by the invocation—"Our Father which art in heaven?"
15. What three principles are here grouped together?
16. Explain the first.
17. Explain the second.
18. Explain the third.
19. What does the clause—"Which art in heaven," teach?
20. What does the very commencement of the prayer assume?
21. What is to be our first concern in this prayer?
22. What is said of the first and second parts of it?
23. What are we to understand by the "name" of God?
24. What, by "hallowed?"
25. How may God's name be hallowed?
26. What do we pray for, in offering this petition?
27. What is the "kingdom" referred to?
28. What does this petition imply?
29. How may God's will be considered?
30. Is His preceptive will here meant?
31. What ought to be the prayer and endeavor of every Christian?
32. Why is it reasonable that God's will should be done by us?
33. What is said about lowering our desires to do God's will?
34. With what is this petition instinct?
35. What would be the result if it was fully granted?
36. What is said of "bread?"
37. What are we taught by this word to pray for?
38. Explain "day by day."
39. To what thoughts does "our" give rise?
40. Is the bread which the Father giveth from heaven also here meant?
41. What does Stier say?
42. What things are supposed in the petition "forgive us our sins?"
43. Has every man need to offer this petition daily?
44. Is it inconsistent with the perfection and perpetuity of justification?
45. What is said of "For we also forgive," &c.?

46. What does this condition or qualification require ?
47. What is a very striking consideration ?
48. What is said of "Lead us not into temptation," &c. ?
49. What is said of the Greek word rendered "lead?"
50. What does "temptation" mean ?
51. What is said about temptation ?
52. What does this petition ask ?
53. What may the words "Deliver us from evil" mean ?
54. What does this petition ask ?
55. What do we confess in it ?
56. What is said about the doxology of the prayer ?
57. Where have we something like a parallel to this doxology ?

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### LESSON LXVIII.

vs. 5-13.

5. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves ;

After giving to His disciples the form of prayer in vs. 2-4, Jesus proceeded in this parable to urge very forcibly on them the duty, not merely of praying, but of praying urgently, importunately, yea, of never ceasing to pray until the prayer be granted. As in the Lord's Prayer all the petitions are at the same time intercessions, and as the *friend* does not properly beg for himself, so the leading design and purport of the parable seems to be to show the efficacy of persevering intercession.

The picture refers to a simple, primitive condition of society, and reveals corresponding social habits. Some cottages, built near each other for common safety, are owned and possessed by the cultivators of the surrounding soil. Daylight has disappeared, and the inhabitants of the hamlet, wearied with their toil, have all retired to rest. Meanwhile a benighted traveller is threading his way to the spot, expecting food and shelter in the house of his friend. It is midnight ere he arrives, for, footsore and weary, he has consumed many hours in accomplishing the distance between his resting-place at noon and his destination for the night. The inmates, hearing his knock, and recognizing his voice, forthwith open the door, and hospitably receive the traveller. But their bread is exhausted. The head of the house, therefore, goes to the door of his nearest neighbor to borrow, states the case, his request is at first refused, but at length he is successful.

*He said unto them*, intimating that much was said in the same current which is not reported, but the following parable was clearly recollected. *Which of you shall have a friend.* In teaching how God will do, Jesus, at the same time, teaches how we should behave. The same argument is used here as in the parable of the *unjust judge*, one from the less to the greater, or, more accurately, from the worse to the better, with this difference, however, that *here* the narrow-heartedness and selfishness of man is set against the liberality of God, while *there* it is his *unrighteousness* which is tacitly contrasted with the righteousness of God. There is, perhaps, this further difference, that *here* it is *intercessory* prayer, prayer for the needs of others, in which we are bidden to be instant, while *there* it is rather for our-

selves. *At midnight.* This unusual hour is chosen to give force to the reluctance of the man to rise and supply the wants of his friend, and the power of continual entreaties to overcome such well-grounded reluctance. In a tropical climate people often find the night the best time to travel, on account of its coolness. *Midnight* means the time of the greatest internal darkness and necessity. Intercession in behalf of others can never be of any avail, except in this day of gloom and thick darkness, but now may be made in circumstances the most discouraging. It is never out of season to pray until we are out of life. How great is the advantage and privilege of a Christian, who prays, not to a friend, but to a Father, and a Father who does not wait for our soliciting Him, but presses us Himself to ask Him, and who has no difficult moments or unseasonable hours! *Friend, lend me three loaves.* That he required three loaves for the use of his friend clearly shows that the bread of the Jews was in very small loaves, or else in broad and thin cakes, according to the present custom of the East. That the applicant had no bread, or any thing else in his own house to set before his friend, is to be accounted for by the fact that the Orientals generally only prepare sufficient of bread and other food for the current day; so that a person who arrives at night is more than likely to find the house bare of victuals. In such cases, the women are sometimes set to work to grind corn and bake bread; but it seems that, in the present case, the man knew that his neighbor happened to have some bread in the house, and probably preferred to apply to him as the more convenient alternative.

6. For a friend of mine \*in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.

\* Or, out of his way.

He urges the grounds of entreaty, 1, the unexpectedness of the visitor; 2, his own inability. Of the words translated "in his journey," the margin gives a very striking rendering, and, most probably, the true one—"out of the way." The benighted traveller represents the poor sinner "out of the way," walking on still in darkness, not knowing whither he goeth, and then obtaining help from one who is a fellow-sinner, and yet a believer, who asks for him from God the bread of life, which he is not himself able to furnish him. The friend whom we ought to love most is our soul; it is in a journey from the very time that it is united to the body, and comes into the world, and it finds here nothing but poverty, indigence, and infirmity. We must have recourse to God in behalf of our souls, for we have nothing to set before them.

7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

This person is meant to represent Him to whom the believer must go. If surprise is felt that God should be compared to a churlish neighbor, it must be remembered that there was a necessity for referring to just such a character. As it was Christ's object to inculcate persevering importunity, and this could not be done by pointing to one among the loving and generous, by whom no such importunity would be required, descent *had* to be made into the lower and harder strata of human character to reach a specimen of the pertinacious refusal which would generate the pertinacious demand. *He from within.* This, in addition to referring to the person within, intimates that the door was not opened, that he did not come forth to converse with his friend. God, from within His house, which is heaven, hears those who pray on earth. *Trouble me not.* He is short and sharp. He echoes not the

honeyed word *friend*. We trouble God by our sins, but not by our prayers. *The door is now shut*, that is, fastened, barred, and bolted for the night. The door of Divine mercy is always open during this life. *My children are with me in bed*. In the East whole families frequently sleep in the same room. The man excuses his disinclination by the disturbance and vexation it would cause to him and his household. *I cannot rise and give thee*. It does not necessarily follow that the children were in the same bed with their father, the meaning is that they would be disturbed and fretful, if he should rise, and thus wake them at such an hour. The supreme rest and happiness which God enjoys in Himself with His saints, does not make Him insensible to our pains and miseries, and He need not quit the least part of that happiness in order to assist and relieve us.

8. I say unto you, <sup>b</sup>Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xviii. 1, &c.; Rom. xv. 30.

The term translated "importunity" signifies freedom from the bashfulness which cannot ask a second time. The shamefacedness which prevents a modest man from importuning a fellow-creature for a gift, after the request has been refused, is out of place in the intercourse between an empty but believing supplicant and the God of all grace. If this Jewish countryman in his perplexity had been ashamed to ask a second time, he would have failed to accomplish his object, but because he was not so ashamed, or at least did not permit the shame to drive him from his purpose, he obtained at length all his desire—even more, not only the three loaves which he asked, but "*as many as he needeth*." The case was similar to that of the Syro-Phœnician woman, (Matt. xv. 21-28.) It is not true, in the sense that many affirm it, that our prayers have an effect on *us only*, and *not on God*. As the same unchangeable sun softens the wax and hardens the clay, so does God who is "without variableness," sustain and save us in our penitence, and harden and condemn us in our obduracy. We are not to conceive of prayer as an overcoming of God's reluctance to give; it is, in fact, a laying hold of His highest willingness, as we see illustrated in the case of the woman just referred to. Refusals to a believer are only trials of his faith, to prove his confidence in God, and make the gift, when bestowed, a suitable confirmation of that confidence. Man is hard-hearted, even to his friends, when it must cost him something to assist them, because most commonly it is only either his own satisfaction, or his interest, which he loves in them. God does good to all, because He is goodness itself; because He communicates His good things without diminishing them; because He works in all things without being wearied, and because He loves without the least interest. *Because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity*. Importunity proved a more powerful incentive to action than friendship, a fact which is of no uncommon occurrence in the observation of all. 2 Kings ii. 17. Persevering importunity in prayer is pleasing to God and profitable to men.

9. °And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. vii. 7 and xxi. 22; Mark xi. 24; John xv. 7; James i. 6; 1 John iii. 22.

The parable concludes with words in which the same duty of prayer is commended, and no longer in a figure, but plainly. The three repetitions of the command are mere than mere repetitions. There is an ascending scale of earnestness. Each one of the words, "ask," "seek," "knock,"

manifests increased importunity, so that each apparent refusal will add earnestness to the entreaty, until the required blessing is received. The man in the parable did *ask, seek, knock*, and it was *opened, granted, obtained* by him, according to the promise. So must all suppliants do. A man, in order to offer up a good prayer, must ask with the humility of a beggar; he must seek with the carefulness of a good servant; and he must knock with the confidence of a friend. This three-fold command to pray is, indeed, a commentary on words of our Lord spoken at another time: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

10. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Lest the strong but general assurance of the preceding verse should be neglected as a customary or unmeaning form of speech, it is repeated here in terms still stronger and more universal, not as a promise to be verified in future, but as a fact of actual experience. The change from the future to the present, therefore, is significant, and not to be neglected in the exposition: "I say, not only that you shall receive hereafter what you ask, but that, in point of fact, whoever does ask, does receive accordingly." That is to say, believing prayer is never vain or unsuccessful, and the knowledge of this truth is among the most efficient antidotes to sceptical misgivings and excessive care. When we do not receive that which we ask, let us always believe either that we do not ask it as we ought, or that it is good for us not to receive it. We must receive refusals from God as gifts with adoration and thanksgiving, because it is really a great gift for us not to receive that which He foresees we would abuse, and the abuse of which would incense His wrath against us.

11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12. Or if he shall ask an egg, will he \*offer him a scorpion?

† Matt. vii. 9.

\* Greek, *give*.

Our Lord now draws from the domestic circles of earth some precious arguments for confidence in approaching our heavenly Father. From that which the *friend* will do, the discourse of the Saviour rises even to that which one could expect of a *father*; from that which an imperfect earthly father does, even to that which the perfect Father in heaven bestows. *If a son shall ask bread, &c.* The phrase would be better translated, *when your son, &c.* In the original, the question has a negative form, which implies a negative answer. This is not the way you ever dream of dealing with your children who depend on you for their support. *Bread.* Probably the round cake now used in the East, and bearing some resemblance to a smooth, flat *stone*. The same resemblance may be traced between some kinds of serpents and some kinds of *fish*. *Egg.* This third example is found only in Luke; the two others also in Matt. vii. 9, 10. Old writers say that there was a white *scorpion* in Palestine, which, when folded up, resembled an egg. Now, if earthly parents will not mock their children, when hungry, by giving them that which is not food, and especially if they will not give them a noxious and deadly thing, instead of food, it may not be expected that God will refuse humble and earnest suppliants the good things which they ask. He will not give us a stone instead of bread; but we may ourselves, and we should fear lest we do, change the bread of God into a stone, by the hardness of our heart. When, too, we do not get whatever we ask, and when we ask

it, we may be sure that, in our ignorance and short-sightedness, we asked a stone or a serpent, because they seemed beautiful—not knowing that the one was destitute of nourishment, and that the other would sting.

13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

This is the formal argument or inference from the facts indirectly stated in the preceding verses. *If ye then, being evil*—not a comparison of the morally corrupt man with God, but rather a contrast. Men, notwithstanding their depravity, which blinds their judgments, and makes them defective in moral purity, and tends to make them weary through repeated provocations, and selfish, will satisfy the demands of their children if possible. How then could it be that a holy God should not do that which even sinful man does? *Know how to give*, i. e., are able, understand from their experience, and have the disposition to give. *Good gifts*, in reference to this life, and in opposition to the evil gifts just mentioned. *How much more*, the difference is not defined, being indeed infinite. This argument has never been used to greater effect than here, if we except that other great instance of its use, in Rom. v. 9, 10; viii. 32, where the argument is, that the most difficult part of the work of redemption having been achieved in the death of God's Son, *much more* will it be completed, He having risen to an exalted and glorified state. *Your heavenly Father*, an essential description here, because the argument itself is one from the parental love of men to that of God. *Give the Holy Spirit*. In the parallel passage in Matthew vii. 11, the phrase runs, *give good things*, thus intimating, as the terms illustrate one another, that the Holy Spirit is the best gift of God to those that have received the truth as it is in Jesus, and comprehends all things which are truly and essentially good for them. *The Holy Spirit*, this comprises whatever the poor suppliant needs—whatever he longs to obtain in the kingdom of grace, is included in the promised gift. All good things are conveyed to the waiting, praying child of God by the Holy Spirit. Not a single blessing for time or eternity, that is not immediately the result of His presence with the suppliant. *To them that ask him*, literally, *to those asking him*, a phrase which seems not only to suggest the indispensable condition of God's favors, but to bring back this part of the discourse to the point stated in verse 9, and the necessity of prayer as a preventive of unbelieving and excessive care.

The argument of Jesus in this verse seems to derive its force from three considerations: 1. God is the Fountain of natural affection. From Him all the kindness, pity, compassion, and love have proceeded, which have flowed through all the successive generations of the world. If, then, the love of offspring be so strong in our nature, how purely and how powerfully must it operate in Him, who tells us that the instinct which Himself has planted in our hearts, but feebly expresses the affection that is in His own breast to the family of mankind! 2. The reception of the Holy Spirit has relation to our highest welfare. It concerns us in our spiritual and eternal interests. How, then, can it be, that He who blesses our bodies, and inclines our hearts to give our children what is requisite for their subsistence and comfort, will not give us, if we ask, the great blessing which is needed by our rational, depraved, accountable, and immortal nature? 3. The influence of the Spirit can never fail of being intrinsically and eternally good. This is not certainly known of any gift which a parent bestows upon his child. But it is true of the Holy Spirit, His influence is absolutely and invariably beneficial. Will not God, then, willingly give the Spirit? It is a precious truth that this view of God, as so human, so paternal, is given us by one who knows what He affirms. "No one knoweth the

Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son may reveal Him." Matt. xi. 27. Nothing can exceed the kindness and grace which are thus represented as belonging to our Father in heaven. This great gift of the Holy Spirit, be it remembered, we may ask unconditionally, and without limit, as we are permitted to supplicate for nothing else, at the throne of grace. But we must ask in the name of Him whom the Father heareth always.

QUESTIONS.

1. What does Jesus do in this parable?
2. What is its leading design?
3. To what does the picture refer?
4. What is intimated in "he said unto them?"
5. What argument is used here?
6. What is the difference between this parable and that of the unjust judge?
7. Why is the hour of midnight chosen?
8. What is said of the great privilege of a Christian?
9. What is said of the three loaves?
10. Why had not the applicant bread in his own house to set before his friend?
11. What two grounds of entreaty are urged in verse 6?
12. Who does the benighted traveller represent?
13. From whom does he obtain help?
14. What is said of our soul?
15. Who is represented by the person in verse 7?
16. How can this comparison be explained?
17. What is said of "he from within?"
18. What is said of "trouble me not?"
19. What is said of the door of Divine mercy?
20. How do families in the East frequently sleep?
21. What does the word translated "importunity" signify?
22. How did this Jewish countryman prevail?
23. Did he obtain more than he asked?
24. To what case was his similar?
25. What is said of the effect of our prayers?
26. How are we to conceive of prayer?
27. What is said of man as hard-hearted?
28. What of God as good to all?
29. What is said of importunity?
30. How does the parable conclude?
31. What is said of the three repetitions of the command to pray?
32. What is said in verse 30?
33. Is believing prayer ever unsuccessful?
34. Whence does our Lord draw arguments in verse 11?
35. What is said of "if a son shall ask bread," &c.?
36. What is said of "bread?"
37. What is said of serpents?
38. What of scorpions?
39. What is the argument presented?
40. What is said of verse 13?
41. Explain the words "If ye then, being evil," &c.
42. What is said of "how much more?"
43. What of "your Father which is in heaven?"
44. What are we to understand by "them that ask Him?"
45. From what three considerations does the argument of Jesus in verse 30 seem to derive its force?

## LESSON LXIX.

vs. 14-20.

14. ¶ And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.

• Matt. ix. 32 and xii. 22.

Luke here goes back to relate an incident which occurred while our Lord was yet in Galilee. The same incident is recorded by Matthew, xii. 22-37, and Mark, iii. 22-27. The connection between these verses and those which immediately precede them, is striking and instructive. In the preceding verses our Lord had been showing the power and importance of prayer. In the verses before us He delivers a man from a dumb devil. The miracle is evidently intended to throw fresh light on the lesson. The same Saviour who encourages us to pray, is the Saviour who destroys Satan's power over our members, and restores our tongues to their proper use. The devil shuts up the mouth of those whom he hinders from praising God, from praying to Him, from confessing their sins, from bearing witness to truth and innocence, or from giving admonition, instruction, and comfort to those who need them, and to whom they are due. The mouth is generally shut with respect to all these duties, only because the heart is shut toward God, and open to temporal interests and to human fears and motives. It was the *devil* who was dumb; it was the *man* who spake; the demon was the cause of the dumbness of the afflicted person. *And the people wondered.* According to Matthew they were "amazed," and on the point of publicly proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. This culmination of enthusiasm awakened the strong reaction of the Pharisees, and led to the sudden and malignant accusation mentioned in the next verse.

15. But some of them said, 'He casteth out devils through \*Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.

† Matt. ix. 34 and xii. 24. \* Gr. *Beelzebub*; and so ver. 18, 19.

*Some of them*—they were Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem. These persons, let it be noted, were unable to deny the fact of the miraculous healing, and therefore used the only other means at their disposal to discredit Him who wrought it, by malignantly accusing Him of impious collusion with the very demons whom He dispossessed. Thus their very charge against Him may be reckoned as involuntary testimony to the truth of His pretensions to a superhuman power. Had the Jews been universally or generally converted by Christ's miracles, the skeptic in our day might argue, with some appearance of probability, that the facts had been invented to gratify the national propensity, and had been credited without examination or proof. On the contrary, we are now certain that the gospel miracles were wrought in the presence of enemies, and thus subjected to the severest scrutiny, and that they carried with them conviction to multitudes, notwithstanding the fiercest opposition which national prejudice, bigotry and vice could excite, and the strictest search which could be made by the most vigilant hostility. *Beelzebub, or Beelzebub.* Beelzebub means "Lord of flies," and was worshipped by the Philistines in earlier times at Ekron, 2 Kings i. 2. This god was so called as protecting his worshippers from noxious

insects; or as being himself worshipped under an insect form. This contemptuous description of a heathen deity is perfectly agreeable to Jewish usage, and its application in the case before us is a conclusive proof of the extremes to which these enemies of Jesus had carried their contempt and hatred of Him, when they chose the grossest nickname of a false god to describe the unseen power by whose aid He wrought His miracles. The preposition *through* denotes not mere assistance, but union and identification. *Chief* means one who goes first, takes the lead, presides, or governs. How great the power of prejudice over the hearts of unconverted men! These persons could not deny the miracle, but they would not allow that it was wrought by Divine power, and attempted to discredit the character of Him who did it. That which proceeds from the Spirit of God, is every day ascribed to the evil spirit by the rash judgments of men. Two spirits so contrary to each other have likewise ways as directly contrary. The Spirit of God inclines men to excuse even bad actions as much as possible, by the uprightness of the intention; the evil spirit endeavors to decry the very best, condemning either the intention or the means. We ought to be forced by the plainest evidence to condemn our neighbor, and we often condemn him contrary to all evidence. There never was any person so good as not to be subject to censure and misconstruction. What a trial to the holy and innocent Jesus to be charged with familiarity with the devil!

16. And others tempting *him*, sought of him a sign from heaven.

¶ Matt. xii. 38 and xvi. 1.

The words, *from heaven*, show that it was a sign of Christ's Messiahship, which these *others* demanded of Him. They appear not to have been satisfied respecting the expulsion of the demon, and now ask a *sign from heaven*, as opposed to a sign from hell, or one on earth, in proof of our Lord's pretensions. It is always one mark of a thoroughly unbelieving heart, to pretend to want more evidence of the truth of religion. To one who has a sincere faith, it is enough that God has once declared Himself. He who is not content with this, wants faith, not proofs.

17. <sup>a</sup>But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house *divided* against a house falleth.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xii. 35; <sup>c</sup> Mark iii. 24.

<sup>d</sup> John ii. 25.

*Knowing their thoughts*, by His omniscience. *Said unto them*. Notwithstanding the very awful and most flagrantly wicked charge preferred against Him, by His enemies, Jesus, not in the least angry, but rather pitying the misguided men who had made the charge, reasons with them quietly and calmly as rational men, thus teaching us, that, however extravagant the charge may be that is made against us, yet, if we speak calmly and sensibly, there is something in human nature that will lead it to listen the moment we do so. Some one has said, "Speak common sense to a mob, and the mob will be quiet." If we speak what is rational to those who are infuriated against us, they will listen for a little to what we have got to say. Jesus proceeds to refute the slander that He is confederated with the prince of darkness. His first illustrative comparison is taken from a *kingdom*, a state, a body politic, implying not a mere aggregation of men, but organic life and unity of principle and interest. *Every kingdom divided against itself*—in which there is nothing but divided council and separate action, making on one side, and unmaking on the other, setting up and pulling down, internal discord and civil war—is brought to desolation, or, as Mark has it, iii. 24, can-

*not stand*, cannot be established, made to stand, by such a process. The same thing is true in a sphere still narrower: a *house* or family *divided against itself*, composed of hostile and discordant members, *falleth*.

18. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

*If Satan also be divided against himself*, as the Pharisees intimated, when they accused Jesus of casting out Satan by Satan's own power, *how shall his kingdom stand?* No. He is not so weak, so ignorant of what his strength is, nor so reckless of his resources. His bad power is yet a *united* power, and it will not be for lack of oneness of purpose and action that his kingdom shall at length fall. Had the idea of division, in these various illustrations, been the simple one of some opposing others, our Lord would no doubt have applied His argument or principle to Satan's kingdom rather than himself, but as He here presents the paradoxical idea of Satan as an individual divided into two, and one arrayed against the other, we may safely infer, that this very paradox was meant to be the point of His whole argument. *Because ye say*, these words mean this, I put this question, in order to show you the absurdity of supposing Satan to be thus arrayed against himself. The whole argument of Christ was this: "If Satan were to cast out Satan, he would commit suicide. Therefore, how can you suppose that he will help me to depress and put down that very kingdom which is his strength, glory, and stronghold?" It is an unwarrantable calumny to endeavor to make it believed that a man is an enemy of the Church, because he is trying to establish truth of doctrine and promote holiness of life, and to cast out error and sin. We must not cease to serve the Church in the midst of all the oppositions of false brethren. How great is the sin, folly, and danger of needless divisions in the Church—such, for example, as divisions between those who agree on main points—divisions about matters not essential to salvation—divisions about forms and ceremonies, and ecclesiastical arrangements upon which Scripture is silent! When Christians keep up needless divisions, they show themselves more foolish than Satan himself.

19. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? therefore shall they be your judges.

Here is a second refutation of the charge of the Pharisees: their objection, by parity of reasoning, would extend to their own exorcists, which they would not have been willing to admit. *Your sons*. That is, your disciples. That there were among the Jews *exorcists*, who at least professed to cast out devils, we know from the Apocrypha, from Josephus, and from Acts ix. 12-14. It appears, by the writings of the earliest Christian fathers, that this power of *exorcism* remained for some time in the primitive Church. *Therefore they shall be your judges*, to convict them of injustice and malignity in ascribing what Christ did, to demoniacal collusion, when they made no such charge against them and their real or pretended dispossessions. The corruption of the heart is the cause of the corruption of the understanding and judgment. Passion makes men frequently condemn in some that which they approve in others.

20. But if I <sup>with</sup> the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

\* Exod. viii. 19.

So numerous and powerful had been our Saviour's works that the Jews had ascribed them, not to a spirit of common order, but to the very *chief* of hell. But if they were as beneficent as they were powerful, why not ascribe them to the Prince of heaven, and so conclude that the kingdom of heaven had come? The argument here appears to be this: "If these miracles which I work are really worked by the finger of God, (see Exod. viii. 19,) and I am clearly proved by them One sent from God, then, whether you will allow it or not, the times of Messiah have evidently arrived. The kingdom of God has come down upon you aware, and these miracles are signs that it is so." There was solemn irony in this suggestion to the leading Jews, that, in spite of their unwillingness to see or own it, the Messiah and His kingdom might be come after all. We cannot be assured that God reigns in a soul, but only when the lusts and evil habits which possessed it are cast out, not by other lusts or evil habits, but by the love of righteousness and the hatred of sin, which is done by the finger of God—namely, by his Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS.

1. What does Luke here relate?
2. Where else is the same incident recorded?
3. What is the connection between these verses and those preceding?
4. Whose mouth does the devil shut up?
5. What was the effect of the miracle upon the people?
6. What did the Pharisees and Scribes say?
7. Did they deny the fact of the miraculous healing?
8. What did they accuse Jesus of?
9. What is said of this charge against Him?
10. What is said of the Jews and Christ's miracles?
11. What does "Beelzebub" mean?
12. Why was this god so called?
13. What is said of this contemptuous description of a heathen deity?
14. What is denoted by the preposition "through?"
15. What is said of the power of prejudice?
16. What is said of the Spirit of God, and the spirit of evil?
17. What do we learn from the words "from heaven?"
18. What is always a mark of a thoroughly unbelieving heart?
19. How did Jesus know their thoughts?
20. What did He say to them?
21. What does His example of calmness teach us?
22. What was His first illustrative comparison taken from?
23. What does He say of every kingdom divided against itself?
24. What is Christ's reasoning in ver. 18?
25. What would our Lord have done, if the idea of division, in these illustrations, had been the simple one of some opposing others?
26. What do the words "because ye say" mean?
27. What was the whole argument of Christ?
28. What is an unwarrantable calumny?
29. What is said of needless divisions in the Church?
30. What was Christ's second refutation of the charge of the Pharisees?
31. What is meant by "your sons?"
32. How do we know there were exorcists among the Jews?
33. Explain—"therefore they shall be your judges."
34. What is said of our Saviour's works?
35. What does Christ's argument in ver. 20 appear to be?
36. What is said of the irony in this suggestion?
37. How only can we be assured that God reigns in a soul?

## LESSON LXX.

vs. 21-26.

21. <sup>1</sup>When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 29; Mark iii. 27.

Jesus here likens Satan to a strong man armed keeping his palace, drawing an illustration from the experience of common life, to show the conclusion which His enemies must have drawn in an analogous case, and which, therefore, they should have drawn in this. When a rich man is robbed, no one imagines that he has robbed himself, but every one regards it as the work of an enemy, superior in power; so, too, when Satan's instruments and agents are dispossessed and driven out by Jesus, instead of arguing that He and Satan were in league together, it ought rather to have been argued that the Prince of this world had been cast out and judged, (John xii. 31; xvi. 11,) by coming in contact with his conqueror.

*Strong man.* This, the context clearly shows, is "the chief of the devils," Satan, the great rebel against God, and the great adversary of man. His *palace* are the world and the sinner's heart. His *goods* are the temptations of the world, and those lusts and passions of the poor, fallen soul, all those wondrous faculties which once followed hard after God, but are now alienated from him, degraded by reason of the vileness of the objects on which they now fasten. He allows nothing to mitigate their abomination, or change their character; they are *in peace*. The phrase *keepeth*, implies military vigilance. We have, therefore, three qualities brought to view, strength, completeness of the means of defence, and watchfulness. Satan is, indeed, *strong*, by not only entering in, but now holding in complete subjection such a palace as he occupies. He "works in the children of disobedience," and that so constrainingly, that they are called his "children." He "carries them captive at his will," and "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." He is called the "Prince of this world." He is *armed*. He is well supplied with defensive armor, not to be overcome by slight assaults, and feeble exertions. He is also well supplied with offensive weapons, never at a loss for means to injure the soul of man. He has snares of every kind, and engines of every description. He knows exactly how every temperament, rank, class, age, nation, and people, can be assailed with most advantage. We are all born under the dominion of this strong man armed, and have been his habitation by being born slaves to sin. Would to God we had never been so by our own will!

22. But <sup>m</sup>when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

<sup>m</sup> Isa. liii. 12; Col. ii. 16.

*A stronger*, literally, *the stronger*, that is, he who is stronger. That stronger one is the Friend of sinners, Jesus, the Son of God. Mighty as the devil is, he was overcome by Jesus on the cross, when He triumphed over him openly. Christ can pluck the devil's captives from his hands, and break the chains which bind them. If this *stronger* than Satan undertakes to dissolve the terrible union between the evil one and the sinner's soul, nothing can keep Satan and that soul together. Power, irresistible power, dissolves the com-

pact, severs the union, and destroys the dominion. The steps of this deliverance are as follows: He (*the stronger*) enters into the soul, *comes upon* the usurper there, falls upon him in His might, *overcomes* him, grasps him by a hand which is "mighty to save," *takes from him all his armor, wherein he trusted*, makes the wondering soul fully aware of his subtleties, and unmask the secret of his power, so that it is no longer "ignorant of his devices," *and divideth his spoils*, "recovers all those powers and faculties of the soul, which before only sounded as voices from the pit, and tunes them to the melodies of heaven, at one time causing them to burst forth in the grand swell of victory gained over the tyrant; at another, to join in the new song of praise, with all its sweet cadences of unutterable joy."

Happy is he who can say: "Blessed be thou, O, my God, because thou hast not left this enemy in possession of my heart, but hast been pleased to re-enter upon thy rights, and to reinstate thyself therein, by overcoming in me the love of sin by a stronger charity."

23. "He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

• Matt. xii. 30.

This proverbial maxim, illustrative of the contrariety of Christ's own kingdom and that of Satan, as shown by the opposite works of the two, was addressed especially to such as, on the one hand seized with astonishment at the miracle, on the other hand struck by the blasphemous allegation of the Pharisees, did not know what they should think of Jesus, and were secretly inclined, at least for the moment, to remain neutral in respect to the two parties. These He gives to understand, that in the case of so intense a conflict of principles, such a neutrality was impossible, and at bottom was no better than open enmity. *He*—any one, *not with me*—that does not harmonize with me in spirit and in action—*is against me*—is opposed to me. *Gathereth . . . scattereth*. These two words allude to a *gathering* in harvest. Co-laborers gather in concert; the ravager of their fields *scattereth* the produce. This aphorism, and that other which is the converse of it, Mark ix. 40, do not in the least conflict. The rule, "He that is not against me," must guide us in our judgment respecting *others*; the other, "He that is not with me," is applicable in judging of *ourselves*. The first warns us against bigoted exclusiveness, the other gives us to understand that entire neutrality in the Saviour's cause is impossible. Both these aphorisms may be exemplified in the experience of the very same persons. For example, Nicodemus, by refusing to take part with the Sanhedrim against our Lord, although he did not venture to espouse His cause, proved himself to be upon His side; but if he had continued the same course when the crisis had arrived, he would equally have proved himself to be against Him. The pretence of inconsistency between the words of this verse and the saying recorded in Luke (ix. 50) is therefore as absurd as such a charge would be against Solomon's twin maxims. (Prov. xxvi. 4, 5.) Let it be the settled determination of our minds, that we will serve Christ with all our hearts, if we serve Him at all. Nothing is so offensive to Christ as lukewarmness in religion. Let there be no reserve, no compromise, no half-heartedness, no attempt to reconcile God and mammon in our Christianity. Let us resolve, by God's help, to be "with Christ," and "gather" by Christ's side, and allow the world to say and do what it will. In vain does any one flatter himself that he does no evil, if so be that he do no good. That person scatters, who does not gather with Jesus Christ, in the unity of His body, in His Spirit, and by His grace.

24. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he

• Matt. xii. 43.

walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

p Prov. iv. 16; Isa. xlviii. 22 and lvii. 21.

*Is gone out.* There is nothing here of a "stronger than he" coming upon him and binding him; rather the language suggests to us the strongest contrast between this case and those in which our Lord openly interposed and "cast forth" the devils by His word. Sometimes an evil spirit forsakes his habitation. This devil having left his house, travelled through *dry* or desert places, but found no *rest*, no satisfaction and repose. It seems probable that in the course of his wanderings he found no opportunity of injuring souls. Our enemy, we know, walks about seeking whom he may devour. Sometimes there is a restraint laid upon him, and he cannot perpetrate the evil that he desires, for he can do nothing without the permission of God. Perhaps this devil had left the man, hoping to make new conquests, and to increase the number of his victims, but when disappointed, he thinks of returning to his old abode. He says, "I will return unto my house, whence I came out." He claims the heart as his own property—"my house."

#### 25. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.

On his return, he finds no obstacle to regaining possession of the soul he once inhabited. Nor is the house less acceptable to him because it is "*swept*." He is greatly satisfied with some appearance of reformation, certain significant tokens of cleanness, for he knows that these are all for him. Had it been swept or cleansed for another, he would have fled from it with dismay and hatred, but as it is for himself, he exults over it with fiendish delight, as only making the habitation at length more thoroughly his own—and it is "*garnished*" too. Many ornaments are found within. The soul has put forth some of its inherent powers. It has enriched itself from the stores of art, science, and philosophy. It has shown rare skill in works of social benevolence. It has gained a good name for integrity and uprightness. And all this, too, is gain to the evil possessor, not to the rightful owner of it. All these he takes into his hand, and turns them to his own bad purpose of keeping the soul still further from God, and making use of it for the enlargement and increase of the dominion and the power of darkness.

26. Then goeth he, and taketh to *him* seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

q John v. 14; Heb. vi. 4 and x. 26; 2 Pet. ii. 20.

The unclean spirit will not re-enter weak and alone, but will take with him a strong reinforcement, so as not again to be ejected. He selects some *more* wicked than himself, seven in number, to be his associates, and *share his spoil*. The number seven is often used in Scripture probably to denote great increase in number, or size, or quantity, or intensity. (Ps. cxix. 164; Prov. xxiv. 16; Matt. xviii. 21; Dan. iii. 19.) There are degrees of wickedness, even among *devils*, and no doubt, pre-eminence in wickedness is their glory. It had been better for this miserable man if the first inmate of his heart had never quitted it. His last state was at least seven times worse than the first. How infinitely better would it have been for him, if, when the devil had left him, he had opened his heart to the gracious Saviour! Jesus is willing to come whenever He is invited; often He stands and knocks, and no man opens the door, and at length He withdraws, no more to return. Then the wretched soul must become the prey of demons. Even as a house forsaken by man soon becomes the habitation of beasts and birds, so does the heart, when Jesus is absent, become the habitation of the spirits of hell.

The case above described is not that of one outwardly going on in a course of vile pollution and rampant ungodliness, but of one in whom outward appearances are favorable, and yet, these very things, externally so fair and good, are turned, by the power and subtlety of Satan, into increased means of rebellion against God. As long as the soul is "without God in the world," no matter what it may be in other respects, in its outward manifestations, no matter what men may think of it, nor what it may think of itself, it is still the slave of sin, and the bond-slave of Satan.

Nothing is more likely to recall the devil into a heart from which he had been cast out, than for the man either not to have good works, or to have only the outward part of them, or to take great complacency and satisfaction in them as in his own proper righteousness. There is no safety but in thorough Christianity. The devil must not only be cast out, but the Holy Ghost must take his place. Christ must dwell in our hearts by faith.

The tendency of a backslider, or a man who has at one time professed religion, but afterwards turned back to the world, to become worse than he ever was before, is a painful fact, but a notorious one. The possession of clear knowledge of the gospel, combined with deliberate choice of sin and the world, seems the parent of the most hardened state of soul to which mortal can attain. *Cowper*, in one of his letters on this subject, says: "I have observed that when a man who once seemed a Christian has put off that character, and resumed his old one, he loses, together with the grace which he seemed to possess, the most amiable parts of the character that he resumes. The best features of his natural face seem to be struck out, that after having worn religion only as a mask, he may add a more disgusting appearance than he did before he assumed it."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. To what is Satan here likened?
2. Why was the illustration drawn from the experience of common life?
3. Who is the "strong man?"
4. What are Satan's palace?
5. What are his goods?
6. How does he keep them in peace?
7. What three qualities are brought to view?
8. Is Satan armed?
9. With what weapons?
10. Who is the "stronger than he?"
11. What is said of this stronger one?
12. What are the steps of the sinner's deliverance from Satan?
13. Who is pronounced happy?
14. To whom was the proverbial maxim in verse 23 addressed?
15. What did Jesus give these persons to understand?
16. What is meant by "not with me?"
17. What, by "against me?"
18. What do the words "gathereth" and "scattereth" allude to?
19. What is said of this aphorism, and that in Mark ix. 40?
20. May both these aphorisms be exemplified by the same persons?
21. What example of this is given?
22. What is said to be peculiarly offensive to Christ?
23. What is said of the words "is gone out?"
24. Through what places did this devil travel?
25. Did he find rest?
26. What seems probable?
27. What is said of Satan?
28. Is there sometimes restraint laid upon him?
29. What is said of the unclean spirit's return?

30. What is said of "he findeth it swept?"
31. What is said about the house being "garnished?"
32. Whom does the unclean spirit now take with him?
33. Were they more wicked than himself?
34. What is the number seven often used to denote?
35. Are there degrees of wickedness among devils?
36. What had been better for this miserable man?
37. What is said of the willingness of Jesus to come?
38. What is said of the case above described?
39. What is said of the soul "without God in the world?"
40. What is most likely to recall a devil into a heart from which he has been ejected?
41. What is the tendency of a backslider?
42. What is the parent of the most hardened state of the soul?
43. What does Cowper say on this subject?

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### LESSON LXXI.

vs. 27-36.

27. ¶ And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, 'Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.

† Chap. i. 28, 48.

This remarkable interruption of the discourse of Jesus is preserved by Luke alone. *A certain woman.* She sympathizes with Christ as a great Rabbi, but *especially*, we suppose, in His eloquent denunciations of that class who not only *blasphemed* Him, but *devoured widows'* houses. We are not told who she was, but that she was a mother appears from the nature of her felicitation. *Of the company*—out of the crowd or multitude. *Lifted up her voice, and said unto him*—her feminine voice over-topping all other sounds in the crowd. The scene is truly Oriental, it being the custom in those countries, even now, to implore blessings or imprecate curses upon the heads of the parents of friends or enemies. The words of this woman are to be attributed rather to wonder and astonishment, at the sayings and doings of our Lord, than to a spiritual perception of the true excellence and glory of His character and mission. Hence, in His reply, He administered a gentle rebuke for her admiration of His words and miracles, unless accompanied by a lively and productive faith in the truth of God.

28. But he said, Yea, rather, blessed *are* they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

• Matt. vii. 21; Luke viii. 21; James i. 25.

The Greek word here translated, *Yea, rather*, is only found in three other places, and in each is variously rendered: "Nay, but," Rom. ix. 20; "Yea, verily," Rom. x. 18; "Yea, doubtless," Phil. iii. 8. Christ does not gain-say the woman's utterance, but He rectifies it. "Very true, blessed," &c.—

an intimation to the woman not to let herself be borne along too much by transient impressions. Mary's blessedness proceeded from having borne the Son of God in her heart, even before she bare him in her womb. While our Lord admits the truth of the woman's asseveration, He refers to a state or condition of blessedness enjoyed by the believer, compared with which the previously expressed cause of gratulation diminishes into insignificance.

*Word of God.* Christ does not say *my word*, but *the word of God*. He frequently turns the attention of His auditors from Himself to the Father who sent Him; not, however, intending to intimate thereby, that they were other than one and indivisible, but only that in the work of redemption, the Son is subordinate to the Father, and as such, makes it His supreme delight to honor and obey Him. Compare Luke i. 48; ii. 19-51; Matt. xii. 45, 48; Luke viii. 19-21.

What a trenchant blow is here struck against the folly and sin of deifying the mother of Jesus for an honor, which our Lord Himself places below that which is conferred upon every believer in the spiritual relation which he sustains to God, as an obedient and devoted follower! We have reason to rejoice that this great and gracious privilege is not denied unto us now. Although we cannot see Christ, yet love Him we may; His bodily presence cannot be enjoyed by us, but His spiritual, gracious presence is not denied us.

29. ¶ 'And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, "This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

† Matt. xxxviii. 39.

‡ Matt. iii. 7; John viii. 44; Acts vii. 51, 52.

The occasion for this rebuke on the part of the Saviour appears in ver. 16. *Gathered thick together*, crowding upon. *They seek a sign*; this appears, (ver. 16,) was sought with a view of *tempting* Christ, or making experiments upon Him. They sought *a sign from heaven*. They had a mob-like desire to see splendid shows in the sky, not unlike the excitement of the populace for fireworks on some day of public celebration. They wanted a miracle so far different from the other miracles of our Lord as this, that it was to be performed, not on men who surrounded Him, but on objects which were apparently elevated above Him, and was therefore to strike the eye so much the more strongly. *An evil generation*. Nothing shows more clearly the hardness and corruption of the hearts of that people, than their asking a new miracle—counting, it seems, all those as nothing which they had seen before. Heart unbelief always professes to want evidence. Our Lord, in view of their extraordinary perverseness, refuses any sign, *but the sign of Jonas the prophet*.

30. For as 'Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

† Jonah i. 17 and ii. 10.

The sign of the prophet Jonah was full of warning to the Jews. Jerusalem was the modern Nineveh; a living parallel to Jonah, greater than Jonah himself, was predicting its destruction. Jonah prophesied a destruction in forty days; forty years elapsed between our Lord's ministry and the destruction of Jerusalem. The days and nights during which Jonah was in the whale's belly, and his coming forth alive at the end of them, were typical of our Lord's being in the grave, and rising again the third day. This rising of Jesus should be for His cotemporaries a sign, but not from heaven; from the depth of the earth would this sign be given, yet it served for the condemnation of that unbelieving people. Christ's prophecy of His burial,

after the manner of the swallowing of Jonah, was in itself a miracle of foreknowledge, and so a proof of His Messiahship.

The incredulity of the Jews with respect to the miracles which Jesus promised, and which He gave them in His resurrection, ought fully to convince any one that the most extraordinary miracles are capable only of hardening the heart the more, unless God change it by an inward miracle of His grace. The resurrection of Christ was the last of His miracles for the Jews, and filled up the measure of their impenitence. It was the first for the Gentiles—the signal that they should be called to repentance, and the cause and pattern of their conversion prefigured by that of the heathen Ninevites.

Much as it should grieve and pain us, we need not be surprised to see unbelief abounding. So far from wondering that there have been men like Hobbes, and Paine, and Rousseau, and Voltaire, and Strauss, and Rénan, we ought rather to wonder that such men have been so few. Why should we wonder to see that old disease, which began with Adam and Eve, infecting all their children? Why should we expect to see more faith among men and women now than was seen in our Lord's time? Let us thank God if we have received the gift of faith.

31. \*The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

\* 1 Kings x. 1.

The allusion here is to the queen of Sheba, 1 Kings x. 1. Her name is not known at all. *Sheba* (or *Saba*, of profane history) is a province in the northern part of Arabia, between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. It was probably settled by Sheba, a descendant of Shem, and the inhabitants are called Sabeans. (Job i. 15.) *For she came from the utmost parts of the earth*—a hyperbole, found also in the best Greek writers, for a great distance. It may have been intended to suggest a difference of race and of religion. The queen may well be supposed to have had some traditional knowledge of true religion, and, in the commercial intercourse of her country with that of the Hebrews, might have heard much of the wisdom and piety of Solomon, and to see and converse with him she undertook a journey from what was then regarded as the uttermost parts of the earth. *To hear the wisdom of Solomon.* Solomon was the wisest man, and one of the greatest kings that ever lived on the earth. He exceeded the Orientals and Egyptians in wisdom and prudence, and his reputation spread through all nations. He composed, or collected, three thousand proverbs, and one thousand and five canticles. He was the greatest philosopher of antiquity, as well in natural history as in morals, being acquainted with the nature of plants and trees, from the cedar on Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall; also of beasts, of birds, of reptiles, of fishes. He was favored with a remarkable promise of the Divine favor. (1 Kings iii. 12-14.) *And behold, a greater than Solomon is here.* In order to feel the power of this comparison, we must realize to ourselves what is written in the Old Testament regarding Solomon. (1 Chron. xxii. 9, 10; 1 Kings ii. 19, 27, 31; iii. 1, 9, 16-28; iii. 12-14; 2 Chron. ix. 29.) Here, and in the end of the next verse, the Greek word translated "a greater," is literally, "a greater thing." May it not be that the "thing" referred to is "the sign?" There is One here who is a sign of far greater moment than either Solomon or Jonah. The point in which the queen of the South surpassed the Jews of our Lord's time and put them to shame, was "faith." She had faith enough to come a long journey to hear a wise man. The Jews, on the other hand, had "the wisdom of God" actually in the midst of them, and yet they would not believe.

32. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

x Jonah iii. 6.

Jonah, son of Amittai, the fifth of the minor prophets, is generally considered as the most ancient of the prophets, and is supposed to have lived, B. C. 840. Under his preaching, the Ninevites having repented, God deferred the execution of His judgment till the increase of their iniquities made them ripe for destruction, about a hundred and fifty years afterwards. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire. It was a very ancient city. It was built by Nimrod. Gen. x. 11. Its name denotes "the habitation of Nin," which seems to have been the proper name of that "rebel," as Nimrod signifies. It was, as we learn from Jonah iii. and profane authors, a city of nineteen miles in length and eleven in breadth, and from forty-eight to sixty miles in circumference. It contained a population of about six hundred thousand. It was surrounded by a wall one hundred feet high, and wide enough for three carriages to go abreast, and was fortified by fifteen hundred towers of two hundred feet in height. *Rise up in the judgment* does not mean to rise from the dead at the day of judgment, but stand at the bar to be tried. *With*, not against, but at the same time, or in company. *Condemn it*, not in words, but by example. *For they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* The point here in which the Ninevites surpassed the Jews, and put them to shame, was repentance. They had among them for a short time a prophet, and a very weak and erring prophet too. Yet they repented and turned to God. The Jews had among them the mightiest and most faithful preacher that ever warned a people, and yet they would not repent.

The sins of unbelief and impenitence are exceedingly aggravated from the means afforded by God to bring men to faith and obedience. Graces not received as they ought, and the abuse of the Divine benefits, harden the heart. What a repentance was that of the men of Nineveh, at the preaching of a person unknown, of a different nation and religion, and working no miracles, and this only to avoid temporal evils! Where is that of the generality of persons in Christian lands, though instructed by the Son of God Himself, and though they must repent or perish forever!

33. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

y Matt. v. 15; Mark iv. 21; Luke viii. 16.

This verse is very similar to Matt. v. 15, vi. 22, 23. The saying is a weighty one, repeated at various times for the sake of emphasis and illustration. In the present instance it may have been used for a two-fold purpose: 1. As a rebuke to the unbelieving Jews, who had the light, but would not use it. Our Lord intimates, that if He worked a miracle among such an obstinate people, who were determined to disbelieve every evidence of His Messiahship, He should act as a man who lighted a candle, and then covered it with a bushel, which must prevent the accomplishment of the end for which it was lighted. 2. As a warning to our Lord's disciples, who believed in the light, that they ought not to conceal the light, but display it to the world. "Men light candles: God has lighted you for His candles to the world. Men are not so foolish as to light a candle to be covered up: so God is not so unwise as to light you for concealment. You are lighted that you may illuminate."

*Candle*, a word denoting any movable artificial light, whether candle, lamp, or lantern, though the first is entitled to the preference from long familiarity. *Secret place*, literally in a *crypt, vault, a dark hole or corner*. *Bushel*, the fact that this measure really came nearer to our peck than our bushel, can have no effect upon the meaning of the passage, which would be the same if the word used had been *basket, box, or bed*, (as it is in Mark iv. 21.) *A candlestick*, or, more exactly, the candlestick, *i. e.*, the one found of course in every house. *Light*. Reference is here had both to the beauty and use of the light, a two-fold reason why it should not be concealed in the way here mentioned.

The truths of the gospel are not to be concealed, nor held captive in unrighteousness, but the people are to be instructed in them. The Scripture, and particularly the gospel, is our candle. It is the Spirit of God which has lighted and placed it on the candlestick of the Church, that the light of it might be seen by all. The neglect of this light will be a heavy charge against many at the last day. To forbid or discourage the reading of the Bible, or to oppose its circulation, is a heinous sin.

The man who professes to value the light of the gospel, must take care that he is not selfish in the use of it. He must endeavor to reflect the light on all around him. He must strive to make others acquainted with the truths which he finds good for himself. He must let his light so shine in his family and before men, that they may see whose he is, and whom he serves, and may be induced to follow his example, and join the Lord's side.

34. "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; \*but when *thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.*

\* Matt. vi. 22.      \* Pa. lxxxii. 12; Prov. xxviii. 22; Jer. v. 21; Rom. xi. 8, 10; 2 Cor. iv. 4.

35. Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

The Saviour fears that the here-indicated darkening is already found in part in His hearers, and warns them, therefore, to look to it that it do not become a total darkening. *Therefore*, since the safety and the comfort of the whole frame thus depend upon the singleness and clearness of the vision. *The light which is in thee*, not the light in general, but that part of the animal economy by which its blessings are secured to the whole body. *Darkness*, the correlative of *light*, and used in the same way, not to denote absolute privation, but any obscuration, caused by the diseased state of the organ. That it is not to be absolutely understood, appears from the parallel passage, Mark vi. 23, where the exclamation or interrogation in the last clause would then contain an anti-climax, the darkness being first described as total, and then apostrophized as very great, whereas, if the body is first spoken of as dark, and then the darkness as a great one, there is a natural and striking climax. The expression, "the light which is in thee," must not be so strained and wrested as to convey the idea that man has naturally an "inward light," which can save his soul. Such an interpretation would contradict other plain texts of Scripture, and tend to Pelagianism.

An irregular intention corrupts the whole action. A false light causes a man to fall into abundance of faults. It is one of the most dangerous for us to be unwilling to examine, according to Christ's direction, whether that by which we are led be not rather darkness than light.

36. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

The meaning of this verse appears to be as follows: "If the eye of thy soul is thoroughly healthy, and thy heart thoroughly right in the sight of God, so that thy whole character is enlightened and influenced by it, then shall thy whole character shine after the manner of a candle which enlightens thee by its shining. Thou shalt not only have light for thyself, but reflect light on others." The second expression, "full of light," should be read in close connection with the likeness of the candle which immediately follows. If thou art really full of light, thou shalt be like a lighted candle on a candlestick. Thou shalt be a light to the world. The doctrine that is contrary to the gospel may say, *Ignorance is the mother of devotion*, but Christ shows that there can be no devotion without heavenly light. Ignorance is the mother of superstition, but with this the heavenly *light* has nothing to do.

## QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of this interruption?
2. How did this woman sympathize with Christ?
3. Do we know who this woman was?
4. Was she probably a mother?
5. What company is referred to?
6. What is said of her lifting up her voice?
7. To what are her words to be attributed?
8. What is said of our Lord's reply?
9. What is said of the Greek word translated, *yea, rather*?
10. Did Jesus gainsay the woman's utterance?
11. To what state of blessedness did our Lord refer?
12. What is said of "the word of God"?
13. In what sense did Christ frequently turn the attention of His auditors from Himself to the Father?
14. What is said about the folly and sin of deifying the mother of Jesus?
15. In what great privilege have we reason to rejoice?
16. What was the occasion for the rebuke given in verse 29?
17. Why did that evil generation seek a sign?
18. Whence did they seek a sign?
19. What particularly shows that that generation was evil?
20. What is said of heart unbelief?
21. What was our Lord's refusal, and the ground of it?
22. What is said of the sign of the prophet Jonah?
23. What is said of Jerusalem?
24. In what respects was Jonah typical of Jesus?
25. What is said of Christ's prophecy of His burial after the manner of the swallowing of Jonah?
26. What is said of the incredulity of the Jews?
27. What is said of the resurrection of Christ?
28. Should we be surprised to see unbelief abounding?
29. To what queen is allusion made?
30. What was Sheba?
31. What is said of—"from the utmost parts of the earth"?
32. What is said of the queen?
33. Who was Solomon?
34. What is necessary in order to feel the power of the comparison made?
35. What is said of the words "a greater"?
36. In what point did the queen surpass the Jews of our Lord's time?
37. What is said of Jonah?
38. Describe Nineveh.
39. How were the men of Nineveh to "rise up in the judgment," &c.?
40. Why would they condemn that generation?
41. What is said of the sins of unbelief and impenitence?

42. What is said of verse 33?
43. Why was this saying used in the present instance?
44. What is said of "a candle?"
45. What is said of "a bushel?"
46. What is said of "light?"
47. What is our candle?
48. Is it a heinous sin to discourage the reading, or oppose the circulation of the Bible?
49. What must the man do who professes to value the light of the gospel?
50. What does the Saviour warn His hearers to do, and why?
51. What is said of "the light which is in thee?"
52. What of "darkness?"
53. What is said to be a most dangerous fault?
54. What is the meaning of verse 36?

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## LESSON LXXII.

vs. 87-46.

37. ¶ And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in and sat down to meat.

It is not known who this Pharisee was. It seems clear that he was not a disciple of Christ. *Besought him*, doubtless, in full concert with the set mentioned in ver. 53. The invitation was given, not by interrupting the Saviour, but when He had spoken. *Dine*. The Jews made but *two* meals in the day: the first may be called their *breakfast* or their *dinner*, because it was *both*, and was but a slight meal. Their chief meal was their *supper*, after the heat of the day was over, and the same was the principal meal among the Greeks and Romans. As this was not the chief meal, it would appear that the disposition of the entertainer towards Christ was not by any means friendly. *Went in*. The form of expression conforms to the fact that He occupied no time in ablutions, between His entering the house and reclining at the table. *Sat down, lay down or reclined*, as was the custom of the ancients at their meal.

The conduct of our Lord, on this occasion, as on all others, is meant to be an example. Christ is our pattern as well as our propitiation. There are evidently times and occasions when the servant of Christ must mix with the ungodly and the children of this world, but he should converse with them with prudence and circumspection. There may be seasons when it may be a duty to hold social intercourse with them, to accept their invitations, and sit down at their tables. Nothing, of course, must induce the Christian to be a partaker in the sins or frivolous amusements of the world. But he must not be uncourteous. He must not entirely withdraw himself from the society of the unconverted, and become a hermit or an ascetic. "A minister of God," says an old commentator, "ought not to eat at the table of others often, or of his own accord. He may sometimes yield to importunity, and to considerations of usefulness, decency, or charity, but never to his own inclinations, or to the desire of good cheer."

38. And <sup>b</sup>when the Pharisee saw *it*, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. vii. 3.

Perhaps Christ omitted washing, (Mark vii. 8,) because He had just accepted the invitation, or because He was wearied by His work. It is more probable, however, that, knowing that the Pharisees imagined that washing of their hands before dinner rendered them holy, He purposely neglected to observe this custom.

39. °And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but °your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

° Matt. xxiii. 5.

° Tit. i. 15.

40. *Ye* fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also?

41. °But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

° Is. lviii. 7; Da. iv. 27; Ch. xii. 33.

*And the Lord said unto him, &c.* The Pharisee had probably given utterance to his amazement at our Lord's omission of what he esteemed of such importance. This is not necessarily to be supposed, however, for Jesus knew well what was passing through his mind, and needed not its audible expression. If we think there was a want of courtesy on the part of Christ toward His host, we should remember that "such a Divine rudeness is everywhere in place."

*Ye Pharisees.* The class of Pharisees to which the host belonged. The figure here is very simple. It is that of a person who takes great care to make the outside of the vessels used at meals thoroughly clean, while he knowingly allows the inside of those vessels, with which, of course, the food he eats must be brought into contact, to remain foul and uncleansed. This is altogether different from "the form of godliness." There is a satisfaction with inward corruption, only so that the exterior is fair and plausible. *Your inward part*, i. e., your heart: the figure which began with the *outside of the cup and platter* is here dropped, and the heart or internal moral state is substituted for what, if the metaphor had been continued, would have been the *inside of the cup*. *Is full*. Literally, *loaded*. *Ravening* is the same word rendered in Matthew, *extortion*. *Wickedness*. The word thus rendered is a general term for *excess*, found in the parallel passage in Matthew. Who can say that he is entirely free from this Pharisaical hypocrisy? Where is that person to be found who, by the inward purity of the motives of his heart, takes as much care not to offend the eyes of God as he does not to displease men by his outward behavior?

*Ye fools, &c.* The literal meaning of the Greek word translated "fools," is, "persons without mind or understanding." It is the same word that Paul used, 1 Cor. xv. 36. Since God has created the inside as well as the outside, one as much as the other must be held holy; and it is not only evil, but foolish, to wish to separate, even in thought, to say nothing of act, that which, in the nature of things, is absolutely inseparable.

*But rather give alms, &c.* Some hold this to be ironical. Give alms, forsooth! and that is to make compensation for your extortions, a purification of all your guilt! If this is the right interpretation, as it seems to be, of course our Lord intended to cast no slur upon alms-giving, but upon using our alms-giving as a cover for sin. Others understand the passage to mean, "Consecrate your entire being to the duty of benevolence, instead of practising, as you do, all sorts of extortion and excess. Then will you take an important step towards cleansing 'that which is within the cup and platter,' Matt. xxiii. 26, and rendering the outside clean also."

42. <sup>1</sup>But woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 23.

*But*, introduces a strong antithesis to the preceding sentiment. The conduct of the Pharisees is declared by our Lord to be the very opposite of that He had just enjoined. (v. 41.) *Woe* is a word of solemn denunciation of punishment. It implies, as here uttered, that calamities of the most awful nature are impending over its guilty objects from the Divine justice. *Tithe*. The law of *tithes* is found in Leviticus xxvii. 81. The "tithe" of a thing is its tenth part. Of the yearly products of the land of the Israelites, the first fruits were deducted; out of the rest, the tenth part was taken for the Levites. (Num. xviii. 21.) *Mint and rue*. The herbs mentioned in this verse correspond mainly to those of the same name in Europe and America. The Pharisees pretended to such excessive scrupulosity about giving a tenth of all their possessions to the service of the temple and to the maintenance of the ceremonial law, that they were not content with tithing their corn, but even tithed their insignificant garden herbs. Yet all this time they *passed over*, did not enforce, or pay regard to, justice and equity towards all mankind and real love to God. *These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*. It is an admirable proof of the heavenly composure and impartiality of our Lord, that, whilst not abrogating the fulfilment of minor duties, or declaring it unimportant, He, on the other hand, permits and commands it, but then also insists on the performance of the higher duties. (Comp. Matt. xxiii. 23.)

The neglect of the distinction between that which is great and that which is small, first and second, essential and non-essential, has been the source of enormous evil in every age of the Church. It is a distinction which the never-dying school of the Pharisees is unable to draw. There are many now who are enthusiasts in the secondary things of religion, who know little or nothing of the great practical duties of humility, charity, meekness, spiritual-mindedness, Bible reading, private devotion, and separation from the world. Every minister of the gospel should aim chiefly to have religion established in the heart by the love of God, which worships Him in spirit and in truth, and by the love of our neighbor, which includes in it judgment or iustice. External performances are but the outside of these things.

43. <sup>2</sup>Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxiii. 6, Matt. xii. 38, 39.

Behind the pulpit, in the Jewish synagogues, were ranged high seats of honor, "chief seats," where the Scribes and Pharisees loved to sit facing the people. They also loved *greetings in the markets*, that they might pervert the ordinary tokens of social respect to the purpose of establishing an abject submission on the part of the people, and a spirit of man-worship. Pride does not consist in being first or chief, but in loving the esteem and distinction which attend upon the first place, and seeking the advantages which accompany it. It is a misfortune to be exposed to them, because it is very rare not to be corrupted by them.

44. <sup>3</sup>Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! <sup>4</sup>for

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxiii. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. v. 9.

ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over *them* are not aware of *them*.

In Matt. xxiii. 27, our Lord tells them that they *exactly resembled white-washed tombs*—they had no fairness but on the *outside*; but here he says that they are like *hidden tombs*, graves which were not distinguished by any outward decorations, and were not elevated above the ground, so that those walking over them could know what corruption was within. The allusion here is to the notion which existed among the Jews, that by walking over a grave a man contracted ceremonial uncleanness. And so here the hypocrite is represented as the means of defilement and pollution to others. Passers-by become, before they are aware, infected by him, and allured to evil. Thus, Jeroboam set up the calves at Dan and Bethel, and said, “These be thy gods, O Israel,” but his heart-purpose was simply, by this outward respect for God, to secure himself, as he thought, in the kingdom, and so, we are told, (2 Kin. x. 29,) he “made Israel to sin.” It is a dreadful judgment on hypocrites when God suffers them to conceal their corruption according to their hearts’ desire; their being exposed to public shame would be a step toward their conversion.

45. ¶ Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.

*One of the lawyers*, or doctors of the law. These Jewish lawyers, as our translators call them, (though the term *lawyer* naturally suggests to us a modern idea of an office which did not at this time exist among the Jews,) were the most considerable species of Scribes, who applied themselves peculiarly to study and explain the law. Probably some of them were Pharisees, but it was not essential to their office that they should be so. This man considered himself and his brethren as superior to all censure or reproof, and therefore wondered that Jesus should join the Scribes with the Pharisees, in the preceding wo, and charged Him with reproaching so honorable a body.

He alone who searches the heart could unmask these hypocrites; and He did it so effectually that their own consciences acknowledged the guilt, and *echoed* their own reproach. It is a characteristic of hypocrites that they think themselves incapable of committing faults, cannot bear being reprov'd for them, and that they are no further concerned at the disgrace of others than as it falls upon themselves.

46. And he said, Woe unto you also, *ye* lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

J Matt. xxiii. 4

These words are a striking instance of our Lord’s boldness in rebuking sinners. They added to the ceremonies of the law others of their own invention, which were not only burdensome and oppressive, but had neither reason, expediency, nor revelation to countenance them. Neither would they lighten them to those over whom they had power, not even touch them, that is, either to modify or repeal them, when they saw them to be burdensome and grievous. They would come in with *both hands*, to dispense with a command of God, but not with a *finger* to mitigate the rigor of the unauthorized traditional observances which they imposed.

True charity is compassionate, willing to take upon itself the burden of others, and far from laying upon them one which is oppressive; whereas hypocrisy aims at nothing but gaining to itself honor from the austerities which it imposes on others, without consulting their strength. Here is a word in season to all teachers of young people, masters of families, heads of households, fathers and mothers, and especially to all ministers of the gospel, to beware of the inconsistency of telling others to aim at a standard which they do not aim at themselves

### QUESTIONS.

1. Who was the Pharisee?
2. How was the invitation to Jesus given?
3. When was it given?
4. What is said of the meals of the Jews?
5. What was probably the disposition of the entertainer toward Jesus?
6. What is said of the conduct of our Lord on this occasion?
7. Why did not Christ wash before dinner?
8. What did the Lord say to the Pharisee?
9. Why did He say it?
10. What figure did He use?
11. What is said of your "inward part"?
12. Explain the terms in verse 39.
13. What is said of "ye fools," &c.?
14. What two interpretations are given to "but rather give alms," &c.?
15. What is said of the word "but"?
16. What is said of "wo"?
17. What is meant by "tithe"?
18. What is said of "tithes"?
19. What were mint and rue?
20. What is said of the excessive scrupulosity of the Pharisees?
21. What is said of—"these ought ye to have done," &c.?
22. What is said of neglecting the distinction between that which is great and that which is small?
23. What should every minister of the gospel aim chiefly at?
24. What is said of "the uppermost seats"?
25. What, of "greetings in the markets"?
26. In what does pride consist?
27. To what does our Lord liken the Scribes and Pharisees?
28. Explain the kind of graves referred to.
29. To what is the allusion here?
30. What is a dreadful judgment on hypocrites?
31. What did the lawyer say to Jesus?
32. Who were the lawyers?
33. What did this man think of himself and his brethren?
34. Did Jesus unmask these hypocrites?
35. What is a characteristic of hypocrites?
36. What is said of verse 46?
37. What had the lawyers done?
38. What is said of true charity?
39. To whom is there here a word in season?
40. What is it?

LESSON LXXIII.

vs. 47-54.

47. <sup>1</sup>Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 29.

We are not to understand this, as though any part of the guilt lay in the building or adorning the tombs of the prophets, considered in itself, but in their falseness in giving this testimony of respect to the prophets, whilst they were actuated by the spirit, and following the example of their persecutors and murderers, insomuch that they appeared to erect those sepulchres, not to do honor to God's prophets, but to serve as monuments of the success of their progenitors in destroying them.

48. Truly \*ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.

\* Job xv. 6.

The word, *truly*, is a particle, denoting that this verse is an inference from the assertion contained in the preceding one. If the persons referred to had been of a better sort than their fathers, they would have erected no monuments of a damnable deed, which ought rather to be buried in the dust of oblivion.

49. Therefore also said \*the wisdom of God, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they shall slay and persecute.

\* Prov. viii. 1; 1 Cor. i. 30.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 34.

50. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;

51. <sup>2</sup>From the blood of Abel unto <sup>2</sup>the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21.

It is a disputed question what the words, *said the wisdom of God*, mean. Some regard them as merely referring to the wisdom of God speaking, in 2 Chron. xxiv. 18-22, of which Jesus here gives an amplification in the same spirit of Divine or avenging wisdom. They are, however, generally understood as denoting Christ Himself; and, as the words which follow are not found in the Old Testament, we may suppose that He meant, as the Word and Wisdom of God, (1 Cor. i. 24,) immediately to reveal to the hearers His wise counsels and purposes respecting them. In the parallel passage of Matthew, (xxiii. 34,) our Lord evidently spoke in His own person: "Wherefore, behold I send," &c. *Prophets and Apostles*. Prophets or preachers, (for, as the word of God is a great prophecy of the world to come, so he who preaches it, truly prophesies,) to reprove the people for their sins, and warn them of the judgments of God, and who should prove themselves

Apostles, or messengers, sent from heaven, by signs, and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Christ thus gave His enemies to understand that, though they builded the sepulchres of the prophets, yet such was their hostility to those, in their *own day*, that came to them in the *spirit* and *power* of those prophets, that as soon as they had an opportunity they would show that hostility by slaying and persecuting them. A large share of the first preachers, thinkers, and writers of the Church, were martyrs.

*That.* In order that—a statement of the inevitableness of the result. *The blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation.* It may justly aggravate the guilt of a criminal, if, though he have seen a long series of misdeeds punished, yet he has not even suffered himself to be deterred from similar delinquencies; and this, as it evinces a most incorrigible mind, so it is worthy of *severer* punishment. This mind the Jews evinced; for *Josephus* says they permitted no kind of wickedness to be peculiar to those who had preceded them, but had carefully imitated, and even exceeded, all the most atrocious deeds of their ancestors. *This generation.* Both here, and in the following verse, it seems probable that the word, generation, means nation or people, as in Matt. xxiv. 34. It is certain that the greater part of the men who were alive when our Lord said these things must have been dead forty years after, when the great inquisition for blood took place, at the destruction of Jerusalem.

From *Abel*, who was the first martyr. Abel is counted among the prophets, because he prefigured Jesus Christ by his innocence and death, as Cain did Judas, &c. *Blood of Zacharias*—the last of the prophets, whose martyrdom is, according to the arrangement of the Hebrew canon, recorded in the Old Testament. Zacharias is called, Matt. xxiii. 35, "*son of Barachias.*" There has been much discussion upon the true identity of this Zechariah, inasmuch as the martyr in 2 Chron. xxiv. 21, was the son of Jehoiada. But Jehoiada and Barachia are words of the same meaning. This Zechariah was the subject of Jewish legends, and it is not improbable, though there is no proof, that in our Lord's day the one name was substituted for the other in ordinary discourse. The place where Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, was slain, accords with the words of Jesus, and his dying exclamation, "The Lord require it," accords with the thought our Lord here expresses very strikingly. Jesus here couples the first and last of Old Testament martyrs. *This generation, nation or people.*

The number of those who have been put to death for the faith of Christ in every age of the world, is exceedingly great. Thousands of men and women have laid down their lives rather than deny their Saviour, and have shed their blood for the truth. At the time they died they seemed to have no helper. The frequent triumphing of the wicked is perplexing. The frequent depression of the godly is a problem that appears hard to solve. But it shall be made clear on the judgment-day. The great white throne and the books of God shall put all things in their right places. Then shall all the world see, that however they may die, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Ps. cxvi. 15.

52. °Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye \*hindered.

° Matt. xxiii. 13.

\* Or, *forbade.*

*Lawyers.* See Note on ver. 45. *Key of knowledge.* The doctors of the law are said to have been distinguished by the symbolical figure of a *key*, intimating that their proper office was to open and explain the Scripture, and to admit men into the knowledge of God, and of His truth and will. The meaning would then be, "Ye have been by profession the instructors of the

Jews in spiritual knowledge. Ye have, so to speak, carried the keys. Yet ye made no use of them yourselves, and allowed nobody else to use them. By your traditions ye have taken away the true method of interpreting the prophecies : ye have given a wrong meaning to those Scriptures which speak of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the people are thereby hindered from entering into it."

The sin here denounced is awfully common. It is the sin of the Romish priest, who forbids the poor man to read his Bible ; of the unconverted Protestant minister, who sneers at the idea of conversion ; of the ungodly, thoughtless husband, who dislikes his wife becoming "serious;" and of the worldly-minded mother, who cannot bear the idea of her daughter thinking of spiritual things, and giving up the gayeties and follies of the world. All such are bringing down on themselves our Lord's emphatic "wo."

53. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge *him* vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things :

54. Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

p Mark xii. 13.

*Began to urge him vehemently*, they began to be furious. As they found themselves completely unmasked, they were indignant, and therefore questioned Jesus on a variety of points, and hoped, by the multitude and impertinence of their questions, to puzzle or irritate him, so as to induce him to *speak rashly*, that they might find some ground of accusation against Him. The Greek word here rendered *provoke*, is applied to the practice among teachers of requiring the pupil to speak and answer accurately from memory. Hence it means that the Scribes and Pharisees *put prepared questions*, and *required immediate answers*, in order to draw out expressions of hostility to Moses and the traditions, to the temple, or to the Jewish nation, or to Cæsar, so as to excite the hierarchy, the people, or the civil authorities against Him. *To speak of many things*, literally, to *extemporize*, that something inconsiderately uttered might be caught up. *Laying wait for him*, laying snares as for an animal, *seeking to catch*, or lay hold of, as in hunting, *that they might accuse him*, either to the civil authorities as a seditious person, or to the people, as one who was a transgressor of the Mosaic law.

There is hardly an instance to be found, where hostility to Jesus appeared in a more deep-seated and diabolical form, than on this occasion. The vile-ness of the conduct of his enemies is enhanced by the fact that their efforts to effect His ruin were put forth while He sat at the table of one of their number, who, we can scarcely doubt, invited him with hostile and crafty intent, and who was among the foremost to find wherewith to accuse Him.

It is the common way of false teachers to be provoked by the advice which is given them, and at the imputations with which they are justly charged, to clear no one point, to answer by new questions, and to seek to surprise their adversaries, or to catch something out of their mouth, that they may accuse them.

Ministers of the gospel, above all men, should be careful of their tongues ; their enemies, in certain cases, will crowd question upon question, in order so to bewilder and confound them, that they may speak unadvisedly with their lips, and thus prejudice the truth they were laboring to promote and defend.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. How are we to understand verse 47?
2. What is the word "truly?"

3. What do the words "said the wisdom of God," mean?
4. What is said of the parallel passage in Matthew?
5. What is said of Prophets and Apostles?
6. What did Jesus give his enemies to understand?
7. What is said of a large share of the first preachers, &c., of the Church?
8. What is said of "the blood of all the prophets, &c.?"
9. What does Josephus say of the Jews?
10. What is said of the word, "generation?"
11. What is said of the greater part of the men who were alive when our Lord said these things?
12. Who was the first martyr?
13. Why is Abel counted among the prophets?
14. What is said of Zacharias?
15. Whose son is Zacharias called?
16. What is said about this Zachariah?
17. What is said of those put to death for the faith of Christ?
18. What is said of the frequent depression of the godly?
19. Who are meant by "lawyers?"
20. What is said of the "key of knowledge?"
21. What is the meaning of the charge against the lawyers?
22. What is the sin here denounced?
23. By whom is it committed?
24. What is said of all such?
25. What did the Scribes and Pharisees begin to do to Jesus?
26. What was their object?
27. What is said of the Greek word rendered "provoke?"
28. What does it mean in reference to the Scribes and Pharisees?
29. What is said of "laying in wait for him," &c.?
30. What is said of the hostility to Jesus on this occasion?
31. How is the vileness of the conduct of His enemies enhanced?
32. What is the common way of false teachers?
33. What is said of ministers of the gospel?

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## CHAPTER XII.

### LESSON LXXIV.

vs. 1-7.

WE have lately read the Saviour's warnings to the Scribes and Pharisees, now we find Him addressing His own disciples. Many of the sayings, here joined in a connected discourse by Luke, are related by Matthew as spoken on other occasions. These will be noted in their appropriate place.

1. \*In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, <sup>b</sup>Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xvi. 6; Mark viii. 15.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xvi. 12.

*In the mean time*, while our Lord was reclining at the table of the Pharisee, and while the Pharisees were occupying themselves with ensnaring

questions and plotting. *Gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, more exactly rendered, many myriads. Trode one upon another.* The crowd was so great, that in their eagerness to see and hear Jesus, they well nigh trampled one another down. *He began to say unto his disciples, first of all.* It is evidence of Christ's forbearance and self-control, that at the moment when the Pharisees were inflamed with blind rage against Him, He did not address His warning directly to the masses. The discourse alternates (sometimes doubtfully to those who heard it) between the *twelve* and the *multitudes*. But even those parts which were ostensibly addressed to one, had a real application to the other, and were doubtless uttered in the hearing of both. *Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.* The disciples doubtless were often exposed to the influence of the conversations of the Pharisees when our Lord was not present. They would, of course, stand on their guard against persons openly vicious, but they needed to be cautioned against Pharisees, who were great pretenders to devotion. *Leaven*, here, is used to denote false doctrine, because it spreads, works secretly and silently, and insinuates itself into and changes the whole character. Those who come under its influence are puffed up with pride, embittered with malice, and their service is unacceptable to God. *Hypocrisy* was the great sin of the Pharisees, the leaven of which permeated and converted to its own vile and odious nature their hearts, lives, and conduct. It consisted in holding from self-interest to a system which they did not truly believe, in rejecting Christ contrary to their own conscience, in pretending to a ritual purity while indulging in all unrighteousness.

The fidelity of our Lord in delivering warnings in the hearing of the multitude against false teachers, and denouncing the sins of the times in which He lived, unsparingly, unflinchingly, and without partiality, is the pattern which all His ministers were intended to follow.

Pharisaism lives still. Its principles are deeply engrained in human nature. It shows itself in attention to the *outward* in religion, whilst the *inward* is overlooked or despised. Let us *beware* of it, as a most subtle and pernicious influence. Let us be real and true in our Christianity.

2. 'For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.'

c Matt. x. 26; Mark iv. 23; Luke viii. 17.

Here our Lord suggests a powerful motive to guard the heart against hypocrisy—the discoveries and exposures of the judgment-day. *Then* all that has been hid will be known. Not only will the mask be torn from the deliberate hypocrite, but the veil which has been cast over any part of the conduct of true believers will be lifted up. *Nothing*, good as well as evil, that which is greatest as well as that which is least. The iniquity which is concealed with a show of piety will be discovered, perhaps, in this world, as that of Judas and Simon Magus, but certainly in the great day, when the *secrets of all hearts* shall be made *manifest*, Eccl. xii. 14; Rom. ii. 16. This verse, whilst stating the uselessness of hypocrisy, also admits of being understood as an injunction to the disciples to reserve and keep back nothing in their teaching, but to "declare all the counsel of God."

In vain, when we are about to commit a sin, do we shun the sight of men, since we cannot possibly avoid that of our Judge. The darkness of the night, and the light of the day, to Him are both alike.

3. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

*Closets*, any close room for stealth, or chamber for privacy. *Shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.* "At the present day," says a modern traveller through Palestine, "local governors in country districts cause their commands to be thus published. Their proclamations are generally made in the evening, after the people have returned from their labors in the field. The public crier ascends the highest roof at hand, and lifts up his voice in a long-drawn call upon all faithful subjects to give ear and obey. He then proceeds to announce, in a set form, the will of their master, and demands obedience thereto."

The more a sinner endeavors to hide himself here, with the greater shame and confusion shall he be covered hereafter in the sight of all the world. That which constitutes the peace and satisfaction of a good man is, that he does nothing in secret of which he need be ashamed at the day of judgment, and that he shuns the eyes of men on no other account but only that he may not receive from them his reward.

4. <sup>d</sup>And I say unto you, <sup>e</sup>my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

<sup>d</sup> Is. II. 7, 8, 12, 13; Jer. I. 8; Matt. x. 28.

<sup>e</sup> John xv. 14, 15.

5. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

Our Lord foresaw all the temptations which would assail his beloved disciples, and He endeavored to strengthen them to meet their trials. One of their most powerful temptations would be (*not* to put on, as the Pharisees did, the *appearance* of religion, but) to *conceal* the love they really felt for their Lord. He knew that bloody crosses and burning flames would be used by their enemies to induce them to deny His name. How tenderly He addresses those who would be called to suffer for His sake! *I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body.* He does not promise His disciples to preserve them from *death*: but He does promise to keep them from *hell*. *And after that have no more that they can do.* The parallel passage in Matt. x. 28 reads. "but are not able to kill the soul." From these words, it follows that the body may be dead, and the soul alive. Men can murder the body, yet the soul is still alive. *Body—soul*, we have here the two parts of man's compounded nature placed in contrast.

*Fear him*, as opposed to the sinful, slavish fear of *man*, which was just condemned, the holy, awful, and prudential fear of the omnipotent *God* is commended. The persons on whom this fear is enjoined are disciples and ministers, all the friends of Christ. They not only may, but ought to fear Him, not only for His greatness and goodness, but also for His punitive justice, as having ability and authority, *after he hath killed*, that is, after death has been inflicted, *to cast into hell*, or, as in Matt. x. 28, "to destroy both soul and body in hell." In these last words our Lord does not say *kill* both soul and body. To destroy is not to kill, still less to annihilate, but to *ruin*. Our Lord's words teach, not the dismissal of the soul from *existence*, but its catastrophe and ruin *in existence*. And this is an evil, a destruction, which we are bound to *fear*, as a possible reality beyond our bodily death. By *loving* Christ, His disciples may incur the wrath of men, which can reach no further than to put them to death, and not even so far except by God's permission; but by *denying* Christ, they will incur the wrath of God, which has power irresistible to send them to hell. Of two evils the least is to be chosen, and the greatest to be dreaded, therefore, *I say unto you, fear Him.* "It is true," said Bishop Hooper, when dying as a martyr in the flames, "life is

sweet, and death bitter; but eternal life is more sweet, and eternal death more bitter."

*Into hell.* Hell is represented by *Sheol* in the Old, and by *Hades* in the New Testament. The word is used by the sacred writers in several senses, which it is important to distinguish. The Hebrew word, translated *hell* in our Bible, sometimes means simply the *grave*, the receptacle of the dead, or the place of departed spirits, as in Job xi. 7-9; Ps. xvi. 10, cxxxix. 8; Isa. v. 14, xiv. 9; Amos ix. 2, 3; Acts ii. 31; Rev. xx. 14. In other passages it denotes the place of future punishment, as in Ps. ix. 17; Prov. v. 5, ix. 18, xxiii. 14, which punishment consists, in part at least, in the eternal separation of the soul from God and from the presence of His glory, and in the suffering of inconceivable anguish and remorse forever and ever. In the New Testament, hell, as the place of final punishment for sinners, is more distinctively indicated by the term *Gehenna*, or *valley of Hinnom*, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6, which is the word translated "hell" in the verse now before us; also in Matt. v. 22, 29, 30; x. 28; xviii. 9; xxiii. 15, 33; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47; James iii. 6. It is also distinctively indicated by such phrases as "the place of torment," Luke xvi. 28; "everlasting fire," Matt. xxv. 41; "the hell of fire," "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," Mark ix. 44. The valley of Hinnom, Josh. xv. 8, literally means a gorge south of Jerusalem, running east and west, and intersecting the Kedron at the southeast corner of the city. At this place the idolatrous Israelites burnt human sacrifices unto Moloch, a deity represented by a brass image with the face of a bull. The drum (*toph*) which was used to drown the cry of the victim gave the place the name of *Tophet*, Jer. xix. 6. Here also the offals of the city were ordinarily burned. The name of this ancient, defiled, gloomy, and perpetually fiery recess, became to the Jewish mind the emblem, and the word became the name, of the perpetual fire of retribution in a world to come. Universalists mainly maintain their heresy by the sophism that this valley of Hinnom was the only hell. But the present text demonstrates that beyond the death of the body, and therefore in a future state, there is a hell or Gehenna, which the soul may suffer, more terrible than bodily death, and more to be feared than any evil that man can inflict. God is the Author of that evil, it lies beyond death, it is executed upon the soul as well as the body.

6. Are not five sparrows sold for two 'farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

{See Matt. x. 29.

7. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

As doves were sold in the temple, to be used as purification offerings by females, so it is probable that sparrows were similarly sold to be used in the purification of lepers. The Saviour, in these verses, gives a third reason to His disciples for not shrinking from the execution of their great commission on account of the dangers which attended it. Not only was the power of their enemies restricted to the body, but their very bodies would be under God's protection. The little value of the sparrows is indicated by the market price, two being sold for an *assarion*, a coin intermediate in value between one cent and an English penny. The argument is this, that as God's protective care extends to the most insignificant and worthless of the feathered tribe, it must, and does, extend to man, and will especially extend to those who have been honored with a most important mission. *And not one of them is forgotten before God.* God's providential care extends over the minutest of His creatures. As nothing was too little for Him to create, so

nothing is too little for Him to preserve. Of the providence of God over the least things the heathen philosophers had no conception. They maintained that the gods regarded the universe in general, but not particular persons and things.

*But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* This is a strong proverbial expression for minute knowledge and exact care. The hairs are numbered for the purpose of protection and careful preservation, so that if one be wanting, it is missed and looked for. It would be impossible to frame in human language a more forcible description of unerring oversight and sleepless care. God's providence exalts, instead of debasing Him. He acts in every thing without growing weary, and is sufficient for every thing, without multiplying Himself. *Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.* Here is a continuation of the argument from less to greater. *Thomson*, in his "Land and Book," speaking of the habits of this little bird, says: "When we see their countless numbers, and the eagerness with which they are destroyed as a worthless nuisance, we can better appreciate the assurance that our heavenly Father, who takes care of them, so that no one can fall to the ground without His notice, will surely take care of us, who are of more value than many sparrows." *Ye are of more value.* None can estimate the value of a soul, for which Christ has given his *blood and life*. Did the poet intend to contradict Christ when he said:

"He sees with equal eye, as God of all,  
A HERO perish, or a SPARROW fall."

How cold and meagre is this shallow, Deistical saying! That is, a *sparrow* is of as much worth in the sight of God, who regards (if we may believe the poet) things only in *general*, as an *immortal soul*, purchased by the sacrifice of Christ!

Not only are the verses, just explained, a full proof of the universality of a Divine providence, but the singular interposition of it in favor of good men may, in a much more convincing manner, be argued from the prayers and praises offered in Scripture with regard to particular events, and the promise of temporal blessings made to those that fear and serve God. Nor are we much concerned to determine how far many of these are miraculous, and how far the result of general laws settled in exact congruity to the temper and conduct of every individual affected by them, which an omniscient God foresaw, and which His excellent schemes might easily provide for, by methods to us unsearchable.

The doctrine of providence, as here taught, is full of comfort to the righteous. The little faith we have as to the care, vigilance, and concern of God, in every thing which relates to us, is the source of all human disquiets and fears. It should be remembered that His wisdom cannot be surprised, His power cannot be forced, His love cannot forget itself; this ought to make us easy and satisfied, yet not so as to neglect human means. In every trial and disappointment we should try to feel that all is right, and all is well done. We should say to ourselves, "God could keep away from me these things if He thought fit. But He does not do so, and therefore they must be for my advantage. I will bear them patiently. I have 'an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.' (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.) What pleases God shall please me."

The ungodly will sometimes say in trouble, "It is all for the best," but it is *not* all for the best with those who do not desire to please God; suffering will only add to the guilt of those who do not repent of their sins. The children of God *alone* may feel assured that all that befalls them is for the best—sickness and health, riches and poverty, life and death, are all made to promote their everlasting welfare. "We know," says Paul, "that all things work together for good to *them that love God.*" Rom. viii. 28.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by "in the mean time?"
2. What is said of the multitude?
3. What is evidence of Christ's forbearance and self-control?
4. What is said of the discourse at this time?
5. Why did the disciples need to be cautioned against the Pharisees?
6. What does leaven here denote?
7. Why is it used to denote false doctrine?
8. What is said of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees?
9. Is Christ's fidelity in delivering warnings a pattern for ministers?
10. What is said of Pharisaism?
11. What motive does our Lord suggest to guard the heart against hypocrisy?
12. What is said of the judgment-day?
13. How does verse 2 also admit of being understood?
14. Can the commission of sin be concealed?
15. What is meant by "closets?"
16. What does a modern traveller through Palestine say?
17. What is said of the sinner who endeavors to hide himself here?
18. What constitutes the peace and satisfaction of a good man?
19. What was our Lord's object in ver. 4 and 5?
20. What does He promise to His disciples?
21. What is said of—"after that have no more," &c.?
22. What follows from these words?
23. What kind of fear of God is enjoined on the friends of Christ?
24. What is said of—"after he hath killed," &c.?
25. What do our Lord's words here teach?
26. How is hell represented in the Old Testament?
27. How, in the New Testament?
28. What is said of Gehenna, or valley of Hinnom?
29. What does verse 5 demonstrate?
30. What is said of doves and sparrows?
31. What did our Saviour give to His disciples in vs. 6 and 7?
32. What is said of the value of the sparrows?
33. What is the argument used?
34. What is said of God's providential care?
35. What is said of the heathen philosophers?
36. Explain "even the very hairs," &c.
37. Explain "Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value," &c.
38. What is said of a Deistical objection?
39. What are the verses explained full proof of?
40. What is said of the doctrine of providence as here taught?
41. What is said of the ungodly?
42. What of the children of God?

## LESSON LXXV.

vs. 8-12.

8. <sup>a</sup>Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God :

<sup>a</sup> Matt. x. 32; Mark viii. 38; 2 Tim. ii. 12; 1 John ii. 23.

9. But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

*Also*, another reason for discharging their commission without fear of man, viz. : that on their fidelity in so doing must depend their treatment by the sovereign who commissioned them. *Whosoever*, whether of yourselves who preach, or of those who hear your preaching. *Confess me*, that is, own Christ as Lord and Master, *before men*, in this present life. *Him shall the Son of man also confess*. The reciprocal act here ascribed to Christ is that of owning as His apostle, disciple or follower. *Before the angels of God*. In Matt. x. 32, "before my Father which is in heaven." The one form of expression includes the other. The time here referred to, as well as in the next verse, must doubtless be the day of judgment. The angels shall be specially employed on that day in gathering God's people, and separating the wicked from among them. *But he that denieth me before men*, more literally, "he that has denied," that is, disowned, *shall be disowned before the angels of God*. Let it here be observed : 1. That not to confess Christ is in His account to deny Him, and to be ashamed of Him. 2. That whosoever shall deny or be ashamed of Christ, either in His person, in His gospel, or in His members, for any fear or favor of man, shall with shame be disowned and eternally rejected by Him. Christ may be denied three ways : doctrinally, by an erroneous and heretical judgment ; verbally, by oral expressions ; vitally, by a wicked and unholy life. Those are guilty of this sin, who, from unbelief or indolence, or love of the world, or fear of man, shrink from confessing Him as their Saviour and their King.

Every age has its own manner of confessing or denying Christ, as every age has its own way of persecuting those who confess Him. The disposition whereby we are ready to give up our life is requisite at all times, and when a man has it, he sits very loose from every thing else. The less we lose at present, the more culpable are we if we are unwilling, when occasion requires, to relinquish it for the sake of Christ.

How dreadful must be the portion of that soul which Jesus denies and renounces ! He will refuse to acknowledge it, He will not plead for it, but leave it to reap the consequences of its cowardice, renouncing it to the devil whom it chose for its master.

10. <sup>b</sup>And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him : but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xii. 31, 32; Mark iii. 28; 1 John v. 16.

The distinction here made seems entirely unaccountable, if made between the second and third persons of the Godhead, simply as such, without any thing to qualify or specify the statement. This difficulty disappears, however, on observing that the person mentioned in the first clause is not the

eternal Word or Son of God, but the Son of man, and this describes the Saviour in His humiliation, in the form of a servant, as He was while resident on earth. To *speak a word* against him while His Godhead was thus veiled and as it were in abeyance, was a very different offence from *blaspheming against the Holy Ghost*. The sin of thus speaking against the Son of man was committed by those who did not know Christ to be the Messiah in the days of His humiliation, and did not receive Him, believe Him, or obey Him, but ignorantly rejected and crucified Him, and many of whom, so sinning, were pardoned, we cannot doubt, as, for example, on the day of Pentecost, after Peter's preaching. The sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be, what some have supposed it, "the ascribing those miracles to the power of the devil which Christ wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit." It must be placed in one line with the sin which cannot be forgiven, referred to in other places, Heb. x. 26; 1 John v. 16. In regard to the sin against the Holy Ghost, we remark: 1. That the man is not necessarily guilty of this sin, who is led for a time, by the temptations of Satan or his own corrupt heart, openly to rebel against this Divine Spirit; for the children of Israel "rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit," yet God still "remembered the days of old, Moses and his people," Isaiah lxiii. 10, 11, and yet again had mercy upon them. 2. Neither does he commit this sin who "hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God," John iii. 18, and "who loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil," John iii. 19. For this is our Lord's description of the unregenerate in his day, and is undoubtedly the characteristic of every unregenerate man, in every age and every clime. 3. Nor again is he guilty of it, who through fear denies the Lord who bought him, for then would Peter himself have been among the miserable number of the unpardoned. Nor he, who persecutes the people of Christ, for then would Paul have been a castaway. Nor he who "crucifies the Son of God afresh," Heb. vi. 6, for then would all who crucified Him on Calvary; yet we distinctly know some, at least, of these obtained mercy, Acts ii. 36-38. 4. Not every *reproach*, nay, not every word or expression truly in itself blasphemous *toward* the Holy Spirit, not even with blasphemous intention, really is accepted by the Holy Spirit as blasphemy *against* Himself. Experience shows that such words are repented of, and, though perhaps not often, forgiven. Of these delinquencies, great, terrible and damnable as they all, if persevered in and unrepented of, unquestionably are, it may safely be asserted, that neither any of them singly, nor all of them together, can be pronounced to be the unpardonable sin.

The original meaning of the word *blaspheme* is simply *reproach* or *slander*. At the present time it is applied almost exclusively in reference to the Supreme Being. It may, therefore, in general, be defined "to utter a presumptuous insult toward God." But as such a sin may be as truly committed in *thought* or in *act*, as in *speech*, it may rather be defined the *offering* a presumptuous insult to God. It is a great sin. Humanly speaking, there may be greater *crimes*, but there can be no greater *sin*. This sin of blasphemy *against the Holy Ghost*, regarded by Him as an *insult to Himself*, it is declared, *shall not be forgiven*. He resents the insult with a justice that knows no mercy. This sin was committed by those who, after the day of Pentecost, and the outpouring of the Spirit, and the full publication of the gospel, persisted in unbelief and obstinate impenitence, and were given over to a reprobate mind. These especially grieved the Spirit, and resisted the ministration of the Holy Ghost. That this was the state of many of the Jews, appears from several places in the Acts, and especially Acts xxviii. 25-28. See, also, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. This sin was the sin of the Pharisees, who maliciously disavowed, blasphemed and resisted the operation of the Holy Ghost, at the very moment when they were most fully convinced that in so doing they were fighting against God. And it may now be committed by any one, in

continuing to oppose the gospel from deliberate malice, while at the same time the Holy Ghost has convinced the mind of its truth. The sin, therefore, to which our Lord here refers, seems to be the sin of deliberately neglecting God's truth, while the truth is clearly known with the head, and deliberately choosing sin and the world. It is a combination of light in the understanding, and determined wickedness in the will. *It shall not be forgiven.* So says He whose prerogative it is to forgive. Why it is so is sufficiently answered by the reply, because God has willed it so. No sin can be forgiven without repentance, but repentance is the gift of God, and as the blasphemer against the Holy Ghost drives from him the only person who could "give repentance," Acts v. 31, he seals himself up, under final and total apostasy, until the day of doom. Such a man, indeed, will never seek to have his sins forgiven. This is exactly the root of his awful disease. He might be pardoned, but he will not seek to be pardoned. He is gospel-hardened, and "twice dead." His conscience is "seared with a hot iron." 1 Tim. iv. 2. That those who are troubled with fear that they have committed the unpardonable sin, are just the persons who have not committed it, is the judgment of all the soundest divines. It is most comforting to think that though *all sin* will be followed by *sorrow*, yet that there is only *one sin* that cannot be *forgiven*. Let those who, while they cannot deny the facts of Christianity, despise and oppose its doctrines, tremble to think how near they approach to the boundaries of the unpardonable sin, which is perhaps more obscurely described, that we may more cautiously avoid all such approaches. But let not the humble soul that trembles at God's word meditate terror to itself from such a passage, which, when viewed in its due connection, cannot, with any shadow of reason, be thought to belong to any who do not obstinately reject the gospel, and maliciously oppose it when made known to them with the fullest evidence.

11. 'And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say :

† Matt. x. 19; Mark xiii. 11; Luke xxi. 14.

12. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

Our Lord here informs His Apostles that, for preaching His doctrine, and professing His religion, they should be brought before all sorts of magistrates, and into all kinds of courts; but counsels them, when they should be thus brought, not to be anxiously thoughtful, or solicitously careful what they should say, for it should be suggested to them by the Holy Ghost what they should speak in that hour. The assistance promised should be so complete, that they would be mere instruments or organs of the Spirit. *How* relates to the form, and *what* to the substance, of their public defences or apologies. Christ does not forbid all forethoughts what to say, but only distrustful thoughts; that they should not, like orators or advocates, strive to make studied pleas or rhetorical apologies for themselves. This is so far from being a promise of Divine assistance to unprepared and off-hand preachers, that it is not given even to the twelve indefinitely or forever, but expressly limited to one particular emergency, not only by the first words of ver. 11, (*when they bring you,*) but also by the words, *in the same hour*, ver. 12. This promise gives the highest authority to all the apostolical defences upon record, and precludes the supposition of unhallowed anger in such cases as that of Paul's reply to Ananias. Acts xxiii. 3. The doctrine of inspiration is here stated in its strongest form. In the Apostles, in the moment of trial, the Holy Spirit would reside, and the words they spake should be His words.

And if they were furnished with this inspiration in their momentary times of trial, how can it be doubted that, in recording their words for ages for the instruction of the Church and the conversion of the world, they should possess the same high qualification?

QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by "also?"
2. What, by "whosoever?"
3. What, by "confess me?"
4. What, by "before men?"
5. What is the reciprocal act here ascribed to Christ?
6. What is said of—"before the angels of God?"
7. What time is here referred to?
8. How shall the angels be employed on that day?
9. What is said of—"he that denieth me," &c.?
10. What two things are to be observed?
11. How may Christ be denied?
12. Who are guilty of this sin?
13. What is it said every age has?
14. What is said of the soul which Jesus denies?
15. What is said of the distinction made in ver. 10?
16. How is the apparent difficulty explained?
17. By whom was the sin of this speaking against the Son of man committed?
18. What is said of the sin against the Holy Spirit?
19. What is said first of this sin?
20. What, secondly?
21. What, thirdly?
22. What is the original meaning of the word *blaspheme*?
23. How is it almost exclusively applied at the present time?
24. What may it, in general, be defined?
25. How may it rather be defined?
26. What is said of the greatness of this sin?
27. What is declared of this sin?
28. By whom was this sin committed?
29. What is said of many of the Jews?
30. Was this the sin of the Pharisees?
31. What seems to be the sin to which our Lord here refers?
32. Shall this sin be forgiven?
33. Why not?
34. What is said of those who are troubled with fear that they have committed the unpardonable sin?
35. What is said of those who admit the facts of Christianity, yet despise and oppose its doctrines?
36. What is said of the humble soul that trembles at God's word?
37. Of what does our Lord inform His Apostles in ver. 11?
38. What counsel does He give them?
39. Does Christ forbid all forethoughts what to say?
40. What does the promise of Jesus here give the highest authority to?

## LESSON LXXVI

vs. 13-18.

13. ¶ And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

*One of the company, one of the vast and crowded congregation, said unto him, interrupting the words of Jesus, who pauses to hear and then answer, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.* It seems that a contention had arisen between himself and his brother concerning their proper shares of their common inheritance, and he wished the matter to be adjusted. This appeal shows incidentally that the people had begun to look on Jesus as a prophet, and to pay great deference to His word. Had he not been already in some sense recognized as an authority, this man would not have applied to Him for relief. He was well aware that Jesus of Nazareth could bring no civil constraint to bear upon his brother, it was the moral influence of the prophet's word that he counted on as the means of accomplishing this request. There was nothing sinful in this request that Jesus should act as an umpire or arbitrator, for if the half the inheritance belonged to this man, or was bequeathed to him by a legal and proper will, it was his duty, as it was his right, to require that half. Besides, Paul himself recommended this manner of settling differences. (1 Cor. vi. 1-6.) The man's sin, therefore, lay not in asking for his rights, but in interrupting so inopportunistly, a discourse so precious, so beautiful, so instructive to the multitude, with a petition, purely, intensely, and exclusively selfish. From this entreaty, which led to the warning in verse 15, it is plainly evident that he had a covetous disposition. He had no taste for those inner spiritual possessions which Jesus was urging on him as well as others.

14. And he said unto him, 'Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you ?

† John xviii. 35.

*Man.* The word in the original has a shade of disrespect, there being another word for *man*, as a term of respect. *Who made me a judge or a divider?* This reply of our Lord is generally referred by expositors to Exod. ii. 14. The word *divider* is probably explanatory of *judge*, which means a *judge or umpire* to settle disputes. *Over you*, over mankind, men in general. *Who made me, &c.* Who constituted me a civil ruler, to judge or arbitrate between men, in regard to worldly matters of dispute? This is not my office. I was not sent into the world on such a mission. On this verse one ancient commentator says, "Christ would not, for three causes, be a judge to divide inheritances. First, for that He would not cherish the carnal opinion which the Jews had of the Messiah. Secondly, for that He would distinguish the civil governance from the ecclesiastical. Thirdly, to teach us to beware of them which abuse the show of the gospel, and also the name of ministers, to their own private advantage." Another says, "It is probable that Christ refused to take this office upon him, chiefly because He had but little time remaining, which He could better spend in dividing to them the Word of Life, and promoting their eternal interest." It is undoubtedly the duty of ministers of the gospel to mark our Lord's conduct in this case, and as far as possible to walk in His steps. To this they are urged by the shortness and uncertainty of life, the state of the world, the worth of souls, and

the immense importance and arduousness of their work. "Give thyself wholly to these things," is a sentence which they should never forget. At the same time, it is true that Ambrose and Augustine felt obliged to undergo the onerous task of arbitration, against their own will, but in obedience to conscience, and according to the doctrine of Paul, 1 Cor. vi. 1-6. How is this doctrine to be harmonized with our Lord's reply to this man? It may be by keeping in sight the distinction between the relations of the Church and the world to Christ. If, for example, a dispute in relation to the settlement of their worldly affairs had arisen between Peter and John, or any of the Apostles, our Lord would have interposed with his advice and authority. They were members of His family, and belonged not to the world without. They had put themselves under His special guidance and direction. But the class of which this man was the exponent were yet outside hearers, and belonged to Jesus neither by spiritual affinity nor external profession.

It was eminently characteristic of the Lord Jesus Christ, during His ministry on earth, that He was a reformer of principles, a purifier of hearts; not a distributor anew of the mechanical and civil arrangements of society. He undertook to change men's hearts, not their circumstances; or rather to change their circumstances by first changing and ameliorating their hearts. He worked from the inward to the outward. He did not interfere with the laws, or the arrangements, or the polity, of the world, but endeavored to implant in men's souls living truths, living principles, which should germinate and grow until the whole world should be overspread with that kingdom whose great elements are righteousness, and truth, and peace, and joy.

15. And He said unto them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

k 1 Tim. 6, 7, &c.

This man, in regard to the matter in dispute between himself and his brother, probably had both an honest purpose and a righteous cause. For aught that we know to the contrary, he may have been violently or fraudulently deprived of his share in the inheritance of the family. At any rate, the question of right and wrong as between the brothers, does not constitute an element of the case that is presented to us. It is not, therefore, *dishonesty* that is here dealt with. Elsewhere it is disposed of in a very brief sentence, "Thou shalt not steal." The sin here analyzed and exposed is a far more subtle one. The lesson is not, Take heed and beware of injustice, but, Take heed and beware of covetousness. *He said unto them*, i. e., the multitude around Him, *be on your guard against covetousness*. The word, in the original, signifies *greediness, grasping selfishness*. It is derived from a concrete noun, denoting *one who has, or claims more than, his share, one who has never enough*. Covetousness is avarice, the insatiable desire of more, springing out of ungodly love and too high an estimation of earthly things. It is not what a man has that makes covetousness, but it is the hunger after what he has not, and the concentrating all his thoughts upon it, and drawing from it the main elements of his joy, his comfort, his satisfaction, his repose. The desire of having wealth, in order to enjoy it, or the desire of having and adding to our wealth, in order to have more influence or more power, not to do more good—this is covetousness. *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*. Christ here denies that our life consists in abundance, thus indicating the internal origin and fountain-head from which the mad desire of possessing issues. The word translated *life*, is to be taken in its two-fold meaning, according to which it marks a happy state of being, in time and in eternity, so that the sense is, riches by no means secure for us, of themselves, a life of satisfaction upon earth, nor

do they insure us of eternal blessedness ; or, real well-being is no necessary consequence of the possession of riches. It is not for ministers to meddle with the partition of estates, or with the differences in families, but they ought to teach the rules of true religion, and the means of avoiding all injustice. This vice still proceeds from covetousness, and therefore this is the thing which must be rooted up.

Covetousness is a wide-spread and fearful sin. It estranges from God, by putting something else in the heart in place of Him. It leads to a suspension of that Divine influence which is essential to nearness with God. It cripples confidence in God. More than any other sin, it *grows* upon men. It dishonors Christ. What must men of the world think of Christ's spirit, as they see it displayed by a covetous Christian? It injures the cause of Christ, being like a moth fretting a garment, which, however costly and beautiful it may be, will, by degrees, be destroyed. Of all sins, it most assimilates the soul to Satan, whose heart is covetous, whose desires are inordinate, yet all terminate in himself, irrespective of the glory of God, thus producing the misery of this great but fallen spirit. It would be vain to decide positively, which is the most common sin in the world, but it would be safe to say that there is none to which the heart is more prone than covetousness. The warning of Jesus in this verse is a word more in season for the members of Christian churches than an exhortation to beware of theft.

How may this all-besetting sin be escaped? By believing in Jesus, who was nailed to the tree for our sins, and looking constantly to Him for strength to overcome this sin as every other. See this exemplified in the publican of old. Luke xix. 8. Faith will enable us to bring our heart near to the heart of Christ, and here it will lose its covetousness, and we will realize for ourselves the great truth uttered by the Apostle: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself, for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." A faith that works by love will save the soul even from the deadly embraces of covetousness, but it must be a faith that *works* by love. "The liberal man deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand." This order must not be inverted: many imagine they are to stand by covetousness, and to fall by liberality. But, no; God declares we are to *stand* by liberality. Let our faith prayerfully embrace this fact, and practice it, and covetousness shall not claim us as its slaves and victims.

16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully :

This parable springs from the untimely and intensely earthly interruption of our Lord's discourse by one of the company that heard it. Thus, the Saviour makes the covetousness, as well as the wrath of man, to praise him, and restrains the remainder thereof. Like a fissure which has been made in the mountain by some pent-up internal fire that forced its way out, and rent the rock in its outgoing, but in which a tree may now be seen blooming and bearing fruit, while all the rest of the mountain side is bare, this word of Jesus, that liveth and abideth forever, is a green and fruitful field to-day, though it was the outbursting of a scathing, scorching covetousness that formed the cavity, and supplied the soil in which the tree might grow.

*A certain rich man.* His name is not given. It is not a sin to be rich. We read of Gaius, who exercised hospitality to the saints. Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy man, and yet he was a good man. *The ground* may denote a large territory, or property in land. *Brought forth plentifully.* The reference is to the crop of that particular season, which was so large that, if it could be well-stored, it would suffice for the wants of many years to come, even if such rich harvests should never be yielded him again. On

the fields of the covetous man the rain fell and the sun shone : God makes his sun to shine on the evil and the good. We cannot judge of what we are by what God's providence does to us, but must judge by what God's word says respecting us. Yet many persons reverse this rule, and judge that they are good because they are successful in business, and that others are bad because their property is swept away. Let the means be noted by which this rich man became richer. It was not by craft, dishonesty, and fraud. He was a *farmer*: one of the most harmless ways of becoming rich. It was important to our Lord's purpose that such a case as this should be selected; for He was not aiming His rebuke against what is regarded as fraudulent between man and man, but to illustrate the case of one who, by no unfair or improper means, was increasing in riches, but who, as they increased, had "set his heart upon them," and neglected God. It serves also to strengthen the case, that it was by rains, and sun, and fertile soil, by cold and heat, summer and winter, that the stores of this man were continually becoming greater. The direct agency of God's providence, in such a case of outward prosperity, is, so to speak, more marked than in many other ways whereby men become rich; and so the absorption of this man's mind and affection in the gift, and not in the Giver, comes all the more prominently forth. The prosperity of the ungodly, for a short time, laid the Psalmist under a temptation. Ps. lxxiii. 7; xii. 13, 14. It is not here—it is not now that God judges the world in righteousness. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Prov. i. 32. In respect to this, how deep a knowledge of the human heart the warning of the Psalmist displays: "If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them." It might, at first sight, appear that the time when we should be in chiefest danger of setting our heart upon riches would be when we saw them escaping from our grasp—perishing from under our hand. But all experience testifies the contrary: that earthly losses are the remedy for covetousness, while increase in worldly goods is that which chiefly provokes to it, serving, not as water to quench, but as fuel to augment, the fire.

17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

The profusion of nature and the beneficence of God set this man to thinking. As the original imports, *he dialogued in himself*: his soul and he held a conversation on the subject. This was a proper course. There is no law which forbids that a man shall exercise forethought, or take a prudent care of his property, and see, as his substance increases, that it does not suffer from neglect, or waste, or exposure. But then the expression, that this man *thought within himself*, implies mental excitement and anxiety. He was perplexed, not as other men, to *get* wealth, but to *dispose* of it. And surely the fact that riches and cares are inseparably wedded together, ought to go far to reconcile the poor to their poverty, whatever the pains, and mortifications, and inconveniences of that condition in life. This expression means more: it shows that the man was eminently *selfish*; he thought *in* himself, and *to* himself, as is indicated not only by the words "*my* fruits," but also by the words, *what shall I do?* which were in all probability not the utterance of one brought to sore straits and difficulties through the abundance, for the sake of which others were envying him, but of a worlding's heart, rejoicing over his abundance, and realizing to the very letter the making "provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." This expression, *he thought within himself*, means still more: it shows that the man was too reliant upon his own judgment in a matter in which his judgment was likely to be warped in his own favor; he ought to have gone to a minister of the gospel, or officer of the church, or pious man, and consulted with them in regard to his duty; above all he ought to have gone to God, who seems not to have been "in all

his thoughts," but of whom it is said, "in all thy ways acknowledge him ; and he shall direct thy paths." Prov. iii. 6. *What shall I do?* How many answers might have come back, if only time had been given, from many an object of compassion, many an orphan, many a widow, many an ignorant family, many an avenue for doing good ! But no such answer was wanted by this man, as many do not want them now, and hence he soon reached the foregone conclusion contained in the next verse, as certain to rise in such a heart with its ruling selfishness as a spark is to fly upward, or a stone cast into the air to fall back upon the ground.

18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

*This will I do.* The words are expressive of a well-formed and final determination, after full consideration. "I will" pull down, I will build up, I will bestow my goods. He is the only party, in his own opinion, capable of devising or executing any plan in reference to the storing and preserving of the property. He does not say, "If God permit;" he has no reference to God, but full confidence in himself: "*all my fruits and my goods.*" Persons of that sort call riches *goods*, not simply from falling into the popular mode of speaking, but because they consider these the chief good. *My fruits and my goods.* His language is full of pride, vanity, folly, and atheism; he forgets that all is only lent him, thinks nothing of the Author of his riches, flatters himself with the secure and inalienable possession of his goods, if he had them but once up in his new barns, and consequently overlooks the thousand accidents which threaten to interrupt, and often completely destroy all temporal possessions: *all my fruits, &c.* He makes no mention of the poor. *Pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow, &c.* Here was the turning-point in the poor man's history—determining to do this thing. As God's goodness was showered upon him in such abundance, he should have opened his treasures and permitted them to flow: for this end his riches had been bestowed upon him. But self was the man's pole-star: he cared for himself, and for none besides. Hence the proposal to enlarge his barns, in order to hoard his treasures. The method he adopted was rude and unskillful. We understand better the principles of finance, and enjoy more facilities for profitably investing our savings: but the two antagonist principles retain their respective characters under all changes of external circumstances—the principle of selfishness, and the principle of benevolence; the one gathers in, the other spreads out. *Barns.* His barns were not, as they often were among the Jews, caves of the earth or rocks, but granaries or constructed buildings. His were tall buildings, but he must have still more spacious ones. The word here rendered "barns" means, literally, "a repository."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by "one of the company?"
2. What did he say to Jesus?
3. What contention had arisen?
4. What does this appeal show incidentally?
5. Was there any thing sinful in the request that Jesus should act as an umpire?
6. What did the man's sin consist in?
7. What is evident from his entreaty?
8. What did Jesus reply?
9. What is said of "man" in the original?
10. To what is our Lord's reply generally referred?

11. What is said of the word "divider?"
12. What is meant by "over you?"
13. What is meant by "Who made me," &c.?
14. What does an ancient commentator say on verse 14?
15. What does another say?
16. What is said to be the duty of ministers?
17. What is said of Ambrose and Augustine?
18. How is Paul's doctrine to be harmonized with our Lord's reply?
19. What was eminently characteristic of our Lord during His ministry on earth?
20. What is said of this man in regard to the dispute between himself and his brother?
21. What is the sin here analyzed and exposed?
22. What does the word "covetousness," in the original, signify?
23. What is covetousness?
24. What is said of—"for a man's life," &c.?
25. What is said of covetousness?
26. How may the sin of covetousness be escaped?
27. What is said of this parable springing from the interruption of our Lord's discourse?
28. What is said of the "certain rich man?"
29. Is it a sin to be rich?
30. What may "the ground" denote?
31. What is the reference in "brought forth plentifully?"
32. Can we judge of what we are, by what God's providence does to us?
33. How did this man become rich?
34. What is said about the selection of such a case as this?
35. What is said of the prosperity of the ungodly?
36. What is said of—"he thought within himself?"
37. What ought to help to reconcile the poor to their poverty?
38. What is said of—"What shall I do?"
39. Explain "This will I do."
40. Why do such persons call riches "goods?"
41. Where was the turning-point in the man's history?
42. What should the man have done?
43. What is said of "barns?"

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LESSON LXXVII.

vs. 19-21.

19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, 'thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. xi. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 32; James v. 5.

Having now at last, as he imagines, secured himself against every thing that could disturb his felicity, he determines to rest from his labors, to enjoy that ease and quiet from which hitherto the anxious acquisition of wealth had hindered him. The dialogue which he had commenced before, proceeds: the man has something more to say to his soul: *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years.* Because he has *much* to enjoy, he flatters himself with the hope that he shall have *long* to enjoy it, and promises himself a

great age; in his folly he thinks as little of the possible loss of life, as of his goods; nay, he looks upon his riches as conveying a sort of right to a long life. He also speaks of his *goods*—as if the fruits and stores of earthly things had any thing in common with the *soul*, so as to be capable of satisfying that. However praiseworthy frugality is, as not suffering any of God's gifts to go to waste, John vi. 12, it does not render less blameworthy the purpose here expressed, of applying every thing for one's self, in the gratification of selfish desires. *Take thine ease.* From the very torture of anxiety and care, he feels how sweet rest is, which he is unable to provide for himself. "Cease to gather and be careful any more, withhold thyself from any further pains and applications." So must it ever be with the covetous—poor in the midst of their overflowings, they enjoy it not, for they think with anxiety on some possible future want, and hence strive and labor without getting satisfaction. This rich man, however, is not of such a covetous disposition, as desires only to have, and keep, and handle wealth or other possessions: he is bent upon enjoyment, he has been working only for future satisfaction, now he counts himself quite sure of attaining his end, and hence he goes on to say, *eat, drink, and be merry.* The man stupidly imagines that he could lay up in a barn an adequate and satisfying portion for his soul. The prophet's words are applicable to him. "He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Is. xlv. 20. What a mockery it is to address the soul, whose food and sustenance alone can be the knowledge, love, and fear of God, in such terms as these, and yet it is just what thousands and thousands are doing practically every day. Every one in whom is the love of the world plays this trick with his soul, and eagerly covets one thing or another, in the vain and delirious hope that he is laying up "*goods for his soul for many years.*" Covetousness, especially in its more advanced stages, eats the pith out of the understanding, and leaves its victim almost fatuous. *Eat, drink.* The man adds to his indolence ("ease,") gluttony, and drunkenness. He not only expected rest in the acquisition of his goods, but he meant to have great self-indulgence by means of them. He would procure the choicest viands, he would, like another rich man, in another parable, "fare sumptuously every day." This would form a very important feature in his existence. It would fill a large portion of his time. It would make an essential item in his happiness and soul-satisfaction, this eating and drinking. Oh! what degrading carnality! But this is not all: the man says to his soul, "*be merry.*" Take thy fill of pleasure and of worldly enjoyment. The thing to be avoided is sadness. Any thing which will cause a moment's pain or sorrow is to be shunned. Life itself is, after all, short, and it must be bright throughout. No gloomy thoughts, no fears, no anxieties about God, or final judgment, are to be tolerated. "*Be merry.*" "Let thy heart cheer thee"—"rejoice in the ways." Let "the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life," minister continued joy and pleasure to thee. What matters it that past experience warns against all such unhallowed enjoyment—still the pursuit must be followed. Thus this man, in a dialogue with his own soul, had settled matters according to his own mind. The two had agreed together that they would have a royal time on earth, and a long one. The whole business was comfortably arranged. But at this stage another interlocutor, whom they had not invited, breaks in upon the colloquy.

20. But God said unto him, *Thou fool, this night* \*thy soul shall be required of thee: \*then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?

\* Or, *do they require thy soul?*

in Job xx. 22 and xxvii. 8; Ps. lli. 7; James iv. 14.  
in Ps. xxxix. 6; Jer. xvii. 11.

*But God said unto him.* It is not necessary to inquire in what way God spoke to the man: whether by a sudden presentiment of approaching death, by some strong alarm of conscience, by some mortal sickness at this instant falling upon him, or by what other means. It is enough to know, that, just as when the heathen monarch, in his palace at Babylon, was glorying in his pomp and power—was at the very height of his pride and self-dependence—God said to him: “The kingdom is departed from thee:” so, in some way, this rich man—this selfish, sensual, daring sinner—approaching, as he thinks, the very summit of his joy, receives an awful message from God, and is thus brought into direct and immediate contact with the Being whom he has neglected, and who yet, nevertheless, “for all these things will surely bring him into judgment.” Here is a most solemn view of a most common occurrence in our world. Not unfrequently, at those very moments, when the hearts of fallen men seem nearest the goal of their hopes, an irrepressible emotion steals in upon them of doubt and misgiving as to those things in which they have embarked the prosperity and happiness of their souls. How often is the successful moment of worldly enterprise the very time when, almost by an audible voice from heaven, the soul trembles as Belshazzar did when the hand came forth upon the wall! *Thou fool.* Literally, *fool!* The deep scorn of the epithet being weakened by the unnecessary pronoun in our English version. The Greek word so translated means, literally, without mind, or sense, or understanding. It is the same word as in Luke xi. 40. This epithet was applicable to the man: 1. As conveying God’s estimate of him, as opposed to the opinion he entertained of his own wisdom. 2. For saying “*my soul,*” as if he had made it, redeemed it, could command its presence, and determine the hour of its separation, as if it were like his fruits and goods, part and parcel of the stock or property which belonged to him. 3. Because he put off his comfort, in his abundance, till he had compassed his projects concerning it. 4. Because he made such strong calculations on an uncertain future, forgetting how soon he might be parted from his property. 5. Because he counted on *certain ease,* from his abundance, whereas there were many things that might make him uneasy in the midst of all his abundance. 6. Because he made no other use of his plenty than to *eat, and drink,* and be *merry,* never thinking of distributing the overflowings of his granary among the poor—thus robbing God, and failing to “lay up in store for himself a good foundation against the time to come.” 7. Because he believed that his *soul* would be satisfied by the abundance of things he possessed. What a mistake! Every thing which God has made requires a good suited to its nature. The bird seeks, and must have, its native air; the fish exists, and only can exist, in the water; the beast craves a plentiful provision for its body, and is satisfied therewith; the human body cannot subsist on ideas, but must have earthly food; the mind must receive suitable nourishment: so the soul thirsts for some higher enjoyment than this world can afford. Neither sumptuous feasts, nor lovely gardens and splendid houses, nor scientific knowledge and elegant accomplishments can make man happy. Nothing but communion with God can fill the aching void of the human soul. Adam was happy when he walked with God; but when by sin he lost that privilege, he became wretched. When man returns to God, he feels the first emotions of real bliss. David knew this: therefore he said: “Return unto thy rest, O my soul.” How different was David’s command to his soul from that of the rich man who said: “Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry!” “*This night thy soul shall be required of thee.*” *This night,* stands opposed to *years,* in ver. 19. It is here implied that it was in the night, the usual hour of repose, that the rich man formed the determination expressed in ver. 19. His great and unexpected wealth threw him into such a state of restless, feverish anxiety, as to the disposition for safe-keeping which he should make of his treasures, that he lay awake, planning and revolving one scheme after another, until he came to the con-

clusion stated in ver. 18, 19. One commentator remarks, that night is the time for Divine revelations to men, Job xxviii. 20, and also of sudden deaths.

*Thy soul*, which thou hast debased to the mere sensual enjoyment of the brute. The man had formerly addressed his soul, and now he is addressed about his soul. It is not the whole man, but only his soul that is wanted : his body will be left behind. But the body, though left behind, cannot claim, cannot use the goods. The treasure that was not improved, and over which the man claimed a monopoly, shall be recalled. *Shall be required of thee*. Here is the announcement of the sudden termination of the man's course. He was given to understand that he was on the verge of the eternal world. He was like the unconscious mariner, who is whistling at the helm, and only thinking of the many months of his pleasant voyage, when suddenly he sees that he is approaching the rock on which he will be wrecked and ruined. The man has received the summons, and in obedience to it, he must arise and go ; he can neither resist nor delay. He may weep, tremble, rage, but he must go, and go on the instant. The child of God yields up his soul to God ; commits, commends it to God and the Father of spirits, willingly, joyfully bids it depart and be with Christ ; but the sinner who has enflashed his soul, and embodied it, and made it earthly, has prepared to render its divulsion from the body most hard, and hence it is said *to be required of him as a disobedient debtor, that is delivered to pitiless exactors*. The mere worldling is torn from the world which is the only sphere of delight which he knows, as the fabled mandrake was torn from the earth, shrieking and with bleeding roots. The expression, *thy soul shall be required*, is literally, shall *require thy soul* ; some interpreters supply *they*, referring to the angels, the "ministers of God, who do His pleasure." Good angels conveyed the soul of Lazarus to the abodes of bliss. May we not by a parity of reasoning assign to evil angels the same service, in respect to those who are condemned after death to the torments of the lost ? *Then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?*—those fruits, those enlarged barns, this accumulated property—whose shall it be ? What will it do for thee ? Will it encounter death and conquer him ? Will it follow thee to the judgment-seat, and prevail with the Judge to acquit you ? The obvious scope of the inquiry is, that these things should not be his after death, and could therefore furnish no happiness to his soul beyond the grave. Not only is death frightful, but to the selfish heart, which has always been seeking its own, and paid no regard to others, the thought is peculiarly painful, that it must leave to others all the goods which it cleaves to with so much love, without being able to enjoy them itself. Eccls. ii. 18, 19, 26 ; v. 15 ; Job xxvii. 16, 17 ; Ps. xxxix. 6 ; xlix. 16-20.

21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

\* Matt. vi. 20 ; ver. 33 ; 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19 ; James ii. 6.

Such a fool is every one who thinks and acts after the manner of this rich man, whose accumulations have no aim but the gratification of the selfish desires and appetites ; since he is not rich in God, he is much more to be pitied than to be envied, and notwithstanding his riches in the account of the world, he is still poor in the eyes of God. Rev. iii. 17, 18. *And is not rich toward God* : in respect to God and Divine things, these riches consist in the imperishable blessings of faith, love and hope. Eph. i. 3. Those are not rich toward God, who give nothing to God's glory—neither money, affection, time, nor interest. There are thousands of this character. They are rich to every thing but God. They have plenty to give to the world, but nothing to give to God. Ask them to help a worldly scheme, and they can find money, time, and attention. Ask them to do something for God and they

have no money, no time! Such persons are not rich either in grace, or faith, or good works.

In addition to the reflections already presented on this parable, the following suggest themselves. How evident is it that the condition of man is a fallen one, that "the god of this world hath blinded him." Truly his "foolish heart is darkened," and he has "become vain in his imaginations." He forgets whence he has derived his life, covets things, not for God, but for himself, and his notion of what "good" things are, are deplorably carnal, low and grovelling. There is nothing but vexation in riches, though ever so well acquired. Great wealth is but a great incumbrance, when a man has not learned to wean his affections from it. How can such things be called goods, of which even the abundance vexes and disturbs the mind, which cannot be preserved without great pains and cost, and which, through the fear of losing them, become the torment of their possessor? Let us beware of worldly-mindedness. It is an awful thought, that the character which Jesus brings before us in this parable is far from being uncommon. The deadly characteristics of the natural man which it exhibits lie broadcast over the field of the world. The sins that are painted in it are just the common sins of the race. In some they are more prominent, in others less revolting; but all share in them more or less. Thousands are committing these sins this very day. They are laying up treasure upon earth, and thinking of nothing but how to increase it. They are continually adding to their hoards, as if they were to enjoy them forever. When we are tempted to ask, whether *we*, too, are in darkness and under Satan, this parable will testify of one "not rich towards God," and it will apply the solemn truth to us, if not in the language of the prophet of old as he pointed to the guilty monarch's heart, at least in the spirit of his language—"Thou art the man." It is duty to pray for rich men. Their souls are in great danger. Even when converted, the rich carry a great weight, and run the race to heaven under great disadvantages. We never know what we may do when we become rich. 1 Tim. vi. 10. Poverty has many disadvantages. But riches destroy far more souls than poverty. Let us strive to be rich towards God. Those are truly rich who have faith in the Lord Jesus, a faith which is accompanied with good works. God has declared that some of the *poor* in this world are *rich* in *faith*. James ii. 5. *Faith* is the gold that Christ offers to bestow on all that *ask* it. "I counsel thee to buy of me *gold* tried in the fire, that thou mayest be *rich*." Rev. iii. 18. If faith is in our *hearts*, we shall never hear the summons, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." But rather, we shall hear, in God's appointed time, a voice saying to our spirits, "Come up hither." Rev. iv. 1. And when we ascend to heaven, we shall find a treasure—an inheritance which death cannot snatch from us, which is incorruptible, and fadeth not away. 1 Cor. iii. 23. How dreadful must be the approach of death to him, who, having pampered his body, has starved his soul—lived for the present, and had no supreme and controlling regard to the endless future!

"How shocking must thy summons be, O Death,  
To him that is at ease in his possessions,  
Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,  
Is quite unfurnished for the world to come!  
In that dread moment, how the frantic soul  
Raves round the wall of her clay tenement,  
Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help,  
But shrieks in vain! How wishfully she looks  
On all she's leaving, now no longer hers!  
A little longer, yet a little longer—  
Mournful sight!  
Her eyes weep blood, and every groan

She heaves is big with horror. But the foe,  
 Like a staunch murderer, steady to his purpose,  
 Pursues her close through every lane of life,  
 Nor misses once the track ; but presses on,  
 Till, forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,  
 At once she sinks to everlasting ruin."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What did this man now determine to do ?
2. What more does he say to his soul ?
3. What did he mean by "Soul, thou hast much goods," &c. ?
4. Explain "take thine ease."
5. What is said of "eat, drink, and be merry?"
6. What is said of every one in whom is the love of the world?
7. What is meant by "eat, drink?"
8. What, by "be merry?"
9. Explain "but God said unto him."
10. Of what have we here a solemn view?"
11. What is said of "Thou fool?"
12. State the first reason this epithet was applicable to the man.
13. The second.
14. The third.
15. The fourth.
16. The fifth.
17. The sixth.
18. The seventh.
19. What does "this night" stand opposed to?
20. What is here implied?
21. What is said of "thy soul?"
22. Explain "shall be required of thee."
23. How does the Christian yield up his soul to God?
24. What is said of the sinner's soul?
25. What word do some interpreters supply?
26. What do they refer to in the word "they?"
27. What is said of angels?
28. Explain "then whose shall those things be," &c. ?
29. What is the obvious scope of this inquiry?
30. Explain "so is he."
31. What is meant by "not rich toward God?"
32. Who are not rich toward God?
33. What is said about the condition of man being a fallen one?
34. What is said about riches?
35. Of what should we beware?
36. What is said about praying for rich men?
37. Who are the truly rich?
38. What is said of the summons of death to the worldly-minded rich man?

## LESSON LXXVIII.

vs. 22-30.

22. ¶ And He said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, <sup>p</sup>Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

p Matt. vi. 25.

23. The life is more than meat, and the body *is more than* raiment.

It is very easy to pass from solicitousness to covetousness, and to avoid the latter we must secure ourselves from the former. All sinners are inclined to *over-value the creature*, and to *under-value the Creator*. The rich man betrays this disposition by delighting in his well-stored barns, and forgetting his all-sufficient God. The disciples were in danger of repining when their scrips were empty, and of forgetting their all-sufficient God. From their poverty, they were exposed to the insidious and widely prevalent vice of covetousness, which had just been exposed and condemned. Hence, our Lord now turns from the man for whom He had refused to be a judge and a divider, and from the mixed multitude, to whom He had spoken the parable of the rich fool, and addresses His *disciples*. The directions He gives from v. 22 to v. 31 are found, with slight verbal variations and trifling omissions, in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. vi. 25-33. That this portion of this sermon should be repeated here is not strange, in view of its applicability, as shown by the circumstances just referred to. *Therefore*, in consequence of the danger and vanity of earthly riches, *I say unto you*, as my disciples, with the authority belonging to me as your Master, *Take no thought for your life*. *Life*, a word which properly denotes the vital principle or living substance. It is sometimes used to distinguish the *soul* from the *body*, as in Matt. x. 28. *Take no thought*, be not anxious or excessively solicitous. Our Lord does not here forbid what His Apostles elsewhere enjoin—the use of lawful means to obtain for ourselves and those who depend on us the necessaries of life—nor that exercise of thought which is requisite for this purpose, but He does forbid us, while we use these means, or after we have used these means, to be anxious and fearful as to their being effectual for the purpose for which they are intended. *What ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on*. Our Lord's meaning is not—what the words taken by themselves might mean—“Do not allow food and dress to occupy many of your thoughts,” (though for any person to do so, it may be remarked, is to act a part not only incompatible with genuine Christianity, but unworthy of a rational being,) but the meaning is, “When, in prosecuting your great object—the heavenly happiness—the attainment of the necessaries of life for yourselves and your families, be not anxious: God will provide for you. He has given you life; He has given you a body, and, while it is His will that you should continue to possess this life, and this body, He can and will take care of them.” *The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment*. Here is an argument from greater to less. Surely He who gave life can give food; surely He who gave you a body *can* give you clothing for that body. And, as to give life is a far greater favor than to give food, to give a body, than to give clothing, surely He who has given the more valuable blessing *will not withhold the less*.

24. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and "God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?"

<sup>a</sup> Job xxxviii. 41; Ps. cxlvii. 9.

*Consider.* This means more than a superficial view: rather an observing and studying. *The ravens.* The ravens are specially mentioned in Ps. cxlvii. 9, and Job xxxviii. 41, as objects of God's care. In the history of Elijah, the Holy Ghost shows us the ravens providing for others, as well as for themselves. 1 Kings xvii. 6. Of this miraculous history of the prophet, there is perhaps an indirect reminiscence here. *For they neither sow nor reap, &c.* They do not even use the means which man is bound to use, and does use, but are wholly dependent on their instincts and the bounties of their Maker. Sowing, reaping, and ingathering, are three stages of agricultural employment and provision for the food of man, all which are here denied in reference to the birds, which is equivalent to saying that they use no means at all for the production of their own food. *And God feedeth them, provideth for them; how much more are ye better than the fowls?* The reasoning is made more pointed and popular by being compressed into a question instead of being stated as a formal proposition. You are much better than the birds; as men you occupy a far higher place in the scale of being. You are creatures of a nobler order than they, and designed for a higher destiny. You are created in God's image; you are acknowledged as "his offspring." He has taught you more than the beasts of the field, and made you "wiser than the fowls of heaven." Acts xvii. 28; Job xxxv. 11. And if we consider our Lord as addressing those who are laying up treasures for themselves in heaven, the argument is still more forcible, as such persons are the objects of His peculiar love, and He has bound Himself by promise that they shall want no good thing. Will the God who cares for and feeds these birds overlook you, and allow you to perish for want of food? The consideration of the world is a continual lesson for a rational creature, and faith finds something everywhere to increase and strengthen itself. The care which God takes of every living creature upbraids men with their uneasiness and distrust. Man knows too well his own excellence, and how to set himself off when he would gain the confidence of others. But he forgets what he is when he should put his confidence in God.

25. And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

26. If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

The word *cubit* signifies primarily the human arm, from the elbow to the end of the longest finger. This part of the human frame (like the *foot*) became, very anciently, a *measure* of external objects. The ancient Egyptian cubit was six handbreadths, or two *spans*, a span being the measure from the end of the thumb to the end of the little finger of the extended hand. These are somewhat variable measures, but the cubit was about eighteen inches. *Stature* would be more properly rendered *life*; the word here relates to *time*, and not to *corporeal growth*. This is evident for the following reasons: 1. With the exception of children, in the very dawn of reason, there are very few people anxious about extending their physical stature, and it is not easy to see how the incapacity of persons, by anxiety to increase their height—a thing very little connected with their happiness in any way—is a reason why they should not be anxious about what is absolutely necessary for the continuance of their life. 2. The addition of a cubit to one's stature is a very great one, whereas the one described in ver. 26 is "that thing which is

least." 3. Though a cubit is a very large addition to one's stature, it is a very small one to the duration of a lifetime. 4. The connection of this form of expression with the sudden death of the rich fool gives to the meaning *time*, a special appropriateness. "A cubit of time," though to us a very odd expression, is to be found in an old Greek poet, and denotes a very short space. It is by no means uncommon for us to apply measures of length to time, and to human life particularly. We speak of the *span* of human life, and of lengthening or shortening that span. "Behold," says the Psalmist, "thou hast made my days an handbreadth," xxxix. 5. *With taking thought*, i. e., caring, being anxious; *can*, is able; *add*, or put to. As thus explained, our Lord's words contain a strong argument why we should not be anxious about life or food. It serves no purpose; no anxiety of ours can protract life. If we cannot by all our anxiety secure that object for which a supply of food is chiefly desirable—the lengthening out of life—why should we be anxious for that which is valuable, only because it is fitted to gain this object? True confidence must needs be a thing extremely rare and very necessary, since Christ recommends it to us with so much earnestness. Let the experience of our own inability as to those things which are least oblige us at last to resign ourselves up entirely to God on all extraordinary occasions, and to acknowledge that it is through His blessing alone that our most ordinary cares and endeavors succeed.



THE LILY.

27. Consider the lilies, how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

28. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more *will he clothe you*, O ye of little faith?

Our Lord now goes on, by a similar illustration, to show the uselessness of anxiety about clothing. The birds illustrate the precept in regard to *food*, the lilies in regard to *raiment*. Consider. The original means, to learn thoroughly, and then, as a necessary means, to study closely, to observe attentively. The idea is, that what is thus proposed is not a mere indulgence of the taste or curiosity, but a moral lesson to be learned by studying the works and providence of God, a method of instruction practised long before by Solomon, see Prov. vi. 6-8, xxx. 24-31, to which there may be here an intentional allusion, as his name is introduced just afterwards. *The lilies*. Dr. Thomson, in his "Land and Book," says: "The Hùleh lily is very large, and the three inner petals meet above, and form a gorgeous canopy, such as art never approached, and king never sat under, even in his utmost glory. And when I met this incomparable flower in all its loveliness, among the oak woods around the northern base of Tabor, and on the hills of Nazareth, where our Lord spent His youth, I felt assured that it was this to which He referred. We call it the Hùleh lily, because it was here that it was first discovered. . . . Our flower delights most in valleys, Sol. Song, iii. 1, 2, 16, but is also found on the mountains. It grows among thorns, and I have had my hands sadly lacerated in extricating it from them. Nothing can be in higher contrast than the luxuriant, velvet softness of this lily, and the crabbed, tangled hedge of thorns about it." *How they grow, &c.* They neither practise the labors of husbandry to procure the materials of clothing, nor engage in the processes of art to form them into raiment, and yet they are clothed in garments of beauty far surpassing any thing which the wardrobe of royalty can display. *Solomon*—in the estimation of a Jew the most illustrious of sovereigns, *Solomon*—*in all his glory*, decked out in purple, and gold, and jewels, was not arrayed like one of these. *If then*, the premises having been recited, the argument from less to greater is now stated, but again in the form of an interrogation—"If God so clothe" such short lived, and such comparatively useless vegetables; if God so clothe "the herbage of the field"—for the word rendered "grass" signifies herbage generally, including the lilies of the field—the flowers which grow up among the grass; if God so clothe this herbage, "which is to-day in the field," flourishing in all its beauty, and "to-morrow is cast into the oven," employed as fuel—for, in Eastern countries, where fuel is scarce, herbage is often employed to heat the ovens and baths—"how much more will *he clothe you*, O ye of little faith?" These words require no explication. From the appellation, *O ye of little faith*, it is obvious that those to whom our Lord addressed Himself were in a state of mind like that of Nicodemus, when he came to Jesus by night—persons disposed to admit His Divine mission, yet afraid of the consequences of acknowledging this, and delivering themselves entirely up to be guided by Him—disposed to lay up treasures in heaven, yet not quite sure about abandoning all hope of the treasures on earth, which they had long so fondly anticipated. It is as if our Lord had said, "Why should you, while seeking the heavenly happiness, be anxious about worldly happiness? You are secured of all you need in this world: He who feeds the birds, can and will feed you; He who clothes the lilies, can and will clothe you."

29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, \*neither be ye of doubtful mind,

\* Or, live not in careful suspense.

30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

A practical application of the argument of God's care of inferior creatures. *Seek not.* A strong expression for anxious desire. *Neither be of doubtful mind,* refers to the vacillation between hope and fear, which characterizes those whose confidence is not fully reposed in the protecting care of God. The expression is probably one borrowed from ships out at sea, which, especially when seen from the shore, appear lifted up, tossed to and fro, and restless. There are here two additional reasons why those whom Christ addressed should not be anxious. 1. *For all these things,* all worldly goods and earthly treasures, *do the nations of the world seek after.* Such anxieties were characteristic of the nations of the world, Gentiles, heathens—the world outside of the Jewish nation. The heathen had very obscure and incorrect views of the Divine character and government. Some of them believed that all was fixed by fate; others, that all was left to chance. The one considered the gods themselves as subject to fate; the others thought that they took no interest in the concerns of mortals. With such views, how could they trust in these gods? Of a future world, they had no distinct knowledge. This world was every thing to them, and it was not wonderful that they should be anxious about obtaining its necessities and comforts, and making the most of them all. But it is unworthy of a Christian to be distinguished by a mode of thinking and feeling which is emphatically heathenish. 2. The other additional reason is, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." He has made us, He knows our frame, and if we regard him as our Father, who, we know, is able to bestow them, can we imagine that they shall be withheld from us when He knows that we need them?

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of solicitousness and covetousness?
2. What are all sinners inclined to do?
3. What is said of the disciples?
4. Where else are verses 22-31 recorded?
5. Why are they repeated here?
6. Explain "therefore, I say unto you?"
7. What is said of "life?"
8. What is meant by "take no thought?"
9. What does our Lord not here forbid?
10. What is the meaning of "what ye shall eat," &c.?
11. What is said of "the life is more than meat," &c.?
12. What is meant by "consider?"
13. What is said of the "ravens?"
14. Explain "they neither sow nor reap," &c.
15. What is said of "how much more are ye better," &c.?
16. What is said of the consideration of the world?
17. What does the word "cubit" signify?
18. What was the length of the ancient Egyptian cubit?
19. What is said of "stature?"
20. How is it evident that this word relates to *time*?
21. What strong argument is contained in verses 25 and 26?
22. What is said of true confidence?
23. What does our Lord now go on to show?
24. What do the birds illustrate?
25. What do the lilies?
26. What are we to understand by "consider?"

27. What does Dr. Thomson say of the lily?
28. What is said of "how they grow," &c.?
29. What is said of "Solomon"?
30. What, of "if then," &c.?
31. How is herbage often employed in the East?
32. What is obvious from the appellation, "O ye of little faith"?
33. What have we in verses 29 and 30?
34. What does "seek not" mean?
35. What does "neither be of doubtful mind" refer to?
36. From what is the expression probably borrowed?
37. How many additional reasons against anxiety are given?
38. What is the first?
39. What is said of the heathen?
40. What is the second reason?

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### LESSON LXXIX.

vs. 31-40.

31. ¶ But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

† Matt. vi. 33.

Having now prohibited, at great length and in various forms, the indulgence of a special solicitude about even necessary things belonging to the present life, our Lord shows His hearers how it is to be avoided, not by mere negation, or attempting simply to abstain from such anxiety and unbelief, but by positively doing something else which will immediately correct the evil. *But rather seek ye*—*seek* is emphatic, opposed to the *seek* in the preceding verse. The phrase in the parallel passage in Matthew is, "seek ye first:" as the Gentiles *seek* "all these things," first and supremely, so do ye seek first and supremely *the kingdom of God*, that is, the dominion or supremacy of God—the kingdom, as then about to be erected, and the cause which they were bound, as Christ's disciples, to promote. Make the attainment for yourselves and others, of the holy spiritual happiness which that kingdom—the new spiritual economy—secures to all its genuine subjects, your great object. Subordinate and sacrifice every thing else to it. In doing this, *all these things shall be added unto you*, every thing really necessary and useful shall be secured to you, *added*, given over and above the spiritual good directly flowing from devotion to God's service. Psalm lxxxiv. 11, 12; 1 Tim. iv. 8; Rom. viii. 28.

The great, important lessons taught for every age, in these sayings of our blessed Lord, are, 1. Confidence in God. Distrust is the property of infidels, and trust or confidence the virtue of the children of God. Men seek human supports, but Christians, who are somewhat more than men, ought to rest only upon a divine foundation, which is the goodness and promise of God. Whilst using the means for earthly support, and shunning negligence and sloth, yet we are not to be unduly anxious about it, nor rely on our own industry, care, and labor, but, having God as our Father, we are to trust to His wisdom, power, love and tenderness. Nothing is more common than a careful and troubled spirit, and nothing so mars a believer's usefulness, and diminishes his inward peace. Nothing, on the contrary, glorifies

God so much, as a cheerful spirit in the midst of temporal troubles. 2. We are to make it the chief business of our lives to secure a place in the number of saved people, to have our sins pardoned, our hearts renewed, and ourselves made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Alas! how painfully evident it is, that the generality of men do the direct contrary to that which God requires of them, seeking all other things before their salvation, and frequently them alone. Let us not do so. Then will we receive whatever is really good for us. The Christian may not always have as much health, or wealth, or as richly a spread table, as others, but he will have *enough*, as much as God sees he needs, as much as would be for his good. Is. xxxiii. 16; Ps. xxxvii. 25.

32. Fear not, little flock; for 'it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

• Matt. xli. 25, 26.

To banish inordinate cares, our fears must be suppressed. Therefore Jesus uttered these words of consolation and encouragement. Allusion is made to the fear combatted in the foregoing verses, but also to the fear which might hinder them in seeking the kingdom of God. *Little flock*, or, literally translated, *very little flock*. This is what some term a double diminutive. Though this expression refers solely to the Apostles and first believers, of whom it was *literally* true, yet we may say that the number of genuine believers *has* been, and *is* still, small, in comparison of *heathens* and *false Christians*. Jesus Christ is here referred to as the great and good Shepherd of his Church, which is the *flock*: the love and care, the compassion and tenderness, the guidance and vigilance of a good Shepherd are found in Him. John x. 1-18. *For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* The kingdom of heaven, mentioned in the last verse as the object of those who seek it. *Your Father's good pleasure to give*, literally, "well pleased." It is the same expression used in Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5; Mark i. 11; Luke iii. 22. It is your Father's benignant purpose to *give*, not of debt, but of grace. Special stress is here laid on the fatherly relation of God to all believers, as an antidote to over-carefulness and anxiety. It is the small number which is saved, and therefore we ought to fear to be of the great number whose end is perdition. Believers need not fear because of the fewness of their numbers, or the multitude of their enemies, or the many difficulties in their way, or their sense of weakness and unworthiness, for a glorious kingdom awaits them.

33. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

† Matt. xix. 21; Acts ii. 45 and iv. 34.

‡ Matt. vi. 20; Luke xvi. 9; 1 Tim. vi. 19.

*Sell that ye have*, a strengthening of the admonition which in Matt. vi. 19-21, appears in another form. Rather than want wherewith to relieve those that are truly *necessitous*, sell that which you have *superfluous*, all that you can spare from the support of yourselves and families, and give it to the *poor*. *Sell that ye have*, if ye find it a hindrance, or incumbrance, in the service of Christ. Thus giving *alms*, the treasure *laid out* shall be as *laid up* for yourselves and families in heaven. This *purse* shall not *grow old*, and this *treasure* shall not decay. The *thief* represents sudden and violent loss, the *moth* gradual and silent waste or exhaustion. The lesson here taught is, not that a man must literally sell all his possessions, Acts v. 4; 1 Tim. v. 8, and distribute the avails to the poor, but that he must give liberally, and

cherish such a whole-hearted benevolence, that he would be willing to part with all his possessions, if the cause of his Redeemer and the interests of his fellow-men demanded the sacrifice, and thus giving he will lay up imperishable treasure in heaven. God freely gives His kingdom, and yet it must be purchased. The poor are those who sell it, and receive the price. This price is just what we are able to give: it costs little, if we have but little, much, if we have much. We can give nothing but what we have received, and we receive even the grace to give it, and the hundred-fold of that which is given by us.

34. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

There is here indicated the deepest knowledge of men. The principle stated is the obvious but momentous one, that what men value they will love, and that the two things cannot be divided in experience. Theoretically, this may seem to be a truism, but experience demonstrates its necessity, and men's native disposition to deny it, as evinced by their professions to love God supremely, while the objects which they value most belong to the world. The human heart little by little appropriates to itself the style and nature of the treasure to which its whole thought is directed. Whoever constitutes his god of gold, his heart becomes as cold and hard as metal; whoever takes flesh for his arm, or makes it his idol, becomes more and more sensual, and takes on the properties of that which he loves above every thing; but whoever has invisible treasures keeps spontaneously eye and heart fixed upon the invisible world. Our Lord condemns no true earthly good, no true earthly enjoyment; He simply claims that in these shall not consist our *treasures*, and that all their value shall consist in their enabling us to be better servants of God, and winners of the true happiness. Happy is that person who has nothing on earth which detains and fixes his heart there.

35. Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning;

v Eph. vi. 14; 1 Pet. i. 13.

w Matt. xxv. 1, &c.

36. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

We have here the case of certain servants to whom is intrusted the care of their master's house during his absence from it. He has gone forth, and is expected to return from his marriage, bringing his bride with him. They are to have *their loins girded about*, in allusion to the long flowing robes of the Orientals, which were drawn up, and held fast by the girdle, when active exercise is demanded; they were to be in continual readiness for active duty. They were to have *their lights burning*. Matt. xxv. 1, &c. They were to "wait for their Lord." They were to be in their right place, not taking advantage of his absence to be out of the way, but remaining at home, ready, as soon as the master *came and knocked, to open unto him immediately*, just at the moment when they heard him, to open the door. Thus we are taught what believers ought to be in their present condition,—their Lord being absent from them, and faithlessness abounding in His professing Church. They ought to be "*waiting*" for Christ. As the Apostle has it, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the *patient waiting* for Christ." This means steady, calm endurance even to the end, not moved by "evil tidings," or "casting away confidence," but kept in perfect peace, having "the mind stayed on God." It means that the believer should "hold fast

that which he has," and be ready at any moment when his Lord returns, to say, "Lo, this is the Lord, I have *waited* for him." And something more is demanded of the believer than merely *waiting*. The servant may be in his right place, in expectation of his Master's return, but he may be drowsy, and lacking in that wakeful diligence which shall prevent him from being even for a moment unawares by his Master knocking at the door. Unlike such a servant, the believer must always be ready to receive his Lord. The man who is living the life of faith in the Son of God is the man whose "loins are girded," whose "light is burning," and who is "waiting," and ready at once to receive his Lord. He may be a Daniel, having the care of kingdoms on him, or be a servant in a Nero's household, like some in Paul's time; all this matters nothing. If he lives looking unto Jesus, he is a servant who can "open to Him immediately." A Christian must not look upon death with concern and anxiety, but with submission, love, joy, and, if possible, with the earnestness and impatience of a good servant.

37. \*Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

\* Matt. xxiv. 46.

Encouragement is here given to the disciples by announcing the reward to be bestowed upon the faithful and watchful servants. *Verily I say unto you.* See Matt. v. 18; xxiv. 46. *He shall gird himself, &c.* At the Roman Saturnalia, the masters put on the servile dress, and waited on and served their servants. As our Lord bases this parable upon the ancient relation of master and servant, so he uses this custom for an image to express the great honor He will confer upon his servants at the judgment-day, when all the blessings accruing to His followers, from His ever having worn "the form of a servant," will then be conferred by Him. Wonderful promise! Some think there will be a literal fulfilment of it, and that our Lord refers to this when He says at the last supper: "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." Luke xxii. 18. A reference to the same literal fulfilment is supposed to exist in Isaiah xxv. 6. What a joyful view is here given of the coming of Christ! The faithful servants who once girded themselves, and stood in readiness to open unto their Lord, shall now find Him changing His relative position, and serving them: they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; for the Lamb Himself shall feed them.

38. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants.

Anciently the Jews divided the night into *three* watches, consisting of *four* hours each. The *first* watch is mentioned, Sam. ii. 19; the *second*, Judges vii. 19; and the *third*, Exod. xiv. 24; but a *fourth* watch is not mentioned in any part of the *Old Testament*. This division the Romans had introduced in Judea, as also the custom of dividing the day into *twelve* hours. See John xi. 9. The *first watch* began at six o'clock in the evening, and continued till *nine*; the *second* began at *nine*, and continued till *twelve*; the *third* began at *twelve*, and continued till *three* next morning; and the *fourth* began at *three*, and continued till *six*. The first watch is not mentioned in this verse, because the wedding-feast took place during that time. Neither is the fourth watch mentioned, because the return at so late an hour was improbable. *Find them so.* That is, in such a state of readiness to receive Him. *Blessed are those servants, &c.* An emphatic repetition of ver. 37. The Christian must look upon every hour as that which may possibly be his

last. He must not only believe in Christ, but look and long for His appearing.

39. 'And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

7 Matt. xxiv. 43; 1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. iii. 8 and xvi. 15.

*The good man of the house*, that is, *householder* simply. The word *good* implies here no moral character. There is here a modification of the figurative language, in which those who had hitherto been represented as servants now, during the presupposed absence of their lord, are compared with the master of the house, who has to take care that his goods be not stolen. *Had known what hour the thief would come*, had been warned, as you are warned, especially if he had known the precise hour the thief would come, he would have kept watch against his approach, *and not have suffered his house to be broken through*—be digged through, for the walls of the Eastern houses are often of clay, and the house would be attacked by excavation. It is noticeable how frequently the coming of the day of the Lord is compared, in all manner of forms, with the coming of the thief. 1 Thess. v. 2, 6-8; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. iii. 8; xvi. 15. Life is the time of probation. It is the watch time in which we are to be on the alert for the coming of the Son of man. How unlike is this parable to that which precedes it! The reason of this difference is, that our Lord intended to teach that while some have reason to rejoice at the expectation of His coming, others have reason to tremble at the thought.

40. 'Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

\* Matt. xxiv. 44; xxv. 13; Mark xiii. 33; Luke xxi. 34-36; 1 Thess. v. 6; 2 Pet. iii. 12.

Be always on your guard, that you may not be taken unawares. We are kept uncertain concerning the precise time of our Lord's coming, that we may be always ready. The coming here referred to is the second personal advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, at the end of this dispensation. To apply the expression, as some do, to death, is an entire perversion of Scripture. The coming of the Lord is one thing, and death is another.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What does our Lord now do?
2. What is said of "seek?"
3. What is meant by "the kingdom of God?"
4. What is the meaning of the injunction concerning it?
5. Explain "all these things shall be added unto you."
6. What is the first important lesson taught in these sayings of our Lord?
7. What is the second lesson?
8. Why did Jesus utter the words of consolation in verse 33?
9. To what fear is allusion made?
10. What is said of "little flock?"
11. To whom did this expression solely refer?
12. Has the number of genuine believers been, and is it still small?
13. In what relation to His Church is Christ here referred to?
14. What is said of "your Father's good pleasure?"
15. What, of "to give?"
16. What is said of the small number saved?

17. What is said of "sell that ye have?"
18. What is said of "give alms," &c.?
19. What is the lesson here taught?
20. What is said of verse 34?
21. What is the principle stated?
22. What is said of the human heart?
23. Does our Lord condemn any true earthly good?
24. To whom is reference made in vs. 35 and 36?
25. To what is there an allusion in "your loins girded about?"
26. What is said of their "lights?"
27. How were they to wait for their Lord?
28. What is here taught concerning believers?
29. Who is the man who is living the life of faith in the Son of God?
30. How must a Christian look upon death?
31. How is encouragement given to the disciples in verse 37?
32. What is said of "he shall gird himself," &c.?
33. What does our Lord use this custom as an image to express?
34. What do some think of this promise?
35. How did the Jews anciently divide the night?
36. How was this division introduced into Judea?
37. What was the first watch?
38. What the second?
39. What the third?
40. What the fourth?
41. What is said of "Blessed are those servants," &c.?
42. Who was "the good man of the house?"
43. What modification of the language is noticed?
44. What is said of "had known?"
45. What is said of "broken through?"
46. What is noticeable in regard to the coming of the day of the Lord?
47. What is said of life?
48. Why is this parable different from that which precedes it?
49. What is the injunction in verse 40?
50. Why are we kept uncertain concerning the precise time of our Lord's coming?
51. What is the coming here referred to?

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LESSON LXXX.

vs. 41-48.

41. ¶ Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

Some of the foregoing directions appeared to be of such general application, that Peter wished to know whether they were intended for the Apostles alone, or for all Christians: *this parable* means all the cautions, directions and illustrations contained in vs. 32-40. It is worthy of remark, that this question was proposed by that very Apostle who afterwards most of all needed the admonition, and so sadly forgot it. Matt. xxvi. 41.

42. And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise

\* Matt. xxiv. 45; xxv. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 2.

steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season?

This reply of our Lord, without giving a definite answer, manifestly carries this meaning, that He had directed His admonitions pre-eminently to those to whom there was committed a peculiarly great, important, and distinguished sphere of action, without, however, excluding other believers. But at the same time He shows that distinguished position is accompanied with corresponding responsibility, and that reward may not be expected even in an extensive sphere of action, apart from fidelity. Matt. xxiv. 45. The answer instructs, awakens reflections, and points the inquiring disciple to the main thing he had overlooked, that in the case of the householder, more depends upon his prudence, the devotedness of his heart, and the intentness of his eye toward his master, than upon the extent and importance of his trust. *Who then is that faithful and wise steward*—whoever, and whenever, and wherever he is? As the *steward* was burdened with the care of the whole domestic establishment, his post was in the fullest sense one of confidence, and therefore faithfulness in every respect was required. *Over his household*. The construction of the original refers to a constant and vigilant oversight, as though his authority and supervision rested upon his charge continually. "To give *them their* portion of meat in due season." The family is here properly the Church of God, considered as a great congregation, through all ages, waiting for the coming of Christ. It is that Church of all ages to whom He said of the Lord's supper, "Ye do show forth the Lord's death until He come." The *servant* seems to be more specially the *ministry* of Christ through the ages, to whom He said, "Lo, I am with you until the end of the world."

43. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44. \*Of a truth I say unto you, that he will makè him ruler over all that he hath.

\* Matt. xxiv. 47.

*Blessed*, (Rev. xvi. 15,) *when he cometh*—cometh to the judgment, the same coming as in vs. 37, 38, 39, 40—*find so doing*, referring to the specifications of duty previously made; *ruler over all that he hath*, simply the image of his master, drawn from the custom of appointing a competent or favorite servant to be head steward, as was Joseph in the house of Potiphar. The more extended sphere of action is represented as the reward of fidelity.

45. <sup>b</sup>But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46. The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will \*cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xxiv. 48.

\* Or, cut him off, Matt. xxiv. 51.

*If that servant*, the same servant, in whom the lord had placed so much confidence, and whom he had set over others, *say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming*: the speech of folly which believes the day of reckoning and judgment to be far distant, only to abandon itself to the more unrestrained

indulgence of its lusts. It is remarkable that every mistake on the subject of Christ's coming hitherto made, arises from requiring it to be *too soon* : and shall begin to beat the men servants and maidens, laying claim in arrogance and hard-heartedness to a right belonging to the lord ; and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, revelling upon that which has been withdrawn from others, and, at the same time, wickedly squandering the goods of his lord ; cut him in sunder : false security sees itself confounded by the unexpected arrival of the lord, and is severely punished. *Cut him in sunder* means quarter him, the image of a very hard punishment. This was the punishment at that time threatened against a villain who first appeared to be faithful, but who afterwards manifested himself as unfaithful. *Appoint him his portion with the unbelievers*, hypocrites, Matt. v. 51, that is, he shall have the same fate. It is here taught that the Lord will judge his servants according to the condition in which He finds them, and that no earlier manifested faithfulness can deliver them if they afterwards, in view of the delay of His coming, shall fall into negligence and unfaithfulness. Let it be observed also, that it is *after* the punishment of being split into pieces that the unfaithful servant has his part appointed with the hypocrites, and yet he is represented as still living.

47. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

<sup>c</sup> Num. xv. 30 ; Deut. xxv. 2 ; John ix. 41 and xv. 22 ; Acts xvii. 30 ; James iv. 17.

48. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required : and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

<sup>d</sup> Lev. v. 17 ; 1 Tim. i. 13.

The Saviour justified the judgment just passed, against the possible suspicion of too much severity, by placing a general principle in the foreground, namely, that the more light there beams upon us the greater will be the punishableness of sin, and precisely in the difference of punishment is the impartiality and righteousness of the judge made known. *Which knew his lord's will*, either actually by an open and express command, such as Jesus was then giving His disciples, or, virtually, because Divine revelation was within his reach. *Prepared not himself*, literally, *did not hold himself in readiness* to execute his lord's command. *Neither did according to his will*, i. e., his declared will and purpose. *With many stripes*. Although the fixed number of stripes, according to the Mosaic jurisprudence, amounted to forty, (Deut. xxv. 2, 3,) it is of course understood that such determining of the number in this case would be in conflict with the spirit of the parable. But the same principle which is expressed, Deut. xxv. 2, namely, that a righteous relation must exist between the greatness of the offence and the punishment, is also emphasized here by the Saviour. See Num. xv. 30 ; John ix. 41, xv. 22 ; Acts xvii. 30 ; James iv. 17. *But he that knew not*, this refers to comparative and not absolute ignorance. In Rom. ii. 14, 15, it is clearly shown that none are absolutely devoid of the knowledge of God's will. God has not only bestowed on men the light of a special revelation, but also the light of conscience. Ignorance itself is guilt, and hence even sins committed in ignorance are punishable. All the subjects of a kingdom are under obligation to make themselves acquainted with its laws ; and misconduct, arising from neglect, is punishable guilt. Few expressions in the Bible are more

unfavorable to the heathen who die in ignorance of the gospel than this. In Rom. i. 20, the heathen are declared to be without excuse for sin, in consequence of the abundant knowledge of God, derived from the works of creation. *Did things worthy of stripes*: His acts of disobedience may have been even more glaring than those of his fellow-servant, who knew his lord's will, but his sins being comparatively unintentional, his punishment will be less severe, "he shall be beaten with few stripes." The discrimination here drawn, though in one view merciful, yet, in another, is full of terror, for whatever may be the case respecting past, forsaken, and repented sins of ignorance, no man is entitled to take comfort to himself from this passage, respecting his present or future course of life; the very thought of doing so proves that the person entertaining that thought has sufficient knowledge to place him beyond its favorable operation. We may infer from this passage, as well as from the grades of bliss and glory in the rewards of the righteous, 1 Cor. xv. 41, that there are different degrees of punishment among the lost. Here, also, is evidence that the souls of the ungodly are not *annihilated*, for, if they receive stripes, they must *know* it, and they must know also whether they are receiving *many* or *few*. *For unto whomsoever much is given*, &c. In this sentence our Lord lays down a great principle in His kingdom as an appropriate conclusion to the parable He has just been speaking. From it we learn, 1. That whatever we receive from God is both a gift and a talent. 2. That every one has received some gift or talent to improve for God. 3. That God's gifts or talents are not given to all in the same measure. 4. That, whether we receive little or much, all is in order to an account. 5. That, answerable to our present talents will be our future accounts. The greater opportunities a man has of knowing his duty, and the greater abilities he has for doing good, if he do it not, the greater will be his condemnation, because the neglect of his duty in this case cannot be without a great deal of wilfulness and contempt, which is a heinous aggravation. If our gifts are few and feeble, the less we have to account for; if they are greater than those of others, God expects we should do more good than those others. This principle of God's government is the principle on which *men* judicially act. It accords with the universal conscience and common sense. And if *men* universally know the principle, it is right that they should be judged as knowing it.

As we look at the sayings of our Lord which have just been explained, let us, like Peter, ask this question: "Speakest thou this parable unto us?" Surely the Lord speaks to *us* in *all* these parables. He tells us to be "*doing*" Christians, not merely intending, and hoping, and wishing, and feeling, and professing Christians, but working, practical, diligent, useful. Only the "*doing*" servant does Jesus call "*blessed*." It is an awful thought that our responsibility is in proportion to our knowledge. It will not do, to say in reference to God's will, as many do, "we know it," "we know it," secretly flattering themselves that their knowledge of that will makes them better than others; whereas, whilst that will is not done, it only increases their guilt, and will fearfully aggravate their final condemnation.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Why did Peter propose his question?
2. What does "this parable" include?
3. What is worthy of remark?
4. What was our Lord's reply?
5. What is said of this reply?
6. Explain "Who then is that faithful and wise steward?"
7. What is said of the "steward?"
8. What are we to understand by "over his household?"
9. What is here meant by the family?

10. What is meant by the "servant?"
11. What is the import of "blessed?"
12. What is meant by "when he cometh?"
13. What does "find so doing" refer to?
14. Explain, "ruler over all that he hath."
15. What is represented as the reward of fidelity?
16. Who is meant by "that servant?"
17. Explain "say in his heart my lord delayeth," &c.
18. What is said about Christ's coming?
19. Explain "shall begin to beat the men servants," &c.
20. Explain "to eat, and drink, and be drunken."
21. What is said of "cut him in sunder?"
22. With whom is that servant to have his portion appointed?
23. How is it here taught our Lord will judge His servants?
24. *When* has the unfaithful servant his portion appointed with hypocrites?
25. How did the Saviour, in verses 47 and 48, justify the sentence just passed, against the suspicion of too much severity?
26. What is said of "which knew his lord's will?"
27. What is meant by "prepared not himself," &c.?
28. What is said of "many stripes?"
29. Explain "But he that knew not."
30. Are any absolutely devoid of the knowledge of God's will?
31. Is ignorance itself guilt?
32. What is said of "did things worthy of stripes?"
33. What is said of "beaten with few stripes?"
34. What is said about different degrees of punishment among the lost?
35. Is there evidence here that the souls of the ungodly are not annihilated?
36. What does our Lord lay down in the words "For unto whomsoever much," &c.?
37. What five things do we learn from this principle?
38. Do men judicially act on this principle?
39. What does our Lord tell us to be?
40. What servant alone does Jesus call "blessed?"
41. What is said to be an awful thought?

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### LESSON LXXXI.

vs. 49-53.

49. ¶ "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?"

• Verse. 51.

A variety of opinions exists among commentators as to the meaning of the word "fire" in this verse. Some think it means "love;" some, "the persecutions, afflictions, dissensions and strifes, which were to accompany the introduction of the gospel into the world;" some, "the preaching of the gospel;" some, the "word of God;" some, "the Holy Spirit, referring to the day of Pentecost." We are disposed to think that the true, literal meaning of the passage is, "I am come to set the earth on fire; I am come to produce a general conflagration." If this be admitted to be the literal meaning of the terms, there can be very little difficulty in fixing on their

spiritual signification. They indicate that His religion, His doctrine, accompanied by His Spirit, should rapidly, and at length universally, overspread the world, diffuse itself among mankind, and either thoroughly impregnate with its own spirit or utterly consume all human institutions—purifying whatever will submit to purification, and destroying what is incapable of purification. "Fire" is, in Scripture, the emblem both of the word and of the Spirit of God. "Is not my word a fire and a hammer, breaking the rock in pieces?" The cloven tongues of fire, the forked lightning flames, which sat on the heads of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, were appropriate representations of the rapid dissemination of the doctrines they were to propagate, and the powerful destructive energy, with which they were instinct, against all the varied forms of evil. Acts ii. 3. In Ps. xcvi. 3, 4, where an account is given of the Father "bringing in his first-begotten into the world"—in other words, of Jesus Christ establishing by Divine power His kingdom among men—it is said, "Fire goeth before Him." "His lightnings enlighten the world." And in the Apocalypse, fire is said to proceed out of the mouth of the mystic witnesses, who speak His truth under the influence of His Spirit, and to consume their and His enemies. Rev. xi. 5. How remarkably has our Lord's declaration been accomplished! How striking is the fulfilment which even now is taking place! How rapidly did the sacred fire diffuse itself in the primitive ages! And how has it ever since gone forth purifying and consuming! *And what will I, if it be already kindled?* These words express desire, rather than exultation. *What will I, or, "What do I wish? but that it were already kindled," or, "What do I wish? O, that it were already kindled!"* The word rendered "if" is sometimes used to express desire: thus Balaam says, Numb. xxii. 29: "I would there were a sword in my hand;" literally, "if there were a sword in my hand." In Isaiah xlviii. 18, the word properly rendered by our translators, "O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments," is literally, "If thou hadst hearkened." And our Lord's words, Luke xix. 42, "If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" are obviously equivalent to, "O, that thou hadst known," &c.

50. But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xx. 23; Mark x. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Or, *patned.*

*But:* the force of this particle plainly is, these intense desires cannot immediately be gratified. In order to my doing what I am come to do, I must suffer, severely suffer. The baptism referred to is plainly not that of water, nor that of the Holy Ghost, but the baptism of suffering. See Mark x. 38. In calling His sufferings a "baptism," our Lord may refer, 1. To their origin. As the baptisms under the law were Divine appointments, so were His sufferings. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," (Acts ii. 23.) See, also, 1 Pet. i. 20; Acts iv. 26-28. 2. Their nature. As baptism marked the person and thing baptized as sacred, devoted to God, so our Lord's sufferings marked Him out as the "elect, righteous servant of God," employed by Him in the great work of man's redemption. 3. Their degree or severity. As some, though not all, the legal baptisms, were submersions; so, from the nature and number of Christ's sufferings, He may be said to have been plunged into an abyss of sufferings. *How am I straitened till it, that is, my baptism of suffering, be accomplished!* *How am I straitened*—compressed and grasped as if by a pressure enclosing on every side. The words, so far from denoting only a pressure of longing and desire, or merely oppression by anxiety and fear, mean both these states of feeling. They express the feelings with which we look forward to an event, in itself extremely disagreeable, abso-

lutely inevitable, and which, when taken in connection with its consequences, we do not wish to avoid. We may be assisted in forming a conception of the Saviour's state of mind at the moment He used these words, by endeavoring to realize the feelings of an advanced Christian in the immediate prospect of dissolution—dissolution likely to be the result of agonizing suffering. He instinctively shrinks from pain and death for their own sakes, but he knows that there is no entrance for him into heaven, to be with Christ, and to behold and share His glories, except through death, and the assured hope of obtaining this great honor and blessedness makes him more than willing to die, desirous "to depart, to be with Christ, which is far better." Still this desire has a very peculiar character, easily distinguishable from the desire of unmixed good. He is, as the Apostle says, Philip. i. 23, "in a strait betwixt two," even when desiring to depart. So Jesus, whilst realizing the dreadful agony through which He would pass, in bringing forth His Church by His pains, washing her in His blood, giving her life by His death, and establishing the kingdom and the glory of the Father by the sacrifice of Himself, was more than willing to suffer and to die. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame."

Let this disposition of the High Priest of good things to come, in not regarding His life, so He can but promote the glory of God and the salvation of sinners, be ours. Let His readiness to die for us be like a glowing coal in our memories, and constrain us to live to Him, and not to ourselves. Again and again should we examine ourselves, how far and how fast God's word is purifying us from the dross and corruption of sin.

51. 'Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; <sup>1</sup>but rather division.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 34; ver. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Mic. vii. 6; John vii. 43 and ix. 16 and x. 19.

52. 'For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 35.

53. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

*Suppose ye.* In Matt. x. 34, the phrase is, "Think not;" in either case, the words imply a disposition so to think, or imagine, and to act accordingly. "If, from the meekness of my character and my gospel you imagine that I am to send *peace*, not only in *spirit*, but in *result*, among mankind," "I tell you, *Nay*; but rather *division*." Is not the Lord Jesus called the Prince of *Peace*, and did not the angels join in chorus at his birth, saying, "*Peace* on earth, good will to men?" How, then, are we to understand the expression that *He came to give division*? We must distinguish between the intentional aim of Christ's coming, and the accidental effect of it. Christ's intentional aim was to plant, propagate, and promote peace in the world; but, through the lusts and corruption of men's natures, the issue and event of His coming is war and division, not that these are the genuine and natural fruits of the gospel, but occasional and accidental only. *Division* is not the legitimate effect of Christ's mission on the character and hearts of men, but is an abnormal consequence of their alienation and resistance. Division is not referred to as something good and desirable in itself, but as the only way in which Christ could erect His kingdom of peace here below upon an immovable foundation. When right goes forth into a world of wrong, there

must be war. Because Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, it cannot but be that torches of strife and funeral pyres should be kindled by its fiery glow. When the Holy One of God comes into personal contact with an unholy world, a shock and strife is inevitable; and that not only against Him personally, but also among men themselves, inasmuch as these begin to distinguish themselves into adversaries and subjects of His kingdom. See Luke ii. 34; John ix. 39.

Verses 52 and 53 are an amplification of the word *division*, as denoting discord and separation of the tenderest relations, some of which are specified with antique and scriptural simplicity and force. The expression, *fire in one house divided*, &c., and the expressions in the following verse, are not to be pressed too literally. In some houses there are not five persons; in others, there are more than five. In some families, where the work of conversion begins, the father and son are entirely of one mind, and so also are the mother and daughter. The expressions are manifestly proverbial. The plain lesson they are meant to convey is this, that the gospel will often produce divisions in families; and that even two persons who are most nearly related may become estranged from one another, in consequence of one being converted and the other not. That this is constantly the case is well known to all who know any thing of true religion. So faithful Abraham was divided against his father, the idolatrous Terah. So religion sets the pious child in opposition to the impious parent. So temperance sets the sober child at variance with the drunken father. So piety divides the fashionable, godless mother or mother-in-law, against the pious daughter or daughter-in-law, or the fashionable, frivolous daughter or daughter-in-law against the devoted mother or mother-in-law.

We find in the *Acts of the Apostles*, that wherever the gospel came, persecution was stirred up; *it was everywhere spoken against*, and there was *no small stir about that way*. The disciples of Christ, therefore, must not promise themselves peace on earth. They must also hold themselves ready to break any union, how close and natural soever it may be, when faith and the interests of God are in question. And those ministers whose preaching is marked by a carnal peace and a sensual repose, should earnestly inquire how far this effect may be attributable to their failure to proclaim the truth in all its plainness, purity, and power.

What could show in a stronger light the depravity of the human heart, than the fact that the world has not only *rejected* the gospel, but persecuted those few happy persons who have accepted it? In many families there are *none* who have embraced the gracious offer; in others there is *one* or *two* who have believed, while the rest despise both the message and those who believe it. *Nations* are divided in the same manner as *families*. *No wars* have been so bitter as *religious wars*; no persecutions have been so bloody as *religious persecutions*; or, rather, the persecutions *of* the religious. Shall we think ill of religion because these effects result from it? As well might we deem the medicines of the physician hurtful, because at first they often increase the sufferings of the patient. The Lord Jesus, who foresaw all events, *rejoiced* that His gospel would be preached in every land.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What various opinions exist as to the meaning of the word "fire"?
2. What is probably the true literal meaning of the passage?
3. What do the terms indicate?
4. Is fire, in the Scriptures, an emblem both of the word and Spirit of God?
5. What is said of the accomplishment of our Lord's declaration?
6. Explain the words, "what will I, if it be already kindled," &c.?
7. What is said of the word "if"?

8. What is the force of the particle "but?"
9. What is the baptism referred to?
10. In calling His sufferings a baptism, may our Lord refer to their origin?
11. May He refer to their nature?
12. May He refer to their degree?
13. What is meant by "till it be accomplished?"
14. How are we to understand "straitened?"
15. How may we be assisted in conceiving of our Lord's state of mind at the moment He used these words?
16. What is said of this disposition of Christ, as our High Priest?
17. Explain "suppose ye."
18. How are we to understand the expression that Jesus came to give division?
19. What is said of division?
20. Is division referred to as something good?
21. How is it referred to?
22. What is said of verses 52 and 53?
23. What is said of the expression, "five in one house," and the expressions in the following verses?
24. What are these expressions meant to teach?
25. Does the gospel often produce divisions in families?
26. What is said of Abraham?
27. What other examples are given?
28. What do we learn from the Acts of the Apostles?
29. What must the disciples of Jesus not promise themselves on earth?
30. What must they hold themselves ready to do?
31. What should those ministers do, whose preaching is marked by a carnal peace and a sensual repose?
32. What is said of the depravity of the human heart?
33. What is said of many families?
34. What is said of nations?
35. What is said of religious wars and persecutions?
36. Are we to think ill of religion because these effects result from it?

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## LESSON LXXXII.

vs. 54-59.

54. ¶ And he said also to the people, <sup>J</sup>when ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

<sup>J</sup> Matt. xvi. 2

55. And <sup>\*</sup>when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.

<sup>\*</sup> Job xxxvii. 17.

Having addressed His disciples, Christ now addresses *the people*, the immense multitude who surrounded Him, and who were pressed so closely together that they trode upon each other. The address is a general rebuke of the blindness of the Jewish nation, in not seeing the signs of the times, and the fulfilment of prophecy, and a general exhortation to seek reconciliation with God before it be too late. *When ye see a cloud.* The cloud which

rose out of the west, on the side of the Mediterranean sea lying on the west of the whole Jewish territory, was regarded as a sign of approaching rain. 1 Kings xviii. 44; while the south wind from the great wilderness of Sinai and hot deserts of Arabia, lying to the south of the Jewish territory, was considered as a sign of heat to be expected, Job xxxvii. 17, and the people accordingly either housed their hay and corn or threw it abroad, and equipped themselves for a journey, according as they foresaw the weather would be.

56. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

57. Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

Our Lord rebukes their inconsistency or disproportionate regard to lower interests, by pointedly contrasting their facility and skill in judging of the weather with their real or pretended want of evidence in His case as the promised Messiah. *Do not discern this time?* There are certain signs by which reflecting minds might discover the kind of *time* that is approaching. When the time for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt drew nigh, the parents of Moses knew it was near, and Moses knew it also, but the Israelites understood not the signs of that time. When the captivity of Babylon drew nigh, the people of God knew the time, but the world knew it not. When the time for Israel's release approached, Daniel knew it, but many of the captives knew it not. When, in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, some were prepared to receive Him. Simeon and Anna knew the signs of the time, and spoke of Jesus to those who *looked for redemption* in Israel, but the world knew not the signs of the time. Our Lord here rebuked the multitude for not discerning *this time*, as the time of the Messiah's appearing, and He called them *hypocrites*, that is, dissemblers or deceivers, a term entirely appropriate to them as men who could foretell the changes of the weather by its dubious and variable signs, and yet were not able to discern that the time had come when the Messiah long promised in the Scriptures and expected by the people should appear; all this, too, in face of the facts, that Daniel's seventy weeks of years were drawing to a close, at which time the Messiah was to appear, and the sceptre was departing from Judah, at which time their predicted Shiloh was to come, and the harbinger of the Messiah had appeared and warned them all with his warnings, and Herod, alarmed by a sign from the sky, had summoned the Sanhedrim to inform him of the place of the Messiah's birth, and there was a general presentiment prevalent through the east that the great *One* was about to appear, and *He* was now before them, as One who, by their recorded pedigrees of the line of David, was proving by miracles—miracles which they confessed were such as no power less than the highest spiritual agent could perform—that *He* was the Messiah of prophecy.

The mind of man has but little insight into the things of God, because it applies itself but little to them, and is diverted from them by his passions; but in those of nature, and of the present life, it is very discerning, because his curiosity, interest, and other passions give a relish to the study of these things, and make them grateful to his understanding or senses. It is unspeakably important for any one to be able to discern the time of repentance and mercy, which incessantly glides away. It is prophesied in Daniel, that the wise shall understand, but none of the wicked shall understand. (See Dan. xii. 10.) The wicked shall go on doing wickedly, just as the people did before the flood.

*Yea, and why even of yourselves, &c.* Our Lord does not here mean to say that the Jews could understand spiritual things, and see the kingdom of God

by their own unassisted judgment, and without the teaching of the Holy Ghost. His meaning is, "Why do ye not of yourselves, by simply observing what is going on around you, form a right judgment about my claim to be received as the Messiah, and a just decision upon the matters in dispute between me and your teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees?" Righteousness and truth seldom find admittance into the minds of men, unless some interest open their eyes, or grace work this miracle. Very often a little reflection upon ourselves, and upon our ordinary conduct, would enable us to judge what we ought to do in order to our salvation, but even this reflection, which we think need cost nothing, is only to be obtained by the gift of God. We ought not to be so much under the control of our teachers, as not to venture to think and judge for ourselves, when this is really necessary.

58. ¶ <sup>k</sup>When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, <sup>l</sup>as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

<sup>k</sup> Prov. xxv. 8; Matt. v. 26.

<sup>l</sup> See Ps. xxxii. 6; Is. lv. 6.

59. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last <sup>m</sup>mite.

<sup>m</sup> See Mark xii. 42.

This is repeated from the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. v. 25, 26, with a slight verbal variation. By some the verses have been interpreted as containing a counsel of prudence with regard to the management of differences, an advice to avoid as much as possible going into law courts to have them decided. Such a counsel will be readily admitted by all to be a wise one, and it could scarcely be couched in more appropriate terms. But such a mode of interpretation, it seems to us, strangely breaks the train of our Lord's illustration, and weakens the force of His argument, besides making the explication of the verses themselves exceedingly perplexed. An example is here given of what His hearers should do in relation to their exposure to the righteous judgment of God, if they brought to the consideration of spiritual things the same prudence, forethought, and energy of action, which marked their conduct in human affairs. And thus the charge of moral blindness and dulness, in relation to the ways and works of God then in process of development, is illustrated and confirmed. The solemn duty of seeking timely reconciliation with God is enforced. *When, that is, for instance when. Adversary, a plaintiff at law, to whom a debt, or payment of penalty is due. Magistrate, "as thou art in the way," to the place of trial, an allusion to the Roman law, by which the plaintiff himself seized the defendant and drew him before the court for trial. Give diligence, take pains, do thine utmost, that thou mayest be delivered from him, rescued from his demand, lest he hale thee to the judge, by prosecution or complaint, deliver thee to the officer, by passing sentence, and ordering the ministerial attendants to execute it, and those attendants cast thee into prison. Thou shalt not depart thence, thou shalt not be freed from incarceration, till thou hast paid—though it implies the possibility of paying, at the same time suggests the debtor's hopeless capacity to make it—the very last mite; the coin mentioned is of much less value than our cent, and therefore was adapted to convey what is here the essential idea, that of an infinitesimal residuum. The whole is a symbolical representation of Divine judgment. The adversary stands for the law of God, under the condemnation of which we are on account of our sins, a condemnation from which nothing but the intervention of the Saviour could deliver us; the way stands for the brief period of our probation; the judge*

is the Son of man, at His coming; the *officer* is the judicial angel, Matt. xxv. 31; the *prison* is hell. The attempt to sustain the doctrine of purgatory from the words, *not depart thence, till thou hast paid, &c.*, is vain. Such an argument would prove many absurdities, if applied to other texts where the expression "until" is used. See Pa. lxxii. 7, cx. 1, and Matt. i. 25.

It is of immense importance that we seek reconciliation with God before it be too late. His law is against us, and contrary to us, and its demands must be satisfied. We are moving on to the judgment. There is not one moment to be lost, since we cannot be certain of one moment. We ought, therefore, to be in the greatest earnest in seeking pardon and forgiveness through the blood of Christ. When we are once out of the way of repentance and mercy, what can we expect but the rigor of an inflexible justice?

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Whom does Christ now address?
2. What is the nature of the address?
3. Explain "when ye see a cloud."
4. What is said of "the south wind?"
5. What did our Lord rebuke in the people?
6. Explain "do not discern this time."
7. What is said of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt?
8. What is said of the captivity of Babylon?
9. What is said of Daniel?
10. What is said of Simeon and Anna?
11. What did our Lord rebuke the multitude for?
12. What does the word "hypocrites" mean?
13. Why was this term appropriate to them?
14. What things rendered it probable that they would discern that the time for the Messiah's appearing had come?
15. Why has the mind of man but little insight into the things of God?
16. What time is it unspeakably important to discern?
17. What is prophesied in Daniel?
18. What does our Lord not mean to say in verse 57?
19. What is His meaning?
20. What is said of righteousness and truth?
21. What is said about the control of our teachers?
22. What is said of verses 58 and 59?
23. How have they been interpreted by some?
24. What is said of such a counsel?
25. What is said of this mode of interpretation?
26. What does our Lord here give an example of?
27. Explain the words and phrases used.
28. What is said of the word "mite?"
29. What is the whole a symbolical representation of?
30. What are we to understand by the "adversary?"
31. What, by *the way*?
32. What, by *the judge*?
33. What, by *the officer*?
34. What, by *the prison*?
35. What is said of the doctrine of purgatory?
36. What is said to be of immense importance?
37. What is said to illustrate this importance?

CHAPTER XIII.

LESSON LXXXIII.

vs. 1-9.

AT the solemn close of the discourse of the last Chapter, the assembled myriads broke up their congregation, but a lesser circle remained round our Lord, with whom a colloquy now ensued. The incident with which this Chapter opens is connected with the foregoing discourse by the words, *at that season*, (more literally, *on that same occasion*.) Some persons who, perhaps, had arrived lately from Jerusalem, reported the slaughter which had just been committed there by Pilate, of certain Galileans. Perhaps they wished to get Christ's judgment on the matter, and thus lead Him into a snare. This led to the solemn admonition which Jesus uttered.

1. There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

*Galileans.* There were two eminent sects among the Jews in our Saviour's time, namely, the Herodians and the Galileans. The former stood stiffly for having tribute paid to the Roman emperor, whose subjects the Jews now were; but the Galileans (so called probably from Judas of Galilee, mentioned *Acts v. 37*) opposed this tribute, and often raised rebellion against the Roman power. The heads of this party, Judas and his coadjutor, Sadduc, were put down by the Romans, and measures of active opposition suppressed; but the party still survived, and it is fair enough to conclude that the Galileans here mentioned belonged to this party, and having by some acts or declarations made their principles known, were slain by Pilate, when they had proceeded to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. They were in the court of the temple, near the great altar, and probably the process of slaying their sacrificial victims was going on. How they were slain is not stated, but from the tower of Antonia, which had been so built as to command the temple, for the purpose of instantly repressing all tumults and seditions, for which its courts rendered it a favorite and advantageous place, it would be easy for Pilate to pour a destructive volley upon the occupants of any part. *Mingled with their sacrifices.* An arrowy shower of death upon the Galileans would cause the blood of the sacrificers and of their sacrifices to blend in the same stream. This massacre, besides being intrinsically a heinous crime, had its hideousness increased by being perpetrated where and when it was.

2. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

3. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

The Jews held, that whosoever was prosperous in this world was acceptable to God, but that he who was unfortunate was a sinner. John ix. 2, 3. In all probability those who brought this intelligence to our Lord were

involved in the common error that sudden deaths were special proofs of the Divine displeasure. In their opinion, the fate of these Galileans was to be taken as an example of the punitive righteousness of God, while at the same time they manifested the perversity of the human heart, which, though it is ready enough to judge others, is equally ready to overlook its own guilt and liability to punishment. Jesus, therefore, considered it necessary to contradict the erroneous fancy that these Galileans were in any way stamped as greater sinners than all others by the judgment that had befallen them, and made a general application of this particular case, saying, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*. The *likewise* does not imply that they would die by a shot from Pilate, but under God's wrath.

From these verses we learn : 1. That a violent and sudden death is no evidence of God's displeasure. 2. That people are more ready to talk of the deaths of others than their own. A murder, a sudden death, a shipwreck, or a railway accident, will completely occupy the minds of a neighborhood, and be in the mouth of every one you meet. And yet these very persons dislike talking of their own deaths, and their own prospects in the world beyond the grave. Such is human nature in every age. 3. That though no man suffers without being a sinner, *they* are not to be regarded as the greatest sinners who suffer most in this life. Whilst it is true that even temporal suffering is a penalty for wickedness, and that all mankind are sufferers because they are sinners, it is not true that the greater sufferings are proof of the greater guilt. It is only in the next world that God punishes with the view chiefly of inflicting punishment, and that His justice proportions the punishment to the sin. Here the punishment proceeds, either from His mercy, which would fain save the sinner, or from His holiness, which purifies believers, or from His Providence, which establishes the belief of His justice, or from His wisdom, which, by means of fear, puts a stop to sin. 4. To repent is not a matter of counsel, but of absolute necessity. He who defers doing it, hazards no less than eternity. He who dies without doing it, must perish eternally. This was to be the doom of the Judeans and Jerusalemites as *individuals*, however true it was also prophetically of the tremendous slaughter of the Jews by the Romans under Titus, which was to take place in a few years at the siege of Jerusalem, and it is true of every man. Repentance, beginning with knowledge of sin, going on to work sorrow for sin, leading to confession of sin before God, showing itself by a thorough breaking off from sin, resulting in a habit of deep hatred for all sins, and, above all, inseparably connected with lively faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—this repentance must be ours, if we would escape the perdition of ungodly men. Without repentance toward God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, no man can be saved.

4. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were \*sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

\* Or, *debtors*, Matt. xviii. 24; Luke xi. 4.

5. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Here, again, we know nothing about the circumstance to which our Lord refers. It is probable that it was something which had lately happened, and was the common subject among dwellers in Jerusalem, just as any grave accident is among ourselves at the present day. *The tower in Siloam*. This tower, no doubt, stood near the pool of that name, which was the only one whose waters gladdened the city, and flowed at the base of Mount Moriah,

to the southeast. These and other similar instances in which our Lord avails Himself of recent occurrences, which were doubtless the subjects of general conversation, to give point or illustration to His instructions, are of much interest, and must have made a strong impression upon His actual auditors. In this illustration, as in the one preceding it, our Lord teaches that casualties or calamities, whether such as are inflicted instrumentally by man, or such as come more directly from the hand of Providence, though indeed they are a part of the general suffering which sin has entailed upon the race, are not to be especially referred to as proofs of the aggravated character of the sins of those who are the subjects of them. Job's friends made a grand mistake in regarding his overwhelming calamities as a special judgment, in view of some great sin of which he must have been guilty. Job xxii. 5, 16. The same tendency thus to judge prevailed among the Jews and is very common. It is said that the present feeling in Western Asia—that is, among the Mohammedans—is somewhat different, every one who is slain by the fall of walls or buildings being regarded as a martyr.

*I tell you, Nay, &c.* The repetition of this sentence shows the general importance of repentance. Philip Henry is represented as having said, "Some people do not like to hear much of repentance. But I think it so necessary, that if I should die in the pulpit, I should desire to die preaching repentance, and if I should die out of the pulpit, I should desire to die practising it." The word *likewise* is not to be pressed to signify precisely the same kind of death which the *eighteen* suffered by the falling of the tower, although this was doubtless true of many, who fell before the Roman sword, in the sanguinary scenes which followed; the similarity consisted rather in the completeness and awful nature of the ruin which was to come upon them, and the passage cannot be limited to the temporal judgments impending over the nation, but has a higher and more awful import in the judgments which will overtake the finally impenitent in the world to come. There is no medium: either repentance or damnation. It is a small thing to perish in the ruins of a city, as the Jews did, or in the ruins of the world, as at the last day, if a man has taken timely care to secure his soul by repentance; but how great must be the despair when the first death is followed by the second! (See Notes on verses 2 and 3.)

6. ¶ He spake also this parable; \*A certain *man* had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

\* *Lu. v. 2; Matt. xxi. 19.*

What may be called the text or key-note of this parable is found in the verses immediately preceding, 4 and 5. The narrators of the massacre of the Galileans by Pilate had mentioned the event, not for its own sake, but for the purpose of supporting a doctrine which the narrators held and desired to establish. In the spirit which ever led them to turn every thing to the account of their own self-righteousness, they drew the inference that those who were slain, and whose destruction was so sudden, were signally guilty, and they themselves, whose lives were spared, were signally virtuous. This inference they did not express, and perhaps did not distinctly frame, even in thought, but they solaced themselves with it notwithstanding: *they* were not visited by such calamities, and, therefore, it might be presumed they were not chargeable with such sins. Our Lord expressly denied the truth of their silent, hidden inference, and fortified this teaching by reference to another analogous case—the sudden death of the *eighteen* through the fall of a tower. Leaving untouched the general doctrine that mankind suffer for sin, He clearly and emphatically taught that particular calamities do not measure or prove the particular guilt of those who suffer them. Then, by the words,

*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* He indicated to the Jews that the sudden and unexpected destruction of those sacrificing Galileans was but an emblem of the sudden and unexpected destruction that would overtake themselves, if they were not converted in time, and shielded in mercy from the judgment that sin entailed. This lesson is repeated, expanded, and enforced in the parable. *And he spake also this parable.* It should not be overlooked how significantly typical the figure was which was employed by our Lord to represent the rapidly approaching overthrow of the Jewish nation, in righteous vengeance, for their deep and wide-spread corruption, and their inconsiderate and obstinate impenitence, notwithstanding the many provisions made by God for their improvement. For though that fig-tree, the Jewish nation, has been cut down, the *roots* are yet left in the earth, and the



FIG-TREE.

words of Job may be applied to that afflicted people: "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branches thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof was old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of *water*, it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant." (Job xiv. 7-9.)

But whilst this parable referred to the Jews as a nation, it is not meant for them only. As God still manifests the riches of His compassion to all the impenitent—as in His patience and long suffering, in His holiness and justice, He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever—as in the naturally corrupt state of the human heart, the same levity and inattention to the manifestations of Divine grace is ever and anon repeated—as proper repentance is at all times in the Divine economy the means of deliverance, but impenitence is perpetually ruinous—therefore the parable possesses a much wider and more general application. It refers to every individual in every age, and in every country, enjoying the means of grace. Indeed there is a personal application made of the image which supplies the ground-work of the parable, by the Baptist, Matt. iii. 10, and of an image very nearly the same by Christ Himself. John xv. 2.

*A certain man, that is, God, had a fig-tree planted.* As the fig-tree is a fruit-tree, which should bear fine fruit, and besides was planted in a vineyard

and treated with special care, this represents the favorable circumstances and relations which the mercy of God had granted to Israel, His design to obtain fruit from the tree, and the just expectation of the same. In the Scriptures men are frequently compared to trees, and their work to fruit. (Ps. i. 8; Jer. xvii. 8; Luke vi. 43; John xv. 2, 4, 5; Rom. vii. 4.) And there is a deep significance in this simple image, inasmuch as fruit on a tree is not something tied on from without, but is something originated by the vital sap from within. As fruit is the exponent of the inner substance of the tree itself, this comparison helps greatly to set forth the true relation between faith and works, which relation is, in fact, just as plainly elsewhere declared by our Lord. Luke vi. 43. Whatever the man is, that the works are; whatever his inner life is, that his outer conduct will be.

There are three sorts of works mentioned in Scripture, all of which may be illustrated from this image: first, *wicked* works, the fruit of a corrupt tree; secondly, *dead* works, those that have the appearance of good works, but are merely put on from without; thirdly, *good* works, the outward proofs visible to the world of a good and pure tree, *i. e.*, of a good and holy heart. (John vi. 28; Tit. ii. 7; 1 Tim. ii. 10; 1 Thess. i. 8.) *In his vineyard.* We need give ourselves no trouble as to what the vineyard means. The introduction of this feature in the parable is evidently designed to show that the tree had a position in favorable soil, and where it was prominently exposed to the view of the owner, as he passed along through his vineyard inspecting its condition, and seeing what fruit was ripening for his use. Besides the life and faculties which they possess in common with others, those who dwell in Christian lands have spiritual privileges which are peculiar to themselves. Civil and religious liberty, the Scriptures, the Sabbath, the Church, place us in the position of the fig-tree within the vineyard, while other nations, destitute of these privileges, are more or less like a tree rooted in the sand, or exposed on the way-side. *And he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.* Here is a description of the ingratitude and impenitence of those for whom God had done so much. Long before, the prophets had upbraided their people with thanklessness and disobedience. And, at the time of Jesus, Israel was actually in the condition of deep moral corruption, excessive wickedness, and hypocrisy reigned almost in every heart. God who gives us our advantages, that we might bear fruit unto holiness, has His eye upon us, and expects this result, and has a right to expect it.

7. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

*The dresser*, manifestly the Son of God, Himself, the intercessor for men. Job xxxiii. 23; Zech. i. 12; Heb. vii. 25. *Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit, and find none*: a lively representation of the numerous attempts and movements of God to remind sinners of their obligation to comply with His gracious design. He comes always anew in His word, by means of conscience, and through other media. Along with this, however, we have here depicted the patience and long-suffering of God, which waits for the expected fruits. 2 Pet. iii. 15, Rom. ii. 4. *These three years* have had various interpretations given them. They have been regarded by various Commentators as signifying, "the times of Israel before the law, in the law, and after the law;" "the times of natural law, of written law, and of evangelical law;" "the times of children, of youth, and of old age;" "the times before the Babylonian captivity, the times after the return from Babylon, and the times of our Lord's own first advent." Others apply them to the three years of our Lord's earthly ministry. If any of these senses is true, the last appears

most likely. It may, however, be seriously questioned, whether our Lord had any of these meanings in His mind. A definite time had to be mentioned to give verisimilitude to the parable. *Three years* seems to have been selected as a number neither too great nor too small. A tree may for some reason remain barren for one, or even two years. But if it be fruit-bearing, it will hardly remain barren the third year. Yet that, in extreme cases, this was so, is evident from the plea of the dresser, to spare it another year, in hopes of bringing it by extra culture into a productive state.

*I come.* This is a verb of *continuity*. During the whole three years, again and again *have I been coming*. The visits of God are secret and unrecognized, though they be ever recurring. *Seeking fruit.* The Master seeks, and seeks from season to season. There may be no fruit, there may be leaves, there may be the leafless branch; in either case He departs in sorrowful disappointment. *Cumbereth, rather, makes sterile.* The sinner can never sin by omission alone. He will commit positive sin, and produce positive evil and destruction. Public chastisements, calamities, and diseases are so many admonitions from God in order to our conversion, and threaten us with His wrath and indignation. They are the voice of God, and when we are deaf to them, it is He whom we refuse to hear. Life is conferred upon us, to no other end but that we should serve God, exercise repentance, and work out our own salvation. He who does no part of this, well deserves to have it immediately cut off and taken from him.

8. And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it :

9. And if it bear fruit, *well* : and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

*Let it alone.* It is the voice of the Intercessor. No worth or worthiness in the sinner preserves him. He lives upon sufferance, and dies when the pleading voice becomes silent. *This year also,* seems to imply that it was not the first time the owner had threatened to cut down the tree, but was induced to let it remain by the entreaty of the dresser of the vineyard. *Dig about it, &c.* Three things were necessary to the cultivation of the fig-tree—digging, dunging, and watering, and especially the first. We are told that fig-trees exhaust the soil. *If it bear fruit, well.* In that case there will be no occasion to remove the tree. *And if not, then after that, &c.* Future time is here specified, but it is left indefinite. One thing was certain, if the tree afterward continued unproductive, it was to be cut down. The decree had gone forth. Even He who was the impersonation of love, the Intercessor, had yielded so far as to say, *after that thou shalt cut it down.* *And if, and if not.* Upon these two *ifs* hang eternity. The patience of God with respect to sinners is one of the most surprising things imaginable, when we consider what God and what the sinner is; and yet how few frequently think of this, adore it, render thanks for it, and cooperate with it! But this patience, though great, and of long continuance, is wearied out at last, when it has no effect upon sinners.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said in the introduction to this chapter?
2. What is said of two eminent sects in our Saviour's time?
3. What is said of the former?
4. What of the Galileans?
5. Who were the Galileans here mentioned?
6. Where were they?
7. What is meant by "mingled with their sacrifices?"

8. What did the Jews think of prosperity in this world?
9. In what error were those probably involved who brought this intelligence to our Lord?
10. Did Jesus aim to correct this error?
11. State in their order the lessons we learn from verses 1 and 2.
12. What circumstance is referred to in verse 4?
13. What is said of "the tower in Siloam?"
14. What is said of our Lord referring to recent occurrences?
15. What does our Lord teach in these two illustrations?
16. What does the repetition of "I tell you, Nay," &c., show?
17. What reference is made to Philip Henry?
18. What is said of the word "likewise?"
19. What is the alternative to which we are shut up?
20. What is the key-note of the parable commencing in verse 6?
21. What is said about the figure employed by our Lord?
22. Was this parable meant for the Jews only?
23. To whom does it refer?
24. Who is meant by "a certain man?"
25. What does the tree being planted in the vineyard represent?
26. Are men frequently compared to trees in the Scriptures?
27. What deep significance is there in this image?
28. What three sorts of works are mentioned in Scripture?
29. What is said of the vineyard?
30. What, of "came and sought fruit," &c.?
31. Has God His eye upon us?
32. Who was "the dresser?"
33. What is said of "Behold these three years," &c.?
34. How have these three years been regarded?
35. Why, probably, were three mentioned?
36. What is said of "I come?"
37. What, of "cumbereth," &c.?
38. Whose voice do we recognize in "let it alone?"
39. What is implied in "this year also?"
40. What is said of "if not, then after that," &c.?

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LESSON LXXXIV.

vs. 10-17.

10. ¶ And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.

The narrative of the healing of the infirm woman is peculiar to Luke. The time when it was performed is not stated. It seems to have taken place after our Lord had taken his final leave of Galilee, and had retired to the region beyond Jordan. This conjecture is strengthened by the fact that it immediately precedes, and is thus connected with, our Lord's journeying towards Jerusalem. See ver. 22. Frequent reference is made to His attending the services of the synagogue on the Sabbath days: these services consisted of prayers, reading the Scriptures, and preaching, or expounding the law. We should make conscience of attending the house of God, as we have opportunity, and not think we can spend the Sabbath as well at home in reading a good book; for religious assemblies are a Divine institution;

we must give our testimony to them, however small the number may be of which they consist. *Was teaching* denotes a continuing act. *He still taught the people knowledge.* He was in His element when teaching.

11. And behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in nowise lift up *herself*.

The woman was present, with the other worshippers, in the synagogue. *Spirit of infirmity.* Had we only these words, we might be doubtful whether Luke meant to trace up her complaint to any other cause beyond the natural causes, whence flow the weakness and sufferings which afflict our race. But our Lord's words, *whom Satan hath bound*, ver. 16, are more explicit, and leave no doubt of His meaning. The power of wicked spirits to produce disease is abundantly shown in the word of God. Mark x. 1; Acts x. 38; 2 Cor. xii. 7; Job ii. 7. Though this woman should be classed with those possessed by evil spirits, the type of her possession was much milder than that of most, as is shown by her permitted presence at the public worship of God. Her affliction had lasted for the long period of *eighteen years*. Her nervous energies were so weakened that she could not stand erect. She was *bowed together*, bent down to the earth, a situation equally painful and humiliating, the *violence* of which she could not support, and the *shame* of which she could not conceal. She could in no case stand straight, or look toward heaven.

Sin is the origin of all our diseases and afflictions. Had this never entered into the world, there had been neither pain, distortion, nor death. Many persons are called to peculiarly painful and protracted sufferings. Can we look back to uninterrupted years of health and activity? What cause for thankfulness! Of the intensity of diabolical hate we can scarcely form an adequate idea, but who can doubt its existence in the mind of him who felt a malicious delight in the fearful agonies of the Son of God? His meat and his drink is to oppose the Almighty, while the sufferings of God's creatures ever add additional relish to his infernal repast. There are many things in this sad world which make the heart of man to stoop, tinge his head with grey, and cause his body prematurely to bend towards that kindred earth, where, sooner or later, he must find for a time his last home. The power of Satan binds the *souls* of sensual men to the earth. They are unable to look up to the God above them. It is the power of the Redeemer that can loosen their bonds, if they apply to Him, and give them power to raise themselves up, and to use their tongues in praise of His strange mercy. Some poor cripples are afraid of venturing out of their houses, lest they should meet with scornful looks or unfeeling remarks. But this afflicted woman was not restrained by such fears from entering the public congregation. With pain and difficulty she must have reached the place of worship. Yet she was truly blessed in her deed. She found a rich reward for all her pains. She came sorrowing, and went home rejoicing. How does the conduct of this suffering Jewess put to shame many a strong and healthily professing Christian, that allow frivolous excuses to keep them away from the house of God! Souls that thirst after God spare no pains to get a refreshing draught from the wells of salvation. The man who can find no pleasure in giving God one day in the week is manifestly unfit for heaven. Heaven itself is nothing but an eternal Sabbath.

12. And when Jesus saw her, he called *her to him*, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

The objects that attracted the Saviour's eye were those that the world

overlooks, or even derides. *When Jesus saw her.* Had He not seen her before? Yes; doubtless, her history was well known to Him. As the long years of her suffering passed tediously along, she could scarcely help thinking that her sorrows were overlooked; but the days of her affliction were numbered. He who counted the stars will not be too late, either to confound her adversary, or loosen her bonds. She was a "*daughter of Abraham,*" and that stooping and oft-weary body was His temple; He knew the place well, and it had long been determined that Satan's cruel work should all be undone. Upon that distorted body the curious had often gazed, and ignorant mirth had sometimes pointed the finger of scorn, the wise had pondered *the cause* of her infirmity, and the benevolent expressed a passing regret. But now ONE saw her, who would not only look, but help; not speak, but cure. *He called her to Him.* She did not apply to Him for relief; perhaps she did not know that He would be at the synagogue; and as she could not lift herself up, she may never have seen His gracious countenance. But her heart and her distress spoke loudly, though her lips were silent; and, as she was thus calling for help, the Saviour called her to Himself that she might receive help. How must she have felt when she heard the Lord Jesus desire her to approach. If our Lord does so much for a person when unsolicited, how much more will He do for those who call upon Him in prayer! *And said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.* Satan's grasp had fastened and tied her down with stiffened sinews and muscles; but now she was LOOSED from her infirmity, the nature of her disease rendering this form of address appropriate. O, what a surprise, what a deliverance was this! How unexpected, how free! Her only merit was disease; but one word brings her cure.

13. <sup>b</sup>And he laid *his* hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

<sup>b</sup> Mark xvi. 18; Acts ix. 17.

The hand of Christ's *holiness terrified*, and the hand of his *power expelled*, the demon. The imposition of His hands may also have been intended to confirm the woman's faith, and rendered the cure, in the eyes of the spectators, palpable and unmistakable as to its source: *immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.* She at once stood erect before them all, in the vigor of health, and free from the oppressions of Satan, and full of joy and gratitude, she broke forth in devout praise to God for her instant and wonderful cure. It will be noticed that this cure was, 1. A *speedy* one: it was done in an instant. 2. It was a *perfect* one: the woman was made *completely* whole. 3. It was a *public* one: there were many to attest and render it credible. 4. It was a *stable* and *permanent* one: she was *loosed*, forever loosed from her infirmity. 5. Her soul partook of the good done to her body: *she glorified God.*

Have we seen others recover, whilst we still continue in affliction? Let us bear the burden that is laid upon us, with humble submission and cheerful hope. Should our trouble continue to the end of life, if we are true believers in the Saviour, it will at last be found, that "our light afflictions," which were for a moment, have worked for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. iv. 17. The case before us seems an emblem of that more glorious day when the people of God will be made free forever from the bondage of corruption, and will receive from their Lord the assurance of His everlasting favor. *Then*, how short will all their past trials appear! Whether they lasted eighteen or *eighty* years, the time will appear as a dream when one waketh.

There are drooping *souls* now, who stoop by the way, and who in bondage through fear can scarcely look up, who feel their bonds, and sigh for relief,

who carry their chains, and cannot get free. Let us point such to Christ, let us speak of His blood, let us tell them of His grace, and of His power to save. Has Christ made us free? Has his love melted our chains? And shall we be silent among the captives of Satan? All our movements should declare, and all our words loudly proclaim, that Jesus has redeemed us, and lives to loosen the bound. We need not doubt that this mighty miracle was intended to supply hope and comfort to sin-diseased souls. With Christ nothing is impossible. He can soften the hardest hearts, and bend the most stubborn will. He can enable sinners who have long been poring over earthly things, or wasting themselves in soul-defiling excesses, to look upward to heaven, and see the kingdom of God. Let us never, therefore, despair about the salvation of others so long as they live, but pray on, labor on, and faint not. Jesus is "able to save to the uttermost."

14. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, "There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day.

<sup>c</sup> Exod. xx. 9.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. xii. 10; Mark iii. 2; Luke vi. 7 and xiv. 3.

There were some present who, instead of being touched by the sight of the woman's joy, were filled with indignation. *The ruler of the synagogue* was one of these. He had not dared to prevent the Lord from teaching in the synagogue, because he knew the admiration in which He was held by the people. But now he could no longer restrain his rage, and he angrily addressed the congregation loud enough for Jesus to hear him, saying, *There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day.* The people had *not* come to the synagogue *in order* to be healed, they had come to worship God. The ruler knew this, but he only sought for some *pretence* to hinder the glorious triumphs of the Redeemer: *there are six days, &c.*, the bitterness and sarcasm of this unhappy speech are very remarkable, and show that the wonderful miracle the man had just witnessed, instead of convincing him that Jesus was the Messiah, called forth the corruption of his heart. He affected to be hurt at what he chose to consider a desecration of the Sabbath, but the true reason for his indignation was the fact that Christ was glorified. He feared the effect of the miracle which had just been wrought, and under the influence of this fear, he covertly and meanly endeavored to convey the impression, that the cure performed by our Lord was not supernatural, but such as those effected by human agency, and not therefore to be distinguished from the common medical treatment of patients.

There is no person so holy, no action so innocent, but that may fall under unjust censure, especially where malice and ignorance are combined. Religion often serves to cover envy and avarice, and we should be on our guard against this sort of imposture. Great pretenders for the sanctification of the Sabbath, blind judges of the works of God, unjust accusers of God's people, and ignorant interpreters of His law, often confound the servile works of men with the works of God, mercenary employments with acts of charity, and common labor with necessary assistance and relief. The one are forbidden to be exercised on the Sabbath-day, the other are the completion of the law, the sanctification of the Sabbath, and that very rest which God commands to be observed, which consists in resting in Him by holiness and charity.

15. The Lord then answered him, and said, *Thou hypocrite,*

'doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead *him* away to watering?

• Ch. xiv. 5.

16. And ought not this woman, 'being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day?

† Ch. xix. 9.

It was foolish ever to attempt to argue against the Lord of all wisdom. By one word He could confound His most subtle adversaries. In this instance He vindicated His action most triumphantly, making Himself to be heard as Lord of the Sabbath, and that in figurative language similar to that which He had already more than once used in a case of this kind. He did not defend His breaking the Sabbath, but declared that He had not broken it. *Lord*. This title well accords with the assertion of authority, and the tone of the rebuke now assumed by Jesus. "*Thou hypocrite,*" literally, hypocrite! This cavilling at healing on the Sabbath-day was one of the stereotype tests of the hypocrite. The epithet, though severe, was spoken in love, and precisely suited the case, for the man was not disturbed because the Sabbath was violated, but because Christ was glorified, and besides, not daring directly to find fault with the Lord, he sought obliquely to reach him through the people, who were now under his influence, and whom he feared less. *Doth not each one of you on the Sabbath, &c.* The Talmud states that a beast might be led forth to watering on the Sabbath-day, so that it bore no other burden than its collar and halter. Indeed, it was held lawful to draw water for them and pour it into the trough, but it was not lawful to bear water to the beast, which must be led to the well, pool, or river, and watered there. *And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, &c.* It is not easy to doubt that this woman was not only a natural descendant of Abraham but his daughter by spiritual relation, in the highest sense of the term. Gal. iii. 7. This would appear from the fact that the Saviour did not once ask her as to her faith, doubtless because He had already read this in her heart, nor say to her, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" while besides, her glorifying of God immediately after the miracle indicated her devout disposition of soul. Then, too, when Zaccheus was converted, our Lord said, "He also is a son of Abraham." Luke xix. 9. Our Lord's reasoning was this: Is your loosing and watering the beast a work of necessity? much more is mine. Is yours a work of mercy? mine much more. Your compassion is to a beast, mine to a rational creature, to a woman, and that not a stranger, an heathen woman, but one of your own, a Jewish woman, a daughter of Abraham: nor this only, my work was one of far greater necessity, and more special mercy than yours, for the beast might live a day without water and not be sick, but this woman was in sore distress for eighteen years—she was in the hands of the enemy of mankind, bound by Satan. Your work, moreover, is a process of unfastening and leading away to water, whilst I have but spoken a word and released a body from suffering. Was it not then a greater act of compassion and mercy, and is it not more lawful, to loose this woman, *on this very sabbath-day* (for so the original literally signifies) than to lead a beast? There will be noticed at the root of this argument, as of so much else in Scripture, a deep assertion of the specific difference between man, the lord of creation, for whom all things were made, and all the inferior orders of beings that tread the same earth with him, and with whom on the side of his body he is akin. He is something more than the first in this chain and order of beings, he is specifically different. 1 Cor. ix. 9; Ps. viii. 8. We should pray for a right understanding of the law of the Sabbath. Of all the commandments that

God has given, none is more essential to the happiness of man, and none is so frequently misrepresented, abused, and trampled under foot. Nothing is more proper for the Lord's day than the work of the Lord, which is to destroy the works of Satan. The day should be spent in the public or private worship of God, except so much as is required for works of necessity and mercy.

17. And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

The ruler of the synagogue had his party, but they were thoroughly put to shame. Their shallow and malignant hypocrisy had been so thoroughly exposed by Jesus, that they were conscious that they had forfeited the respect of the common people, and hence they were filled with a sense of shame and disgrace. But though ashamed, probably convinced, perhaps silenced, we are not told that they confessed their error, or acknowledged their unjust censure of Christ. The truth does not convert all those whom it confounds. The passions blind the understanding, and harden the heart against it. When men's judgments are convinced of an error, it is very hard to bring them to confess it, on account of the pride of their understandings. But whilst Christ's *adversaries* were ashamed, the *people* were affected differently. They *rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him*. The view of the miracle which they had just witnessed renewed again the recollection of the former ones, wrought, as we have reason to believe, on the same day, and the continuity of this beneficent activity disposed heart and mouth to the glorifying of God. Their hearts opened themselves to the truth without difficulty, because not corrupted either by envy or interest. It is always time to show by our joy, and other religious dispositions, how much we are concerned in the mysteries, work, and glory of Christ. We ought, in reading them, to be transported with joy in our heart, if we have any love toward Jesus Christ.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of the narrative of healing the infirm woman?
2. When was it performed?
3. What is said of attending the house of God?
4. Where was this woman?
5. What is said of her complaint?
6. What is said of wicked spirits producing disease?
7. What is said of the type of this woman's demoniacal possession?
8. What was her condition?
9. What is said of sin?
10. What is said of diabolical hate?
11. What does the power of Satan do?
12. Did this woman's condition keep her from the public congregation?
13. What is said of her example?
14. What did Jesus do when He saw her?
15. What objects attracted the Saviour's eye?
16. Was not this woman's history known to Jesus before?
17. What did Jesus do to her?
18. Why did Christ lay His hands on her?
19. Was the cure immediate?
20. What did the woman do when made straight?
21. What should be noticed concerning this cure?
22. What is said of our afflictions?
23. What is said of drooping souls?

24. What is said of some who were present?
25. What did the ruler of the synagogue say?
26. What is said of the bitterness and sarcasm of this speech?
27. What is said of unjust censure?
28. What does religion often serve to cover?
29. What did the Lord answer to the ruler?
30. What is said of "The Lord?"
31. What is said of "Thou hypocrite?"
32. Explain "doth not each one of you," &c.
33. Explain "And ought not this woman," &c.
34. What is to be noticed at the root of our Lord's argument?
35. For what should we pray in regard to the Sabbath?
36. What effect was produced on Christ's enemies?
37. How were the people affected by the miracle?

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### LESSON LXXXV.

vs. 18-21.

18. ¶ Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like?  
And whereunto shall I resemble it?

ε Matt. xiii. 31; Mark iv. 30.

19. It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

Our Lord, in view of the spirit of faith and joy produced in the hearts of the people, in consequence of the miracle He had just wrought and its triumphant justification, proceeds, in this and the following parable, to animate His disciples, lest they should be discouraged at the small beginning of the gospel, to foretell its great and glorious success. The same parables are recorded, with slight verbal variations, in Matt. xiii. 31, 32, and the first in Mark iv. 30-32. It might seem, at first view, that both parables are identical, but, upon nearer inspection, essential differences will be found to reveal themselves. The ideas common to both parables are: 1. The small beginnings from which the effect proceeds; 2. In each case, the growth, as to cause, is due to the kingdom's inherent unquenchable life; 3. The gradual, silent, concealed development of the mustard seed and the leaven; 4. The greatness of the result in both cases reached. And yet whilst thus in the main coincident, the parables, besides teaching the same lesson in different forms, teach, also, different lessons. The parable of the mustard seed exhibits the kingdom in its own independent existence, inherent life, and irresistible power; the parable of the leaven exhibits the kingdom in contact with the world, gradually overcoming and assimilating and absorbing that world into itself. In the mustard seed, we see the kingdom growing great because of its own omnipotent vitality; in the leaven, we see it growing great because it uses up all its adversaries as the material of its own enlargement. In the former, increase was attained by development from within; in the latter, by acquisitions from without. It is not that there are two distinct ways in which the gospel may gain complete possession of a man, or Chris-

tianity gain complete possession of the world, but that the one way in which the work advances is characterized by both of these features, and consequently two pictures are required to exhibit both sides of the same thing.

The comparison which Christ uses, likening the growth of His kingdom to that of a tree, was one with which many of His hearers may have been already familiar from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. (Ezek. xvii. 22-24; Ps. lxxx. 8.)

*Like a grain of mustard seed.* The plant here spoken of was probably the "Khardal," or Turkish mustard, (botanically, the *Salvadora Persica*,) which, from a very small tree, grows to a tree with a wooden fibre, and to such a size that it can be climbed by a man, and so it truly becometh a tree. It produces numerous branches and leaves, among which birds may and do take shelter and build their nests. "There was a stock of mustard seed in Sichein," says *R. Simson*, "from which sprang out three boughs, of which one was broke off, and covered the tent of a potter, and produced three cabs of mustard." "A stock of mustard seed was in my field," says *R. Calipha*, "into which I was used to climb, as men do into a fig tree." The Spanish commentator, *Maldonatus*, observes that he had sometimes seen large groves of *sinapi* (or Oriental mustard) and the birds sitting on the branches." Dr. Thomson, in his "Land and Book," says of the mustard plant, "It may have been perennial, and have grown to a considerable tree, and there are traditions in the country of such so large that a man could climb into them." We adduce these various testimonies because the diminutive proportions of our mustard plant might otherwise mislead us in regard to the magnitude of the herb which bears the corresponding name, in a hot climate, as in that of Judea.

The peculiar aptness of the particular kind of seed, mentioned by our Lord, for His purpose, will be manifest, when it is remembered that the point of comparison in the parable is the greatness of the effect from so small and unpromising a beginning, and that the mustard seed was the smallest of domestic garden seeds in proportion to the size of the tree which it produces. The point presented by our Lord is, not greatness in itself, but the greatness of the tree when compared with the smallness of the seed from which it springs. Then, again, the appropriateness of the simile is evident from the fact, that the magnitude of the mustard tree, in connection with the minuteness of its seed, was employed at that day among the Jews, as a proverbial similitude, to indicate that great results may spring from causes that are apparently diminutive, but secretly powerful. The expression, "if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed," employed by Christ on another occasion, is sufficient to show that both the conception and its use were familiar to His audience. *By the kingdom of God*, we may understand saving truth, living and growing great, either in the world or in an individual human heart.

*Cast into his garden.* The grain of mustard seed is here represented as sown in a good soil, and a select spot, a garden, and not a field. *And the fowls of the air lodged, &c.* *Maldonatus*, the Spanish commentator quoted above, mentions that birds are exceedingly partial to the seed of the mustard tree, so that when it is advancing to ripeness, he has often seen them lighting in great numbers on its boughs. The fact of the fondness of birds for the seeds, and the manner in which, therefore, they congregate in the branches, was probably familiar to our Lord's hearers also. Though this last circumstance may have been introduced to complete the image of a goodly tree, yet it is also to be recognized as a prophecy of the refuge and defence that should be for all men in the Church; how that multitudes should thither make their resort, finding their protection from worldly oppression, as well as the satisfaction for all the needs and wants of their souls. See Ezek. xvii. 23. "Under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing."

Like the mustard seed, the "kingdom of God" was at its commencement,

to outward sense, *small and insignificant*. Behold the stable in Bethlehem, and that weak babe sleeping in the manger. In the quiet of domestic privacy, the child increases; in His thirtieth year He comes forth into public, teaches three years, and then dies upon the cross. Matt. xiii. 54, 55. Fishermen and publicans, plain and unlettered men, having no countenance or support from the ordinary forces of the world, are His first scholars and messengers, and they gathered themselves to Him only by degrees, John i. 35-51; besides the twelve, the whole multitude of disciples amounted to but one hundred and twenty, Acts i. 15. So small at first was the company of our Lord's followers; small also is the beginning of the heavenly kingdom in the human heart; it begins by a word of truth reaching the conscience, a ray of light from above finds its way into the darkness of the inner man, and perhaps some trifling circumstance gives rise to consequences infinitely important. All life is, in its origin, invisible, and the new life of faith is not an exception to the rule. Jesus, in his conversation with Nicodemus, compared it in this respect to the wind. The first true, deep check in the conscience because of sin, the first real question, "What must I do to be saved?" the first tender grief for having crucified Christ and wounded the Spirit, the first request for pardon and reconciliation made to God, as a child asks bread from his parents when he is hungry—the kingdom, coming in any of these forms, is small and scarcely perceptible, but it lives, and in due time will grow great.

*It grew, and wazed a great tree.* The gospel spread on all sides from Jerusalem, manifesting itself as an effect of the power given to the exalted Son of man, and of His blessed influence, since He accompanied the preached gospel with the gracious workings of His Spirit. In spite of persecution, opposition, and violence, Christianity gradually spread and increased. Year after year its adherents became more numerous. City after city, and country after country, received the new faith. Roman emperors and heathen philosophers, sometimes by force and sometimes by argument, tried to check its progress, but in vain; in a few hundred years the religion of the despised Nazarene—the religion which began in the upper chamber at Jerusalem—had overrun the civilized world. It was professed by nearly all Europe, by a great part of Asia, and by the whole northern part of Africa. Though the first preachers had no power or honor from the world, had sprung from a despised and hated people, had no other means of working but the power of the word, put to shame the vain, fleshly wisdom of the world, stood up for One crucified, (1 Cor. i. 25-29,) and made no promise of earthly gains, yet the gospel spread, thus showing its increase to be manifestly a work of Divine grace. Individual believers, also, experience only a gradual increase in faith, discernment, love, hope, humility, and all the Christian graces. Amid many storms, both of external and internal temptation, the new creature still grows, and the old more and more decays. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

The kingdom of God is like the mustard seed in its great and glorious issue. The parable places before us in a lively and striking image such truths as these: "The earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the glory of God, even as the waters cover the sea;" "All shall know me, from the least to the greatest;" "The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign on the earth;" He shall "have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." When these prophecies, which are now being fulfilled by the labors of God's ministers and people, and by zealous missionary efforts, shall have reached their full accomplishment, then will be gathered "all the kindreds of the people" to rest under the shadow of that kingdom, which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The appearance presented by a heart which wholly belongs to Christ is in like manner great and glorious. What did not a John, a Paul become? And all from the small beginning that the word of God had been implanted in the heart!

20. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?

21. It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

<sup>b</sup> See Matt. xiii. 33.

To the agricultural analogy just given, our Lord added another borrowed from domestic life and female industry, as if to leave no part of every-day experience unemployed in the elucidation and enforcement of religious truth. *The kingdom of God.* This phrase may be understood as denoting the reign of grace by which Christ rules in the hearts of men; also, and mainly, as relating to Christianity in its workings with the race. *Like leaven.* We are not to understand by this, as some allege we should, that the parable is a representation of the corruption which should arise in the Church or the heresies which should vitiate the gospel; for if it could be said that at any time the whole Church was thus penetrated through and through with the leaven of false doctrine, the gates of hell would, indeed, have prevailed against it, and from whence it should ever have become unleavened, it would be difficult to understand. Besides, whilst it is true that leaven is often used in the New Testament in a bad sense, as for example in Luke xii. 1, where it is the image of hypocrisy, and in Gal. v. 9, where it represents the injurious influence of false doctrine, yet it is also used as a figurative expression for designating an efficient power for good, nor can any satisfactory reason be imagined why it should not be so employed. See Notes on ch. xii. 1.

The following points are noticeable in the parable: 1. As "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," so our holy religion had a small and slight beginning in the world, and has also in the human heart, generally beginning by a word of truth reaching the conscience. 2. As this leaven was a foreign importation, so Christianity was not of earthly origin, and Divine grace is something introduced into the soul from without. 3. As leaven is of an assimilative nature, so the gospel transforms society into the likeness of itself, and Divine grace makes the subject of it a new creature. 4. The gospel, like leaven, is diffusive in the world and in the individual heart. 5. The gospel and Divine grace, like leaven, work silently, gradually, and outwardly. Beginning in the centre, they reach an external development. 6. The gospel and Divine grace, like the leaven, are destined to work until their saving power reaches the full completion of its design—until the whole mass is leavened. Their triumph is sure.

*A woman took.* In the Scriptures the Holy Spirit is frequently referred to in such terms as these: "As a mother comforteth her son, so will I comfort thee." "Under the apple tree (a name by which Christ was denoted) thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee." "Ye must be born again." *Three measures of meal.* A measure was the third part of an ephah, and these three were the usual quantity for a baking. Gen. xviii. 6; Judg. vi. 19; 1 Sam. i. 24. *Till the whole was leavened.* There are some who see in the three measures the constituent parts of our compound being, soul, body, and spirit. But it is more than probable that our Lord had not in His mind any of the various allegorical meanings which have been attached to His words. The gospel is destined to conquer the world, and subdue it to itself. It is now spreading, elevating society, and it will continue to do so, until at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. Nothing can prevent its progress and dominion. So with the grace of God in the heart, "The righteous shall hold on his way." God "will perfect that which concerneth us." The "good part" which has been "chosen" "shall never be taken away." "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

QUESTIONS.

1. Why did our Lord proceed in these parables to animate His disciples?
2. Are these parables recorded elsewhere?
3. Are they identical?
4. What ideas are common to both?
5. May many of Christ's hearers have been familiar with His comparison of the growth of His kingdom to that of a tree?
6. What was the plant here spoken of?
7. What do R. Simeon and others say?
8. How is the peculiar aptness of the mustard seed for our Lord's purpose manifest?
9. What is the point presented by our Lord?
10. Where is the grain of mustard seed represented as sown?
11. What is said of "the fowls of the air lodged," &c.?
12. Why was the kingdom of God, at its commencement, like the mustard seed?
13. What is said of its commencement?
14. What is said of the beginning of the heavenly kingdom in the heart?
15. Is the new life of faith invisible?
16. Did the gospel spread from Jerusalem?
17. Why did it spread?
18. Did it spread in spite of opposition?
19. What was its diffusion in a few hundred years?
20. What does the extension of the gospel show?
21. What is said of the experience of individuals in faith?
22. In what other respect is the kingdom of God like the mustard seed?
23. What truths does the parable of the mustard seed place before us?
24. What is said of the appearance of a heart wholly belonging to Christ?
25. Whence did our Lord borrow the analogy of the leaven?
26. What is said of "the kingdom of God?"
27. What are we not to understand by the words "like leaven?"
28. State the points of analogy noticeable in this parable.
29. Whom does the "woman" represent?
30. What was a *measure*?
31. What is said of "three measures?"
32. What do some see in these "three measures?"
33. What is said about Christ's meaning in these words?
34. What is said about the gospel's future triumphs?
35. What, about the grace of God in the heart?

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LESSON LXXXVI.

vs. 22-30.

22. 'And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

† Matt. ix. 35; Mark vi. 6.

The portion of Luke's Gospel extending from this verse to ch. xviii. 14 is peculiar to him. Our Lord was now approaching, evidently by a somewhat circuitous route, the city of Jerusalem, there to finish, by suffering and

death, the work given Him to do. John xvii. 4. *He went through their cities and villages.* This is Luke's general heading for the *Peræan ministry of Jesus.* The *cities and villages* were those of the trans-Jordanic region, including Bethabara and the localities generally of John's baptisms. Jesus preached by His holy doctrine, but also by His exemplary life. Wherever Providence brings us, we should endeavor to be doing all the good we can. The pastor who instructs his people with care, visits his flock, and is continually intent on his duty, advances very fast toward the heavenly Jerusalem.

23. ¶ Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

24. <sup>†</sup>Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for <sup>‡</sup>many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

† Matt. vii. 13.

‡ See John vii 34 and viii. 21 and xiii. 33; Rom. ix. 31.

*Then said one.* The time, place, and person are not particularly stated. *Lord.* The respectful address, and the confidence of the inquirer in our Lord's ability to answer, show that he had some proper view of Christ's character, and render it probable that his question was not one of captiousness or curiosity, but grew out of some anxiety on the subject of salvation. This is also indicated by our Lord's reply, in which He makes no allusion to the pride, hypocrisy, or cavilling temper of the man. *Are there few that be saved?* The question was much debated by the Jewish doctors: some maintaining that all Israelites are *saved* by birthright; others asserting that the saved will be few, just as but few of the original Israelites arrived in Canaan. *And he said unto them.* The answer was not directed only to the man, but, because it was of such general interest and importance, it was addressed to all the people round Him.

*Strive to enter in at the strait gate.* That the Saviour's instruction contains an answer—it is true, indirect, but yet satisfactory and powerful—to the question addressed Him, strikes us at once on comparing the two. The allusion, in this and the following verses, is, probably, to nuptial feasts. These were celebrated by night. The house was filled with lights. Thus they who were admitted had the benefit of light, but they who were excluded were in darkness outside the house—"outer darkness"—which necessarily appeared more gloomy compared with the light within. The guests entered by a narrow wicket-gate, at which the porter stood to prevent the unbidden from rushing in. When all that had been invited were arrived, the door was shut, and not opened to those who stood without, however much they knocked. *Strive.* The word used to denote those extraordinary efforts, made by the combatants in the Olympic games, to gain the victory; it is that from which we take our English word "agonize." It is like our expression, *strain every nerve to enter in at the strait gate.* The *strait gate* was a wicket-gate in a larger one. *At* would be better translated "through;" the idea is that of a struggle to press through the narrow entrance-way, to renounce the world and sin, accept the offered salvation through Christ, and press toward the kingdom with great earnestness and perseverance. Men may make devotion as easy as they please; they may widen the gate of heaven, and flatter themselves and others that their salvation is continually in their hands. the direct contrary is true; since truth itself assures us so. Salvation is neither for the slothful and idle, who will not strive; nor for such as will not enter in at the strait gate; nor yet for those who presume to the very last, either upon their own strength, or upon the grace of God. God has His proper seasons, which we must by no means let slip.

*For many, I say unto you, &c.* We are to understand such a *seeking* as is in the wrong direction and at the wrong time. The word here translated

"*seek*" is the very same which is used in the familiar promise: "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." It does not, therefore, mean faintness or feebleness of effort, but effort to enter, at the wrong time, and by the wrong way, into everlasting life, into which there is but one entrance-way, and that through the strait gate. We are not to suppose that many who are very anxious to be saved, may, notwithstanding, come short of salvation. But if men do not find eternal life, it is because they do not seek it in the way in which God hath appointed it to be sought. No man who thus seeks it shall seek it in vain. Neither are we to infer from this statement of our Lord any thing discouraging as to the number of the human race that will be saved. The Scriptures inform us that there are to be "nations of the saved," and that they are to form "a multitude whom no man can number." They also lead us to a joyful hope respecting all who die in infancy, and in the age of millennial glory the converts of true religion will be very numerous. "Not a stinted few—not a scanty and reluctant remnant; but a mighty host—like God's own perfections, an effluent and exuberant throng—like Immanuel's merits, which brought them there, something very vast, and merging into infinity—so great a multitude, that when those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression are added to the many saved in the thousand years of reigning righteousness, it may prove in the long-run of our poor earth's history, that Satan's captives are outnumbered by the Saviour's trophies."

25. <sup>1</sup>When once the master of the house is risen up, and <sup>2</sup>hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, <sup>3</sup>I know you not whence ye are:

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxii. 6; Is. lv. 6.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxv. 10.    <sup>3</sup> Luke vi. 46.    <sup>4</sup> Matt. vii. 23 and xxv. 12.

*When once*, literally, *from the time, the master of the house*, the hospitable entertainer of his friends, *is risen up*, from his seat, in order to *shut to the door*; this expresses deliberate forethought and determination, after the exercise of patience and forbearance; *and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door*, or, ye shall take to standing without and knocking, showing a change from carelessness to concern; *saying, Lord, Lord, open to us*: this appeal implies earnestness and expectation, all they ask is an open door and a refuge; *and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are*. The word "know" here is used in a somewhat peculiar sense: it is equivalent to acknowledged, or approved—a sense of the term of not unfrequent occurrence in Scripture. "The Lord *knoweth* the way of the righteous," Ps. i. 6—He approves, and gives tokens of His approval of their way. "You only have I *known* of all the nations of the earth," Amos iii. 2—acknowledged as my peculiar people. "I *know*"—acknowledge—"my sheep, and am *known*"—acknowledged—of mine. "As the Father *knoweth*"—acknowledgeth "me, even so *know*"—acknowledgeth—"I the Father," John x. 14, 15. The words, *whence ye are*, should be given interrogatively, "Whence are YE?" It is not safe to lay too much stress on expressions used in parables in the establishment of doctrine. Nevertheless, this repeated sentence, "I know you not," showing that the Lord did not know those to whom it was addressed, appears hard to be reconciled with the opinion that saints may fall away and be lost.

26. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

*We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.* They had, perhaps, partaken of His miraculous feedings with the five thousand. Jesus, doubtless, often ate and drank, and was on terms of friendship and social intercourse with those whom, as a public teacher, He addressed. It is eating and drinking before the Lord that is spoken of, without inward communion with Him. It was customary with Jewish doctors to teach in the streets. It will be observed that there is a striking climax in the earnestness of those who applied for admittance: first, standing some time without, then knocking, then calling, finally reminding of former acquaintance, but all in vain.

27. <sup>p</sup>But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; <sup>q</sup>depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

<sup>p</sup> Matt. vii. 23 and xxv. 41; ver. 25.

<sup>q</sup> Pa. vi. 8; Matt. xxv. 41.

The words, *I know you not whence ye are*, are repeated, yet with still greater emphasis, showing that the judgment is inexorable: *depart from me all ye workers of iniquity*. The word *workers* here signifies hired operatives. He charges them, therefore, with being the paid fabricators and laborers of wickedness. The similarity between this expression and Matt. xxv. 41, appears to show clearly that the time described is the second coming of Christ, and the judgment day.

28. <sup>r</sup>There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, <sup>s</sup>when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

<sup>r</sup> Matt. viii. 12; xiii. 42, and xxiv. 51.

<sup>s</sup> Matt. viii. 11.

Those who by procrastination and inaction suffer the time of admission to the gospel feast to pass by, and hence are excluded, are here represented as in the midst of night, (hell.) Yet they are said to see heaven, thus showing that the lost shall see afar off the glory and blessedness of the saved, and the sight shall add to their misery, as they behold the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament participants of this joy, and they themselves as the children of those spiritual ancestors, *thrust out*. *Weeping and gnashing of teeth*, is a strong image of that utter despair, darkness, and death of a soul excluded from God.

29. And they shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

The word *many* is here omitted, which we find in the parallel passage, Mark viii. 11, 12. Probably this omission is to be accounted for by the fact, that, by the repetition of that word here, the Saviour would have given a decided answer to the question, (ver. 23,) which, however, was not in His intention, and was in conflict with His wisdom in teaching: *shall come*, are to come hereafter: the reference is to the calling of the Gentiles of all nations, and people, and tongues, into the Church: *from the east*, &c. The points of the compass are given in their usual order, but it is something of a coincidence that they follow the course in which the gospel seems in human history to proceed. It first took root in Syria and Asia Minor, then spread to the west of Europe and along the shores of the Mediterranean, then turned northward to the Scandinavian nations and Britain, and since that time has spread, wherever it has spread, toward the south, in Africa, Asia, South America, and the South Pacific ocean. We must co-operate by our prayers, desires, cares, and acts of charity, to enlarge the bounds of the kingdom of God, if we cannot do it by our labors and ministry. *Sit down*, literally, lie down, or recline.

30. 'And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

† Matt. xix. 30 and xx. 16; Mark x. 31.

The idea here is, that, in regard to the gospel feast, there shall be such a reversal of present relations, that many of those who seemed most likely to have been the favored guests will be excluded, while others whose prospects for such an honor were far less favorable will be selected as the recipients. The Gentiles, who were last, have become first; the reverse has been the history of the Jews. And so in the following chapters (xiv-xvi.) the Pharisees and publicans are reversed from first to last. The churches of Asia Minor and Africa were called first, and were famous when Britain was only a field for missionaries. But now those churches have become last, and the British and American churches fill the foremost position in Christendom. And they, too, "if they continue not in God's goodness, will be cut off." Rom. xi. 22.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of this portion of Luke's Gospel?
2. What is said of our Lord's approach to Jerusalem?
3. What cities and villages did He pass through?
4. What should we endeavor wherever Providence brings us?
5. What is said of the time, place, and person referred to in verse 23?
6. What does the word "Lord" show?
7. Why is this also shown by Christ's reply?
8. What is said of "Are there few that be saved?"
9. To whom did Jesus reply?
10. What did He reply?
11. Did our Lord's instruction contain an answer?
12. What is the allusion in verse 24, and the following verses?
13. What is said of nuptial feasts?
14. What is said of "strive?"
15. What is the idea presented?
16. What is said of men making devotion easy?
17. What are we to understand by "seek?"
18. What are we not to suppose?
19. What is said about the number that "be saved?"
20. Explain, "when once," &c.
21. What does knocking at the door show?
22. What does the appeal, "Lord, Lord," &c., imply?
23. What is said of the word "know?"
24. How should the words, "whence ye are," be given?
25. What is said of "we have eaten and drunk," &c.?
26. What was customary with Jewish doctors?
27. What is said of a striking climax?
28. What does the repetition of the words "I know you not," &c., show?
29. What is said of "workers?"
30. How are those who suffer the time of admission to the gospel feast here represented?
31. Are they said to see heaven?
32. Explain "weeping and gnashing of teeth."
33. What is said of the word "many?"
34. Explain "shall come."
35. What is said of "from the East," &c.?
36. How does the gospel seem in human history to proceed?
37. What is the idea in verse 30?
38. Mention the instances of this which are given.

## LESSON LXXXVII.

vs. 31-35.

31. ¶ The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

*The same day*—the day on which the question of verse 23 was answered—*there came certain of the Pharisees*, Herodian partizans among the Jews, flatterers and tools at the court of Herod Antipas. They were Pharisees in profession; but Sadducees in life and practice. *Saying unto him, &c.* Not only Galilee, but also Peræa, and the boundary district in which Jesus now was, (ver. 22,) belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod.

32. And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

• Heb. ii. 10.

The threats of Herod did not alarm the Lord. He showed His abhorrence of Herod's character by the name which He gave him, a *fox*. It adds much to the force, and points to the meaning of the message sent, to understand that our Saviour called the tetrarch of Galilee a "fox," in allusion to a proverb at that time current, to the effect, "Honor even the fox in the day of his power." A fox among the Jews appears to have been the emblem of a wicked ruler, who united cunning with cruelty, and was always plotting how he might aggrandize himself by robbing the people. Herod Antipas, like many other princes of his time, shaped his manners after the model of the Emperor Tiberius, who, among all traits of character, prided himself upon his own *dissimulation*. Then Herod was an *old fox*, since he had held the government now thirty years, and had played the most diverse characters. He played the slave to Tiberius, the master to Galilee, the friend to the Emperor's prime favorite Sejanus, and to his own three brothers, Archelaus, Philip and Herod II., all whose dispositions were most opposite to each other, and to the temper of Antipas himself. Against the objection that such an answer to Herod on the part of Jesus would have been hardly seemly, it must be remarked, that antiquity, in this respect, was not so excessively courtly as modern times, that the man who wasted the vineyard of the Lord (Canticles ii. 15) fully deserved this name, and that surely no one in this respect deserved less to be spared than this tyrant, who had shortly before stained his hands with a prophet's blood. Moreover, the Saviour has here yet more the man than the prince in mind. *Behold, I cast out devils, &c.* Intentionally the Saviour speaks not of His words but of His miraculous deeds, because these had most strongly excited the uneasiness of Herod, chap. ix. 9. *To-day and to-morrow.* From John xi. 6, we find that after Jesus received, at this very locality, the message of Lazarus's death, from the sisters of Bethany, *he abode two days*, and then said, *Let us go into Judea.* Let us suppose that the spies of Herod and the messengers of the sisters arrived at about the same hour, and the *two days* of John are just these *two days* of Jesus. Starting on the third day, Jesus would reach Bethany on the fourth, and find Lazarus *four days dead.* John xi. 39. *And the third day I shall be perfected.* These words do not refer to bringing His works to a close on the third day, but to His death. "I shall continue my

work, notwithstanding Herod's threats, and at the end of that time I shall be perfected or finish my course by death." See Hosea vi. 2.

33. Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

*Nevertheless I must.* This is an intimation by our Lord that He has nothing to fear from Herod, as long as His day of life endures, and that He united the fullest repose in the present with the clearest consciousness of His impending departure. *Walk*: this conforms to the itinerant ministry of Jesus, and is equivalent to, *I must proceed from place to place* in the fulfilment of my prescribed duties. *It cannot be*: literally, *it is not admissible*. As John the Baptist, to say nothing of other prophets, did not die at Jerusalem, the sense here must be—"It would be an unusual thing, an exception to a rule, for a prophet to die in any place but Jerusalem. When I do die, it will be at Jerusalem. But I am not there yet, but in Galilee." This was a rebuking irony upon guilty Jerusalem. Jesus assigns the time and place of His death, as having them more in His own power than those who were to inflict it on Him. The victim was not to be sacrificed far from the temple, the truth was to be accomplished near its types and figures, and Jerusalem to fill up the measure of her sins, in crucifying the Saviour of the world.

34. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

▼ Matt. xxiii. 37.

The prospect of Christ's death, with all its attendant horrors, did not excite angry feelings in His breast. Instead of expressing anger, He burst forth into these most tender lamentations over His murderers.

"He thought not of the death that He should die;  
 He thought not of the thorns He knew must pierce  
 His forehead—of the buffet on the cheek—  
 The scourge—the mocking homage, the foul scorn!  
 Gethsemane stood out beneath His eye,  
 Clear in the morning sun, and there, He knew,  
 While they who 'could not watch with Him one hour'  
 Were sleeping, He should sweat great drops of blood,  
 Praying the 'cup might pass.' And Golgotha  
 Stood bare and desert by the city wall,  
 And in its midst, to His prophetic eye,  
 Rose the rough cross, and its keen agonies  
 Were number'd all; the nails were in His feet,  
 Th' insulting sponge was pressing on His lips,  
 The blood and water gushing from His side,  
 The dizzy faintness swimming in His brain,  
 And, when His own disciples fled in fear,  
 A world's death-agonies all mixed in His.  
 Ay! He forgot all this. He only saw  
 Jerusalem—the chosen—the loved—the lost!  
 He only felt that for her sake His life  
 Was vainly given, and, in His pitying love,  
 The sufferings that would clothe the heavens in black  
 Were quite forgotten. Was there ever love,  
 In earth or heaven, equal unto this?"

These apostrophic lamentations seem to have been suggested by the word *Jerusalem*, which He had just named as the place where, unless a prophet was martyred, a rule of uniformity would be broken. *O Jerusalem*. Jesus reiterated the same apostrophe, in fuller terms, at a later moment in Jerusalem itself, as His closing sentence before His retirement to the sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the world. Matt. xxiii. 37-39. *Killst the prophets*, identifying the Jerusalem of the then present day with the Jerusalem of past ages. *How often would I*. The beautiful tenderness of this verse shows that the warnings of the previous verses are the language, not of human anger, but of terrible Divine justice. Love, deep love, may dwell in the breast of the judge who pronounces the sentence of death. *Would I . . . ye would not*. The Greek word in both these phrases is stronger than appears from our English translation. It is, literally, "I willed, and ye willed not." *As a hen, &c.* The emblem of "a hen gathering her chickens under her wings" is similar to what is used, with respect of JEHOVAH, in several places of the Old Testament. Deut. xxxii. 11; Ruth ii. 12; Ps. xvii. 8; xxxvi. 7; lvii. 1; lxiii. 7; xci. 4. Nor does all nature furnish a more apt emblem of the Saviour's tender love, and faithful care of His redeemed people; but His *power* is also adequate to the confidence reposed in Him. He bore the storm of Divine justice against our sins, in order to save us from it, and "suffered being tempted, that He might succor us when tempted." He calls sinners to take refuge under His protection, and there keeps them safe, and nourishes them unto eternal life. He had for ages, by his prophets, repeatedly invited the children of Jerusalem, or the Jews, to take shelter under His almighty wings, before He came to call them by His personal ministry, "but they *would not come*," so that their ruin was wholly owing to their obstinate unbelief and rebellion. *Ye would not*, our Lord does not say, "thou wouldest not." By this mode of speaking, He makes it plain, that He charges the guilt of Jerusalem on its inhabitants, the men and women who dwell there, and specially on the priests, and Scribes and Pharisees, who governed the city. They were neither willing to be gathered themselves into the kingdom, nor allowed others to enter. Christ was willing, but they were unwilling. Most deplorably and inexcusably will they perish, who perish by their own wilfulness and obduracy under the gospel.

35. Behold, "your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until *the time* come when ye shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

¶ Lev. xxvi. 31, 32; Ps. lxxix. 25; Is. i. 7; Dan. ix. 27; Mic. iii. 12.  
 \* Pa. cxviii. 26; Matt. xxi. 9; Mark xi. 10; Luke xix. 38; John xii. 13.

*Your house is left unto you desolate*. Jerusalem is pictured as from a future stand-point, as a person whose habitation has been completely desolated and abandoned to the pillager. The *house* may be an allusion to the temple. "Your temple, (now not God's house, but *your house*,) in which your glory, your holy and beautiful house, is now deprived of its glory. God has departed from it, and has no longer any pleasure in it." Josephus's description of the effects of the famine at the siege of Jerusalem is perhaps the most affecting representation of misery ever penned. One in Italy, A. D. 539, as described by Procopius, is *almost* a parallel. *Ye shall not see me*. In the word *ye*, Jesus still considers Jerusalem as being the same historical and national person through all ages. *Till ye*—in your posterity in a future age. *Blessed is he that cometh, &c.* The language by which the children in the temple recognized Him as the Messiah. Ps. cxviii. 6. Some think that Christ here refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, when the fulfilment of all His predictions would oblige the Jews to confess that He

was the Messiah. Others think that our Lord's words are not yet fulfilled, and that they refer to the last times, when the Jews, after their last tribulation, shall "look on Him whom they pierced," and believe, at the time of His second advent in glory. Though Jerusalem be still desolate, and Israel scattered, the unseen person of Jesus is still on Zion, and His unseen feet still stand on *Olivet*. His ever preserving care perpetuates the race in its vicissitudes, waiting for the day when devoted Israel shall say, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

## QUESTIONS.

1. What day is referred to?
2. Who were these "certain of the Pharisees"?
3. What did they say to Jesus?
4. How does it appear that the threats of Herod did not alarm the Lord?
5. What adds much point to the meaning of the message He sent?
6. What is said of Herod Antipas?
7. What is said in explanation of Christ's answer to Herod?
8. Why did Jesus speak of His miraculous deeds?
9. What is said of "to-day and to-morrow"?
10. Explain "I shall be perfected."
11. What is the import of "Nevertheless I must"?
12. How are we to understand "it cannot be"?
13. What is said of the prospect of Christ's death?
14. Into what did He burst forth?
15. On what other occasion was this lamentation reiterated?
16. Explain "killest the prophets."
17. What is said of "how often would I"?
18. What is said of the emblem of a hen?
19. Was this a most apt emblem of the Saviour's love, &c.?
20. Why was it so?
21. What is said of "ye would not"?
22. On whom did He charge the guilt of Jerusalem?
23. How is Jerusalem pictured?
24. To what may the "house" be an allusion?
25. What is meant by "*your* house"?
26. What is said of the famine at the siege of Jerusalem?
27. Explain the words "ye shall not see me."
28. What is meant by "till ye"?
29. By whom was the language "Blessed is he that cometh," &c., also used?
30. What do some think Christ here refers to?
31. What do others think?
32. What is said of Jerusalem though still desolate, and Israel though scattered?

## CHAPTER XIV.

## LESSON LXXXVIII. ●

vs. 1-6.

NOTWITHSTANDING the severe language of our Lord to Pharisees at their own table, these Pharisees were themselves very *apt to repeat the invitation*. It often happens that men return, again and again, to hear the preaching of ministers who offend them through a wounded conscience. At the feast, with a reference to which this chapter commences, our Lord is a central object for all eyes and ears, while He Himself is calmly at perfect ease.

1. And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him.

*And it came to pass*, an expression similar to the Hebrew, Gen. xliii. 25, 32, 34. *One of the chief Pharisees*: as they had as a sect no chiefs in the common sense of the word, we are probably to understand here a Pharisee who, by his rank, learning, or influence, had obtained a moral predominance over those of his sect, like Nicodemus, Gamaliel, and others: *to eat bread on the Sabbath-day*. The tables of the Jews, as their Rabbinical writings show, were generally better spread on the Sabbath than on any other days, and that, as they themselves reckoned, on account of religion and piety. As the Saviour so often borrowed the images of his parables from that which was actually present before His eyes and the eyes of His hearers, and as He represented a certain man as having made a *great supper*, it would seem that this also at which He was now sitting was more than an ordinary entertainment. It may possibly, as some think, have been with an insidious, treacherous design that Christ was invited by this Pharisee. Yet as inns and places of reception were doubtless far more uncommon in our Lord's time than they are now, and thus the duty of entertaining strangers often devolved on the chief man in each village or town, we may regard this Pharisee, though not a friend of Christ, as having done only what was customary for a man in his position in inviting to his table a stranger who was teaching religion, and whom some regarded as a prophet. Nor does it conflict with this view that it is said that *they watched Him*, doubtless for the purpose of finding something of which they might accuse him, for this seems to have been done by the Pharisees previously mentioned, many of whom were no doubt present on this occasion. If we only read attentively the first twenty-four verses of this chapter, as we find our Lord about His Father's business, we shall find why He accepted the invitation, and how He carried Himself during the entertainment. Jesus went among sinners as a physician goes into the wards of a hospital, only because there is good to be done.

Those who cannot, like Christ, render a Sabbath social gathering a profitable occasion, had better absent themselves. As the world takes notice of every thing in Christians, what particular care should they exercise in all their actions!

2. And behold there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

*Behold*, indicates the unexpectedness of the appearance of the man. *Before him*, as Jesus sat, perhaps, on the divan, before the company had taken seats at the table. That the man was not an invited guest is evident from verse 4. It has been suggested that the Pharisees had placed him there with a malicious intention. But this view would involve us in the difficulty of supposing that our Lord would heal a man, in whom not only was no faith, but positive unbelief, as must have been the case if he was in complicity with the Pharisees in suffering himself to be used for their base ends. Besides, it is evident the man was no party to such a plot, for the Lord "took him, and healed him, and let him go." There is the strongest probability that the man placed himself "before Christ" in faith, hoping that He would see and heal him. Any difficulty as to how the man without permission could have found entrance into a private house, rests upon an ignorance of the almost public life of the East, and a forgetting how easily, in a moment of excitement, such as this must have been, the feeble barriers which the conventional rules of society would oppose might be broken through. The *dropsy* is a disease in which the body, or some part of it, is filled with water, most usually the abdomen.

It is sufficient sometimes that our miseries be only exposed to the eyes of mercy. Mercy is of a preventing nature, and, without waiting for our solicitation, is disposed to do us good. Jesus did not omit any opportunity of helping and healing the distressed, though He knew that His enemies, the Pharisees, might carp and cavil at it, it being the constant guise of hypocrites, to prefer ceremonial and ritual observances, before necessary and moral duties. We should persevere in the way of duty, though we may meet with opposition and scorn. Daniel and his companions in Babylon, Elijah among his own countrymen, and the Apostle Paul in his labors, were thus severely tried. Opposition is permitted, among other reasons, that we may show meekness, charity, and forgiveness. 1 Pet. ii. 15.

### 3. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?"

• Matt. xii. 10.

As we are not told that any thing was said, or spoken by the *lawyers and Pharisees*, we are to understand that our Lord answered their *thoughts*. He knew their usual objection, (Matt. xii. 11; Luke xiii. 15,) and anticipated it by a question, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?" Had they answered this question affirmatively, they would have sanctioned His miracle; had they answered it negatively, they would have betrayed their own want of love. It was not out of ignorance, but charity, that Christ asked this question, on purpose to give those men an occasion of reflecting upon their own thoughts, and by their answer to engage them in such as are good.

### 4. And they held their peace. And he took *him*, and healed him, and let him go;

They had been so often put to silence before the people, that, at this time, they feared to encounter Christ's arguments and rebukes, and hence kept quiet. Observing they were silent, He took hold of the man, healed him, and dismissed him from the assembly, perhaps, lest they should visit him with their malice, as they had lately done to the man born blind at Jerusalem.

There is, in wicked persons, a silence proceeding from pride, malice, impotence, dissimulation, and craft, but it cannot hide their hearts from Him who sees their inmost recesses, nor ought we to have any manner of regard to them, when an opportunity of doing good works presents itself.

We should do nothing which can give occasion to the Lord's enemies to blaspheme. The thing is possible. By the grace of God it can be done. The haters of Daniel were obliged to confess, "we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Dan. vi. 5.

5. And answered them, saying, <sup>b</sup>Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day?

Exod. xxiii. 5; Deut. xxii. 4; Luke xiii. 15.

6. And they could not answer him again to these things.

Here again, as nothing had been said by the lawyers and Pharisees, our Lord answered their inward conception or reasoning. This remark applies to Matt. xxii. 1; Luke v. 22; vii. 39, 40; Mark xiv. 48; Matt. xi. 25. We may observe, that as in that other case where the woman was *bound*, Christ adduced the example of *unbinding* a beast, (Luke xiii. 15, on which see our Notes,) so in this, where the man was dropsical, suffering, that is, from water, the example he adduces has its equal fitness. "You grudge that I should deliver this man upon this day from the water which is choking him, yet if the same danger from water threatened one of your beasts, *an ass or an ox*, you would make no scruple of extricating it on the sabbath from the dangers which threatened it; how much then is a man better than a beast?" *And they could not answer him again to these things.* They were convinced, no doubt, but we read nothing of their conversion. The obstinate and malicious are much harder to be wrought upon, than the ignorant and scandalous; it is easier to silence such men than to satisfy them, to stop their mouths than to remove their prejudices, for obstinacy will hold the conclusion, though reason cannot maintain the premises.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of "And it came to pass?"
2. Who was this "one of the chief Pharisees?"
3. What is said of the tables of the Jews?
4. Was this feast more than an ordinary one?
5. Why was Jesus invited by this Pharisee?
6. Why did they watch Him?
7. What is said of a Sabbath social gathering?
8. Why should Christians be careful in all their actions?
9. Explain "Behold."
10. How was the man "before" Jesus?
11. Why was he at the entertainment?
12. Had he been placed there with a malicious intention?
13. Explain how the man could have been there without permission.
14. What practical reflections are suggested?
15. How did our Lord answer the lawyers and Pharisees?
16. In what dilemma were they as to His question?
17. Why did Jesus ask them this question?
18. What did they do?
19. Why did they hold their peace?
20. What did Christ, observing their silence, do?
21. What is said of wicked persons?
22. Should we do any thing to give occasion to the Lord's enemies to blaspheme?

23. What is said of Daniel ?
24. What did Christ answer the lawyers and Pharisees ?
25. How did He answer them ?
26. What may we observe ?
27. What was the import of our Lord's answer ?
28. Could they answer Him again ?
29. Why not ?
30. Were they converted ?
31. What is said of the obstinate and malicious ?

LESSON LXXXIX.

vs. 7-14.

7. ¶ And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms ; saying unto them,

8. When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room ; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him ;

9. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place ; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

10. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room ; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher : then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

• Prov. xxv. 6, 7.

11. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

• Job xxii. 29 ; Ps. xviii. 27 ; Prov. xxix. 23 ; Matt. xxiii. 12, Luke xviii. 14 ; James iv. 6 ; 1 Pet. v. 5.

*Chose out the chief rooms.* In the East it is still the custom for guests to occupy seats that mark their degree of rank. Each person, as he enters, seats himself in the place that he thinks he is entitled to fill, and often he takes a higher place than the company consider to be his due. But the master of the feast has the power to desire him to move either to a higher or lower place. The Pharisees showed a great anxiety to occupy the most honorable seats. Our Lord openly censured their conduct, and alluded to one of Solomon's proverbs, (xxv. 6,) an authority that they professed to revere.

But as the Evangelist calls these words a *parable*, he thus indicates to us that they contain a deeper meaning ; hence we are to look beyond the mere rebuke which the words conveyed to persons present, and to others who, like them, exhibit a similar spirit, and to mark how Jesus merely took occasion

of the entertainment then before him to teach a truth in connection with a still greater entertainment—even such a supper as He again refers to in that other parable He so soon after delivered. The sinner is bidden to enter the household of his Father, and to hold fellowship with that Father himself, and with all His family. Every thing that is needful for his refreshment and comfort is spread out for him within the house, where he has been admitted. And having entered, he is in a very different position from what he was before he had heard or replied to that invitation. Formerly an outcast and an alien, now he is a recognized and welcome guest. Now the “table is spread for him in the presence of his enemies.” But he must take good heed to himself. There is no room for self-exaltation here. He must not *begin to take the highest room*. The same spirit which led him to feel so unworthy of the least benefit from his Father—which led him to stand afar off, and hardly to dare to lift up his eyes unto heaven, must characterize him *still*. Who that has studied human nature by looking into his own heart, but at once recognizes the solemn meaning of such a lesson as this, and how needful it is for the sinner when restored to a favor that he had forfeited, and brought again within the circle of a house which he had despised! How does *pride* still linger even after conversion! What a solemn lesson is here for all ages, when we are told that even among Christ’s Apostles, His immediate friends and followers, there was disputing “which of them should be greatest,” and when one of the gentlest and most loving of them on one occasion took upon him to forbid a man from preaching in the name of Jesus, because he followed not with *them*!

*Sit not down in the highest room.* In other words, we are to obey the Divine command, “Let each esteem others better than themselves.” The injunction is to take *the lowest room*—not to think of others at all, but to feel that to be admitted to sit down in such communion is sufficient, and the soul asks no more. Our Lord says that this conduct will be followed by the master of the feast calling the lowly one higher. He does not put forth this as a motive *why* we should take the lowest place, but merely to show that the whole ordering and arranging of these things are of the Lord. *He may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher*, or He may not. You have nothing to do with that. It is enough for you to be at the feast—leave all the rest to Him—with this certainty, however, that *whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. God will Himself, according to His own will, and in His own way, establish this truth. We must honor Him by putting all this into His hands with real heartfelt humility. And He will take care just to give us that place by which He will be honored, and we ourselves made happy *and glorious forever*.

12. ¶ Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind :

• Neh. viii. 10-12.

14. And thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot recompense thee : for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Our Lord now addresses Himself particularly to His host, the preceding parable having been spoken to the guests. (See v. 7.) *To him that bade him*. We must not even allow the hospitality of those who appear friendly to in-

terrupt us in our duty, or induce us to be unfaithful, though the contrary conduct will probably, on some occasions, draw on us the censure of rudeness or ingratitude. *A dinner or a supper.* The inhabitants of the East generally, and as well the Greeks and Romans also, took a slight dinner, chiefly of fruits, milk, cheese, &c., about ten or eleven o'clock of our time, and then, on account of the burning heat of noon, deferred their principal meal till about six or seven in the afternoon. *Call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors.* These terms merely mean the higher classes of society, to which the host himself belonged. *A feast.* A general entertainment, or banquet. Some suppose that Christ alludes here to the festival of the second sort of first fruits, (or the feast of weeks,) at which Moses enacted that servants and widows, orphans and Levites, should be made free partakers. Deut. xvi. 11-14; xii. 12-18. *For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* We are not to understand here that resurrection is the special privilege of the righteous. It is hard to put any other sense on the expression than this: that there is a resurrection of which none but the just, or righteous, shall be partakers—a resurrection which shall be the peculiar privilege of the righteous, and shall precede that of the wicked. The last words, *of the just*, would have been purposeless if the Saviour had here had in mind the general resurrection which he describes, *e. g.*, John v. 28, 29. He distinguishes, like Paul (1 Thess. iv. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 23) and John, (Rev. xx. 5, 6,) between a first and a second resurrection. Comp., also, Luke xx. 34-36.

Our Lord, in these verses, gives no lesson against the interchange of hospitalities among friends. He does not deny that they have their healthful social influence among men. The repayments of the social debts of life, performed in the right spirit, have the blessing of God upon them. He would be evidently condemning Himself in attending them, if He were rebuking the inviters. Neither did Jesus mean, absolutely and universally, to prohibit men from entertaining their wealthy friends, relatives, and neighbors. Nor did He intend to encourage an injudicious, useless, and profuse expenditure of money in giving to the poor. But the sentiment is simply this: that we are not to lavish our attentions upon those only from whom we may expect some favor in return, which is the very essence of selfishness, but are to expend them upon those rather, whose condition in life forbids the hope that they can repay our kind attention. Only where one does something, not out of an every-day craving for advantage, but out of disinterested love, does the Saviour promise the richest reward. The profusion occasioned by feasting the rich and great serves to gratify a man's vanity and pride, and the sensual appetites of his friends, who in return are tempted to run into similar extravagance, of which the consequences are often very fatal, and it renders a man incapable of relieving the poor in any adequate degree. Such expenses cannot be incurred from love to God, or regard to His authority, favor, or glory; therefore no recompense can be expected from Him, and human applause, or a similar banquet in return, is the only reward of them. Prov. xxii. 16; Matt. vi. 1-4. But when a man, from *proper motives*, expends his wealth in relieving the distressed and indigent, he derives the greatest satisfaction imaginable from the use of it, and his gracious Lord will abundantly reward it in another world. This reward, however, will be of grace. It is impossible for us to *deserve* a reward. When we have done all, we have done only what it was our duty to do. In our country, many benevolent persons, instead of giving feasts to the poor, contrive other means of giving them relief and pleasure. Thus the spirit of the counsel is followed.

The venerable reformer and martyr, Hooper, of England, while he was Bishop of Gloucester, entertained a certain number of the poor every day, with a dinner of whole and wholesome meats, in his great hall, having first examined them in the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; nor would he himself sit down to table until his poor guests had been

served. But though he had given his goods to feed the poor, and though at length he gave his body to be burned, so far was he from trusting in his good deeds for salvation, that, when brought to the stake, he was heard to pray thus: "Lord, I am hell, but thou art heaven; I am a sink of sin, but thou art a gracious God and a merciful Redeemer." Job appealed to God, saying, "If I have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof." And Nehemiah, on a day of rejoicing, said to the people of Israel, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." Our Saviour and His Apostles again and again teach us that it is a solemn duty never to neglect the poor, who "shall never cease out of the land," Deut. xv. 11; but to aid and relieve them in their time of need. It is not for nothing that He declares that He will say to the wicked in the day of judgment, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink." Matt. xxv. 42. It is not for nothing that Paul writes to the Galatians, "They would that I should remember the poor, the same which I also was forward to do." Gal. ii. 10. All our attentions to the poor, however, are entirely lost as to heaven, if we have only earthly views of interest, pleasure, vanity, ambition, or human friendship.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is still the custom for guests in the East?
2. What did the Pharisees show?
3. Did our Lord censure their conduct?
4. To what proverb did He allude?
5. What is indicated by these words being called "a parable?"
6. What is said of the sinner?
7. What is said of him after having entered the house?
8. What must he not begin to do?
9. What spirit must still characterize him?
10. What is said of pride?
11. Explain "sit not down in the highest room."
12. What is the injunction given?
13. What does our Lord say of those who take the lowest room?
14. Why does He say this?
15. What is said of "whosoever exalteth himself?" &c.
16. Whom does our Lord proceed in verse 12 to address?
17. What is said of the hospitality of those who appear friendly?
18. What is said of the people of the East generally as to meals?
19. Explain "call not thy friends," &c.
20. What do some suppose Jesus alludes to by the "feast?"
21. Explain "for thou shalt be recompensed," &c.
22. Does our Lord in these verses forbid the interchange of hospitalities among friends?
23. Does He absolutely and universally prohibit men from entertaining their wealthy friends, relations and neighbors?
24. Did He intend to encourage an injudicious, useless, and profuse expenditure of money in giving to the poor?
25. What is the sentiment presented?
26. When is the spirit of the counsel followed?
27. What is said of the reformer and martyr, Hooper?
28. What, of Job?
29. What, of Nehemiah?
30. What do our Saviour and His Apostles repeatedly teach in regard to the poor?
31. What is said of the wicked in the day of judgment?

## LESSON XC.

vs. 15-17.

15. ¶ And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

[Rev. xix. 9.

The moment our Lord touched upon the resurrection of the just, one of the company laid hold of His words, as affording a welcome opportunity to turn the conversation into another channel, and expressed a great desire to participate in the blessedness of that day, of which, however, his heart knew nothing, so that he only feigned this stroke of piety with his lips.

To *eat bread* is a well-known Hebrew phrase for sharing in a repast, whether it be at a common meal or at a sumptuous feast. *Kingdom of God*: by this the Jew meant a *resurrection kingdom*, when the Messiah should come. Perhaps he wished, in saying what he did, to end Christ's discourse, which contained nothing flattering for the host, and thus, with worldly covetousness, come to the help of the Pharisee who had invited him, and avert the threatening storm. At all events, by what was previously intimated of the moral condition of the guests, and still more by the whole structure of the parable, in which it is manifested, by means of the guests first invited, how an earthly disposition and the love of this present world withhold so many from a blessed participation in the great supper, and how those only made their appearance there, in whose case no such hindrance existed, we are justified in thinking that the man's language was not expressive nor indicative of a real earnest desire for participation of the blessedness of the finally saved. His remark appears nothing better than the indolent, vague wish of a man who thinks it proper to say something religious when religion is spoken of in company. Hence the connection between the exclamation in verse 15 and the parable that follows would be—"Thou dost indeed pronounce those blessed who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, but I say unto thee, although this blessedness is prepared for all, and is freely offered them, there are many who still despise it, and all who resemble them in spirit shall, from their own fault, lose the offered salvation."

16. ¶ Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many :

[Matt. xxii. 2.

This parable, though there are some points of resemblance between it and that recorded in Matt. xxii. 1-14, is perfectly distinct from it. This occurred at a meal; that, in the temple. This, at an earlier period; that, at a much later. At the time of Luke's narrative, the hostility of the Pharisees was not yet so intensely expressed, and there was some hope of softening down and winning to a better mind, and therefore all is gentle and persuasive. At the time of Matthew's narrative, the hostility and hatred of the Pharisees to the Son of man had risen to its highest possible pitch. There seems to have been left no hope, and therefore there is a tone of stern and unsparing severity. In the first instance the excuses wear an air of plausibility and importance; in the second no excuse is pleaded, but there is exhibited, instead, violence, insolence, and contempt. In the first instance the deceived excuse-makers

were excluded, but in the second their city is burned up with fire, and they themselves are utterly destroyed. In Luke's the thought is, that the gospel should be taken away from the Jews, the priests, and the Pharisees, and passed over to the Gentiles, or perhaps the very least esteemed of the people. In Matthew's, the Pharisees finally cease, and the Gentiles are represented as taking the place of the Jews, who had lost their privileges, and perished from their possession. Thus we see the perfect consistency and harmony of these parables with the circumstances, the time, the position, and the audience of our Lord.

*A certain man*, that is, the Saviour. In this case it is not a king, but a person in a private station, who provides the feast. And the occasion of the rejoicing is not the marriage of the entertainer's son : it is an ordinary example of hospitality exercised by an affluent citizen. *Made a great supper*. The representation of the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, under the image of a feast, was very common : Isa. xxv. 6 ; Prov. ix. 1-5 ; Matt. viii. 11 ; also various passages in Book of Revelation. The representation here was partly occasioned by the exclamation of the guest in ver. 15, and partly also by the entertainment itself, ver. 1, during which the parable was uttered. As men's relish is so little, their desire so faint for the things heavenly, they are therefore presented to them under such inviting images as this, that if possible they may be stirred up to a more earnest longing after them.

The word translated *supper* was, in ancient times, employed generally to signify the principal meal, without reference to a particular period of the day ; and, from the circumstances of this case, it would appear that the feast was a dinner at an early hour, not a supper in our sense of the word. The excuses of two of the invited guests, that they were going to see the land and prove the oxen that same afternoon, although not sincere, must, in the nature of the case, have appeared plausible, and consequently the feast must have been ready at an early hour of the day. The *supper* may be called *great*, as well on account of the abundance of the refreshing viands, as on account of its being intended to be celebrated by many. How rich and abundant the provisions which God has made in His gospel for those who will come to His house, enter the Church, and become true members of it by repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ! For such there is refreshment in the discoveries and promises of the gospel, Luke i. 78 ; Mal. iv. 2 ; in its privileges and blessings, such as the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, the favor of God, regeneration, adoption, &c., Matt. xi. 28 ; in the communications of grace through the Spirit, and the prospects of future glory and felicity, Isa. lv. 1-6. Provision is made in the gospel for the sustenance or support of the Divine life in all penitent believers, namely, the blood and righteousness, or the merits of Christ, (John vi.,) received and fed upon by faith : "this is the bread that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die," ver. 50. Hereby they are preserved in a state of justification and favor, and the influences of the Spirit are afforded which quicken them. Provision is made for the health and strength of the soul, as strength of understanding in the truths revealed, of will in a choice of God, intention to please Him, and resolution in His service, of the affections in their vigor and liveliness in divine things, for the spiritual warfare, for duty, for suffering. Provision is made for their nourishment and growth in knowledge, (Jer. iii. 15,) that "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, they may go on to perfection," (Heb. v. 14 ; vi. 1,) in faith, confidence, and assurance, in love, and all graces, holiness and conformity to God, (1 Pet. ii. 2,) in inclination and ability for usefulness, till they arrive at the measure of Christ's stature. The provision is a "feast" for the soul of a man that knows its own capacities and powers, for the soul of a sinner that knows its own necessities and miseries—"a feast of fat things."

*And bids many*. It was a custom existing among the Jews, in giving entertainments, first to issue their invitations to their guests generally, and

then on the day appointed to send out again to them who were invited to call them to the feast. The Jews, as sprung from Abraham, were invited to the feast, for to that patriarch was the seed promised through which the blessing was to come, and accordingly the prophets carried it forward, and showed the people that there was no failure in regard to the Lord's will concerning the glorious festival for which He had made all previous preparation, and pressed on them His invitations. It seems probable that the priests and the elders, the Scribes and the Pharisees, those who "sat in Moses' seat," and had authority in the land, who professed to be the guides of the people, and from whose lips they took the law, are specially intended, in opposition to the publicans and sinners, and all the despised portions of the people. At the opening of the gospel dispensation, God sent the harbinger of the Messiah, John the Baptist, the Messiah himself, His Son and servant, with His servants, the Apostles, first twelve, and then the seventy, and by them invitations had been given. The invitation comes from the free grace and love of God; on the part of the invited there is found no worth or desert; the invitation is still always made through the proclamation of the blessed gospel in churches, schools, and families, by all who communicate its truth to others. The fact of many invitations being given, is evidence of the greatness and expensiveness of the feast, and renders the conduct of those refusing attendance more inexcusable. It is implied by the words *bade many*, and the second invitation to them to come, that the persons mainly intended had tacitly, or in some other well-understood way, accepted the first invitation. They gave no intimation that they intended to decline, and this, as well as the greatness of the feast, increased their criminality, in suffering themselves to be so engrossed with cares and labors as to have no time to attend the feast.

17. And <sup>b</sup>sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

<sup>b</sup> Prov. ix. 2, 5.

It was an Eastern custom to bid the guests a *second* time, by a messenger who announced that they might come, because every thing was ready. Dr. Thomson says in his "Land and Book," that in Lebanon, "this custom still prevails. If a sheikh, bey, or emeer invites, he always sends a servant to call you at the time appointed. The servant often repeats the very formula mentioned in Luke xiv. 17: 'Come; for the supper is ready.' It is true now, as then, that to refuse is a high insult to the maker of the feast. It is pleasant to find enough of the drapery of this parable still practised to show that originally it was, in all its details, in close conformity to the customs of this country." *Servant*. When the fulness of time was come, (Gal. iv. 4,) John the Baptist and the Apostles went forth to say to those that were bidden, to the people of Israel, now is the time, come. *Servant*, however, is to be taken in a collective sense: it is the *calling voice of God*, as uttered through all His messengers. *Supper time*: literally, *at the hour of supper*. *Coming* denotes the necessary internal change and readiness for receiving what was prepared, just as corporeal coming implies a change of place. The *repeating* of the invitation manifests the earnest desire and gracious purpose of God to do every thing on His part to bring men to a participation in the offered salvation, and, at the same time, also, the utter invalidity of the alleged grounds of excuse, *for all things are now ready*. It will be borne in mind that when John came preaching, it was the *Pharisees* who came prominently forward to demand an account of him and of his message. It was markedly with them that the settlement was first to be made regarding the "*supper now ready*." John i. 19-24. *Now* is indicative of the present time, in the New Testament; *all things are now ready*. All preceding dispensations were a preparation for Christ. When He appeared in the flesh, those who had been all along brought up within the lines of the privileged people were

invited to behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. This is repeated in the experience of every generation, and every individual, that grows up within the circle of Christian ordinances, as soon as the mind comprehends the message of mercy. As each attains maturity, he is informed that all things are now ready; he is invited and pressed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that he may be saved.

It is a blessed truth that there is nothing wanting on God's part for the salvation of man. If man is not saved, the fault is not on God's side. The Father is ready to receive all who come to Him by Christ. The Son is ready to cleanse all from their sins who apply to Him by faith. The Spirit is ready to come to all who ask for Him. There is an infinite willingness in God to save man, if man is only willing to be saved. The feast being ready, the guests have not to bring food with them, but to seat themselves at the table, and to eat what is provided for them. The gospel of salvation is ready, and we come, not to make a salvation, or to bring a salvation, but simply to receive a salvation already perfect and complete. In other words, it is our true position, that we are not to come to make an atonement, but to believe in an atonement already made.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What did one of the company do with our Lord's words?
2. Why did he lay hold of them?
3. Explain "eat bread."
4. What did the Jews mean by the "kingdom of God?"
5. What did this man probably wish to do?
6. How do we know that the man's language was not expressive of a real, earnest desire for an interest in salvation?
7. What is the connection between ver. 15 and the parable that follows?
8. Is this parable the same as that in Matt. xxiii. 1-14?
9. State the points of difference.
10. Who is the "certain man?"
11. What is said of the representation of the blessings of Messiah's kingdom, under the image of a feast?
12. How was the representation here occasioned?
13. Why is such a representation made?
14. Explain the word "supper."
15. Why may the supper be called "great?"
16. What custom existed among the Jews in giving entertainments?
17. What is said about the Jews being invited to the feast?
18. Whom did God send at the opening of the gospel dispensation to give invitations?
19. From what does the invitation come?
20. What does the fact, that many invitations were given, show?
21. What is implied by the words "bade many," and the second invitation to come?
22. Was it an Eastern custom to bid the guests a second time?
23. What does Dr. Thomson say?
24. Explain the word "servant."
25. What does *coming* denote?
26. What does the repetition of the invitation manifest?
27. Explain "all things are now ready."
28. Is there any thing wanting on God's part for the salvation of man?
29. What is said of God's infinite willingness to save?
30. Are we to come to make a salvation, or simply to receive it?

## LESSON XCI.

vs. 18-24.

18. And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

*And they all with one consent began to make excuse.* They began to beg off; they did not give a plain and flat denial, but "made excuse," thus acknowledging themselves the necessity of an excuse in some manner plausible, and thereby indirectly establishing the fact that they were under obligation to appear. It is to the honor of Christianity that so few deny its claims, and only ask to be excused from yielding to them. *With one consent.* There is no reason to believe that they met together and framed a plan to insult their entertainer. The servant saw them separately and received their answers; the meaning is, with one *spirit* or *accord*, unanimously. We must not suppose that our Lord meant *absolutely* that *all* the leading men among the Pharisees begged off, for there may have been some exceptions, such as Nicodemus, for example. But these were so rare, and such was the variety of feeling existing in individuals to whom John's message came, that Christ was justified in grouping them all together in one class under this general character, common to all—they *all* began, &c.

*The first said unto him.* There have been a number of explanations of these three excuses. Some explain the piece of ground as referring to property possessed, the oxen as property getting, and the wife as sensual enjoyments. Some suggest that the land is dead materiality, that the oxen rise to animal life, and the wife to human and social life. Others say the first excuse is the landlord's, "I am too busy in looking after my rents, I am too busy in these times of severe pressure, to be able to spare any time for religion." The second is the tradesman's, "I make so little, my customers are so few, my profits are so small, that I must work from morning to night, either at my books or behind my counter, in order to make all ends meet; and therefore I have no time for religion;" and the third is the domestic man's excuse, the excuse of the father, mother, sister, brother, son, daughter, "I have a home, and its cares and anxieties are so many, that I have no time for religion." *I have bought a piece of ground, &c.* He alleges he had bought the land without seeing it, being thus a type of the folly of worldly men, who spend their time, thoughts and strength on things of which they do not know the real worth. *Must needs: I am under the necessity of going away from home.* He wished to see his possession that he might glory in it, as Nebuchadnezzar gloried when he walked in his palace and said: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built . . . by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty." Dan. iv. 30. *Have me excused, not only now, but always.* This entreaty to be excused is an acknowledgment of the groundlessness of the pretext, the worthlessness of the excuse, the impropriety of remaining away, the guiltiness of the man's conduct, and hence shows the greatness of his perverse, worldly state of mind.

19. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

*I have bought five yoke, &c.* The number five has no special significance. *To prove, test their strength, endurance and docility. I go; am going even*

now—he has only just time to add, “I beg thee,” while he already desires to be with the oxen.

20. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

*Married a wife, &c.* The other two, even when they plead their excuses, are themselves conscious that they are hardly valid, hence pray to be excused. This man makes no such request, seems to regard his excuse legitimate, and declares it in a tone of self-confidence which does not even deem an excuse as necessary. The greater peremptoriness of his refusal shows that the force of his temptation lay in the difficulty of reconciling conflicting duties. Attendance upon the feast, however, would not have involved the violation of any duty arising out of his new relation, but simply the holding it of inferior importance on a given occasion. According to the Mosaic law, Deut. xxiv. 5, the newly-married man was free for a year from military service, and it therefore appeared to this man that it could not be demanded of him that he should leave his young wife. But, as the invitation to the feast had been accepted before the celebration of the marriage, the marriage, though it set him free from the burden of military service, did not from the enjoyment of social intercourse. In case of need he might have brought his young wife also with him, and if she did not wish this, then here, also, the saying, Matt. x. 37, held good. From the case of this man Roman Catholic writers have drawn arguments in favor of the unmarried state. By parity of reasoning, we might prove that buying oxen or land is more sinful than hoarding up money and not spending it. They overlook the beautiful point of this part of the parable, which is this: It is not so much the open breach of God's law, as our excessive attention to lawful and innocent things, which ruins many men's souls.

Here we have a vivid picture of the reception which the gospel is continually meeting with wherever it is proclaimed. It is not avowed dislike to it which is so much to be feared. It is that procrastinating, excuse-making spirit, which is always ready with a reason why Christ cannot be served *to-day*. Let the words of our Lord on this subject sink down into our hearts. Infidelity and immorality, no doubt, slay their thousands, but decent, plausible, smooth-spoken *excuses* slay their tens of thousands. No excuse can justify a man in refusing God's invitation, and not coming to Christ.

In relation to the excuses of the men in the parable, let the following things be noted:

1. They were frivolous. They did not constitute a real hindrance. Neither sickness nor the death of friends detained them at home. They could have *foreseen* those events, but it showed great contempt to purchase land or oxen, or to contract a marriage at the time they had agreed to come to the feast. It would have been far better to have refused at *first*, than to accept the invitation, and then to make excuses, when the feast was prepared and the master was waiting.
2. They were the same. Though variant in *form*, they were identical in *origin* and substance. They all manifest the same perverse state of heart, only the object of the sinful love is not uniform.
3. The excuses were all based on things *lawful in themselves*. The abuse of lawful things ruins many souls.
4. There was an ascending scale of contumacy in these men. The first pleaded *necessity*, the second did not plead necessity, but went to prove his oxen, the third gave a rude, point-blank refusal—“I cannot come.”
5. All these excuses were probably false, for it is not likely that the first two would buy ground and oxen before seeing and trying them. As to the third, see Notes on verse 20.
6. If these excuses were not false, they were *falsely applied*. Men often give a reason different from the *real* one, for not being Christians.

21. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

*So that servant came, &c.* Ministers must lay before their Lord their good or bad success. They must do it now at the throne of grace, going to God with thankgivings, if they see the fruit of their labor, or with complaints, if they labor in vain. They will do this hereafter at the judgment-seat of Christ, witnesses against those who persist in unbelief and perish, to prove that they were fairly invited, and witnesses for those that have accepted the call. The Apostle urges this as a reason why the people should submit to those who rule over them in the Lord. Heb. xiii. 17. *Being angry.* God is not liable to the passion of anger, as the giver of a feast, whose feast is despised. Yet these words are meant to teach us that unbelief and rejection of the gospel are very provoking to God. At the same time that they indicate the righteous displeasure of God toward the conduct of the guests, they show once more His earnest desire for their welfare, the unsatisfactoriness of all their excuses, and the justness of His expectation, that the invited would receive the invitation. It is always found in the links and relationships of affection, that the greatest love, should it undergo a change, becomes the intensest hatred—the reaction is the greater. Hence as parallel to this, we read of the “wrath of the Lamb,” the most awful expression in the whole New Testament.

*Go out quickly, &c.* *Quickly*, in haste, soon these offers must cease, this opportunity shall have passed away. This second sending forth of the servant refers to the commission given to the Apostles of Christ to preach the glad tidings of His gospel, and invite sinners to the feast of salvation. By the terms of this commission, they were to “begin at Jerusalem.” And so here it is “the streets and lanes of the city” to which the servant is sent. *The poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.* These words describe primarily the Gentiles, who were just in this miserable condition as compared to the Jews. Secondly, they describe all sinners to whom the gospel is offered, who feel their sins, and acknowledge their own spiritual need and poverty. In these words there seems to be a reminiscence of the precept Christ gave, verse 13. Outward want and corporeal wretchedness are easily apprehended by the eye and the mind; hence under this description are meant all such as feel the necessities of their soul and their spiritual wretchedness, Matt. v. 3. Bodily distress, also, often opens the heart to the consolations of the gospel, and hence to those who had experience of it the gospel was especially preached, Luke iv. 18; Matt. xi. 45; and among them, for the most part, is found the most cordial and extensive reception, 1 Cor. i. 26-29. Earthly riches, on the other hand, very readily become a hindrance to the reception of the gospel-call, as they are apt to blind the internal eye to the wants and necessities of the soul. Matt. xix. 23-26. No such excuses were to be feared, as the first invited gave, from the blind who had no field to view, the lame who could not go along behind his oxen, the maimed who would have no wife to hinder his coming; only the feeling of poverty could have held them back, but this feeling also vanishes, since they must be in a friendly way led in by the servant.

22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

Much humility is shown in the servant's reply. He does not say, “I have done as thou hast commanded,” lest it should look like taking some glory

or credit to himself, but, "It is done as thou hast commanded," so that the instrument is lost and obscured in the lustre of him that uses it. A true minister of the gospel will thus feel. *Yet there is room*, the feast must have its full complement of guests. It has been prepared at a most costly price, and there must not be one vacant place at the table. Since now the will of the Lord has been executed, the invitation held out to others, and by them accepted, the greatness of Divine grace is expressed in these words, as is also its universality in ver. 23. The *room* is, indeed, as vast as the merits of the atonement, capacious as heaven itself. This expression seems to show that there is more willingness on God's part to save sinners than there is on the part of sinners to be saved, and more grace to be given than there are hearts willing to receive it.

23. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled.

*Highways and hedges*, that is, the public roads, and paths hedged in, and passing through or along by vineyards: *compel them to come in*. It yields a most delightful consolation, that God orders men to be compelled, for it intimates that He *really* seeks our salvation, and *really* wishes us to be saved, as when a father is seriously concerned about the government of his son, he not only employs cold admonitions, but also a certain severity of discipline towards him, and constrains him to do what is required. The meaning is, that the moral compulsion of love must be used. So Jesus compelled His disciples to go into the ship. Matt. xiv. 22; Mark vi. 45. Men are to be *compelled*, by argument, by the force of moral suasion, by commending the thing to their consciences, to *come in*, and partake of those benefits provided for them in the gospel. They are to be compelled by the strong, earnest exhortation, which the ambassadors of Christ will address to men, when they are themselves deeply convinced of the importance of the message which they bear, and the mighty issues which there are for every man, linked with his acceptance or rejection of the message of the gospel.

That nothing like physical force is meant by compelling men to *come in*, is evident. How could the single servant sent out, drive before him from the country into the city, hundreds or thousands of unwilling guests, and these, too, gathered from those rude and lawless men to whom he was sent? And how could he compel them to eat when they did come in? Besides, it was not *reluctance* to come to the feast that was to be overcome, on the part of the dwellers in the highways and by the hedges, but a sense of unworthiness, requiring no physical force. The gospel does not sanction any literal compulsion, or force, in pressing its claims on men's acceptance. Least of all does it sanction the least approach to intolerance or persecution of men because of their religious opinions. *That my house may be filled*. It is only God's design of mercy to save sinners, (Eph. i. 3,) not any proper merit on the part of men, which is the ground of the invitation; it must not be that His grace has been prepared in vain. If some reject, others will thankfully accept it. "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength," &c. Isaiah lix. 5, 6. God will have a Church in the world, though multitudes may reject the gospel.

24. For I say unto you, "That none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxi. 43 and xxii. 8; Acts xiii. 46.

The ingratitude of those that slight offers of grace and mercy, and the

contempt which they put on God, is a very great provocation of Him. Mercy abused turns to the greatest wrath. When the ungrateful Israelites despised the land of promise, God "sware in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest." Grace despised is grace forfeited. They that will not have Christ when they may, shall not have Him when they would. Even those that were bidden, if they slight the invitation, shall be forbidden. Why did the master declare that none of those men who *first* were bidden should taste of his supper? Do not the words seem to indicate that a time would arrive when those who had made excuses would repent of their folly, and seek to be admitted to the feast? But they would find the door shut against them. When they knocked, they would hear a voice within, saying, "I know you not." They would not be permitted even to *taste* the supper, of which they had once been invited to partake.

### QUESTIONS.

1. How were the invitations received?
2. Explain "with one consent."
3. Did our Lord mean absolutely that all the leading men among the Pharisees begged off?
4. What did the first say?
5. What explanations have been given of these three excuses?
6. Explain "I have bought a piece of ground," &c.
7. Explain "have me excused."
8. What did the second say?
9. Explain his answer.
10. What did the third say?
11. What is peculiar in this man?
12. Would his attendance upon the feast have involved the violation of any duty arising out of his new relation?
13. What was the Mosaic law on this subject?
14. What vivid picture have we here?
15. State, in order, what is said of the excuses of these three men.
16. What must ministers lay before their Lord?
17. Explain the words "being angry."
18. Explain "go out quickly," &c.
19. What does the second sending forth of the servants refer to?
20. What is meant by "the streets and lanes of the city?"
21. Whom do the words, "poor," "maimed," "halt," and "blind," primarily denote?
22. Whom do they secondly describe?
23. What is said of poverty and bodily distress?
24. What, of earthly riches?
25. What is shown by the servant's reply?
26. Explain "yet there is room."
27. What are we to understand by "highways and hedges?"
28. What is said of "compel them to come in?"
29. How are men to be thus compelled?
30. How is it evident that nothing like physical force is meant?
31. What is said of "that my house may be filled?"
32. What is said of the ingratitude of those who slight offers of grace and mercy?
33. What do the words "none of those men," &c. mean?

## LESSON XCII.

vs. 25-30.

25. ¶ And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

Jesus was now on His way to Jerusalem. The multitudes which followed Him probably did so only as He walked from the feast to His place of abode. At all events, it is to be supposed that they returned to their homes, as He approached the Jordan to cross over to Jericho. They appear to have accompanied Him, in order to witness further exhibitions of His miraculous powers, or to hear the words of instruction which fell from His lips. They were under a slight and transient impression. He knew that they had generally very erroneous notions of His kingdom, and were not prepared to submit to the losses and privations, or to encounter the various dangers and difficulties which certainly awaited His true disciples. From love, therefore, He is stern enough to portray to them in darkest colors the conditions of being His disciples, that they may be held back from foolish fancy, and led to self-examination. Discipleship was not so pleasant as they were disposed to think. He would not have one follower otherwise than as he was thoroughly alive to all that he had to do and to suffer, all that he had to bear of self-denial.

The temptation to admit people to full communion, and endorse and approve them as true Christians, before they have given evidence of decided grace, is very strong. The inclination to set before young inquirers the joys and comforts of the gospel, without any proportionate exhibition of the cross and the fight, requires constant watching against. The close imitation of our Lord's conduct in this passage would probably greatly lessen the number of our communicants. But it may be doubted whether we should not gain in quality what we lost in quantity, and whether we should not be freed from many of those disgraceful backslidings, and gross inconsistencies, which so often now-a-days bring discredit on religion.

26. <sup>k</sup>If any man come to me, <sup>l</sup>and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, <sup>m</sup>yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

<sup>k</sup> Deut. xlii. 6 and xxxiii. 9; Matt. x. 37.

<sup>l</sup> Rom. ix. 13.

<sup>m</sup> Rev. xii. 11.

*If any man come to me.* The coming to Jesus is not the same as the coming after Him. Matt. xvi. 24. The latter presupposes that one is already His disciple, the other that one desires to become such. It is evidence of Christ's deep knowledge of man, that He knew that the people accompanying Him had not yet by any means taken the first decisive step, but were only in a measure inclined to do so, and treated them accordingly. *And hate not his father, &c.* None can suppose that Jesus disapproves of natural affection. This would have been to contradict the fifth commandment. His whole life and teaching, His conduct to His mother, when He was on the cross, refute such a notion at once. By the words themselves He guards himself against possible misconception, for He says not only, *if any man hate not his father and mother, &c.*, but *his own life also*. To know what He means by the hate in the one case, we have only to consider what it can mean in the other. One thing is said to be loved, another hated, in Scripture, when the former is much preferred, and especially when, out of regard to it, the latter is neg-

lected and forsaken. Compare Gen. xxix. 31; Deut. xxi. 15-17; Mal. i. 8; Rom. ix. 13; and Matt. vi. 24. Matthew x. 37 expresses the true meaning of the words *hate not*, when He says, *He who loveth his father and mother more than me*. The meaning of the expression, then, is, that love to Christ in order to be genuine must be supreme, earthly affections when they come into collision with His claims must be postponed. He hath done more for us than our nearest relative; when, therefore, the drawings of affection stand in the way of our entire surrender to Him—our supreme devotion to His interests—their power must be rejected; if one or another dearly cherished object stands on one side, and Christ on the other, we need not love them *the less*, because we cannot go with them, but we must love Him *more*. Even *life*, and its attendant blessings, are also to be regarded as worthless when placed in an opposing scale to the love of Christ, and therefore to be freely surrendered, when required to be yielded up in His service. Without such a spirit, no one can be Christ's disciple. He builds without a foundation who pretends to be the servant of God, without loving Him, or to love Him as he ought, without preferring Him above all things whatsoever. In our days, converted Jews and converted Brahmins have resisted the tenderest entreaties of affectionate mothers and devoted wives, who would have turned them from the faith. And even in our Christian land, there are many instances of children who have endured much unkindness from their own parents, rather than comply with the vain customs of the world. It is painful to disagree with those we love, and especially about spiritual things. But if there should arise a necessity for this, we must not hesitate, remembering that it can never be true love to relatives to do wrong in order to please them. Alas! how many there are who, instead of being willing and ready to give up all for Christ, often prefer a mere trifle before Him.

27. And "whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xvi. 24; Mark viii. 34; Luke ix. 23; 2 Tim. iii. 12.

To the natural affections this was a hard saying, and might seem to ask too much of the disciple; since, in many cases, such a separation would amount to the severest punishment, and be, in fact, a sort of lingering death like that of crucifixion. But, so far from recognizing this as an admissible objection, or a valid ground of disobedience, Christ repeats it as a positive command, requiring just such crucifixion as a duty and a test of true discipleship whenever circumstances might demand it. Our Saviour had not been crucified; but death by crucifixion, though a Roman punishment, had already been made by the Roman dominion familiar to the Jewish eyes. In adopting this symbol of self-denial, He had Himself, doubtless, even already in the distance, beheld this instrument of His own pain and ignominy. The *cross* is a large and comprehensive word; but, with whatever variety applied to individuals, it cannot lose its essential nature: it still carries the nails that pierced the body, and the shame that penetrates the soul. Wherever it rises upon the page of Scripture, it cannot but bring with it the shadow of pain and trouble. Whenever it is erected, surely, as at first, there will be "darkness over all the *earth*," even though that darkness may make the stars of heaven's consolations shine more brightly. What our Lord here commands is, that each follower should bear, not his Saviour's cross, but his own. The requirement is, that as Christ bore His own cross to His own crucifixion, so His followers should bear each his own cross to his own crucifixion.

*And come after me.* Christ is here presented as our *example* in bearing of the *cross*. He is everywhere described as being ever *tempted*, just as we are, though ever victorious, as—alas!—we are not; nor can we doubt the disciplinary character of this constant and painful struggle, when we are told

that, "though a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered," that He was "made perfect through sufferings," and by that means "became the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him." From such passages as these, it is evident that Christ suffered that He might accomplish a refining and exalting change upon Himself—not upon Himself *as God*, nor as the Divine sacrifice of His own Divine justice, for, as such, change and exaltation are alike impossible, but upon Himself *as man*. As virtue, tried and triumphant, ranks above innocence, if Christ was to possess (as, surely, was on every account fitting) the utmost *perfection* of our nature in the humanity allied to His Godhead, it was necessary that He should possess it in the state of *victorious trial*. Nor can we, with any reason, doubt that His trials raised and refined the *human element* of His being beyond the simple purity of its original innocence, so that He who could "*grow in wisdom*" and in years "*learned obedience by the things which He suffered*," and was "*made perfect through sufferings*." It is for this reason, obviously, that, in His earthly career, we find Him immersed in the same difficulties which we have to encounter; supported by the same faith, acting in view of the same reward, "*in all things made like unto His brethren*."

Those, therefore, who would be Christ's disciples must *come after Him* in those sufferings which, under the blessing of God, purify and fit for heaven. Each follower, who has the spirit of the Master, is crucified in behalf of Christ and of truth—crucified in fact or in readiness. They are not ambitious to share with Jesus in the merit of His sufferings as the *Atoner*, for this is absolutely and forever impossible; but there is more than a willingness to participate with Him in the benefit of His sufferings as the *Purifier*, and also to be conformed to Him in their own sufferings. Paul joyfully suffered *the loss of all things, and counted them but dung, that he might have the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that he might know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death*. Philip. iii. 8-10; see Col. i. 24.

It is to be feared many dream they are interested in the cross of Christ, who were never willing to bear the cross for Him, and who neither renounce their worldly interests nor mortify their lusts in order to follow Him. But, if we be not prepared to give up iniquitous gain, forbidden indulgences, and the friendship of the world, and to bear ridicule and reproach, and the displeasure or loss of friends, how should we be able to forsake all, and lay down our lives for Christ? Jer. xii. 5, 6; Heb. xii. 4-8. Utterly vain is it to call ourselves Christians, when we live in ease and pleasure, instead of bearing our cross, when we follow the world, which is the enemy of Christ, and conform ourselves to its manners, instead of following our Head, and practising His gospel.

Christ never discouraged a sincere soul from following Him. But He has given a true description of the nature of His service, so that none can say that it was represented as easier than they found it. A poor Madagascar woman, who had undergone great persecutions, was once asked whether she was surprised when afflictions overtook her. She replied, "No, from the first we knew it was written, that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God, and when our troubles came, we said, 'This is what we expected.'" This poor woman was once shut up for five months in an iron case that prevented her moving a single limb, yet, having counted the cost, she proved more than conqueror through Him who loved her.

28. For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish it?

• Prov. xxiv. 27.

Though there is no immediate external connection between this parable or the one that immediately succeeds it, and that of the great supper, yet a certain internal relationship may be recognized. *That* points out the carnal mind and the love of the world as the main hindrance which stands in the way of the sinner's salvation, whilst *these* similitudes represent the discipleship of Jesus to be a difficult thing, which demands the greatest sacrifices, so that its cost should be duly and carefully estimated by all who would become His followers. *A tower.* We are not so particularly to understand a tower in the strict sense of the word, but an expensive edifice requiring a more than ordinary development of resources. The words, *which of you*, would indicate that Christ addressed the *multitudes*, and they were not of a character and condition to justify the supposition of their building a tower, such as kings, governors, and military commanders generally erected. Possibly nothing more was meant than a *dwelling-house*, on the top of which, according to the Asiatic manner, battlements were built, both to take fresh air on, and to serve for refuge from and defence against an enemy. It was also used for prayer and meditation. *Sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost*, whether he have *sufficient to finish it?* The meaning is, a man about to build a house, if he is wise, will be careful what he is doing. He wishes to have a house in which to shelter himself. His first duty is to sit down calmly, and to look over every thing connected with his plans, to satisfy himself that he is about to commence what he will be able to finish. That plan alone secures a good beginning, and a happy, successful ending. In like manner, any one proposing to become a disciple of Christ should weigh deliberately whether he is able and prepared to bear all the losses, conflicts, and persecutions incident to such discipleship. He is surrounded with those things which minister to his earthly comfort and happiness. Is he prepared to give up all these things at the command of his Saviour? Is he prepared, whenever their claims upon him would interfere with what his Master demands at his hands, at once to set them aside for the sake of Jesus? Yea, is he ready, like Paul, to say, "I count not my life dear unto me, that I might win Christ and be found in Him?" See John vi. 68-69.

29. Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him,

30. Saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

p Matt. vii. 27; xxvii. 3-8; Acts i. 18, 19; 1 Cor. iii. 11-15; Heb. vi. 4-8; x. 39; 2 Pet. ii. 19-22; 2 John viii.

There is in many a kind of undecided attachment to Christ, such as that which the multitudes following Him manifested, but they do not persevere in it, and it is their folly they have not courage and resolution, have not a rooted, fixed principle, and so bring nothing to pass. *Mock* means to *deride, scoff at*. The words, *this man*, throw a shade of sarcasm on the expression. In the ground-work of this parable there is an allusion, it would seem, to the spiritual edifice referred to in 1 Cor. iii. 11-15, which must be reared on the one Foundation which shall be tried in the day of the Lord. While the decidedly Christian life constrains the world to involuntary respect, half Christianity provokes it to not unnatural scoffing—so absurd is it to undertake to be disciples of Jesus, without seriously considering what difficulties are to be met with. We must take great care, however, that our deliberation and consideration of difficulties do not deter us from, but work in us, a steady resolution to go forward. The design of Christ here is not to discourage, but to prevent men following Him lightly and inconsiderately, and to admonish all in taking up the cross, to gird themselves with fortitude. There is no reason why the knowledge of our wants, which the Lord is ever

ready to relieve, should depress our minds. If we come to a reckoning, indeed, we are all so destitute in ourselves, that we cannot even lay one stone of the tower. But though unable of ourselves to do any thing, yet we may *do all things through Christ that strengthens us.* *Counting the cost* must, indeed, always issue in a discovery of the utter inadequacy of our own resources, and the going out of ourselves for strength and means to build, to Him who, with every command, gives a promise of aid, and has engaged to make His grace sufficient for us, and His strength perfect in our weakness.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Where was Jesus now?
2. Why did the multitudes probably follow Him?
3. What is said of the temptation to admit people to communion, before they have given evidence of decided grace?
4. What is the difference between coming to Jesus, and coming *after* Him?
5. What is evidence of Christ's deep knowledge of man?
6. Explain the words "hate not his father," &c.
7. What, then, is the meaning of the expression?
8. What is said of converted Jews and Brahmins in our day?
9. What is said of disagreeing with those we love?
10. Why did Christ utter the language of verse 27?
11. Why did He adopt this symbol of self-denial?
12. Explain the word "cross."
13. Explain the words "and come after me."
14. What is said of those who would be Christ's disciples?
15. What is to be feared?
16. Does Jesus ever discourage a sincere soul from following Him?
17. What is said of a poor Madagascar woman?
18. What is said of the connection between the two parables here, and that of the Great Supper?
19. Explain the relationship.
20. What are we to understand by "a tower?"
21. What is said of the words "which of you?"
22. What is the meaning of "sitteth not down first," &c.
23. What should any one proposing to become a disciple of Christ do?
24. What kind of attachment to Christ is said to be in many?
25. What does "mock" mean?
26. What is said of the words "this man?"
27. What allusion seems to be in the ground-work of the parable?
28. In relation to the consideration of difficulties, of what must we take great care?
29. What is the design of Jesus here?
30. Should the knowledge of our wants depress our minds?
31. Can we do all things through Christ that strengthens us?

## LESSON XCIII.

vs. 31-35.

31. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth, whether he be able, with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

32. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

Here is another view of what a disciple of Christ must make up his mind to, if he would walk in the narrow path. The king who declares war against another without comparing his forces with those of his enemy, and considering whether the bravery of his troops, and the conduct of his generals, will be able to make up what he wants in numbers, is sure to be ingloriously defeated, unless he humbly sue for peace before the matter comes to an engagement. The *two kings* here, are the *man desirous to become a disciple*, to work out his salvation, and *God*, with whose just and holy law he is *naturally at variance*; and the question for each man to ask himself is, "Can I with my ten thousand, stand the charge of him who cometh against me with twenty thousand?" The numbers *ten thousand* and *twenty thousand* are designedly chosen to denote an entirely unequal military power. When once the sinner is awakened to the consideration of this all-important question—"Can I meet God with all that I have? He is coming against me as my adversary. I am a rebel against Him. I have dared to dispute His authority, and sought to reign as a king, independently of His eternal sovereignty. Can I meet Him when He is coming to contend with me? How shall I be able to conduct myself in this mighty controversy?"—whenever a man has been awakened to this solemn consideration, it is not long before he discovers how utterly inadequate all his resources are for such a contention.

*Or else*, that is, if on deliberation, he is of opinion that he cannot cope with the more powerful enemy—cannot reckon on a successful issue—he will not hazard a battle, but *sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace*, that is, an embassy, to obtain the terms on which peace will be granted. This is spoken for the sake of verisimilitude. It would not have comported with royal usage, for the king to have gone in person, to sue for conditions of peace. But this feature belongs exclusively to the costume of the parable. In seeking the forgiveness and favor of God, each one must go in person. He must go, as a penitent sinner, to God whom he has offended, seek to be reconciled, supplicate for pardon and peace. He must send his petition to his heavenly King, plead with Him through Jesus Christ, the all-prevailing Mediator and Intercessor, *take with him words, and turn to the Lord*, his God, giving up all confidence in himself, and confessing that he is "poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked," that he is utterly unable to save or help himself, and cast himself on the forbearance, the compassion, and the kindness of the Being whom he has offended. No sinner can be pardoned, who seeks to secure the blessing by commissioning any one to act in his place. He must make a personal surrender of himself, and renounce the ways of sin, before he can expect any conditions whatever of peace and pardon. This does not militate, however, against the efficacy of prayer in behalf of an impenitent friend. But the answer to such prayer is not in contravention to the general rule pervading the whole redemptive economy

of God, that the sinner himself must come to Him, and by personal repentance and submission, end the perilous conflict in which he is engaged.

It may be taken as the general teaching of both the parables, that the consciousness of our own incapacity should lead us to seek for a higher power, to join ourselves to the great empire of light and its Prince, which, in all circumstances, contends against the empire of darkness.

We are not to think of God as a *real* enemy to us, but only an *apparent* one. He desires our salvation, for He so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. It is only because of our sins that we are obnoxious to His wrath and curse, and He invites us to come and *reason* with Him, that our sins, though as scarlet, may be as wool, and though red like crimson, may be made whiter than the snow.

33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

*So likewise*, that is, like the person who "began to build, and was not able to finish," or, like the king, who, being afraid to face his enemy, sent an embassy and desired terms of peace; *whosoever he be of you*, of you who are in great danger of supposing that to be my pursuer is to be my follower, —that forsaketh not all that he hath, who does not engage so earnestly and resolutely in the Christian warfare, as to hold all things cheap in comparison of life eternal, and be ready to forsake them when I call him to it; *he cannot be my disciple*, he lacks the proper pre-requisite of supreme love for me, he cannot be acknowledged by me as a disciple, for my disciples will be exposed to such trials and afflictions, that unless they prefer me, and the cause in which I am engaged, to all visible and temporal things whatever, they certainly will not steadily adhere to me, or continue faithful and constant in my service.

Christ does not require that we should actually renounce these temporal things, but that our heart and our affections should be so taken off from them that we always love them less than we love Him, and be always ready to part with them, when we cannot keep them without "making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience." It was in this sense that the Apostles understood their Master; for though they are said to have forsaken all and followed Him, they still retained the property of their goods, as is evident from the mention that is made of John's house, into which he took our Lord's mother, after the crucifixion, and from Peter and the other disciples prosecuting their old trade of fishing, with their boat and nets, after their Master's resurrection; nevertheless, though they thus retained the use and ownership of their property, they had truly forsaken all, in the highest sense of their Master's precept, being ready, at His call, to leave their families, occupations and possessions, as often and as long as He thought fit to employ them in the work of the gospel.

To be a *disciple of Christ* is to learn of Him, as the Great Teacher sent from God; to apply to Him, and rely on Him, as the Mediator, for reconciliation with God, trusting alone in His sacrifice and intercession, under a conviction of our guilt, and deserved condemnation; to come to Him, and trust in Him, as a Saviour, not only from the guilt, but also from the power and pollution of sin, and all its consequences, to be subject, loyal and obedient to Him as a king and governor, renouncing other lords, looking to Him for protection, peace and salvation, and striving to observe His laws, submitting ourselves to His sway, and aiming and endeavoring to imitate His example and to promote His glory. How far we may approach to this character, and yet fall short of it, we may learn from Mark x. 17-22; Matt. xxv. 8; xxii. 11.

34. ¶ Salt is good : 'but if the salt have lost its savor, where-with shall it be seasoned ?

q Matt. v 13; Mark ix. 49, 50; Col. iv. 6; Heb. ii. 4-8

35. It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dung-hill ; but men cast it out. 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

r Heb. viii. 8; ix. 44, Matt. xi. 15. Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 29

These verses do not stand here independently, but are in some measure the application of the previous remarks. Comp. Matt. v. 13, Mark ix. 50. As the disciples were a purifying salt with reference to the unbelieving world, so was Israel (here represented in the people following) called to be such a salt for the heathen nations. *Salt is good*, literally, salt is excellent, but if the salt have lost its savor, is insipid, wherewith shall it be re-endowed with its saline power? It is such a vile and worthless thing, that it is neither fit to be used of itself, as manure for the land, nor even to be cast upon the dung-hill, to be there mixed with other manure, but men cast it out, it is thrown out of doors, and trampled under foot like mire in the streets. Maundrell, in describing a valley of salt in his travels, says: "Along, on one side, there is a small precipice, occasioned by the continual taking away of the salt. I broke a piece of it, of which the part exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had 'the sparks and particles of salt, had completely lost its savor. The inner part which was connected with the rock retained its savor." Dr. Thomson, in his "Land and Book," says of the salt of Palestine, "From the manner in which it is gathered, much earth and other impurities are necessarily connected with it. Not a little of it is so impure that it cannot be used at all, and such salt soon effloresces and turns to dust—not to fruitful soil, however. It is good for nothing itself, but it actually destroys all fertility wherever it is thrown, and this is the reason why it is cast into the street. There is a sort of verbal verisimilitude in the manner in which our Lord alludes to the act: 'it is cast out,' and 'trodden under foot,' so troublesome is this corrupted salt that it is carefully swept up, carried forth, and thrown into the street. There is no place about the house, yard, or garden where it can be tolerated. No man will allow it to be thrown into his field, and the only place for it is in the street, and there it is cast to be trodden under foot of men."

We see from this extract, that our Lord could not have selected a more striking illustration of the worthless character of false discipleship than the one here made use of. When the Church, or any of its members, fail to exercise the salutary influence for which they were created, they become not only absolutely worthless, but just objects of contempt to those who ought to have revered them, and been benefited by them. But what is all the disgrace which the useless professor of Christianity (the savorless salt) can draw upon himself here, in comparison of the shame and everlasting contempt which awaits him in the other world? Matt. xxv. 30. *If the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?* That is, "if the salt lose its taste, how is it to recover it?" The sentiment intended to be conveyed seems to be this. a professed Christian, especially if he has seemed to be distinguished for the knowledge and experience of the saving truth, and by being so, has seemed to be useful in making the world wiser and better, who becomes careless, and ignorant, and worldly, and irreligious—who loses the hold he seemed to have of truth—who ceases to manifest any thing like its native influence on his temper and conduct, is in a state peculiarly deplorable. There is less probability that he shall be reclaimed than that the grossly ignorant, the openly profane, should be converted. An ignorant, wicked heathen is in a less helpless condition than an apostate Christian, whether the apostasy be avowed or silent. This is a sentiment very strongly ex-

pressed by the inspired Apostles, who had the mind of Christ. Heb. vi. 4, 8; 2 Pet. ii. 20-22. It is clear that "salt may lose its savor," and that true Christians might lose the principle of Divine life, unless God had engaged to preserve it, but in respect of all those mentioned in Scripture, who became like "salt which hath lost its savor," some intimation is annexed that there was previously a radical defect: "No root in themselves," "no oil in the vessel," "They went out from us, because they were not of us." Jer. xxxii. 39-41; Ezek. iii. 20, 21; Matt. xiii. 20, 22; xxii. 11-14; xxv. 1-13; John xv. 2, 6-8; 1 John ii. 18, 19. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* This whole discourse, 25-35, can only be fairly understood by remembering that the audience to which it was so kindly directed consisted of a retinue of loose, but admiring attendants, who applauded at every step, but who were liable, under opposing influences, to cry, *Crucify Him, to-morrow.* This expostulation aims to call them to consider their depth of feeling and the true method of being an earnest disciple of Jesus. Every man who had ears to hear Christ's touching words is earnestly admonished to accept them in their true force. How can the faculty of hearing be better employed than in attending to the word of Christ, particularly to the alarms He has given us of the danger we are in of apostasy, and run ourselves into by it? True religion easier finds its way to the vacant, destitute soul, which has merely the primitive common sense which God has given, than into the most cultivated mind, occupied already with its systems and with its prejudices.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What other view have we here?
2. Whom do the two kings here represent?
3. What is said of the numbers "ten thousand" and "twenty thousand?"
4. Explain "or else."
5. What is said of "sendeth an ambassage," &c.?
6. What is necessary in seeking the forgiveness and favor of God?
7. What is said of the efficacy of prayer in behalf of an impenitent friend?
8. What may be taken as the general teaching of both the parables?
9. How are we to think of God?
10. Explain "so likewise."
11. What is said of "whosoever he be of you?"
12. Explain "that forsaketh not all," &c.
13. What is meant by "he cannot be my disciple?"
14. What is said of verses 34 and 35?
15. What is said of "salt is good," &c.?
16. What is said of salt that has lost its savor?
17. What does Maundrell say?
18. What does Dr. Thomson say?
19. What do we see from this extract?
20. What is said of the Church, or any of its members, who fail to exercise the salutary influence for which they were created?
21. Explain "if the salt have lost its savor," &c.
22. Might true Christians lose the principle of Divine life, unless God had engaged to preserve it?
23. What is said of all those mentioned in Scripture, who became like salt which hath lost its savor?
24. What is said of "he that hath ears to hear," &c.?
25. Is every man who hath ears to hear Christ's touching words, earnestly admonished to accept them?
26. What is said of the faculty of hearing?
27. What, of true religion?

CHAPTER XV.

LESSON XCIV.

vs. 1-3.

THIS chapter contains the Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Piece of Silver, and the Prodigal Son. An eminent expositor thinks that it forms a contrast with the severity of the discourse in the preceding chapter, the point of junction between the two being our Lord's rejection of some and acceptance of others. This view appears the more plausible from the character of the persons to whom the discourses were addressed; the former being, as this expositor thinks, a company of self-reliant, curious persons who had flocked together and were following Jesus to hear or see something strange and wonderful, while the present company were poor, despised publicans and sinners. To the former He laid down, in the most explicit terms, the stern requirements of discipleship, the latter He invites to come to Him by the most tender and winning appeals.

1. \*Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. ix. 10.

*Then* does not mark time by the mere continuation of the narrative: it seems to have the meaning of *as*. We suppose these transactions to have taken place as our Lord passed through Perea, on His way to Jerusalem. *All the publicans and sinners*. As *Bethabara* was probably the rallying-point of His Perea ministry, this being near Jericho and the fords of the *Jordan*, with their custom-houses, many publicans and sinners would be in the neighborhood, to whom the preaching of our Lord presented powerful attractions. *Publicans*. See Notes on v. 29, 30; vii. 34. By *all*, we are to understand all in that particular neighborhood where our Lord was. *Drew near unto him to hear him*. This expresses a confidential and continued course of such persons about Jesus, with the design of listening to Him. They were desirous to hear Him preach, and to see what He would do; for they well knew that He was a pious man, and that in His words and deeds they should find nothing but what was good; and although their disposition was far from according with His life, yet, as they were not hostile to Him, there was still hope of their being improved by Him. There is an implied contrast between the object for which they sought the presence of Christ and the mere motive of curiosity which appears to have actuated the multitudes who followed Him in ch. xiv. 25.

2. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, <sup>b</sup>and eateth with them.

<sup>b</sup> Acts xi. 3; Gal. ii. 12.

*Pharisees and Scribes*. See Notes on xi. 42, 43, 44; xii. 1. *Murmured*. In their self-righteous spirit they were offended when they saw the publicans and sinners gathering around our Lord, and said: *This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them*. This cannot be referred, as some think, to former and general habits of intercourse with these men; for it is evident that these fresh murmurs arose from what took place on that very occasion. The

words, *this man receiveth sinners*, should be carefully noted. They are a key-note to the whole chapter. A constant recollection of them throws light on the interpretation of all the three parables which follow. The Pharisees found fault with our Lord for "inviting sinners," regarding this as unworthy of the high character He claimed. Our Lord replies, in effect, that the thing which they found fault with was the very thing He came on earth to do, and a thing of which He was not ashamed. He came, not only to *receive* sinners, but to *seek* them, and to rejoice over their restoration to God. The accusations brought against Christ, by His chief foes among the people, were, in by far the greater number of cases, an expression of unworthy spite, envy, and malice, on their part. But it is possible that, in *this* instance, some among the Scribes and Pharisees, who had exalted ideas of what was proper in a prophet, started the objection which was made, from a sincere, though mistaken conviction, that it was well founded. At all events, the objection was a most plausible one: it was one which was likely to turn the tide of opinion against Christ; nay, it was an objection which, if in a *certain* point of view it could have been substantiated, would have utterly condemned His mission. Had our Lord's fellowship with the persons here spoken of been such as this—that He descended to their level, that He held converse with them without rebuking their sins—*then*, indeed, the objection, "this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them," would be well founded, and nothing else of power or love on the part of Him who did so could wipe away that stain. Jesus, therefore, without giving heed to the spirit which prompted the objection, at once proceeded carefully to vindicate His conduct from any false construction which might be put upon it, while, at the same time, He took occasion from the accusation itself to set forth, under the most remarkable imagery, the true nature of that fellowship in which He Himself rejoiced, His receiving sinners, and eating with them.

### 3. ¶ And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

The three parables which follow, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son, refer all to the same subject, and describe the same fact. They contemplate that fact, however, from opposite sides, and produce accordingly different pictures. The two first set forth to us mainly the *seeking* love of God, while in the third there is exhibited the *receiving* love of God. Whilst the two first teach the same doctrine, they differ in this: that in the case of the living creature, the loss is sustained through its spontaneous wandering; in the case of the inanimate silver, the loss is sustained through its inherent inertia. Both parables alike represent the sinner lost and the Saviour finding him; but in the one case the loss appears due to the positive activity of an evil will, and in the other to the passive law of gravitation. Not that, in the spiritual sphere, one sinner departs from God by an exercise of his corrupt will, and another is drawn away by the operation of an irresistible law: it is one transaction represented successively on two sides. The representations are different, but both are true. In the fallen, sin is both active and passive. The sinful select their own course, and go astray in the exercise of a self-determining power; they also gravitate to evil in virtue of an inborn corruption, which acts like a law in their members. In connection with these two sides or features of sin, the two doctrines, opposite and yet not contrary—the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man—meet and embrace each other in the work of redemption. To the disease of sin in both its phases, as an active choice and an innate tendency, the Divine physician has prepared an antidote. He brings the wanderer home, and lifts the fallen up. Then, the third parable, that of the prodigal son, completes the picture, showing what the sinner, who really desires to be blessed, and has in him something of a penitent and believing spirit, has reason to expect of God, viz., a ready and most welcome reception. Thus the parables would

have seemed incomplete without one another, but together form a perfect and harmonious whole. Separately, they would have seemed incomplete, for the two first speak nothing of a changed heart and mind toward God, nor, indeed, would the images of a sheep and a piece of money have conveniently allowed this; while the last speaks only of this change, and nothing of that which must have caused it—the antecedent working of the Spirit of God in the heart, the going forth of His power and love, which must have found the wanderer, before he could ever have found himself, or found his God.

Some have noticed gradations in the three parables: 1. A gradation of guilt—the stray sheep wandering from the shepherd, and scarcely aware of the error into which it has fallen, as representing the stupid, foolish sinner; the lost coin, as representing the sinner as altogether ignorant of himself; and the prodigal son, as representing the daring and wilful sinner. 2. A gradation in the value of the lost articles, rendered prominent by the decreasing proportion in the number of what remained, compared with what was lost—one out of a *hundred*, one out of *ten*, and one out of *two*; this last one, also, being a *son*, for whom there was a yearning of affection, and depth of longing desire for his recovery from sin and restoration to virtue and happiness, which casts very far into the background any grief for a lost animal or piece of silver. Certain is it that all the three parables represent a loving disposition, for it is love which moves the man to seek his sheep, and the woman her money, and love, also, which prompts the father to take back his lost son.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What does this chapter contain?
2. What does an eminent expositor think?
3. What is said about his opinion?
4. What is said of "then?"
5. How are we to account for the presence of the publicans and sinners?
6. Why did they draw near to Jesus?
7. What contrast is implied?
8. Who murmured?
9. Why did they murmur?
10. What did they say?
11. To what must what they said be referred?
12. What is said of "this man receiveth sinners," &c.?
13. How did our Lord reply, in effect, to the Pharisees and Scribes?
14. Of what character generally were the accusations brought against Christ by His foes?
15. What is said of the accusation in the present instance?
16. What is said of our Lord's reply?
17. What three parables follow?
18. To what do they all refer?
19. What do the two first set forth?
20. What is exhibited in the third?
21. In what do the two first differ?
22. What do they both alike represent?
23. How are they both true, though different?
24. What does the third parable show?
25. Would the parables have seemed incomplete without one another?
26. Why would they have seemed so?
27. What is the first of the gradations in the parables?
28. What the second?
29. What do all three parables certainly represent?

## LESSON XCV.

vs. 4-7.

4. \*What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

c Matt. xviii. 12.

*What man of you* : the Saviour here, as also in ver. 8, appeals to that universal human feeling which impels, as well the man as the woman, to seek what is lost, and to rejoice with others over what is found again : *having an hundred sheep* : the hundred and one was a favorite comparison among the Jewish teachers ; as used here it served to bring into view the comparative smallness of the loss in opposition to what yet remained : *sheep*, the emblem of the flock of Israel, and hence here more principally the Jewish sinner, who more or less knew the law, or ought to know it. It hence takes in the case of the publican whom He is defending : *if he lose one of them*, if one should stray away, *doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness* ; uncultivated ground used merely as pasture was called *wilderness* or *desert* by the Jews, in distinction from arable or enclosed land : *and go after that which is lost*, doth not miss the wanderer, and, leaving the rest of the flock in pasture, *go after it*, or, as the original denotes, go in quest of it with his whole thought and desire fixed upon it, *until he find it* ? The time of the search is not limited or restricted ; it is represented as continuing until the lost object is found.

That the shepherd in the parable means Christ there can be no doubt. His own assumption of this character and name in John x. is conclusive here. He was frequently referred to in the Old Testament as the Messiah under this character. The faithfulness and tender love of the good Shepherd are here set in contrast with the indifference of false and faithless shepherds. See Ezek. xxxiv. The *lost sheep* is sinful man, as originally created safe and happy, in want of nothing, lying down by pastures of tender grass, and by the waters of quietness, but now straying on the bleak and barren mountains of sin. *Lost sheep*. What expression could exhibit more graphically the hopelessness of a sinner's state ? The lost dog finds his way back to his master or to his kennel, but the lost sheep rarely finds its way back to its fold ; it goes further and further into the wilderness, till it dies of hunger, or is devoured by beasts of prey. No lost sinner ever yet of himself found his way back to God. Man by nature is lost to God, and to the grand purposes of his creation. And he has lost God—His image, His friendship, communion with Him, and the hope of His favor and beatific presence.

The shepherd missed his sheep. What an idea does this give of Christ's surveillance over us ! His eye is upon every stray sinner in all his wanderings. He sees him from first to last, as He missed him at the first. *The shepherd left the ninety and nine for the sake of the one that had wandered*. This implied no dereliction of the shepherd's duty—no injury to the body of the flock. In this transaction neither kindness nor unkindness was manifested towards those that remained on the pasture—it had no bearing upon them at all. How natural the conduct of the shepherd ! The mother, who has many children that are all equally dear to her, and would not have one of them taken from her, when one of them falls sick and comes into jeopardy, finds a difference among the children : the sick one becomes now the dearest, and she can neither interest herself much in any thing besides, nor pay much

heed to it. Thus, then, the conduct of Christ, as set forth in this parable, is in harmony with the analogies of nature.

*As soon as the shepherd misses the sheep, he goes after it.* Christ's love is an active, working love. He did not sit still in heaven pitying sinners. He left the glory which He had with the Father, and humbled Himself to be made in the likeness of man. He came down into the world to seek and save that which was lost. He never rested till He had made atonement for our transgressions, brought in everlasting righteousness, provided eternal redemption, and opened a door of life to all who are willing to be saved.

*The shepherd pursued the sheep till he found it.* He knew the nature of the country in which the sheep was straying, and also the nature of the sheep that was straying there. He knew the roughness of the mountain passes, and the silliness of the solitary, truant sheep; he divined accordingly what track it would take. He followed and found the fugitive. In like manner Christ's love has no ebb and flow: it has no flux and reflux, it has all the fixity of an everlasting principle, and all the fervor of an inexhaustible passion. He never lets the eye of His compassion light upon a sinner without, by and by, letting the weight of His power to save be felt by that sinner also. The sinner is *found*, when, penitent and believing, he yields to Jesus, accepting Him, as his Saviour, his prophet, priest, and king.

5. And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

It appears to have been usual with the Jewish shepherds to carry their sheep on their shoulders. The shepherd of the East is often seen bearing upon his shoulder the forlorn sheep that is too weak to be driven. This man, when he found the sheep, though it may have been recovered after a long and arduous pursuit, felt not one sentiment of regret—not one feeling of chagrin. He did not upbraid it for its straying, he did not complain of its weight. Guilty, suspicious hearts may see here the loving heart of Jesus. He takes no pleasure in the death of them that die. *Layeth it on his shoulders.* We have here a sweet intimation of the compassion of Christ; He transfers our burden to Himself, becomes a victim for us, thence bearing us, he carries us to his own flock, bears, feeds, sustains, and governs us. As the shepherd dealt with the sheep, not by law or force, as well he might, driving it before him like other sheep, and letting it go itself, but took all the labor and trouble upon himself, that the sheep might have ease and rest, so Jesus lightens the sinner's return by this exercise of love, helping him to overcome hindrances, removing difficulties, and strengthening weakness with Divine power. We are here taught that the work of saving the sinner is done by Christ alone. This fundamental truth, however, that salvation is begun, carried on, and completed by the Saviour alone, does not, of course, come into collision with another fundamental truth, which expatiates on another sphere, and is represented in the parable of the Prodigal Son, that except the sinful do themselves repent, and come to the Father, they shall perish in their sins.

*Rejoicing.* Whatever trouble the shepherd may have had, whatever care and anxiety he may have gone through, all is merged in the grandeur of that flood of joy that the lost sheep is brought back to the fold. So Jesus lifts His ransomed, His redeemed one, by His strong hand and His almighty power, and "makes a show openly" of what He has done in delivering His poor erring child, and He does all this "rejoicing." His joy begins not when the work is over, but when the work begins. Whilst the lost one is on his shoulder, and because it is on his shoulder, the shepherd is glad.

6. And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends

and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep <sup>4</sup>which was lost.

4 1 Pet. II. 10, 26.

*When he cometh home.* This does not mean, as some have supposed, that the shepherd on his return brought his lost one to the house instead of placing it again in the fold. Such a view would mar the simple, natural story of the parable. All that is meant by it is this: The shepherd succeeded in his search which took him from home, or from his house, and he returned home with his lost one found. The evident purpose of the introduction of such words is to impress upon the hearts of all God's ransomed ones this precious truth, that when the Saviour carries them by His power from the place of danger to the place of safety, *He* is going home, and therefore so are *they*. His home is their home; his place of rest theirs. In his Father's house are many mansions, and the end of their salvation will be in its perfect happiness to realize in the presence of God, and Christ, and the holy angels, in its utmost and highest perfection, all that rises in the heart, and speaks of calm, gentle joy in that one blessed word, *home*. The kingdom of God recognizes two successive home-comings in the history of every citizen: one when, by the discriminating mercy of the Redeemer, though he was an exile, through the regeneration he enters a state of grace; another when, under the leading of the same chief, in the resurrection he enters a state of perfect glory. It is over the first, the repentance of a sinner, our Lord tells us, a jubilee is held in heaven. They do not wait till the ransomed one shall appear in bodily presence near the great white throne. There is no need the entrance into grace insures the entrance into glory.

By the expression, *my sheep which was lost*, or, literally, *my sheep, the lost one*, there is an indication that the loss of the sheep had been generally known in the neighborhood. Now the news that the animal is found spreads rapidly around; the people are called together, to celebrate the event with demonstrations of joy. By the *friends and neighbors*, we are to understand the different orders of heavenly beings. The heart of our Lord Jesus Christ is here represented so full of joy and love that it were impossible for any one to make Him appear more kind and joyful.

7. I say unto you, That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, <sup>5</sup>more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

• Luke v. 32.

*I say unto you.* The truth which follows these words is wonderful in the extreme. It assures us that heaven and earth are united by a chord of sympathy. They are not isolated provinces of the same empire, but bound together by a tender tie. The inhabitants of heaven take a deep interest in the souls of our race. Heaven is not in sight of earth, but earth is in sight of heaven. The Church above forever watches the Church below. God looks down lovingly upon us, and we have the benevolent interest, the affectionate regard, and the exalted, endearing, and enduring sympathy of the bright and glorious intelligences, who, having been made in the image of their Creator, still retain the Divine similitude, and bask in God's beatific presence. Well might Jesus, who knows well what transpires in heaven, in announcing such a truth, thus preface it, *I say unto you*, in order to repress the incredulity in regard to it, from its amazing character, which otherwise might have existed in our minds.

*Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*—a <sup>6</sup>single sinner—any sinner, in a cottage or an almshouse, a palace or a prison, on a throne or in a hovel; any one, even though his condition be so obscure, and his abilities

so mean, that his conversion stops in his own soul's salvation. *One sinner that repenteth*—trusts in God's goodness through Christ, believes in the forgiveness of sins, receives Jesus as a Saviour, and shows a changed mind, by amendment of life both outwardly and inwardly. Over one such sinner there is and *shall be joy in heaven*, joy with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and with the holy angels. *More than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.* There is but one meaning which can be attached to the expression *just persons*, in this connection, and that is entire freedom from sin, and confirmation in holiness. The persons referred to are safe in God's fold, either having never wandered away, like the angels who stand before God and serve Him, or having been reclaimed and admitted into God's presence, where they are now sinless and in no danger of ever falling away again into sin. It is not, of course, meant that a repenting sinner on earth is worthy of more esteem than ninety-nine confirmed saints in heaven. All that is meant is, that the interest for the time being is concentrated upon him, and the others are comparatively lost sight of.

## QUESTIONS.

1. To what does the Saviour here appeal ?
2. Why was the comparison of an hundred and one here used ?
3. What is said of "sheep ?"
4. What was called wilderness by the Jews ?
5. What is said of "go after it ?"
6. What is said of "until he find it ?"
7. Who is represented by the shepherd, in the parable ?
8. Who is the lost sheep ?
9. What is said of the expression "lost sheep ?"
10. How is man by nature lost ?
11. What do we learn from the shepherd missing his sheep ?
12. What is said of the shepherd leaving the ninety and nine ?
13. Did the shepherd go after the sheep as soon as he missed it ?
14. What is said of Christ's love ?
15. Did the shepherd pursue the sheep till he found it ?
16. What is again said of Christ's love ?
17. What did the shepherd do with the sheep on finding it ?
18. Did he feel any sentiment of regret ?
19. How does this represent the case of Jesus ?
20. Is the work of saving done by Christ alone ?
21. What is said of this fundamental truth ?
22. What is said of "rejoicing ?"
23. When does Christ's joy in saving sinners begin ?
24. Explain "when he cometh home."
25. What is the obvious purpose of introducing such words ?
26. How many home-comings does the kingdom of God recognize ?
27. What are they ?
28. Over which one is the jubilee held in heaven ?
29. What is said of "my sheep which was lost ?"
30. Who are represented by the "friends and neighbors ?"
31. What is said of the heart of Jesus ?
32. What is said of "I say unto you ?"
33. What, of "one sinner ?"
34. Explain "repenteth."
35. With whom is there joy in heaven ?
36. Who are the "just persons" referred to ?
37. What is meant by "more joy," &c. ?

## LESSON XCVI.

vs. 8-16.

8. ¶ Either what woman having ten \*pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

\* Gr., Drachma, equal to the denarius. See Matt. xviii. 23.

This parable, as we have shown, is not identical with the one preceding it. Our Lord never repeats the same sentiment under the same symbol, or with precisely the same contemplated effects. A simile, an allusion, that conveys the most kindling sympathies to one man's bosom, fails to elicit a single spark from another: hence our Lord employed a variety of figures through which to communicate and illustrate truth.

The disproportion between nine to one, and ninety-nine to one, gives this parable an increased emphasis over the former one. In the case of the wandering sheep, there may remain some faint, instinctive recollection of the fold, and when darkness and danger surround it, or the pangs of hunger fasten upon it, some instinctive effort to recover what it has lost. But the figure of the *piece of money* tells us that, in the case of the lost soul, even the consciousness of his condition is wanting. He is lost, but he knows it not. He is in danger, but he heeds it not. Besides, the seeking and finding, in the first parable, has more to do with man as a race, and with the restored family of Christ, collectively at last. This parable seems rather to point to the individual and personal discovery of each sinner, and his restoration to God. The appropriateness of placing this parable between that of the Lost Sheep and that of the Prodigal Son will be evident, when we think of the recovery of the lost in these two ways—first, as being restored by the power and through the merits of the Son of God, and next, as being, in consequence of this meritorious work, received into favor by “*the Father*.” The Spirit, by His *seeking* and *finding*, brings to the lost soul all the merits of the Son's work, and under the all-powerful stimulus of the new motives thus given, the new light thus bestowed, the new life thus implanted, leads the soul to say: “I will arise, and go to my Father.” Unless Christ's work had been perfected *for* the sinner, the Spirit's work had never been begun *in* the sinner.

*Either what woman*: by this is meant the Holy Spirit. Sinners, when regenerated, are “born of the Spirit.” *Ten pieces of silver*, in the original a *drachma*. The value of this coin, which was a Greek one, was about fifteen cents. These ten pieces seem a small amount; for the woman, however, the loss of one was of great importance, since her whole treasure consisted of the ten drachmæ; thus the idea is brought out, that not the material worth of what is lost, in itself, but the worth which it has in the eyes of the possessor, is the cause of the carefulness of the love which seeks it. Notice the increasing value of the *sheep*, the *coin*, and the *son*, by the diminished number from which they are lost. The *sheep* is but the hundredth part of the flock, the *coin* is but the tenth part, the *son* is one of two. *If she lose one piece*. Here the primeval dignity of the soul, in its original state, is compared to a piece of silver, having the image of the great Sovereign of the universe stamped upon it. “God made man upright,” bearing resemblance to Himself in his intellectual and moral attributes, capable of an endless progress towards perfection. But man, being left to the freedom of

his will, degenerated from the rectitude of his nature, so that his original glory is departed from him. In this state of moral corruption, he is compared to a piece of beautiful coin, for a time lost in the dust of the earth, where its former lustre is miserably tarnished, and its value diminished. (Lam. iv. 1; Isa. i. 22; Jer. vi. 30.) *Doth not light a candle.* No sooner did the woman miss the coin than she began to search for it. This indicates an earnest desire to recover what was lost. It will not seem strange that the woman should have needed to light a candle, in order to search for the coin, when we consider how exceedingly ill-lighted were the houses of the lower ranks in ancient times. This is manifest from the relics of Herculaneum and Pompeii, where many of the smaller houses have no windows at all, and in such as have them they are rather loop-holes (like those found in our *barns*) than windows. The light of reason is not sufficient for man's salvation. The lighting of the candle may be explained by the help and hints of such passages as these: Matt. v. 14, 15; Philip. ii. 15; Eph. v. 13. When the Spirit of God takes the Divine Word, and, carrying it into the recesses of a man's soul, reveals its foulness, danger, and misery, then the sinner discovers his lost condition, and, feeling his need of a Saviour, cries, "What shall I do to be saved?" *And sweep the house.* Here is further evidence of the great effort made to recover the lost coin. The sweeping, which disturbs the house and reveals a foulness that, so long as it lay unstirred, was perhaps never suspected, may indicate the convictions, the alarms, the dread discoveries, the searchings and agitations of heart, which not unfrequently accompany conversion. What a derangement of the house for the time by the process of sweeping! How does the dust which had been allowed to settle down and accumulate begin to rise and fly about in every direction! How unwelcome that which is going forward to any that may be in the house and have no interest in finding that which has been lost! Thus is it with the Word of God. Evermore the charge against it is, that it turns the world upside down, even as indeed it does. For only let that Word be proclaimed, and much of latent aversion to the truth becomes open enmity, much of torpid alienation against God is changed into active hostility, and there is an outcry against the troublers of Israel, the men that will not leave the world alone. But amid all this, the Holy Spirit is diligently seeking for the lost, not ceasing labor, care or diligence, till the lost is found. Let it be noticed that the coin was lost in *the house*. It is unfortunate to lose a piece of money in the house, but much more so in a field, forest or sea. Sins forgiven are lost in the sea, but souls under condemnation of the law and in danger of hell, are lost in the house. Though deformed by sin, and defiled by corruption, yet, being within the house, they are within the region of hope and the reach of mercy. *And seek diligently till she find it.* The search, it will be observed, was not only earnest, but successful. The Holy Spirit seeks lost sinners by speaking to their conscience, by affliction, by the preaching of the gospel. The sinner is *found*, when he realizes his lost condition, and yields to God on the terms of the gospel.

9. And when she hath found it, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

The woman is already at her own house, and hence nothing is said about her returning, as did the shepherd in ver. 6.

*Her friends and her neighbors.* The feminine gender is employed in the original. It was natural that the woman should call together her female friends to rejoice with her. The angelic hosts have not the distinction of sexes; they are considered, however, as remaining at home, or going abroad—abroad, in manly attire, prepared for war; at home, in the domestic and

peaceful garb of females. By this verse a gracious God, accommodating His language to our ideas, expresses His joy in saving sinners, and in seeing sinners saved. To entertain any other idea of Him is to do injustice to His gracious character and to endanger our own souls. "As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." As the angels here referred to are not "in heaven," as they were represented to be in the last parable, some suppose that they are angels that walk up and down the earth, are present in the congregations of the faithful, offended at aught unseemly among them, (1 Cor. xi. 10,) joying to behold their order, but most of all rejoicing when a sinner is converted.

10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

(Ezek. xviii. 23, 32; Matt. xviii. 10, 11; Acts v. 19; Heb. i. 14.)

Not as in the former parable, ver. 7, joy *shall be*; but joy *is*, &c. Neither is it here said, "more than over ninety and nine," &c. This special characteristic of the joy seems to be left as its crowning one, when the whole story of fallen and restored humanity shall be made known from first to last, with all its springs and all its consequences. Here there is the present joy expressed when one after another of the family of man is taken out of the kingdom of darkness, and brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son. See Notes on ver. 7.

11. ¶ And he said, A certain man had two sons.

This parable has justly been called "the pearl and crown of all the parables of Scripture." "What human teacher," says one, "has placed the folly of human nature, and the consequence of this folly, in such simple, clear, and graphic colors before our eyes, and, in contrast therewith, has given of the long-suffering and compassion of God so inexpressibly rich an exhibition, as is done in this discourse, which, also, has no parallel for its adaptation to the capacity of all!" *Two sons*. One of the greatest difficulties meets us in this first verse. It is evident that God, as specially manifested in the gospel, is represented by the father, but who are represented by the two sons—the elder, who remained at home, and the younger, who went away? On this point three distinct interpretations have been suggested: angels and men, Jews and Gentiles, or Pharisees and publicans. We shall probably more fully and more correctly ascertain the mind of the Lord by employing all these, than by selecting one.

12. And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to *me*. And he divided unto them <sup>his</sup> living.

§ Deut. xxi. 16, 17.

‡ Ma. xii. 44.

*Father, give me the portion, &c.* His claiming of his share in this technical and almost legal form is a delicate touch, characteristic of the entire alienation from all home affections which had already found place in his heart. Though treated with kindness, and provided with every reasonable comfort, he was restless and uneasy. He found the sober, rational enjoyments of his father's family dull and insipid, and he sighed after other amusements and pleasures more suited to his taste. He wished to get rid of godly discipline and pious restraints, which were irksome to him. He longed to be independent, to be his own master, and to follow his own inclinations. To have restrained him would have been to increase his alienation and disobedience.

Only the young man's words are recorded, but these words sprang from thoughts unseen in his soul. Alienated in heart, he became vicious in life. The same two elements go to constitute the character and condition of the sinful before he is reconciled to God. There is a lower and a higher link in the chain that binds the slave. There is a body of this death, and a soul: there is a spiritual wickedness in high places, and a bodily wickedness in low places. The one is guilt, the other sin: the heart is at enmity, and the life is disobedient. The portion asked by the younger son, according to the Jewish laws of inheritance, would be the half of what the elder brother would receive. Deut. xxi. 17. This request, in its spiritual significance, is the expression of man's desire to be independent of God, to be a God to himself, (Gen. iii. 5,) and to lay out his life according to his own will and for his own pleasure. *And he divided unto them his living.* The case would seem to have been, that the younger son, having a right to expect a certain proportion of his father's movable property ("goods") on his death, was also entitled, by usage, to demand that portion before the demise of his father—probably that he might thus be enabled to establish himself in life. Thus we see, in patriarchal times, that Abraham in his lifetime gave his other sons their portions and sent them away, while Isaac (as does the elder son in this instance) remained with him and succeeded to the residue of the inheritance. As the text seems to say that the father gave both his sons their portions, and yet the elder did not receive his in the same sense as the younger, it is easy to understand the transaction in the sense, that there was indeed a formal division, but that it had no further object than to ascertain the proportions to which each was entitled, so that after the claim of the younger had been discharged, the remainder should become the portion, not subject to any further deduction, which would form the future inheritance of the elder son, on the death of his father.

13. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

*Not many days after, a litates for very soon after:* he made off as soon as possible. *Gathered all together,* his means were now all in a movable form, perhaps converted into money or into valuables that he could easily carry, and he was fully prepared for a profligate squander: *and took his journey into a far country:* here is exhibited the spirit of apostasy and departure into open sin. *Wasted his substance in riotous living*—scattered even the patrimony which through the kindness of his father had become *his own* property. The word here rendered *riotous* is used both in Latin and Greek, and expresses the utmost abandonment of character, and is in fact the original of the English word "sot." An interesting parallel to this portion of the parable occurs in Luke xii. 45. The essence of all sin is separation and departure from God. Men are said to remove themselves far from God, who lay aside all fear of Him. Ps. lxxiii. 27. The gathering together of all and departing intimates, on man's part, the collecting of all his energies and powers, with the deliberate determination of getting, through their help, all the gratification he can out of the world—the open preference of the creature to the Creator. It is only when man is, or imagines himself to be, far from God, that he dares to indulge his vicious propensities, and when thus distant, by putting God far from his thoughts, he continually sinks deeper, so that all the powers and faculties of his soul are misapplied and squandered upon what is worthless and vile.

14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

His profligacy soon made way with his means. Distress, disgrace, and ruin, was all the fruit which he reaped from his sin and folly. For a time he enjoyed himself, and took his pleasure. But this was soon over. His substance was squandered, and he felt the pinchings of want. His distress was increased by the fact that a mighty famine had arisen in the land. Without money, without friends, in a foreign country, far from home, his affliction must, indeed, have been great. We find a striking illustration of what is meant by having *spent all*, and being in *want*, in the lines of a great English poet, who, with every thing that fortune, and rank, and genius could give him, and having laid out his whole life for pleasure, and not for duty, yet, before he had reached half the allotted period of man, exclaimed :

“My days are in the yellow leaf,  
The flowers, the fruits, of love are gone,  
The worm, the canker, and the grief  
Are mine alone.  
The fire that on my bosom preys  
Is lone as some volcanic isle,  
No torch is lighted at its blaze,  
A funeral pile !”

The words, *he had spent all*, mark the internally degraded state of the sinner, his ignorance, his unbelief. Eph. iv. 18, 19; Rom. i. 21. From the expression, *there arose a mighty famine*, we learn that the desire of good, the longing after bliss, is never wholly extinguished in the human heart, however far sinners are from rightly understanding it; and if at times it seems quite gone, and sinners think themselves happy, other times again come when they *begin to be in want*, i. e., to have a keen feeling of their necessities, their misery, and the unsatisfying nature of all that is temporal, for they hunger or seek after what can afford a better and truer satisfaction to the wants of their nature.

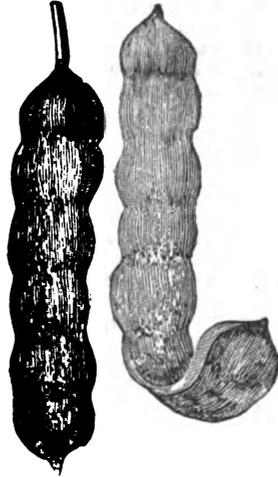
15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

*Joined himself*, i. e., became a servant to a citizen of that country; as he himself was an alien and a foreigner, he hired himself to a citizen. Is not this citizen the devil, or one of his angels? Is any man a citizen of the realm of sin? *To feed swine*. This was deemed an ignoble employment among all nations, and especially by the Jews, to whom swine was an abomination. His proud heart was yet unsubdued, his confidence in his own resources not altogether exhausted. Human sorrow is not all, or always, godly sorrow. Convictions and terrors seldom bring the wanderer at once to the door of mercy; he generally tries in succession several other methods in order to obtain relief. See Isa. ix. 10; Jer. v. 3; Isa. lvii. 10; Amos iv. 6-10. As the prodigal attempted to keep body and soul together by the most desperate and loathsome expedients, rather than throw himself on his Father's compassion, so an alienated human soul, conscious of having offended a good God, and therefore hating deeply the Holy One, will bear and do the will of the wicked one to the utmost extremity of misery rather than come home a beggar, and be indebted for all to a Father's love.

16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xlv. 20; lv. 2; Lam. iv. 5; Hos. xii. 1; Rom. vi. 19-21.  
<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxlii. 4; Isa. lvii. 3; Jon. ii. 2-3.

The pods of the kharub trees were called *husks*, from their resemblance to a horn. This tree is found abundantly in Western Asia, Southern Europe, and Northern Africa, and has a trunk sometimes of many feet in diameter. It belongs to the leguminous family, and produces flat, brown pods, six or eight inches in length, which, like those of the tamarind tree, are very sour before they are ripe, but when arrived at a state of maturity they contain a blackish kind of honey, that makes them an object of research among the poor. They are produced in great abundance, since there are trees which yield eight or nine hundred pounds, so that they are not only eaten by human beings, but often given to mules and asses, and, as we are taught by the parable, to swine. With these *husks* the prodigal would gladly *have filled his belly*—the expression was chosen of design—all he could hope from them was just this: to dull his gnawing pain, not that he should with them truly satisfy his hunger, for the food of beasts could not appease the cravings of man. None but God can satisfy the longing of an immortal soul; as the heart was made for Him, so He only can fill it. *And no man gave unto him, rather, for no man, &c.* No one, in this state of extreme scarcity of food,



CERATONIA SILIQUA, OR KHARUB PODS.

gave him any thing to eat, and hence he was glad to eat the husks. What a reverse! Was this all the fruit he gained by leaving his father's house and following his own inclinations? Such are the consequences of sin. Sinners will forsake one another in the time of adversity. When a son deserts the Father of lights, from whom every good gift comes down, his soul cannot be satisfied from other sources; the world's breasts are dry, or yield only poison to the eager drawing of the famished child.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of this parable?
2. What does the disproportion between nine to one, and ninety to one, give this parable?
3. What is taught by the figure of the piece of money?
4. Does this parable point to the individual sinner?
5. From what is the appropriateness of the place it occupies evident?
6. Whom does the "woman" denote?
7. What was the name of the piece of silver referred to?
8. What was its value?
9. What is said about the smallness of its value?
10. What are we asked to notice in regard to the sheep, coin, and son?
11. Explain "if she lose one piece."
12. What is meant by "doth not light a candle?"
13. What is said of houses in ancient times?
14. How may the lighting of the candle be explained?
15. What is meant by "sweep the house?"
16. What charge is brought against the Word of God?
17. Where was the coin lost?
18. What is said about this?
19. Explain "seek diligently," &c.
20. When is the sinner found?

21. What is said about "her friends and neighbors?"
22. What is said about the angelic hosts?
23. What does God do, in verse 9?
24. Explain "there is joy."
25. What is said of the parable of the prodigal son?
26. Who are represented by the two sons?
27. Explain "Father, give me," &c.
28. What two elements constitute the character of the sinner?
29. Explain "divided unto them his living."
30. What is meant by "gathered all together?"
31. What does "took his journey," &c., import?
32. How did the younger son waste his substance, &c.?
33. When are men said to remove themselves far from God?
34. After the younger son had spent all, what arose?
35. What do we find in the lines of a great English poet?
36. What do we learn from "there arose a mighty famine?"
37. To whom did the prodigal join himself?
38. What is represented by this "citizen?"
39. What is said of human sorrow?
40. What were "the husks?"
41. What is said of "have filled his belly?"
42. Explain "no man gave unto him."

## LESSON XCVII.

vs. 17-32.

17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxxi. 18, 19; Ezek. xviii 28; Acts ii. 37.

*He came to himself.* The prodigal's first act, when light dawned on his darkness, was to converse with himself. Hitherto he had been acting the part of a fool and a madman. Under the idea of pursuing his pleasures, he had been injuring and destroying himself. Now, as he reflected that the meanest servant in his father's house is plentifully supplied, while he, the once-favored, happy son, is ready to perish with hunger, he deeply feels and laments his folly and guilt. It is characteristic of the insane that they never know or confess their insanity until it has passed away. The two beings to whom a man living in sin is most a stranger are himself and God, when the right mind returns, he becomes acquainted with both again. We cannot return to ourselves until God returns to us. It is a beginning of happiness for a man thoroughly to comprehend the misery of sin, and to envy the happiness of those who serve God. If men were wise in themselves, and would yield to instruction, God would draw them more gently, but because they will not become obedient unless subdued by discipline, He deals with them more severely.

18. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings ii. 3, 4; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13; Ps. xxxiii. 5; Jer. xxxi. 6.

19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

In the midst of the prodigal's distressing thoughts, a ray of hope broke in. The very remembrance of his father's kindness, which pierced him to the soul, yet raised an idea in his mind, that possibly he might yet receive him, and at least might save him from perishing. This idea, once raised, is cherished as his only hope. *I will arise*: he did not propose to remain at a distance, until, by efforts of his own, he should make himself, in some measure, worthy to resume his original place in the family, but to come in want of all things, that out of his father's fulness all his wants might be supplied. *And go to my father*. In returning to his father, though bringing with him poverty and hunger, he would leave the instruments of his lusts, his associates, habits, and tastes behind. This is a distinctive, discriminating feature of true repentance. *And will say unto him, &c.* By the term, *father*, he expresses his confidence in the still unchanged and loving disposition toward him of his much-wronged parent. He determines freely and fully to confess his great sinfulness, without any attempt to excuse, palliate, or diminish it. We are not to suppose that a man can turn to God in his own strength, or that a sinner's repentance alone is sufficient to reconcile him with his God, that he needs not a Mediator and a sacrifice. Both these errors are sufficiently guarded against by innumerable passages of Scripture—the first by such as John vi. 44, the second by such passages as Heb. x. 19-22. We cannot expect that every portion of Scripture is to contain the whole circle of Christian doctrine.

20. And he arose, and came to his father. But "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

• Acts ii. 39; Eph. ii. 13, 17.

*And he arose, &c.* He not only resolved to go, but went—went promptly, too, suffering no delay. Many are always on the eve of resolving, "I will arise and go to my father," and not a few come to the very point, but the prodigal carried his purpose into action, with firm, unshaken confidence in the exercise of his father's love. *But when he was yet a great way off, &c.* The kind and tender-hearted father no sooner sees his returning son, than, forgetful of all his guilt, he only feels *compassion* for his present sufferings. Regardless of his own age and dignity, he *runs* to meet him, and instead of upbraiding him with his faults, *falls on his neck and kisses him*, giving every evidence, according to the custom of the East, of a cordial and welcome reception. The gentlest motions in the sinner's heart are known to the all-seeing God. He with His grace anticipates the penitent in all the steps he takes in order to return to Him. Is. lxxv. 24; Ps. xxxii. 5. He is careful to receive him with a fatherly tenderness, since it is His goodness which causes him to return. He *runs*; that is, while we languish, He draws us by His holy Word and Spirit. *He falls upon our neck*, embraces us, supports us in trouble and distress, for we should be overwhelmed with grief and sorrow were we not aided and upheld by God. *He kisses us*; that is, He intimates to us the remission of sins, and assuages our pains and fears by new light and consolation. No representation could better teach us how infinitely willing God is to receive all who come to Him, and how completely full and immediate is the pardon which He is ready to bestow. Acts xiii. 39; Ps. lxxvi. 5.

21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned

against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

• Pa. li. 4.

*Father, I have sinned against heaven, &c.* He recognized his sins to have been committed not merely against man, but against heaven, or against God. Sin is committed against God. David said: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," yet the offences had been against the second table of the law. We may injure ourselves by our evil, we may wrong our neighbor; but, strictly speaking, we can *sin* only against God; and the recognition of our evil, as first and chiefly an offence against Him, is of the essence of all true repentance, and distinguishes it broadly from many other kinds of sorrow which may follow our evil deeds. As the prodigal confessed his sin by a name of love—*Father*—we learn that the love of God is the foundation of true repentance. The chief motive to the hatred of sin is, because it is contrary to the goodness of God, and because He, who is the best of all fathers, is offended thereby. Confessing of sin is a sign of true repentance. Prov. xxviii. 13, Jer. ii. 35; xvi. 10; Hos. xiv. 2; 1 John i. 9, 10.

*Am no more worthy to be called thy son.* Melted, and, in some measure, confused by the undeserved, unexpected warmth of his reception, the son bethought of the speech which, at the turning-point of his repentance, ver. 18, 19, he had resolved to address to his father, and began to recite it, but stopped short before he came to the words, *make me as one of thy hired servants*. Some say the father may have cut the prodigal's speech short by giving aloud an order to the servants for the kind and honorable reception of his child. There is, however, a deeper significance in the omission. The son lying on the father's bosom, with the father's tears falling warm on his upturned face, is some degrees further advanced in the spirit of adoption than when he first planned repentance before the swine in his master's field. There and then the legal spirit of fear, because of guilt, still lingered in his heart, he ventured to hope for exemption from deserved punishment, but not for restoration to the place of a beloved son. *Now*, the spirit of bondage has been conclusively cast out by the experience of his father's love, and he could not finish the speech which he had prepared—he could not ask for the place of a servant, for he was already in the place of a son.

22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put <sup>p</sup>a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

<sup>p</sup> Gen. xli. 42; Esther iii. 10 and viii. 2.

23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

<sup>q</sup> Verse 32; Eph. iii. 1 and v. 14; Rev. iii. 1.

Let it be noted that the father does not say a single word to his son about his profligacy and wickedness. There is neither rebuke nor reproof for the past, nor galling admonitions for the present, nor irritating advice for the future. The one idea that is here represented as filling his mind is joy that his son has come home. This is a striking fact. *Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.* The words, translated "the best robe," are extremely expressive in the original—the robe, that first one, the most distinguished, that chiefest, that best one. In the East, wedding-garments hang upon the pegs in the hall, and an individual had only to take one and put it on. The

father commanded the servants, "Bring forth one of the robes : there is going to be a great festival, a high feast : take from my child the rags which have degraded him as the prodigal, and clothe him in the robe that indicates the accepted son." By this is especially signified that act of God, which, considered on its negative side, is a release from condemnation, a causing the sinner's iniquity to pass from him—on its positive side, is an imputation to him of the merits and righteousness of Christ. *And a ring on his hand.* This was a mark of honor, confidence, and distinction. Gen. xli. 42 ; Exod. iii. 10 ; James ii. 2. In ancient times, rings were invariably used for seals. The ring was that which sealed the letter, the document or the deed. We have in Scripture frequent allusions to their use. Eph. i. 13 ; Gal. iv. 6. The giving this ring or seal, therefore, was the evidence that the prodigal was now no more a servant, nor to seek a servant's place, but a son that had received a father's welcome. God takes away the sins of His people through the efficacy of atoning blood ; He clothes them with the garment of righteousness, which is their only title to eternal happiness ; but, in addition to this, there is a *sealing* of God's Spirit spoken of, whereby they that have it are assured, as by an earnest, of a larger inheritance one day coming to them, and which witnesses with their spirits that they are the sons of God. 2 Cor. i. 22 ; Rom. viii. 23 ; 2 Cor. v. 5. *And shoes on his feet.* The Apostle speaks of being "shod" with the preparation of the Gospel of peace : so the putting shoes on the prodigal's feet teaches that he was not to wander any more, but, like Abraham, to "walk before God ;" like Enoch, to "walk with God," and to lead a life that should be the evidence of his sonship.

*And bring hither the fattened calf, and kill it.* Eastern hospitality always had in a state of readiness a calf or some such animal, to be slaughtered and served up. See Gen. xviii. 7, xli. 2 ; 1 Sam. xvi. 20, xxviii. 24 ; 2 Sam. vi. 13. Dr. Thomson (Land and Book) says that now "among unsophisticated Arabs, the killing of a sheep, calf, or kid, in honor of a visitor, is strictly required by their laws of hospitality, and the neglect of it is keenly resented." This "fattened calf," literally, "the calf—that fattened one," seems to have been one kept for a special occasion. It was killed—plainly not for sacrifice, but simply for the feast, or the festival to which they were called. *And let us eat, and be merry.* As the shepherd summoned his friends, ver. 6, and the woman her female neighbors, ver. 9, so here the householder his servants, to be sharers in his joy. It is the very nature of true joy—that it runs over, that it desires to impart itself.

*For this my son was dead, &c.* The prodigal's life before his repentance and the change when he repented, was a state of *death*—after this change, it was a state of *life*. All life, even when most prosperous, without fellowship with God, is but death and misery. Eph. ii. 5, 6. *Was lost*, in all that pertains to virtue and happiness ; *is found*, marks deliverance from the condemnation of sin. *And they began to be merry.* The strong contrast between this expression and the one at the end of ver. 14 ought not to be overlooked. Unconverted man begins to be "in want." Converted he begins to be "happy."

25. Now his elder son was in the field : and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

*In the field, engaged in the duties of superintending the farm.* As he approached the house, *he heard music and dancing.* It would appear that a party of musicians and dancers had been hired to enliven the rejoicing entertainment given on this occasion. In Oriental towns there are large numbers of musicians and dancers who derive their subsistence from their exertions on such occasions. The guests and members of the family are spectators and auditors merely.

26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sould.

The cool and calculating selfishness of the elder brother betrayed itself in the fact, that, instead of entering the house, as his position in the family would have justified, and learning by personal observation the cause of the unwonted joy, he called one of the servants, and sought information from him. *And he said unto him, &c.* The father was overwhelmed with the moral transformation of his son, but the poor servant, who attended merely to duty, and had no sympathy, except with outward facts, replied to the elder brother, that his brother had returned, had been welcomed, and was received by his father, *safe and sould*, none of his limbs broken or features defaced.

28. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

† 1 Sam. xvii. 28; Isa. lxxv. 5.

Our Lord now holds up to the murmuring Pharisees of verse 2 a likeness of themselves, for them to recognize and avoid. As the elder son, because of his cold, selfish, and contracted disposition, is angry at the joy which welcomes the prodigal home from his wanderings, so have these men murmured at the mercy with which Jesus had received the publican and the sinner. *Came his father out, &c.* He went forth to meet the prodigal; now, though he saw his son acting in a manner so unworthy of the affections and duties of a son, he does not utter one word of anger or rebuke, but entreats him to lay aside his anger and enter the house.

29. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

• Isa. lviii. 2, 3; Zech. vii. 3.

† Mal. iii. 14.

30. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

The words, *many years*, stand opposed to, *as soon as*, in verse 30. *Do I serve thee*—the word *serve*, here, is the service of a slave, and hence some have held it as characterizing the Pharisee's devotion to God. *Neither transgressed I, &c.* In this profession of invariable obedience, contrasted with the implied disregard of the father's command, evinced by the desertion of the younger son, there is strongly displayed the self-righteous spirit of this elder brother. He boasts of perfect obedience, while at the very time his conduct belies his words, and shows that he was devoid of all true filial respect and moral uprightness. *A kid*, far inferior to the fatted calf. See how expressive the language of this brother is of the chagrin, envy, and hatred of his heart. He does not say, "as soon as my brother is come," but "as soon as *this thy son*," this contemptible fellow, "which hath devoured *thy* living with harlots." That was not matter of fact; the elder son had had his share, and the younger had had his. It had ceased to be his father's, and became his own. There

was no evidence that he had wasted his father's living "with harlots." This was a mere guess, because there was nothing in his past history to warrant it. It may have been, or it may not, but there was no evidence on which the son could say so. Next he says, "as soon as he was come," not, "as soon as he repented and reformed himself, and became a better man," and, as if there were sinfulness and excessive indulgence on the father's part, the elder son added, "thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." Envy, jealousy, ill-will, uncharitableness, were all compressed into this speech.

31. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad : "for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.

<sup>a</sup> Verse 24

*Son* : the father speaks to him affectionately, and does not immediately drive from him the elder brother. *Thou art ever with me* : always, and therefore it was not necessary that there should be any special rejoicing ; *with me* : it is better to be happy with a father than with a multitude of friends ; *all that I have is thine*, for the younger brother had received his portion, and the elder was sole heir to his father's goods. *It was meet*, i. e., right, proper, *that we*, the elder son is affectionately included in this general expression, notwithstanding his contemptuous and sneering words, *for this thy brother*, purposely repeated from *this thy son*, but with different manner, denoting the deepest affection : *was dead and is alive*, &c. See Notes on verse 24. This answer of the father was wisely intended and adapted to avert the wrath and jealousy of the elder brother. From the spirit manifested by the elder son, it was evident that *he* was lost, as well as the younger, but as far as the parable reveals his history, he was not like him found again : he, like his brother, went astray, but unlike him, for any thing we know to the contrary, refused to come back. The father was grieved as much by the sullen, dry, hard, cold, dead formality of his elder son, as by the prodigal wastefulness of the younger, without getting the sorrow balanced by a subsequent joy. Whited sepulchre ! what will thy residence in the house, and thy constant and punctilious profession avail thee while thou art planting daggers in thy father's heart, and nursing vile hypocrisy in thine own ? It is the empty open vessel that gets itself filled when it is plunged into a well of living water ; the vessel that is full and shut, although it is overflowed by rivers of privileges, does not receive and retain a drop. Before God and under the gospel, the turning point of each man's destiny is not the number or the aggravation of his sins ; but the discovery of his own guilt, and the consequent cry out of the depths for mercy. That which really in the last resort hinders a man's salvation and secures his doom is not his sin, but his refusal to know and own that he is a sinner, and flee to God, through Christ, for pardon, peace, hope, and heaven.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What was the prodigal son's first act when light dawned upon him ?
2. How did he feel his folly and guilt ?
3. What is said of the man living in sin ?
4. What is a beginning of happiness ?
5. What is said of "I will arise?"
6. What is said of "go to my father?"
7. Explain "and will say unto him, Father," &c.

8. What did the prodigal do?
9. What did the father do?
10. How does this illustrate God's treatment of the penitent sinner?
11. What did the son say to his father?
12. Against whom is sin committed?
13. What is the foundation of true repentance?
14. Did the son say to the father all he had resolved to say?
15. What is said about the omission?
16. Did the father upbraid the son for his profligacy?
17. Explain "bring forth the best robe," &c.
18. Explain "and a ring on his hand."
19. Explain "and shoes on his feet."
20. What is said about the fatted calf?
21. Why was the fatted calf killed?
22. Explain "Let us eat and be merry."
23. How was the prodigal "dead?"
24. How was he "alive again?"
25. How are we to understand the words "lost" and "found?"
26. Where was the elder son?
27. What did he hear as he approached the house?
28. Explain this.
29. How did the elder son's selfishness betray itself?
30. What did the servant reply to him?
31. What is said of verse 28?
32. What did the elder son say to his father?
33. Explain the particulars of this answer.
34. What did the father reply to this answer?
35. Explain the particulars of this reply.
36. What was this reply intended and adapted to do?
37. Was the elder son also lost?
38. What is the turning point of each man's destiny?
39. What is it that hinders a man's salvation?

## CHAPTER XVI.

### LESSON XCVIII.

vs. 1-7.

THE object of our Lord's teaching in this chapter is to awaken and quicken us all, so to use this world as not to abuse it, so to manage all our possessions and enjoyments here as that they may promote our happiness, and not increase our misery, in the world to come. He also aims to rouse us to take the warning given us by the written Word, and not to expect immediate messages from the other world.

1. And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

*And he said also.* In addition to what He had said in the last chapter,

and at the same time also. There is a perceptible connection between this parable and those which precede it. Those which are *there* regarded as being *found* and restored to their Father's favor and protection, are *here* taught how they are to fulfil the obligations and duties growing out of their new relationship to God. The entrance upon the Divine life is the theme of the preceding parables; the duty and ultimate reward of active fidelity constitute the theme of the one before us. *Unto his disciples.* Not exclusively the Apostolic circle, but rather the whole body of those who had attached themselves to Jesus to be taught of Him, whom His word had found out in the deep of their spirits, and who, having left the world's service, had decidedly passed over into the ranks of His people. Having heard a lesson to the proud and self-righteous, the disciples now hear a lesson for themselves. Having taught the multitude how the distant might come near, Jesus now teaches those who had already come near, in order to incite them to diligence in the course which they had chosen. *A certain rich man.* Some understand this of God, who is the paramount owner of all things. But this makes the very costume and frame-work of the parable spiritual and not temporal. It is true that in the *application* of the parable it refers to God, in referring to whom all who have entered His service are stewards, but the phrase as it stands here means just what lies upon the face of the passage—a man of this world, having large possessions. It may denote an ancient nobleman of very high rank—probably a satrap, or the governor of a very large district of country. This *rich man* is not like the one referred to in another parable, as preparing to build new barns and storehouses in the miserable hope of a future of peace, prosperity and comfort; nor like another spoken of at the close of this chapter, who was “clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day,” but a rich man who was careful of *his goods*. He does not appear to be exceedingly anxious as to their increase, nor yet lavish and luxurious in their expenditure, but he takes good care not to lose sight of them. *Which had a steward:* this officer was one who superintended domestic concerns, and ministered to the support of the family, having the products of the field, business, collection of rents, &c., put into his hands for this very purpose, and having only to render annually to his lord his accounts of all his expenditures and receipts. We learn here incidentally, how evenly balanced are the various conditions of life in a community, and how little substantial wealth can confer on its possessor. As our property increases, our personal control over it diminishes; the more we possess, the more we must intrust to others. Every man stands in the relation of a steward to God. Every thing we have, especially in earthly goods, whether it may have come to us by inheritance, industry, or any turn of fortune, is a gift committed to us by God, not a property, with which we can do and act after the will and pleasure of our own heart; we must one day account for it, as is implied in our dependent relationship. *And the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.* The word translated *was accused* is only found in the New Testament. It is the root of the word “devil,” which means “accuser.” It does not, however, mean in this place that the steward was falsely accused. On the contrary, his own language seems clearly to show that he felt the accusation to be just, and incapable of refutation. *Wasted his goods,* had been profuse and profligate, embezzling his master's substance, and concealing the fraud for a time under the folds of complicated accounts. Some person discovered the facts and informed the proprietor. Not to use what has been intrusted to us according to the design and intention of God is to waste it. Nothing is concealed from God.

2. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

The master, or the lord of the steward, summoned him into his presence, and stated the case. *How is it that I hear this of thee?* This is the expostulation of indignant surprise—an intimation of the abuse of the confidence that had been placed in him, to which he had so ill responded, and in which he had shown ingratitude and inconsiderate forgetfulness of his obligations: of *thee*, whom I had trusted so far, to whom I had committed so much. Never is rebuke so poignant as when it is given in soft and gentle accents. It is a great mistake to suppose that outrageous language is the best vehicle of censure. *Give an account, &c.*; produce thy books of receipts and disbursements, that I may see whether the accusation against thee be true or false. Here is expressed God's holy zeal against all unfaithfulness, and that the application made by men of earthly goods is far from being a matter of indifference to Him. *For thou mayest, &c.*; literally, "Thou wilt not be able to be steward any longer." It is impossible that thou canst be. I cannot allow thee. In this intimation of the removal of the steward, God's righteousness shines forth. A short respite, however, was still allowed him, which he might employ, and which is to be referred to the period of life granted to every one, always uncertain, and never long in continuance. There are three things at the death of an unfaithful man which are very terrible: 1. His being obliged to appear with a guilty conscience before holiness itself. 2. His having an exact account to give of his whole life, and of whatever he has received. 3. His seeing himself deprived of all forever. The most holy persons will be examined and judged concerning the use they have made of their time, talents, and spiritual privileges, all of which belong to God. What a motive is here to fidelity in improving our gifts!

8. Then the steward said within himself, "What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

• La. x. 3; Hos. ix 5; Acts ix. 6.

The steward seems to have given up his case as soon as he was accused. He attempted no excuse. He uttered not a word in his own defence. There was no proof on the one side, and no denial on the other. He *said within himself, what shall I do?* &c. He thus displayed his perplexity. He felt that he was about to lose his position and support, and he was, for the moment, at a loss what course to pursue for a livelihood. With habits, both mental and physical, cast in another mould, he cannot win his bread as a laborer, and his pride revolted against the prospect of becoming a beggar on the spot where he had long been owned as master by the multitudes. The aphorism repeated for many hundred years is still true—"Honesty is the best policy." No man ever gets rich with that which is not his own. A little, with the conscience at peace with God and man, is sweet; much, amid the fever of remorse, generates no happiness. When death approaches, the most worldly man begins to reflect. What remains to a soul which has lost God and His grace, but only sin and the consequences thereof, a proud poverty, and a slothful indigence; that is, a universal inability as to labor, prayer, and every good work conducting to salvation? *I cannot dig.* No work or device, no skill or science, can postpone the inevitable hour, to make provision for the better world. *To beg I am ashamed.* To supplicate for life is as useless as it is cowardly. The ear of the destroyer is deaf to all expostulations.

4. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

*I am resolved what to do.* So he said within himself, after a little consideration; a lucky thought, as he doubtless accounted it, coming into his mind.

As he was not yet ousted from office, he resolved to use his power, for the little time it remained, in such a manner as to make himself friends, who would succor him in his need. *That they may receive me into their houses*—that the tenants or debtors of his lord, who paid their rents or debts, not in money, but in wheat, oil, or other produce of the ground they rented or possessed, might give him entertainment in their houses, or provide for him some other means of subsistence. Dishonest men are often found to have very sharp wits. How sad it is that genius, an emanation of Deity, should be so debased and degraded as to invent fraudulent schemes for gratifying the corruptions of the heart, and ministering to its lusts. Few persons are seriously concerned who shall receive their soul after death, and supply its wants; but the generality of men are very earnest in seeking a retreat for the miserable body which must rot.

5. So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

It is quite evident, from the debts being stated to consist of corn and oil, that these *debtors* were the *tenants* of the steward's lord, and consequently that the transaction refers to the terms on which the corn-fields and olive grounds were held.

6. And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write four score.

The steward, whose office it was to rent out property, and collect rents, would appear to have sought the good will of the tenants, not merely by lowering the existing claim for the year, but by granting a new contract, under which the tenants were permanently to pay less than they had previously done. This was a far weightier obligation than the other, and better calculated for the object which the steward had in view. He directs the tenants to write out the contracts, but doubtless gave them validity by signing them himself, in his lord's behalf. *An hundred measures* of oil, supposed to be the Hebrew *bath*, containing nearly nine gallons. What the quantities mentioned may have been in relation to our standards, is only a question of critical and antiquarian interest. The amount of the debt has no influence on the meaning of the parable. The point which is really important is the proportion between the amount owned by the debtors and the amount exacted by the steward. Olive oil and wheat were two of the staple products of the country. *Take thy bill*, obligation, bond. These bonds, it seems, were kept in the hands of the steward, and of this we have instances in the Roman law. *Sit down quickly, &c.*, says the steward. No time to be lost. If you do not change your bill now, you will never be able to do it afterwards. If you do, I will take care in my reckoning that you are not exposed. He displays his tact and shrewdness in taking advantage of the very last moment at his disposal, and also by implicating others with him in his fraud. It would seem that the *debtors*, though not willing to strike out such a plan of fraud and crime as the steward did, yet were not on the whole unwilling to lend an ear to his suggestions; not equally bold in dishonesty, but equally greedy after the wages of iniquity.

The parable narrates the case of two debtors as specimens of the whole. Wicked as the steward was, he had an eye to the future. Disgraceful as his measures were, he provided well for himself. He did not sit still in idle-

ness, and see himself reduced to poverty, without a struggle. He schemed, planned, and contrived, and boldly carried his plans into execution. How different the conduct of most men about their souls! In this general point of view, and in this only, the steward sets us all an example. Like him, we should look far forward to things to come, provide against the day when we shall have to leave our present habitation, and secure a home in heaven. 2 Cor. v. 1.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is the object of our Lord's teaching in this chapter?
2. What is the connection between this parable and those preceding it?
3. Who are meant by "His disciples?"
4. To whom do the words "a certain rich man" refer?
5. What is said of this rich man?
6. Who was a steward?
7. What do we learn incidentally?
8. Is every man a steward to God?
9. What is said of the word translated "was accused?"
10. Was this steward falsely accused?
11. How did he waste his master's goods?
12. What did his master do to him?
13. What is said of the master's expostulation?
14. What is meant by "give an account," &c.?
15. Explain "for thou mayest," &c.
16. What three things at the death of an unfaithful man are terrible?
17. What did the steward say?
18. Explain "he said within himself," &c.
19. What is said of honesty?
20. What is said of the approach of death?
21. What did the steward resolve to do?
22. Explain "that they may receive me," &c.
23. What is said of dishonest men?
24. Who were the debtors whom the steward called?
25. What did he say to the first?
26. What did he say to the second?
27. How does the steward appear to have sought the good will of the tenants?
28. What did he direct the tenants to write out?
29. What are the "hundred measures of oil" supposed to be?
30. What is said of the amount of the debt?
31. What is the point which is really important?
32. Explain "take thy bill."
33. Explain "sit down quickly."
34. Did the debtors lend an ear to the suggestions of the steward?
35. Why are only two debtors named?
36. Had the steward an eye to the future?
37. What is said of the conduct of most men about their souls?

## LESSON XCIX.

vs. 8-12.

8. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than <sup>b</sup>the children of light.

<sup>b</sup> John xii. 36; Eph. iv 5, 8; 1 Thess. v 6.

*The lord*, i. e., the landlord, the same lord as in verses 3 and 5. Great care should be taken so as not to confound the *lord*, or master of the steward here spoken of, with the Lord Jesus Christ. *Commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely.* He did not commend him for his injustice. He turned him out of his office on that account, but as a man of the world, he could not withhold from him commendation for his cleverness and shrewdness in the plan he had formed for his future provision and comfort. What is this but the very echo of what we hear continually amid the ranks of worldly men?—persons who will not defraud others, and who take good care not to be defrauded by others, and yet who cannot refrain from admiring the “sharp practices” of the less scrupulous, and even at the very moment when they condemn dishonesty and visit it with a heavy penalty, yet speak of the fraudulent person as a very clever, though an unprincipled man. The parable ends with the word *wisely*. Our Lord now proceeds to make the application. *For the children of this world, &c.* We read of the “children of disobedience,” by which are meant those who live in disobedience to God’s commandments; and “children of wrath,” or those who have incurred the wrath of God; and “the children of wisdom,” or those who value and seek after true wisdom; so by *the children of this world* we are to understand *worldly* persons, those who make this world their god, are devoted to the cares, pleasures, or pursuits of the present life, mind earthly things, have their treasure here, and desire no better portion than this world can yield. These, says Christ, *are in their generation*, i. e., are for *their life* or *for their day*, *wiser*, more shrewd and active *than the children of light* are in relation to their eternal good. By *the children of light* are meant Christians; those who having been “some time in darkness, are now light in the Lord”—whose understandings have been enlightened to see the truth as it is in Jesus, who no longer walk after the course of this world, and profess to be seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly one. We are not to understand our Lord as saying that worldly, irreligious persons are wiser than religious people, for to say this would be to contradict the whole tenor of His own discourses and the universal testimony of Scripture. His meaning is, that Christians are not as prudently careful over what spiritual interests they possess, not as watchful that none shall in any way rob or defraud them of them; not as clear-sighted and watchful in regard to these interests as was this *rich man* in relation to “*his goods*,” neither are they as quick and prompt to take advantage of every moment in order to make provision for the time to come, or as eagerly vigilant not to let slip any opportunity which might be improved for this purpose, as was this *steward* in relation to his future prospects in the world. Alas! how often and how much are those who profess to be seeking the glorious inheritance of heaven put to shame by the diligence and activity, the foresight and circumspection, the decision and singleness of mind, the perseverance, and the readiness to profit by one another’s experience, which characterize those whose “hope and portion lie below!”

9. And I say unto you, 'Make to yourselves friends of the \*mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

\* Dan. iv. 27. Matt. vi. 19 and xix. 21; Luke xi. 41, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

\* Or, riches.

*And I say unto you*—I give you the following counsel and advice. Since it is the case that the children of light are not as zealous as they should be in striving for salvation, this admonition of Christ should be the more laid to heart, and especially since riches and covetousness are such formidable hindrances of salvation, so readily withdraw the eye from it, so completely entangle the heart and render it cold and indifferent towards the higher interests of its being. 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. *Mammon* is a Syriac word, and signifies riches, or wealth. In ver. 13. our Lord beautifully represents this as a person whom the folly of men had deified: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." *Mammon* may be called *unrighteous*, because it is generally unrighteously obtained, unrighteously retained, or unrighteously employed. Trade is not unlawful, neither is property founded in sin; but because the spirit which pervades trade, if not purified by Christianity, and as it exists in heathen countries, and as a heathenish element in Christian countries, is *unrighteous*, mammon, riches, or property, is so called. That cannot be unrighteous in itself which God gives to so many persons by His blessing their diligence, frugality, and economy, so as to make them rich, that they may be a source of blessings to others by their beneficence. We are not to suppose that we can *make to ourselves* friends, in the sense here intended, by *ill-gotten wealth*. This must be restored, as in the case of *Zaccheus*, Luke xix. 8. See, also, Isa. lxi. 8. Neither can any one fulfil the injunction of the text who is still an unpardoned sinner. The first thing to be attended to, by those who would make a right use of their money, is, that they themselves be justified, be at peace with God, and have Him for their friend. Eph. ii. 14. The verse evidently teaches that Christians are to make use of their money, which has been righteously obtained, not only for their own necessities, but also for the support of the cause of the gospel, and for the relief of the afflicted and destitute. Matt. ix. 13; Luke vi. 36; Matt. v. 7; Luke xii. 13; Matt. v. 44; Heb. xiii. 16. The persons spoken of in the parable pursued a wrong course. Their hearts were so set on the mammon of unrighteousness, that it became the source of mutual enmity. It likewise became an enemy to them in their own bosom. Their care and love for the world filled them with anxieties and fears. The disciples of Jesus were to take care that it was not so with them. Christians are to use the world, as not abusing it. They are to set its proper value on it, and keep it in its right place. They are not to make use of the means at their disposal for the mere purpose of self-indulgence and personal ease and comfort, but they are to make "*friends of them*"—make such a use of all worldly things, that they shall not hinder, but help their piety, shall not rise up in judgment against them at the last, and condemn them, but be an evidence in their favor that they sought to serve God with the very things which worldly men reserve for themselves. *That when ye fail*. Become a bankrupt. The Greek may be rendered, "when ye suffer an eclipse." Death brings us under it: our health, strength, beauty, honor, glory and renown, our powers of body and mind will suffer an eclipse. In the final hour we shall *fail*, as far as all earthly resources are concerned. *They may receive you into everlasting habitations*. *They*: i. e., the friends just spoken of, which are to be referred to God. *Everlasting habitations*. This expression must evidently mean heaven. The word translated "habitations" is translated "tabernacles" in every other place where it is found in the New Testament. The word corresponds to the *houses* of the debtors, ver. 4, into which the steward was making provision for his future reception. Heaven

will be the eternal home of all God's people. There those will be received with welcome who brought forth fruits worthy of repentance, whose love labored, whose hope produced a patient continuance in well-doing, and made them steadfast in the faith, who, as they had ability, were "rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18. To them Jesus will say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. xxv. 34.

10. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

<sup>d</sup>Matt. xxv. 21; Luke xix. 17

Our Lord now very aptly repeats a proverbial saying, in order to impress more permanently upon the mind of his disciples the weighty truth just spoken. He guards us against supposing that such conduct about money as that of the unjust steward ought ever to be considered a light and trifling thing among Christians. *Faithful*. He commends, not prudence, but *fidelity*: for fidelity begets and directs prudence. *In that which is least*. This refers to the mammon of unrighteousness, or the earthly stewardship committed to us. *Is faithful also in much*; i. e., *the true riches*. If we are faithful in this world's *least*, we shall be faithful for eternity's *much*. This, of course, does not mean that honesty about money can justify our souls, but that dishonesty about money is a sure sign of a heart not being "right in the sight of God." *Unjust in the least . . . in much*. Our least sin is committed for eternity, and, if unforgiven, must result in an eternal woe proportionate to its guilt. We may, by our degrees of unrighteousness, more or less, sink ourselves deeper into perdition; but the slightest unremoved condemnation is eternal. It is an acknowledged truth, that a man's conduct in little things is a sure test of what he is likely to do in great things. Small things are not so easily preserved as great things: they are much more numerous; and, in great concerns, pride, self-love, a regard to character, can go much further in making one faithful and diligent. Small things, too, are not seen or noticed, are very easily overlooked, and, if attended to with care and diligence, are seldom recognized. So that it certainly requires more principle to be faithful in small things than in great—requires a heart more deeply grounded in what is good, in order to take pains about things which might be more slightly passed by, and deal with them as matters of importance. It is true, the disciples were poor; but the poor, by the gift of two mites, show more love to God than the rich by large contributions out of their abundance.

11. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous \*mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*?

\*Or, *riches*.

*Unrighteous mammon*. We have here the real definition of the term *unrighteous mammon*. It is the opposite of the *true Divine riches*, the riches of God's favor. The word *riches* being in italics intimates that it is supplied by the translators, there being no word for it in the Greek. It is as if our Lord wanted a word which language did not supply. To say in the contrast *the unrighteous mammon*, and the *true mammon*, would be to sanctify the word *mammon*. *The true riches*. Jesus speaks from a heavenly point of view. He calls the blessings of salvation by antithesis *THE TRUE*, because they are not, like the unrighteous mammon, untrustworthy, deceitful, and unsatisfying, but fully deserve the name of genuine and true good, whereby the highest ideal is realized. See John i. 9; Heb. ix. 24. The doctrine is, that he who is dishonest and unfaithful in the discharge of his duties on earth, must not expect to have heavenly treasure, or to be saved.

12. And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

The argument here is the same with that in the preceding verse, though the expressions are different.

Mammon is called by our Lord, not unrighteous merely, but also a strange thing, (*another man's*), intimating that it is a temporal good, and not always abiding, like that which is spiritual. Eternal life is *ours*, that is, the Christian's good, which remains eternally ours. Earthly riches are foreign to a Christian. His own proper and true wealth is not of this world, any more than himself. We are made Christians in order to enjoy heaven and eternity, and therefore heavenly and eternal treasures are those alone which are properly *our own*. And these are *given* to us, not of debt, or claim, but of grace.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Who is designated by "the lord?"
2. What great care should be taken?
3. What did the lord do to the steward?
4. What did he commend him for?
5. What is said of this commendation?
6. Who are meant by "the children of this world?"
7. Explain "in their generation."
8. Explain "wiser."
9. Who are meant by "the children of light?"
10. What are we not to understand our Lord as saying?
11. What is His meaning?
12. What is said of those who profess to be seeking heaven?
13. Explain, "And I say unto you."
14. What does "mammon" signify?
15. What does our Lord do in verse 13?
16. Why may "mammon" be called unrighteous?
17. Is wealth unrighteous in itself?
18. What is said of ill-gotten wealth?
19. Can an unpardoned sinner fulfil the injunction in ver. 9?
20. What does this verse evidently teach?
21. What is said of the course pursued by the persons in the parable?
22. How are Christians to use the world?
23. How are they to "make friends" of the means at their disposal?
24. Explain "that when ye fail."
25. Explain "they may receive you into everlasting habitations."
26. What is said of the word translated "habitations?"
27. What is said of heaven?
28. What is said of verse 10?
29. What does our Lord commend?
30. What is referred to by "in that which is least?"
31. What is referred to by "faithful also in much?"
32. What is said of our least sin?
33. What is said of small things?
34. Does it require more principle to be faithful in small things than in great?
35. Explain "unrighteous mammon."
36. What is said of the word "riches?"
37. What argument is pursued in ver. 12?
38. What is said of the words "another man's?"
39. What is said of earthly riches?
40. What is the Christian's own proper and true wealth?

## LESSON C.

vs. 13-18.

13. ¶ No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

• Matt. vi. 24.

If any one should think that possibly he might reconcile the criminal employment of temporal riches with the attainment of eternal life, our Lord anticipates and explodes this vain refuge. *Mammon* is the Syriac word for riches, and seems here to be an idol. The covetous man is an idolater, and therefore no true servant of God. The point contended for in respect to God is not exclusive *possession*, but exclusive *dominion*. Other things may occasionally, for a certain time, and to a certain degree, have possession of our minds, but they must not *rule*, must not *reign* over them. We can serve but one master faithfully and effectually, and that one must be God. The concerns of this life may have their *dus* place in our hearts, but they must not aspire to the *first*: this is the prerogative of religion alone; religion must be supreme and paramount over all. Every one, it has been often said, has his ruling passion. That of the Christian must be the love of his Maker and Redeemer. This must *principally* occupy his thoughts, time, attention, and heart. If there be any thing else which has gained ascendancy over our souls, on which our desires, wishes, hopes or fears are *chiefly* fixed, God is then dispossessed of His rightful dominion over us, we serve another master, and shall think but little of our Maker, or any thing belonging to Him.

14. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

† Matt. xxiii. 14.

*The Pharisees who were covetous*, of a very worldly spirit, literally, *silver lovers*. This was their master-sin. They accounted none happy but such as were rich. They looked upon poverty as a curse, and regarded the poor accursed. John vii. 49. *Heard all these things*, what had been said concerning the true use of riches, and the impossibility of men's serving God and mammon at the same time: *derided him*, as a visionary, who did not understand human life, or only appeared to despise the world, because (as they suppose) it was out of His reach. The original word is very emphatic, signifying *they mocked him*, by a scornful motion of the mouth and nose, as well as by what they spake to him. The word might properly be rendered, *they sneered*. There was a gravity and dignity in our Lord's discourse, which, insolent as they were, would not permit them to laugh out, but by some scornful air they hinted to each other their mutual contempt. Conscious that they were covetous, they could not bear to hear covetousness condemned. It is natural for the human heart to shrink from the touch of truth. Ministers often find that their hearers have been offended by the most searching parts of their sermons. Though it be painful to be told of our sins, we should not become angry when this is done; it is better to know our sins *now*, than to wait till we stand before God. Our kindest friends are those who faithfully and prudently admonish us of our faults. The best min-

isters are those who will not let sinners slumber on in their sins. Covetous men, when they hear a holy contempt for the Word preached, and the great duty of alms-giving urged and enforced, make it the matter of their contempt and derision.

15. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

† Luke x. 20.

‡ Ps. vii. 9.

§ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

Notwithstanding their insolence, Jesus calmly replied to their disdain. *Justify yourselves, &c. Ye declare yourselves just.* By shunning the company of sinners, and your care of external appearances, you make specious pretences to extraordinary sanctity before the world, and you seldom fail to acquire a great reputation for it. You also endeavor to make it appear that ye can still feel an insatiable thirst after the present world, and yet secure the blessings of another—that ye can reconcile God and mammon. *But God knoweth your hearts*—you cannot justify yourselves before Him. He sees through your pompous and plausible disguise. He knoweth that ye are *alive to the world, and dead to God and goodness.* A fair exterior is not sufficient; God knoweth our hearts—a heart unwashed in the blood of Christ, and unrenewed by the Holy Spirit, is an abomination in His sight. Such a heart may attract the admiration of the world, and be called a tender heart, a kind, warm and good heart; but it is pronounced by God a deceitful and desperately wicked heart. *For that which is highly esteemed, &c.* How often do we see this solemn truth illustrated! Riches, honors, rank, pleasure, are the chief objects for which the greater part of mankind are living, yet these are the very things which God declares to be “vanity,” and of the love of which he warns us to beware! Praying, Bible-reading, holy living, repentance, faith, grace, and communion with God, are things for which few care at all, yet these are the very things which God in His Bible is ever urging on our attention! What God calls good, that man calls evil! What God calls evil, that man calls good! How many earthly judgments will be reversed on the final day!

16. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

¶ Matt. iv. 17 and xi. 12, 13, Luke vii. 20

The Pharisees were very zealous for the ceremonial law, as well as for their own traditions, and they opposed Christ, supposing, or alleging, that His doctrine was contrary to it, but He intimated to them that a more spiritual dispensation was about to be introduced. *The law and the prophets*, the Old Testament, the whole revelation of God's will in that form. *Until John*, as far as down or up to John, as the last in the succession of such agencies. *Since that time, &c.* You forget that the dispensation of the law and prophets was only intended to pave the way for the better dispensation of the kingdom of God, which was to be ushered in by John the Baptist. That dispensation has come. John the Baptist has appeared. And humble men, who feel their wretchedness as sinners, are receiving the glad tidings of the kingdom, whilst ye proud, self-righteous men are deriding me and my doctrine. *Every man presseth into it.* This clause was intended to inform us, not how great the number was of those who entered into the kingdom of God, but what the manner was in which all who entered obtained admission. The

import, therefore, is only, *Every one who entereth it, entereth it by force.* Matt. xi. 12. We know that during our Lord's ministry, which was (as John's also was) among the Jews, both His success and that of the Baptist were comparatively small. Christ's flock was literally, even to the last, a very *little flock*. It was not until after He was *lifted up* upon the cross, that, according to His own prediction, He *drew all men to him*.

17. <sup>k</sup>And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

<sup>k</sup> Pa. iii. 26; Is. xl. 8, ll. 6; Matt. v. 18; 1 Pet. i. 25.

The Pharisees were not to suppose that the new dispensation would interfere with the law of Moses. See Matt. v. 17-20. *And*—the word is in the Greek, *but*. *It is easier for heaven and earth*, the idea that the law shall never cease to be authoritative or obligatory is expressed by a comparison, familiar to the style of the Old Testament, with the frame of nature or the constitution of the universe, a striking emblem of immutability. *Pass*, or more exactly, go by, pass away, become invisible, and by implication cease to be. *One tittle*, in Matt. v. 18, *one jot or tittle*. These expressions, borrowed from the art of writing, in which they denoted small points, are peculiarly appropriate in speaking of a written law, not even the minutest point of which should *fail* of its effect or be abolished without answering its purpose. The immutability of the Divine Word, in relation either to happiness or misery, yields as much comfort to the righteous as it gives despair to the wicked.

18. <sup>l</sup>Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband, committeth adultery.

<sup>l</sup> Matt. v. 32 and xix. 9; Matt. x. 11; 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

Here is an example of the permanence and the violation of the law. The Pharisees had unconverted hearts. They professed to love God: but in reality they hated Him. How did they show that they hated Him? By hating His law. They did not keep His holy commandments. Jesus reminds them of one great sin, which they frequently committed. They broke the seventh commandment by putting away their wives in order to marry others. This sin prevailed in the prophet Malachi's time, for he rebuked it, saying, "The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously, and yet she is the companion and the wife of thy covenant." And this sin, to some extent, prevailed when Jesus uttered these words. The Scribes taught that "men might put away their wives for every cause," and the practice of the Pharisees corresponded with their teaching. Every opportunity was seized for putting away their wives, and marrying others. The great intentions of marriage were in a good degree frustrated. Full encouragement was given and taken to furious passions and irregular desires. Our Lord, therefore, charged the Pharisees, who boasted of their reverence for the law, with being themselves breakers of it in the law of marriage. They had lowered the standard of the law of divorce. They had allowed divorce for trivial and insufficient causes. They had perverted and abused, for licentious purposes, the Mosaic law, Deut. xxiv. 1, that if "uncleanness" were found in a wife, the husband might "write a bill of divorcement, and put it into her hand, and send her out of the house." What was then *permitted*, and that, too, only to prevent greater evils, and because it was found to be necessary in view of the hardness of the hearts of the people, was now regarded as *pre-*

*cept*, and when thus regarded, sadly misinterpreted and applied. This language of our Lord is to be interpreted in harmony with Matt. v. 32. According to this law, adultery, or unchastity, is the only sufficient reason of divorce. He who for any other cause puts away his wife, is to be held an adulterer if he marry another woman, and she, by marrying him, commits adultery, while, at the same time, he becomes the guilty occasion of adultery, if the woman, who is still his wife, marry another man, for in this case she commits adultery, as he does also who marries her. It is proper to state that the case of desertion, by which the contract of marriage has already been virtually annulled by the deserting party, and which is referred to in 1 Cor. vii. 15, is regarded by some as justifying a divorce. Few things have done more to promote the happiness and the moral improvement of man, than the basis on which our Lord has re-established the marriage relation. See Matt. xix. 39. Let all who stand in this relation to each other seriously consider the nature of their relation, and the importance of their duties. Let them reflect, that since they form as it were one body, they ought also to have one mind and heart. Let them cherish each other with the same attention and affection as they do their own bodies—strive to have the same dispositions, guard against disputes and disagreements, beware of all irritating language and disrespectful treatment, bear with each other's infirmities, study each other's tempers, endeavor to correct each other's faults, conduct themselves with gentleness, forbear, forgive, conciliate, comfort, and cheer one another, and strive in every way to promote each other's happiness. Above all, let them live together as heirs of the grace of eternal life, as those who know that death, the only lawful cause of separation, will ere long cut the otherwise indissoluble bond, and let them seek to be bound together by a tie, which even death itself cannot sunder, that they may, after a life of happiness on earth, spend a happy eternity together in heaven. One of the saddest evidences of the decline of morality, and of respect for the Word of God in our land, is the frequency and ease with which, for trivial causes, divorces are obtained.

### QUESTIONS.

1. What vain opinion does our Lord explode in ver. 13?
2. What is the point contended for in respect to God?
3. What is said of the character of the Pharisees?
4. What things had they heard?
5. What did they do to Christ?
6. What is said of the word rendered "derided"?
7. Why did the Pharisees deride Jesus?
8. What is said of ministers?
9. Should we become angry when told of our sins?
10. How did Christ reply to the disdain He received?
11. Explain "ye are they which justify," &c.
12. Explain "God knoweth your hearts."
13. What is said of a heart unwashed in the blood of Christ?
14. What is said of "that which is highly esteemed," &c.?
15. What were the Pharisees very zealous for?
16. What are we to understand by "the law and the prophets"?
17. Explain the words "until John."
18. What is said of "since that time," &c.?
19. Explain "Every man presseth into it."
20. What were the Pharisees not to suppose?
21. What is said of "And?"
22. How is the idea that the law shall never cease to be authoritative and obligatory, expressed?

23. Explain the words jot and tittle.
24. What example of the permanence and the violation of the law is given?
25. Of what great sin did Jesus remind the Pharisees?
26. When did this sin prevail?
27. How was the Mosaic law perverted and abused?
28. How is this language of our Lord to be interpreted?
29. What is said of the case of desertion?
30. What is said of the basis on which our Lord has re-established the marriage relation?
31. What is the duty of all who stand in this relation?
32. What is said of divorces?

## LESSON CI.

vs. 19-23.

19. ¶ There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

m Judg. viii. 26; Eeth. viii. 15.

We must not fail to notice the connection between what our Lord now proceeds to utter, and that which goes before in the chapter. In the parable of the "Unjust Steward," He had reproved the covetousness of the Pharisees. As this was their besetting sin, the reproof stung them to the quick, and led them to deride Him. See Notes on ver. 14. After this derision, which occasioned a brief interruption, He exposed their hypocrisy and contempt of the law. Now He proceeds to present to them truth in other forms and phases, no less important or necessary. In what He says, He shows them the utter folly of linking, as they were wont to do, earthly prosperity with final salvation as a necessary sequence, or poverty in time with perdition in eternity. He affirms that all the advantages of this world which men possess, such as wealth, learning, rank, so far from being important to the attainment of eternal welfare, increase their punishment, if they make not a right use of such advantages. He gives a terrible illustration of the man who, through avarice, pride, and contempt of Divine truth, fails to "make unto himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." He depicts the doom which awaits those who, neglecting the care of the poor, abandon themselves to worldly pleasure. He seeks to lead men so to conduct themselves in relation to temporal things, as not to bring themselves into eternal condemnation, for all anxiety about eternal things springs from faith, and all indifference to them from unbelief.

From the very earliest days it has been a matter of dispute, whether this portion of our Lord's teaching ought to be regarded as a parable or a real history. It would be safe, perhaps, to regard it as mainly historical, and partly figurative; in other words, as the relation of events which actually occurred, though somewhat colored with borrowed imagery, which the great Teacher, according to His usual custom, employed to convey the important instruction communicated. It is, however, of no real importance to inquire whether this is the history of men who actually lived at Jerusalem, or whether our Lord borrowed only general and probable characters, and worked them into a parable. In either case the moral is the same. It cannot, for a moment, be supposed that Jesus would use any embellishment, even in a parable,

that would leave any impression on an honest mind inconsistent with truth. If the parable in part consists of drapery, it is not the drapery of error, but of truth. If it be a *parable*, it is what *may be*; if it be a *history*, it is that which *has been*. Either a man *may live*, as is here described, and go to perdition when he dies, or some *have lived* in this way, and are now suffering the punishment of their evil course. So that, in whichever of these lights it is viewed, the account given is equally true and important. It is replete with lofty instruction and most solemn warning for all times and places. Here the curtain that conceals the eternal future is lifted up, to give us a glimpse of that world where hope never enters, and from which misery can never pass.

*A certain rich man.* No name is given to him, because it would have been invidious, and have provoked ill-will, to name any one in such a description, but he is commonly called *Dives*, a Latin word signifying a *rich man*. The omission of the name is a means of generalizing the representation. It has been suggested that this omission, taken in connection with the mention of the name of the beggar, was designed to testify that the spiritual order of things is contrary to the worldly. In the world, the names of the rich are known, and when they are talked of, they are designated by their names; but the names of the poor are either not known, or if known are counted unworthy to be particularly noted. We are not told how this man became rich. *Which was clothed in purple and fine linen.* Purple was the color in that age appropriate to princely rank. It was obtained from the blood taken from a vein in the throat of a certain shell-fish. The wearing of fine linen (called *bysseus*) was then, because the manufacture of it was in its infancy, considered a proof of the greatest wealth, or the greatest luxury. *And fared sumptuously every day.* He gratified his palate with the most exquisite food which nature, assisted by art, could furnish. The original expression is very expressive, signifying that *he feasted splendidly, or de ighted and cheered himself with luxury and splendor every day.* This rich display was not reserved for special days, festivals, or galas, it was his ordinary style. It is important, in order that the edge of the parable may be retained, that the character of *Dives* as evil should not be exaggerated. He is not said to have been dishonest, nor a calumniator, nor a false accuser, nor an oppressor of the poor, nor avaricious, nor a spendthrift, nor an adulterer, nor a murderer, nor a criminal. There is not exhibited to us any flagrant crime or peculiar wickedness in his conduct. Not a single vice is laid to his charge. True, he was rich, but so was Abraham, who is introduced as on the other side of the gulf, and so was Solomon, Esther, David, and thousands more who are now in heaven. True, also, his dress was costly, but it is not said that in the use of it he exceeded the bounds of his income, or of his rank in life. True, again, he fared sumptuously every day, but there is nothing wrong in taking the gifts of Providence and enjoying them also, so that they are taken with moderation, and enjoyed with thankfulness. And here we read of no great abuse or excess. There is no intimation that he was, as he is sometimes called, for instance, in the heading of the chapter in our Bibles, "a glutton." He spent his money freely, but not, as far as the narrative shows, with reckless extravagance. He might have been regarded by others as one merely living handsomely, according to his means. Much injury, it has well been said, has been done to our Saviour's instructions, by ill-judged attempts to improve and strengthen them. In this parable, many, dissatisfied with its simplicity, and to vindicate the judge from the charge of severity, would load the rich man with all the crimes that can blacken human nature. But for this they have no authority, and in doing it they pervert the design of the parable, which is, to admonish us, not that a monster of wickedness shall be punished in another world, but that the man who, though not chargeable with doing much *ill*, does little or no *good*, and who, though not perhaps *intemperate* or *sensual*, is yet careless about the situation of others, and exists

only for the gratification of himself, the indulgence of his own appetites and vanity, shall not escape punishment. It shows the danger of living in the neglect of duties, though not chargeable with the *commission of crimes*, and particularly the danger of considering the gifts of Providence as our own property, and not as a trust from our Creator, to be employed in His service, (i. e., in doing His will,) and for which we are accountable to Him. These appear to be the reasons for which our Lord has here shown the evil of a life which, so far from being universally detested, is, at this day, but too much admired, envied, and imitated. The sins of this rich man were infidelity, selfishness, and a sordid, hard-hearted worldliness.

20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

*Beggar.* The Greek word thus rendered does not necessarily mean what our English word implies—a mendicant. In thirty-one out of the thirty-two other places where it is used in the New Testament, beside this parable, it is translated “poor.” *Named Lazarus.* This Lazarus was not the brother of Martha and Mary. Lazarus was by his own name known in heaven; the rich man was not distinguished by any name, ver. 25; he had only a genealogy in this world, ver. 27. Even in a parable, admission may be given to a proper name. Ezek. xxiii. 4. It is possible, however, that a person of the name of Lazarus may have existed at that time in Jerusalem, and Theophylact mentions a tradition of the Hebrews to that effect. This is the only one of our Lord’s parables in which He introduces parties to us by name. We have first *Lazarus*, then *Abraham*. When He says the beggar was called *Lazarus*, (which is abridged from Eleazar or Eleadzon, and means, “God only his help,”) it is not too much to infer that He wished by this very name to give us this insight into his character, that he was one of the true Israel, that he belonged to those who trusted in the living God, that he was one who realized in his poverty and disease “that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” and that amid all that was so dreary and dark outwardly in his condition, he was a partaker of the blessedness of the man who “has the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God.” *Which was laid at his gate*, placed there by others, who either wished to rid themselves of him, or to secure to him what fell from the rich man’s table. In sight of the rich man, that he might not have ignorance to plead. “It is still,” says a modern traveller, “a common custom throughout the East, and I observed it this morning in the streets of Jerusalem, to lay a cripple or a leper at the door of some wealthy man, or to place him in a public thoroughfare, stretched upon his mat or wooden litter. The blind, too, line the approaches to the city, and cry out with a loud voice to the passers-by for mercy and for charity.” *Full of sores*, entirely covered with them, ulcerated, one of the natural effects of a mendicant’s life. It is one of the blessed fruits of the gospel, that it provides for the poor and the suffering.

We are apt to wonder at the ways of Heaven, and perhaps tempted in our minds to arraign the conduct of Providence, in crowning so worthless a man as Dives with wealth and prosperity, whilst all that diversified the lot of Lazarus was scene after scene of poverty and pain. But let us suspend our judgment. We see but one link in the great chain of Providence. We live but in the infancy of being. The great drama of life is but begun. When the curtain between both worlds is undrawn, the morn will arise that will light the Almighty’s footsteps in the deep, and pour full day upon all the paths of His providence. There is a future state of retribution. There must be a world in which the just Governor of the universe will assert His justice, vindicate His character, and render to men according to their works. Amidst all the disadvantages of poverty, it should be remembered that it is

more favorable than a state of opulence for the cultivation of piety. Matt. xix. 24; James ii. 5. The poor have less to attach them to the world. The promises of Scripture are principally applicable to them. Christ committed them to the consideration of His Church.

21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

*And desiring to be fed, &c.* The expression, in the original, does not afford a sufficient foundation for supposing that he was refused the crumbs, the word rendered *desiring* not implying so much in the Scriptural use of it. Nor does such supposition seem to be warranted by the facts, that the rich man afterward immediately knew Lazarus, asked that he might be made the instrument of the relief wanted, and that, though the patriarch upbraided the rich man with the carelessness and luxury in which he lived, he said not a word of the refusal of the crumbs to the beggar at the gate. Besides, as the beggar appears to have been laid there repeatedly, this implies some success. *Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.* Perhaps the dogs, always plentiful in Eastern cities, that had no master, perhaps the dogs that belonged to the rich man, and had turned aside to lick the beggar's sores when their master rode past on the other side, and hid from the sight of the misery within the drapery of his stately mansion. The act attributed to the dogs accords, as is well known, with their instincts and habits. It was soothing to the sufferer in the sensations of the moment, and healthful in its effects. When the beggar's fortunate brother took no notice of his distress, except, perhaps, to assent that the crumbs might be thrown to him, which would be shared with the dogs, the dumb brutes did what they could to show their sympathy.

The true Christian, building on the one foundation, even Christ, must be ready not only to *do*, but to *suffer*. He must make up his mind to a cheerful acquiescence in the will of God, even if God shall be pleased to send him manifold "evil things" in his outward lot; even if he be dependent on the merest charity for his daily food. He must let patience have her perfect work, and rest assured that those will not be among the least precious or beautiful of the stones he is building on the tried foundation, which, under the chastening hand of God, give some blessed tokens of resemblance to, and fellowship in suffering with, Him who "knew not where to lay His head."

22. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

a Pa. xci. 11, 12; Heb. i. 14.

*The beggar died.* Lazarus died first. The earliest death is not the evidence of judgment; the ripe is oftenest taken; saints are frequently gathered first. No mention is made of Lazarus being *buried*; his poor, diseased body was probably hid out of sight in any obscure grave which the hand of charity might provide for it. But his dust was precious in the sight of that God in whom he trusted, and in the resurrection morning God will show how much He prizes the redeemed bodies of His saints. *Abraham's bosom*, we may assume, was already an expression employed by the Jews to designate the place of the blessed beyond the grave. It accords much better with the Lord's purpose and method to suppose that this phrase and the term paradise, which He afterwards employed, Luke xxiii. 43, to express the same idea, were

adopted by Him from the current custom, than that they were then first introduced. It is plain that heaven is a *place*. The joys of the blessed after death are here represented as a feast; Abraham, the father of the faithful, is placed, as it were, at the head of the table. Heaven will be a feast of the intellect, of love, of memory, of anticipation. The Jews, as well as Romans, reclined on couches at table, the upper part of the body resting upon the left elbow, so that the head of one guest reclined on the bosom of the next preceding him. So that the expression, *Abraham's bosom*, denotes a place among the blessed near to the distinguished patriarch, and probably intimates that the poor man who occupied this place was an eminent believer, a saint of superior excellency. *And was carried by angels*, that is, his soul. See Heb. i. 14; Ps. ciii. 20. It is not in vain that Christ assigns this office to the angels, whom we know to be given as ministers to the faithful. How great and sudden the change! He who was lately the sport, not only of man but of dogs, is now honored by the presence and kind offices of angels! *The rich man also died, and was buried*. Death is no respecter of persons. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." No earthly resources, however great or grand, can shield us from the assault of the destroyer. The rich man was buried, we may suppose, with much pageantry and pomp. But what a mockery was this marked attention to the lifeless body, now that his soul had passed into punishment!

It must not for a moment be supposed in relation to the parties mentioned in the parable, that *because* the one was rich he was excluded from heaven, and *because* the other was poor he was admitted into heaven. The true lesson here taught is in one aspect the very reverse of this: an ungodly man is in the highest sense poor, in spite of his wealth, and a godly man is in the highest sense rich, in spite of his poverty. God looks upon wealth and poverty as merely adventitious characteristics, having no inherent moral virtue, neither making nor marring those that are their subjects. Poverty of spirit is a spiritual excellence, which poverty of circumstances may be a stranger to. Rich in good works is a spiritual virtue, which the wealthiest may not have. God places us in our respective states, and gives us opportunities for exercising corresponding virtues.

23. And 'in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

• Pa. ix. 17; Prov. v. 6; Is. xli. 9.

In accordance with the use of the word in classic Greek, and of the corresponding term in the Hebrew Scriptures, we might assume that "hell" (Hades) only indicated generally the world of spirits, as distinguished from this life in the body, while the expression "being in torment," serves to determine the specific region or condition in that world to which the rich man was consigned; the term, however, wherever it occurs in the New Testament, seems to be applied, in point of fact, to the place of punishment, except in passages that are directly quoted from the Old Testament. Both were now in the world of spirits, but the beggar in that world was in Abraham's bosom, and the rich man in torment—the ransomed man entered the Father's house and joined the company of the holy; the ungodly gravitated according to his kind, into the place of woe. It is evident that hell is a place. *He lifted up his eyes, being in torments*. In interpreting these expressions we must carefully remember that our Lord's language is adapted to our understandings. It is plain that lost souls can suffer intensely before the resurrection, but how a lost soul can be susceptible of *bodily* suffering before the resurrection of the body we cannot fully comprehend. The whole subject of the sensations of a disembodied spirit is no little involved in mystery. In referring to the question whether a disembodied spirit has *eyes*,

*tongue, finger, etc.*, an able writer says: "A spirit possesses sight, for even in life it is the soul that sees, and the eye is but its instrument. So also it is the *soul* that hears, feels, tastes, and smells through its sensorial organs. And so our entire present sensitive system is in the human form, extending from within to the surface of the body. Our sensitive skin is a dress of and in the human form, our bone system is a skeleton in human form, and so our nerve system and blood system are so many outline sketches of the same figure. The sensible soul, extending its power and apparent presence, is limited by the skin to the same shape. How know we that it carries the same limitations and the same shape when emancipated from the outward world?" *And seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* Among the Jews, the rabbins say that the place of torment and paradise are so situated, that what is done in one may be seen from the other. The Grecian poets represent the abodes of the blessed as lying contiguous to the regions of the damned, and separated only by a great impassable river, or deep gulf, in such a way that the spirits could talk with one another from its opposite banks. Grecian mythologists also tell us that the souls of wicked men lie in a river of fire, where they suffer the same torments they would have suffered while alive had their bodies been burned. It does not follow, however, from these resemblances, that the parable is formed on the Grecian mythology, or that our Lord approved of what the common people thought or spake concerning those matters, agreeably to the notions and language of the Greeks. In parables, provided the doctrines inculcated are strictly true, the terms in which they are inculcated may be such as are most familiar to the ears of mankind, and the images made use of such as they are best acquainted with.

In the present portion of this parable, and the dialogue which follows, if we may not regard our Lord as describing absolutely what is possible and actually takes place in the world of spirits, yet we must believe that He gives such pictures of it, or signs regarding it, as are intelligible to us in the world that now is, and as will best bring the realities of the future to bear with beneficial effect upon the present character of men. From the view which the rich man had of Lazarus in glory, while he himself was in torment, we may safely conclude that the view which lost souls have in the gulf of perdition, of the happiness of the blessed, and the conviction that they themselves might have enjoyed this felicity from which, through their own fault, they are eternally excluded, will form no small part of their punishment. Perhaps by the sight of Lazarus as next to Abraham in glory, the stings of the rich man's conscience were greatly multiplied, and he was filled with envy and self-reproach. Whilst it is true that the state of good men, after death, is one of happiness, and that of bad men one of misery, it is also true that the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked will not be consummated till their souls have been reunited to their respective bodies, and sentence has been pronounced on them at the final judgment. Rev. xi. 18; 2 Tim. iv. 18; i. 18; 2 Thess. i. 10; Heb. xi. 39, 40; Luke xiv. 14.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is the connection between this parable and that which goes before in the chapter?
2. What does our Lord show in this parable?
3. Is this a parable or a real history?
4. Is it important to determine this point?
5. Why is not the name of the rich man given?
6. What is he commonly called?
7. What is said of purple?
8. What is said of fine linen?
9. Explain "fared sumptuously every day."

10. What is Dives said not to have been?
11. How has much injury been done to our Lord's instructions?
12. What is the design of this parable?
13. What is said of "beggar?"
14. What is said of Lazarus?
15. Did such a person exist at that time in Jerusalem?
16. What does "Lazarus" mean?
17. What is it not too much to infer from Christ calling this beggar "Lazarus?"
18. Explain "laid at his gate."
19. Explain "full of sores."
20. What is said of the ways of Providence?
21. What is said of "desiring to be fed," &c.?
22. What is said of "the dogs came and licked his sores?"
23. What must the true Christian be ready for?
24. What is said of the death of Lazarus?
25. Explain the phrase, "Abraham's bosom."
26. How are the joys of the blessed after death here represented?
27. Explain, "and was carried by angels."
28. What is said of the death of the rich man?
29. How was this man buried?
30. What must not for a moment be supposed?
31. What is the true lesson here taught?
32. What is said of "hell?"
33. What is said of "he lifted up his eyes," &c.?
34. Explain "seeth Abraham afar off," &c.
35. What is said of this portion of the parable, and the dialogue which follows?
36. Are the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked consummated at death?

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## LESSON CII.

vs. 24-31.

24. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

p Zech. xiv. 12.

q Is. lxvi. 24; Mark ix. 44, &c.

*He cried and said.* He did not acknowledge the justness of his punishment, or the greatness of his sins. *Father Abraham.* His pride on account of his fleshly descent from Abraham, and his Judaism, had gone with him; he thinks of laying claim to salvation as a right wholly standing in himself, and is quite blinded in regard to his unfilial state of heart, (Matt. iii. 8; Rom. ix. 6, 7,) though he recognizes Abraham as his father. In such a state of mind his condition must have been doubly painful to him. (Matt. vii. 22, &c.) *Send.* He still treats Lazarus as of little account, as afterwards *Moses*, verse 30. It appears probable, that those are always present to the thoughts of the wicked whom they remember to have been ill-treated by them. *Cool my tongue, &c.*—marking the continuance of his lusts and desires, which were now without any means of satisfaction, and consequently increased his torment; the thirst bespeaks a longing desire after an absent good, the suffering of pain a present feeling of distress; the flame is an

image of the highest degree of pain ; he begs, not for entire deliverance, but only for alleviation ; he sues for mercy who himself had been so unmerciful. As this is the only prayer to a saint recorded in the Bible, and it, though for a small relief, was not answered, of course, prayers to saints are unwarranted.

*Tormented in this flame.* The evil passions which now rankle in the bosoms of sinners here will hereafter produce in them inconceivable anguish, by being released of every restriction, and being left unshackled to revel in full and exasperated expansion forever. Each passion which it was the concern of a lifetime to indulge, but which it must now be the employment of an eternity to deny, will be as a fire-sheet around them. The punishment of the wicked is often represented by Christ, not only in parables either, but in His explanations of parables, by fire. Matt. xiii. 41, 42 ; Mark ix. 44, 46, 48. See, also, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9 ; Rev. xiv. 9, 10, 11.

25. But Abraham said, Son, 'remember that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

† Job xxi. 13 ; Luke vi. 24.

*But Abraham said, Son.* In this, and the following verse, the dignity and solemnity of Abraham's language should specially be noted. On the one hand, there is nothing about it of severity or unkindness ; on the other, there is nothing of affected pity or compassion. *Thy good things*—the things you have chosen as your portion—the things of earth, and time, and sense, in the enjoyment of which you lived contentedly and happily, as *your own*. God put them into your hands as a steward, to be taken care of and used for Him ; you have appropriated them to yourself, as if they were your own property. They have been *your good*. Under the same spirit, the prodigal son demanded the portion of "*goods which falleth to me,*" and the rich fool made all preparation for preserving "*his goods.*" *Receivedst.* This word, in the original, has great emphasis. It expresses the receipt in full—the exhaustion of all claims on. "*Those that were good things to thee came to an end in thy lifetime ; there are no more of them.*" Whatever can be derived from the guilty use of the things of earth, apart from the Giver, and in neglect of fidelity to Him, had been received by this rich man. He had taken them as *his own*, and he received his reward. They gave him as much as they could, and then left him to perish. *But now he is comforted.* His afflictions are all past, he has exchanged his place at the gate for a home in heaven, his want for abundant satisfaction of every necessity, his rags for a robe of glory, his obscure and despised condition for the sweet society of God and angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect. *And thou art tormented*—thy gorgeous attire has given place to a robe of flame, instead of sumptuous fare thou art fed with bitter tears, and gnawed continually by a condemning conscience, and instead of thy past elegancies and comforts, nothing but torment and anguish surround thee. Memory will follow the soul into the future state. There is reason to believe that no impressions made upon the human soul in connection with the body are ever permanently erased. Causes operating merely upon man's physical nature frequently revive whole trains of thought which for a long time had been lost. In this world, men manage, by business, cares, and pleasures, to forget the greater part of their actions. But beyond the grave, the curtain will be rent from top to bottom which shuts out recollection, or makes it partial. Then will it be the business of the disembodied to *think*. In that world of vivid intellection and endless meditation,

"—— the *past* lives o'er again  
In its effects, and to the guilty spirit  
The ever frowning *present* is its image."

An eminent physician has reported the case of a lady, who, when in a state of delirium, spoke a language which nobody about her understood, but which, after some time, was discovered to be Welsh. None of her friends could form any conception of the manner in which she had become acquainted with that language, but after much inquiry it was ascertained that in her childhood she had a nurse, a native of a district on the coast of Brittany, the dialect of which was closely analogous to the Welsh. The lady at that time had learned a good deal of this dialect, but had entirely forgotten it for many years before the attack of fever which had produced this delirium. A Lutheran minister, of Philadelphia, informed Dr. Rush, that Germans and Swedes, of whom he had a considerable number in his congregation, when near death always prayed in their native languages, though some of them, he was confident, had not spoken these languages for fifty or sixty years.

26. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

• 2 Thesa. 1. 9; Rev. xx. 10 and xxii. 11.

*Besides all this*:—as to the favor thou desirest from the hand of Lazarus, it is a thing impossible to be granted, for *between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, a great chasm, or void, is established. They which would pass from hence to you, cannot*—if any should be so compassionate as to desire to help you, they are not able—*neither can they pass to us, that would come from you*—but we must still continue in an unapproachable distance from each other, the passage is forever closed, the *great gulf* is forever *fixed*. The righteous will be “forever with the Lord.” The wicked shall be “*unjust still*.” The same word “eternal” is written on the gate of heaven, and the gate of hell. Matt. 25. There is nothing intermediate between heaven and hell. How the doctrine of a *purgatory* can be reconciled with this verse, it is impossible to imagine. How solemn the thought, that whether a person be happy or miserable in the future world, his state is unchangeable!

27. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house:

28. For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

The first prayer of the rich man, ver. 24, being refused, he offered another prayer for himself. Alas! what could give us a more complete idea of the hopelessness of his condition in the world of woe, than his ceasing to ask for mercy! Having given himself up to his fate, he now appeals from justice to grace, and begs that Lazarus might be sent to his brethren, and warn them, *testify unto them*, the certain truth of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, and of the infinite importance thereof. Some have inferred from this request, that in the future world some good and kind sentiments may remain in those who are themselves forever lost. It is more reasonable to suppose that there was in this request of the rich man, the tormenting thought, that he had himself been the means, by his example, and his life, of leading his brothers into careless, irreligious habits which were most likely to involve them in eternal ruin, and that their presence with him in torment would increase his misery. He dreaded the reproaches of those whom he had loved in a wrong manner, and thereby made companions in his misery. How important it is to consider

what kind of influence we are exercising on the community at large, and especially on those whom Providence has placed under our immediate supervision and control! Those who have sinned together on earth, instead of being able to lighten each other's burden in the world of darkness, will only increase each other's misery.

29. Abraham saith unto him, "They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them.

<sup>1</sup> Is. viii. 20 and xxxiv. 16; John v. 39, 45, Acts xv. 21 and xvii. 11.

*They have Moses and the prophets*—from these they might learn (not that it is wicked to be rich and blessed to be a beggar, but) that a rich, infidel, sensual worldliness meets a terrible retribution from a just God. From this answer of Abraham, it would seem that these five brethren were all Jewish believers: they had these writings in their hands, but they did not permit them to influence their lives. It is often asserted that the doctrine of future punishment is not taught in the Old Testament. Doubtless, like the correlative doctrine of heavenly reward, it was not announced in terms as distinctly as in the New. But the general doctrine of retribution, both for the righteous and the wicked, is abundantly taught there, so that, as the reply of Abraham indicates, men were sufficiently warned of the coming wrath. Gen. ii. 17; Num. xv. 31; Ps. vii. 11; Prov. xiv. 32; Ezek. xviii. 4, 31; xxxiii. 8; Dan. xii. 2, &c.

30. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

Whatever aspect of sympathy the rich man's prayer may have worn, it is plain that it breathed the spirit of audacity. It assumed that there was not sufficient evidence of the authenticity, genuineness, and fulness of the Old Testament Scriptures to warrant their reception as a rule of faith and practice. It was a reflection on the wisdom of God, inasmuch as He had made a revelation unaccompanied with evidence adequate to produce conviction of its Divine origin, or so obscure as not to be intelligible for practical purposes. And it was a reflection on His justice, because it had doomed *him* to suffering, for not yielding to the influence of a system of truth thus imperfectly attended with marks and means of credibility. It was, indeed, an effort on his part, for tacit exculpation of himself, by taxing God with having formerly used only imperfect and improper means for his conversion. Thus is it evident that the sinner carries with him to his cheerless abode, the same disparaging thoughts he had of the Bible when on earth, and the same conceit of wisdom superior to the Divine, which supposes itself competent to dictate a more effectual method of salvation than God was pleased to appoint. Thus regarded, therefore, we are prepared for the disposition which was made of this prayer.

31. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, "neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

<sup>2</sup> John xii. 10, 11.

"They will repent," says Dives, but Abraham replies, "They will not even be persuaded;" "They will repent," says Dives, "if one went unto them from the dead;" but Abraham, with a prophetic glance at the world's unbelief in a far greater matter, further replies, "No, not if one *rose* from the dead;" as if he had said, "A far greater act than you demand would be

ineffectual for producing a far slighter effect. You suppose that wicked men would repent on the return of a spirit : I tell you they would not even be persuaded by the rising of one from the dead." Note, 1. A great many persons already believe the Bible, and yet do not obey it. And as they now believe, without obeying, what reason is there to suppose that obedience would be produced by the appearance of one from the dead? 2. If one should rise from the dead to convince every sinner, such resurrections would cease to be miracles, for it is essential to their very nature that they be rare and extraordinary, inasmuch as what is ordinary and frequent is apt to be ascribed to the established laws of nature, however wonderful it be in itself. 3. Such miracles *have* proved powerless for conviction. The Pharisees saw the resurrection of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, and yet sought to kill Jesus and Lazarus too. 4. The evidence on which revelation stands is far stronger and more convincing than would be the evidence furnished by one coming from the dead. How should we know that such an one was not deceiving us? *As a man*, we would surely have reason to mistrust him, and as a *dead* man, we would not necessarily have any greater reason to rely on him. How should we know, if any one appeared to us, that it was not a mere personation of a dead man, by a being of the other world? For it is one thing, be it remembered, to prove that there is another world, and beings belonging to it, and quite a different thing to prove a future state, that is, a world in which *dead men shall live*. How can the evidence that we should receive from the rising of one from the dead, and his appearance to us for an hour, under the alarm and excitement that we should experience, be for a moment compared with the clear, calm, tested, confirmed and cumulative evidences of Christianity? How common is it for our fancy and our senses to deceive us! 5. The state of heart in which the Bible is rejected is such, that it would not be overcome or changed by any external evidence. This was the point which Jesus had mainly in view in this part of the parable. He wished to explain the nature of faith, to show that it is a moral act, an act of the will and affections no less than of the understanding, something therefore which cannot be enforced by signs and miracles : for where there is a determined alienation of the will and affections from the truth, no impressions which these miracles will make, even if they be allowed to be genuine, will be more than transitory. He wished to show, that as infidelity proceeds from a vitiated and corrupted mind which hates to be reformed, which rejects the evidence, because it will not admit the doctrine—not the doctrine, because it cannot admit the evidence—no proof would be successful with such a mind. That infidelity has its origin and support in the temper of mind just described cannot be questioned. If religion presented nothing to men's faith but abstruse speculations, and incomprehensible mysteries that had no relation to morals, they would pass them with the same indifference that they do the abstractions of any other science ; but it touches their hearts, and controls their lusts, and therefore it is that it awakens in them the keenest opposition. They profess, indeed, to be shocked at its mysteries, to find doctrines in it that revolt their reason, and on these they incessantly declaim ; but it is only to conceal from themselves and from the world the *true* grounds of their enmity. It is because religion commands them to renounce their guilty commerce, to sacrifice this criminal connection, to subdue this dominant lust, and to flee even the motives and temptations to evil, that it excites their hatred and provokes their rejection.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Did the rich man acknowledge his guilt?
2. Why did he say "Father Abraham?"
3. What appears probable in relation to the wicked?

4. What are we taught by the words "cool my tongue."
5. Explain "tormented in this flame."
6. What should be especially noted in the 25th and following verses?
7. Explain "thy good things."
8. What is said of "receivedst?"
9. Explain "but now he is comforted."
10. Explain "and thou art tormented."
11. What is said about memory?
12. What cases has an eminent physician reported?
13. Explain verse 26.
14. What is said of the doctrine of a purgatory?
15. What is said of "I pray thee, therefore," &c?
16. What have some inferred from this request?
17. What is it more reasonable to suppose?
18. What is said about the influence we exert?
19. What was Abraham's reply?
20. Is the doctrine of future punishment taught in the Old Testament?
21. What did the rich man reply?
22. What is said of this reply?
23. Explain verse 31.
24. What is said about the rising of one from the dead leading to repentance?

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### LESSON CIII.

vs. 1-10.

OUR Lord, at the commencement of this chapter, turns again to His *disciples*, and specially addresses them, as He had done at the beginning of the last chapter. The awful parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which had been specially spoken to the Pharisees, seems to have caused them to depart in silence. But, though silent, they were not penitent. They were still bent upon opposing Christ. Their busy and active hostility may have led them to influence others to forsake the company of Jesus, and to such they proved stumbling-blocks in the way of salvation. Some suppose that our Lord may now have had in His mind the stumbling-block that conduct like that of the rich man towards Lazarus put in the way of weak believers, or that possibly He referred again to His lesson about "faithfulness in little things" in the parable of the Unjust Steward, and proceeded to warn His disciples not to give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

1. Then said he unto the disciples, "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him* through whom they come!

a Matt. xviii. 6, 7; Mark ix. 42; 1 Cor. xi. 19.

The term *disciples* probably designates, beside the *Apostles*, the publicans and sinners, and perhaps others recently converted during the Saviour's Persian ministry, who, for this reason, are named, as being yet weak in

faith, ver. 2. *Offences* : i. e., *stumbling-blocks*. So the word is elsewhere translated. Rom. xi. 9 ; xiv. 13 ; 1 John ii. 10. Christianity, or true religion, is considered as a path, or way, and whatever occurs that tends to prevent men from beginning to walk in it, or to turn them out of it, or to hinder them in pursuing it, is an offence, or a stumbling-block. Rom. xiv. 13, 21. *It is impossible, &c.* Considering the general corruption of human nature, the snares of the world, and the temptations of Satan, it cannot but be that, one way or other, offences will be given and taken. *But woe unto him, &c.*, Woe unto the man who is the intentional author of these offences by persecution, or deceitful infidelities, or heresies, or ungodly example. He who seduces or drives men from the paths of truth and well-doing is performing the devil's work, and must reap the devil's reward. Their frequent and inevitable occurrence, resulting as it does from a depraved heart, renders these offences more heinous and deserving of God's displeasure.

2. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

*A millstone, &c.* Drowning a person with a stone tied about the neck was an ancient mode of punishment. *One of these little ones.* One of these feeble believers. Probably, Jesus pointed to some of the weak and unestablished followers who accompanied Him and the twelve Apostles. There are always many who are "babes in Christ." 1 Cor. iii. 1. Those who are *strong* in faith must be careful not to injure the *weak* in faith, even as the *elder* children in a family must carefully avoid hurting the tender frames of the younger children. Advanced Christians must refrain even from enjoying *lawful* privileges, sooner than endanger their weak brethren. In Romans xiv. the Apostle clearly points out this duty. If it be a grievous sin to wound a weak believer through *carelessness*, how dreadful a crime it must be to injure him *wilfully* ! No true believer would commit this sin. It would be better to be cast into the sea than to be guilty of it.

3. ¶ Take heed to yourselves : if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him ; and if he repent, forgive him.

• Matt. xviii. 15, 21.

• Lev. xix. 17 ; Prov. xvii. 10 ; James v. 19.

*Take heed to yourselves*, that you may neither offend others, nor be offended by others ; but that you may keep all your passions under proper regulation, and may be preserved from those resentments of injuries, real or supposed, which, if yielded to, might occasion much sin to yourselves or others. *If thy brother.* If, in this community of Christ's little ones, there shall be one who trespasses against thee who art also one of the same childlike brotherhood. Personal offences or aggrievances are here referred to. *Rebuke him.* While our Lord cautioned them against all angry passions, and that quarrelsome temper which they naturally produce, He thus prescribed a reasonable and prudent reprehension of any fault that might be committed, accompanied with forgiveness on the part of the person injured, as the best means of disarming the temptations that might arise from such a disposition. *And if he repent, forgive him*, immediately, without insisting on any rigorous satisfaction. Whether a brother acknowledges his offence or not, our hearts must stand ready to forgive the wrong done to us, and pray for forgiveness on his behalf at the hands of God.

4. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and

seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

*Seven times in a day* denotes frequent repetition. *And turn again to thee, saying, &c.* This cannot mean that we are not to forgive men unless they do repent. At this rate, there would be much bitterness constantly kept alive. But it does mean that when there is no repentance or regret for an injury done, there can be no renewal of cordial friendship, or complete reconciliation between man and man. *Thou shalt forgive him.* Thou shalt consent to be at peace with him, and hold him as not having trespassed. You may be conscious of his changing and careless disposition, but beware of cherishing a purpose of revenge. Learn hence, 1. That to fall often into the same offence against our brother is a great aggravation of our offences. 2. That as the multiplication of offences is a great aggravation of them, so the multiplying of forgiveness is a great demonstration of a God-like temper in us. In most differences, *both* parties have something to confess and something to forgive. Mutual concessions and mutual forgiveness are generally needed. He who *first* says, "I repent," acts the most Christian part, for he shows that he has *already* forgiven the trespasses of his brother. Had not Jesus forgiven us *before* any of us said, "I repent," we never should have felt even the *desire* to obtain His forgiveness. It is important to compare the precept which Christ here gives for private intercourse with that which He ordained for the exercise of discipline in the Church. Matt. xviii. 15-18. To the individual brother, there is *not* permitted what at last may be allowed to the Church, namely, to put one out as a publican and heathen. The forgiveness must be repeated as often as even the least trace of repentance is shown.

#### 5. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

If we consider these words—in reference to *the Being* to whom they were addressed—"the Lord," they teach us that He is the source of grace, and the object of worship.—If in reference to *the persons* who addressed Him—"the Apostles"—they teach us that even the Lord's disciples themselves have their imperfections, but feel them, and are concerned to be freed from them. If in reference to *the subject* they express—"our faith"—they teach us that faith is not finished at once; it admits of degrees, and higher measures of it are attainable. If in reference to *the occasion* which excited them—our *Saviour's preceding charge*—they teach us that an increase of faith is not only always desirable, but sometimes necessary.

Why did the disciples offer up this prayer? Not because our Lord had just revealed some *mystery* that it was difficult to *believe*, but because He had enjoined a *duty* that it was difficult to *practise*—the duty of forgiving oft-repeated trespasses. Whoever has been deeply or often injured, and has endeavored freely to forgive, knows that the wicked heart rises up against the righteous deed, and that the struggle is sharp between the sense of injury and of duty. In vain the person offended reasons with himself, and urges himself to the performance of the command; his unwilling soul hangs back, and refuses to obey. What is the only remedy against this inward repugnance? *Faith*. The disciples felt their need of faith, and they applied to Him who alone can bestow it.

6. "And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xvii. 20 and xxi. 21; Mark ix. 23 and xi. 23.

*A grain of mustard seed* was a proverbial expression for any thing diminutively small. *This sycamine tree.* Probably the same as the *sycamore*. The expression seems to intimate that they were standing by such a tree. The sycamore is a spreading tree, of great size, and one of the most common in Egypt and Palestine. It strikes its large, diverging roots deep into the soil, and on this account is alluded to as the most difficult to be rooted up. *If ye had faith.* The Saviour does not deny that they had any faith, but only gives them to feel how far they are removed from faith in the highest ideal sense, which alone can make them capable of fulfilling His own so strict requirement. "If ye had faith, lively, operative, you would be able to overcome all temptations, and discharge all duties, even those, the conquering and performing of which may be compared to the plucking up of trees, and planting them in the ocean; that is, compared to things impossible." There is nothing which may tend to the glory of God, or to our own good and comfort, but may be obtained of God by a firm exercise of faith in Him: *All things are possible to him that believeth.*

7. But which of you, having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say unto him, by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

The natural tendency of the human heart might lead the Apostles to go from one extreme to another, from the depressed feeling of being utterly unable to attain to such an amount of Christian grace as was required to enable them to give no cause of offence, and to forgive trespasses, to the notion that, with the help vouchsafed to them according to their request, ver. 5, and with their Master's testimony to its power, ver. 6, their graces and good works might become intrinsically valuable, and be so excellent in the sight of God as to deserve commendation from Him on their own account. It was to meet and obviate this tendency that our Lord spake this parable.

*A servant ploughing or feeding cattle.* Whether or not any of the Apostles were farmers is very doubtful. This does not necessarily imply it, as the words are simply addressed to them as men generally. Two kinds of work are mentioned, in order definitely to designate the Apostolical labor awaiting them, and that on its more difficult as well as on its easier side. By the *servant* we are to understand a serf, who was entirely dependent on his lord, and strictly bound to obey him. *By and by,* "immediately," "forthwith." It admits of doubt whether the words "by and by" should not be connected with the expression, "go and sit down," &c. The expressions, "by and by," and "afterward," ver. 8, are evidently meant to be in contrast. *When he is come from the field.* The work must be indefatigably accomplished. Rest follows afterwards, and there is no need of hurrying for that. *Go and sit down to meat.* In one thing or another to have been obedient, and to have labored for the Lord, is not enough to warrant our expecting from Him an immediate refreshment and recompense.

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?

• Luke xii. 37.

Here, what the servant has already done, is regarded as a matter of obligation, and his lord demands from him further obedience, additional labor. *And will not rather.* By the force of the interrogative, an affirmative answer is implied, *indeed will he not rather,* &c. *Make ready* refers to the general

preparation for the evening's repast, and *gird thyself* to the particular service of waiting on his lord at the table. See John xiii. 4. It was a common practice with servants, before making any bodily exertion, to tie their loose garments tightly round the waist. The custom is alluded to by Horace and Anacreon. *Till I have eaten and drunken, and AFTERWARD thou shalt eat and drink.* It will be observed that the fulfilment of duty, both in the field and in the house, while it is required fully, and no reserve of the one allowed because of the discharge of the other, nevertheless leads certainly to refreshment and rest at last. Jesus delights in the calm, spiritual enjoyment of His people. But He knows this is neither good nor safe, that in fact it cannot be attained by a half-hearted or a half-performed service, and so He never ceases to urge His commands that they may be fully and heartily complied with, because it is only "in the keeping of them that there is great reward." It is when the great Saviour of the Church is able to say, "I have eaten *my* honey-combs with *my* honey; I have drunk *my* wine with *my* milk"—accepted the free-will offerings of those He loves—that He adds, "Eat, O friends; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." We make ready wherewith our Master may sup, when we ultimately refer to Him all the glory of our works—a repast to which He alone has a right. Christ is likewise served by us, when we gain over souls to Him. Happy that person who, through his service and fidelity, is deemed worthy to be admitted to the rich banquet of heaven!

9 Doth he thank that servant, because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

This is a question of holy irony, by which the Saviour does not precisely mean to approve the fact, that so many acts of service in daily life are performed without even a word of thanks, but simply reminds of what is continually wont to happen. The point of the inquiry is this: Does the servant, by the mere discharge of what is his incumbent duty, put his master under any obligation to him? By the terms of his engagement he is to perform certain services. When these are done they are not to be regarded as furnishing a claim in his favor, so as to make his master his debtor; they are simply the duties which are fairly required at his hands, which it would not be honest in him to neglect, and which he has no merit in fulfilling. *I trow not.* The Greek word so rendered is generally translated "think," or "suppose," in a sentence like that before us. The word which our translators have used here they have not used anywhere else in the Bible. We belong to God by absolute right. We do no more than what we ought, when we even spend ourselves in His service, since we have received every thing only from and for Him. It is the glory of the creature, to be employed in the service of the Creator, and it is still a new obligation, to receive from Him the qualifications which enable us to labor therein.

10. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are 'unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

(Job xxii. 3 and xxxv. 7; Ps. xvi. 2; Matt. xxv. 30; Rom. iii. 12 and xi. 35; 1 Cor. ix. 16; Phil. ii.

*So likewise ye.* The Saviour will have His disciples, even after their work is faithfully accomplished, not esteem themselves higher than such servants. *When ye shall have done all,* by the powers both of nature and of grace, which have been conferred on you. This is spoken by way of concession, and must not be understood contrary to the doctrine of Scripture, as meaning that man actually can yield a perfect obedience to what the law requires in respect to God and Christ, *Say, we are unprofitable servants*—confess, in a spirit of

deep, unpretending humility, that you can build nothing upon your own worth. The word rendered "unprofitable" is used in Matt. xxv. 30 in a positive sense, denoting worthless, punishable; here it is used rather negatively, of one who brings no gain, is useless, does only what is commanded, and hence can obtain blessings only through grace. The whole expression indicates and involves a consciousness of one's own want of desert and worth, in reference to God. *We have done that, &c.*, no more than our duty. Note, 1. That we are all God's servants. He owns us by creation and redemption. We must obey Him. 2. That salvation is entirely of grace. "When ye shall have done ALL." Supposing that to the minutest point, to the very utmost "farthing," all is paid that is required by God—every service carefully attended to, every duty willingly, cheerfully, and completely performed—all kinds of work, in the field, and in the household, not only done, but well done—still we are not for a moment to presume that by all this we can make God our debtor. All we do is only from grace given to us, not from natural strength. It gives us no merit. We must be saved by His free, sovereign grace and mercy. This is especially true of us who have never done *all*, or *half*, or a *hundredth part* of the things that were commanded us. We are not only unprofitable, but we are provoking and guilty servants. Had we not the God of all patience for our master, we should have been dismissed long ago from His service. 3. The doctrine of works of supererogation, which the Church of Rome teaches, and according to which men may not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but may also do more for His sake than of bounden duty is required, and thus have surplus merit to appropriate to the salvation of other men, is utterly untrue. He who, after doing all that is commanded, must still acknowledge himself an useless servant, cannot possibly have any merit of which others can avail themselves to supply their own deficiency. 4. Though good works are not in themselves in any sense or degree meritorious, they are not by any means to be neglected, for they will receive a gracious reward. Luke xii. 31; Matt. xxv. 34-36. At His second coming, Jesus graciously promises to do, *of His own love and kindness*, what He here shows He is not bound to do *by the deserts of his servants*. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, *that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.*" Luke xii. 37. Jesus is so infinitely gracious that, after having borne with our imperfect services, He has promised to say to each who sincerely loves Him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The thought of receiving such commendation ought to humble us more than the severest reproof. It *will* humble those who shall receive it. Every one of them will cast his crown of life at the feet of Him who bestowed it, and say: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power." Rev. iv. 11.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What does our Lord do at the commencement of this chapter?
2. What is said of the Pharisees?
3. Whom does the term "disciples" probably designate?
4. What is the meaning of "offences?"
5. How is true religion here considered?
6. Explain "it is impossible," &c.
7. Explain "wo unto him," &c.
8. What is said of drowning?
9. What is said of "one of these little ones?"
10. Of what must the strong in faith be careful?
11. What is meant by "take heed to yourselves?"

12. Explain "if thy brother," &c.
13. Explain "rebuke him."
14. What is said of "and if he repent, forgive him?"
15. What does "seven times in a day" denote?
16. What is said of "and turn to thee, saying," &c. ?
17. Explain "thou shalt forgive him."
18. What practical lessons are here taught?
19. With what is it important to compare the precept Christ here gives?
20. What did the Apostles say unto the Lord?
21. Why did they offer up this prayer?
22. What do the words of this prayer teach?
23. What is said of "a grain of mustard seed?"
24. What, of the sycamine tree?
25. Explain "if ye had faith."
26. What is said of faith?
27. Why was this parable spoken?
28. What is meant by the "servant?"
29. What is said of "by and by?"
30. Explain "when he is come from the field."
31. Explain "go and sit down to meat."
32. Explain verse 8.
33. What is said of the fulfilment of duty?
34. What is said of "doth he thank that servant," &c. ?
35. Explain, "I trow not."
36. What is meant by "when ye shall have done all?"
37. What is meant by "say, We are unprofitable servants?"
38. What is the first lesson this phrase teaches us?
39. What, the second?
40. What, the third?
41. What, the fourth?

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### LESSON CIV.

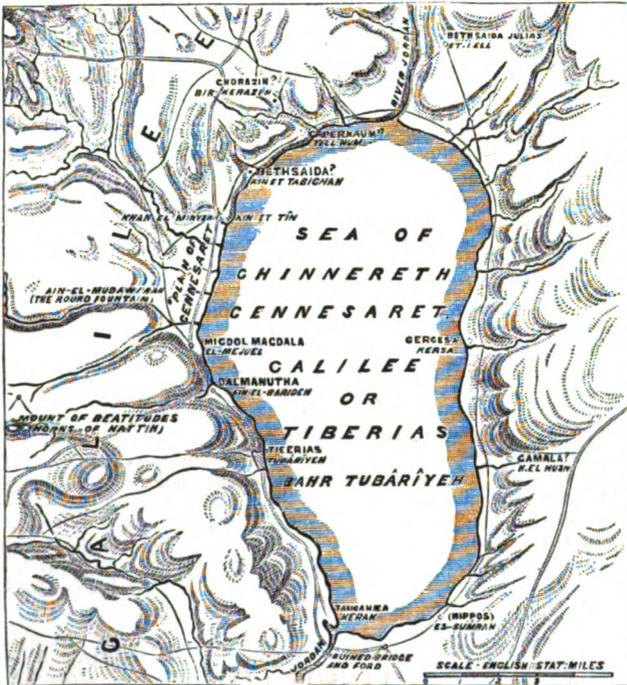
vs. 11-19.

11. ¶ And it came to pass, <sup>5</sup>as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

† Luke ix. 51, 52; John iv. 4.

*It came to pass, i. e., it so happened.* These words refer to His passage through the countries here mentioned. *As he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.* We are, most probably, to understand the Evangelist as saying, that our Lord, with the band of His disciples, on this His last journey to the holy city, from the north of Palestine, passed *between* these two regions, having, that is, one on His right hand, the other on His left, and skirting them both. This explains the mention of Samaria first, which, from its geographical position, is, on any other explanation of the words, almost inexplicable. The Lord travelled due eastward towards Jordan, having Galilee on His left hand, and Samaria, which is therefore first named, on His right; and on reaching the river, He either passed over it at Scythopolis, where we know there was a bridge,

recrossing the river near Jericho, or kept on the western bank till He reached that city, where presently we find Him. Luke xviii. 35.



MAP OF GALILEE.

12. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, <sup>b</sup>which stood afar off:

<sup>b</sup> Lev. xiii. 46.

The *village* referred to is to us unknown. *Ten men that were lepers.* See Notes on ch. v. 12-14. Lepers were not excluded from villages. Neither was the law for their exclusion understood to exclude them even from any towns but such as were already walled in the time of Joshua. To all which were afterwards built they had access. But under all circumstances, they were expected to keep their distance from persons who were clean, as well as those who were unclean from any other cause than leprosy. A leper who transgressed the rules, or intruded into towns or places forbidden to him, was punished with forty stripes save one. Lepers might even enter the synagogues of such towns as we have mentioned; but they remained apart within a railed enclosure, and were the first to enter and the last to depart. Their common misery had drawn these ten lepers together, and had even caused them to forget the fierce national antipathy which reigned between Jew and Samaritan, verse 16. See 2 Kings vii. 8. Under common calamity, persons who are alienated, if not hostile, are often made to forget in judg-

ment what they will not forego in love. *Which stood afar off.* They kept at a distance, because forbidden by law and custom to come near to those who were untainted. See Lev. xiii. 46; Num. v. 2; 2 Kings xv. 5. Sin, of which leprosy was a type, is the great separating, rending, splitting element. It is this that keeps us far from God, and far off from each other.

13. And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

They had heard of Christ's approach, and now ranged themselves on the road side, where they might catch His eye, and, by a display of their misery, move His heart to help them. As He drew nigh, they began their mournful wail in tones loud enough for Him to hear. They cried with one accord—they were all equally necessitous, and there was but one voice among them all, though ten were engaged in crying at the one time. As they were companions in suffering, they were also companions in prayer. Prayer should be earnest, when the disease is great and inveterate. *Jesus, Master.* Neither His honor, nor His name, nor His power, is unknown to them. By the use of the word "Master" they intimate their readiness to acknowledge Him as their teacher, and virtually profess themselves already His disciples. *Have mercy on us.* They were now in earnest to receive the mercy, however at a later period they were slack in giving thanks for it. By praying, they showed that they felt their misery. No man prays for deliverance till he feels danger. The worse a bodily disease is, the more one feels it; but, alas! the worse the disease of sin is, the less one feels it. In spiritual disease, insensibility is evidence of the greatest peril. These lepers expressed their cure by the word *mercy*. Whatever skill there may be in the cure of disease, we need mercy to forgive the sin which is the root of suffering, and it is the end of mercy to heal the disease which is only the expression and product of that sin. The cry, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," will span the chasm that separates us from God, and reach His gracious ear.

14. And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, 'Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

1 Lev. xiii. 2 and xiv. 2; Matt. viii. 4; Luke v. 14.

*When he saw them.* The sight of the wretched men aroused the Saviour's compassion. Had He been mindful of the insults that had been just offered to Him in this part of the country, He would have passed on, without attending to their cry; but, looking at the poor objects, He pitied them, and said, *Go, show yourselves to the priests.* See Notes on Luke v. 12-14. This command was according to the direction, Lev. xiii. 2, &c.; xiv. 2, &c. Our Lord intended that their cure should be received by *faith*: they depended on His goodness and power, and, though they had no promise, yet they went at His command to do that which those only were required to do who were *already* healed. The Roman Catholic inference from this verse, that our Lord intended there should be a Christian priesthood, and that sinners deriving spiritual relief were always meant to go to a priest, is utterly baseless. There is nothing whatever in the verse to warrant it. So long as the ceremonial law lasted, and the Levitical priesthood continued, all its requirements were to be observed. The veil was not yet rent. The true sacrifice was not yet offered. The Old Testament dispensation had not yet passed away. In commanding lepers to go to the priests, our Lord simply declared His respect for the ceremonial law so long as it lasted. *As they went.* They

started before they were healed. The highest reason that can be given for *believing* is, that *God has commanded it*. We are not told how far the lepers had proceeded before their cure was effected; but it was, doubtless, a sufficient distance to test their faith. In the path of unhesitating obedience, Christ will meet and bless us. John vii. 17. *They were cleansed*. Their disease was removed; they felt an unusual and delightful sensation in their bodies, which proved that they were restored to health. As they looked at each other, they mutually beheld, with surprise, the ghastly hue of their flesh, and the unsightly glare of their eyes, change for the bloom and freshness of health. Not one, or a part—all—share the happy deliverance. He who will not believe till he receives what *he* calls a *reason for it* is never likely to get his soul saved. As in the case of the leper, ch. v. 12-14, Jesus first cured the man, and then bade him go and show himself to the priest; but in this instance where He gave this command before the cure was declared, we learn that all men are not brought to the knowledge of the gospel in the same way. God convinces one man in one way, and another man in another way. No man's conversion to God ought to be set up as a type or model of every other man's; each must take mercy from Christ in the shape in which He is pleased to bestow it.

15. And 'one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

J Is. xx viii. 19.

16. And fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

All were healed, but only one was thankful. He was so affected, in view of his cure, that he did not, it would seem, wait to go first to the priests; but, with a heart full of gratitude and joy, he immediately *turned back, and, with a loud voice, glorified God*—made a free and open acknowledgment of the signal mercy which he had received. Though he had kept at a distance from Jesus before, yet, being sensible that he was now cleansed, he came near, that all might have an opportunity of beholding the miracle, *and fell down on his face at his feet*, in the deepest humiliation, giving Him thanks as the immediate Author of his cure; and yet this man *was a Samaritan*, (see Notes on x. 33,) one of that heretical nation from which one would have expected less of any thing good than from the Jews, the professors of the true religion, and members of God's visible Church. If deliverance from a physical evil evoked such thankfulness, what gratitude is due to God from those whose sins He has so often pardoned! This is a thing of which we are by far too little sensible. We preserve the remembrance of a temporal blessing, of the healing of a bodily disease, but too frequently forget the exercise of God's forgiving love toward us. True gratitude is always accompanied with humility, and this humility is so much the greater in proportion to the greatness of the evil, and to the conviction a man has of his unworthiness to be delivered from it. A recovered sinner should be always prostrate in mind and heart at the feet of his Deliverer.

17. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine?

*Were there not ten cleansed?* literally, *Were the ten not cleansed?* Christ's love and solicitude went forth to the nine, who, rejoicing in their cure, were now on their way to the priests, thinking probably more of the blessing of sound health, than of their great Deliverer. *Where are the nine?* How

touching are these words! The Lord keeps an account of the number that He blesses, and He expects to see them at His feet, giving Him thanks. How rare a thing is true gratitude! The lesson before us is humbling, heart-searching, and deeply instructive. The best of us are far too like the nine lepers. We are more ready to pray than to praise, and more disposed to ask God for what we have not than to thank Him for what we have. Murmurings, complaints, and discontent abound on every side of us. Few, indeed, are to be found, who are not continually hiding their mercies under a bushel, and setting their wants and trials on a hill. These things ought not so to be. Let us pray for a daily thankful spirit. It is the spirit which God loves and delights to honor. It must mingle with our prayers. Phil. iv. 6. It is a sad thought that, in all probability, there are not as many as *one in ten* in this Christian land who have *heartily* thanked God for the gift of His Son—who have thanked Him *as* heartily for it, as they would thank a fellow-creature who had saved their lives at the risk of his own; or even as heartily as they would a friend for showing them common kindness and hospitality.

18. There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19. <sup>k</sup>And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. ix. 22; Mark v. 34 and x. 62; Luke vii. 50, and viii. 48, and xviii. 42.

*Give glory to God.* The connection between "returning" to give thanks to Jesus, and "giving glory to God," is peculiarly to be observed. *Save this stranger.* The Greek word used here means literally "one of another nation," and only occurs here. It is a strong expression, and shows clearly that our Lord did not recognize the Samaritans as any thing more than Gentiles. This man belonged to an ignorant nation; to a nation whom the Jews despised, and whose religion the Lord disapproved. This instance shows that among the most ignorant there are some whose hearts God has prepared to love Him. Those who visit the abodes of misery in crowded cities find some of the poor outcasts ready to receive the truth. Missionaries find some in heathen lands who, as soon as they hear the gospel, embrace it. But there are only a *few* of whom this is true. The mass of mankind in all countries care for the gifts, and not at all for the Giver. *Arise, go thy way, &c.* The man was dismissed with a new and better blessing; the first had reached but to the healing of the body, and that he had in common with the unthankful nine, but gratitude for a lower mercy led to his reception of a higher; one which reached not merely to the springs of bodily health, but to the very fountains of his spiritual being. These also are healed, that which the others missed, to which their bodily feeling should have led them up, he obtained. He had shown himself to his great High Priest, and from Him received the blessed assurance—*thy faith hath made thee whole.* Jesus commends the faith of the man, to the end that man may praise the grace of God, which is the principle from which it proceeds, and frequently beg this principle from Him. It is faith which gives birth to the life of grace in sinners: it is faith likewise which increases and perfects it in the righteous.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Explain "it came to pass."
2. What is said of "as he went to Jerusalem?"
3. What village is referred to?
4. What is said of lepers?

5. Why did these lepers stand afar off?
6. What is said of sin?
7. What did these lepers do?
8. What is said of "Jesus, Master?"
9. What, of "have mercy on us?"
10. What did Christ say to them?
11. What was this command according to?
12. What did our Lord intend?
13. What is said of the Roman Catholic inference from verse 14?
14. When did these lepers start?
15. What is the highest reason for believing?
16. Explain "they were cleansed."
17. What is said of conversion?
18. What did one of these lepers do?
19. How did he glorify God?
20. Was this man a Samaritan?
21. What is said of God's forgiving love?
22. What is said of true gratitude?
23. What did Jesus say?
24. Explain "where are the nine?"
25. What is said of praying and praising?
26. What is said of a thankful spirit?
27. What is said about "give glory to God?"
28. Explain "save this stranger."
29. Explain "Arise, go thy way," &c.
30. Did Jesus commend the faith of the thankful leper?
31. Why did He commend it?

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LESSON CV.

vs. 20-27.

20. ¶ And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh \*not with observation;

\* Or, with outward show.

21. 'Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, =the kingdom of God is \*within you.

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 23.

= Rom. xiv. 17.

\* Or, among you, John I. 26.

The thread of discourse is here resumed from ver. 10. The question of the Pharisees, judged by the partially rebuking and partially warning answer given by our Lord, seems to have been asked in derision. It is as if they said: "Where is the kingdom you so often speak of? What likelihood is there of one so poor and lowly as you setting up a kingdom? How long are we to wait before this kingdom of yours shall appear?" Doubtless, also, their inquiry was tinged with the notion which the generality of the Jews, and particularly the Pharisees entertained, that the Messiah would be a temporal prince, and establish His kingdom with great pomp and splendor.

*He answered them and said.* It was common with our Lord, when the Pharisees asked Him questions, to disappoint them by His replies. They made inquiries in the hope of entangling Him, but they themselves were con-

founded by the answers they received. In the present instance He revealed a more important truth than that about which He had been interrogated. *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.* By this, some understand, "not with that royal splendor or worldly grandeur which shall render it conspicuous in the eyes of the world;" others regard the expression as meaning, "it cometh not in such a way that men shall be able to observe it, but quietly, noiselessly, unnoticed." Probably both views are correct. *Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there!* The truth intended to be presented is here brought out more fully: the coming and development of the kingdom are not to be of such a character as to be recognized by external tokens, so that *they*, i. e., such as by their spiritual discernment are cognizant of its internal approach and presence, shall trumpet forth the event with a *Lo here! or, Lo there!* for, *behold, the kingdom of God is within you.* According to some, what our Lord here asserts is, that His kingdom is not *external*, but *internal*; that is, it is not a thing of *observation* and localities, but of consciousness, and *within*. It is not an external and political kingdom, but an internal, spiritual one, erected in the hearts of men, consisting in the subjection of their will to the will of God, and in the conformity of their minds to His laws. Others hold that "within" means "among you," and that the Saviour intended to say, "My kingdom has already begun in the midst of your nation, my disciples have already joined it and become its first subjects; while you are waiting, my spiritual kingdom has already been set up." This view they support on the following grounds: 1, that in this way the antithesis between the external coming and the being already actually present is kept more sharply defined; 2, that the kingdom of God had not been truly set up in the hearts of these Pharisees; 3, that in John i. 26, xii. 35, Luke vii. 16, xi. 20, the same thought which is expressed in our translation is expressed in another way. The kingdom of our Lord, which began in a manger at Bethlehem, without the knowledge of the great, the rich and the wise, and was afterwards gradually and silently developed, corresponded with the description given of it in these verses. While many were looking on earth and in the heavens for signs of its approach, it commenced and advanced, and thousands were already rejoicing in its blessings. Those run the risk of never finding the kingdom of God, who do not live in a constant expectation of it, and in a continual disposition to receive it. It is visible to none but those who have invisible eyes, and to whom invisible things are all in all.

22. 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.

• Matt. ix. 16; John xvii. 12.

Having disposed of the Pharisees by the answer He gave them, our Lord here turns away from them, and addresses His own disciples. As it was His constant custom to support and comfort the minds of His disciples, we cannot suppose that He intimates here that they should be left destitute of those blessings necessary for their support in a day of trial. His object was to prepare them for His approaching departure. He foresaw that under the pressure of manifold tribulations in their efforts to establish His kingdom, they would long even for the temporary revelation of the glorified One; but, to prevent their disappointment, He told them that when He left the world, it would be His final departure until the last day, when He should be "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." Acts iii. 21; 2 Thess. i. 7-10. How were these words of Jesus fulfilled! How earnestly John, when banished to the isle of Patmos, desired to see the glorious day of the Son of man! Almost the last words he wrote were these: "Come, Lord Jesus." And do not all

the disciples of the Lord long to see His day of glory? This is one of the marks by which they are distinguished—they “love His appearing.” 1 Tim. iv. 8. They pray for it constantly in the words, “Thy kingdom come.”

23. °And they shall say to you, See here ; or, see there : go not after *them*, nor follow *them*.

° Matt. xxiv. 23; Mark xiii. 21; Luke xxi. 8.

Our Lord now proceeds to give such warning as should protect His followers from being deluded by false Christs which should appear. The local Messiahs who would start up in different places, or might be rumored to have started up, would prove deceivers. This warning was the more important, inasmuch as the notion that the coming of Christ would be at the destruction of Jerusalem, was liable to lead them to credit false deliverers, by which the Jews were deluded in immense numbers to their own destruction. This warning is unquestionably meant to apply to the times immediately preceding the second advent. False Christs, false prophets, and pretenders to Divine commission, may be expected in the latter days, and believers must be on their guard against them. There are false churches as well as false Christs, and the true spouse is known by the same marks with the true Bridegroom.

24. °For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven ; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

p Matt. xxiv. 27.

The coming of false Christs would be on earth, while the next coming of Jesus would be in the sky, like the lightnings flashing along the firmament. It is here distinctly declared that His second advent, when it does take place, will be so sudden, so clearly marked, and so unmistakable, that true believers shall at once recognize it as the coming of their King. Christians are thus assured that when the Saviour comes, they shall see Him, wherever they may be, or whatever they may be doing. Only a few disciples saw Him ascend in the clouds from the Mount of Olives : but *every eye* shall behold Him when He comes again. How exceedingly great will be the brightness of that day ! When the Lord Jesus appeared to the persecuting Saul, the light was beyond the brightness of the sun at noonday, and its dazzling splendor blinded the eyes of the astonished man. Acts xxvi. 13. But when He comes again, the light will spread over the whole world, saints will be strengthened to gaze upon the scene, and will be changed into the image of their Lord ; while impenitent sinners will find the day of *brightness* a day of *darkness* to them. Amos v. 18-20. The suddenness of Christ's second appearing is a solemn thought. It ought to make us study a continual preparedness of mind. Our heart's desire and endeavor should be to be always ready to meet the Lord. Rev. xvi. 15.

25. °But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

q Mark viii. 31, and ix. 31, and x. 33; Luke ix. 22.

The reference is here to the moral necessity arising from the work of redemption which our Lord had taken upon Himself, and which required that He should suffer and die for the sins of the world. (See Matt. xvi. 21; Mark viii. 31, ix. 31, x. 33.) Jesus asserts the great truth which His disciples and all the Jews were so exceedingly slow to see—that He must first suffer and afterwards reign. *Of this generation*. How absurd and contradictory to a

whole mass of texts the idea that our Lord or His disciples taught that His second coming was in their generation. Some think the word translated "generation" means this *nation* or people of the Jews, and not merely the men who were living when our Lord spoke. Suffering and the cross of Christ are the only means chosen by God to form His Church, and to fit and to prepare her to appear with Christ at the great day. None of His followers are excused from walking in this way: they must suffer, and be hated of the world, before they can partake of His glory.

26. 'And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

r Gen. vii.; Matt. xxiv. 37.

27. They 'did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

\* Deut. vi. 10, 12, and viii. 12, 14; 1 Sam. xxv. 36, 38; Job xxi. 9, 13. Is. xxi. 4, and xxii. 12, 14, chap. xii. 19, 20, and xv. 19, 23; 1 Thess. v. 1, 3.

*In the days of Noah.* Comp. Matt. xxiv. 37-39. Although the coming of our Lord will be the perfect redemption of His disciples out of all tribulations, ver. 22, it is here represented especially as a judgment upon the godless and unbelieving world, and this judgment is typified in the fate of the contemporaries of Noah. *As in the days of Noah.* The same illustration is used in 2 Pet. iii. 5, 6, and the parallelism shows that it is the judgment day alone that is the present subject. *So shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.* The days preceding His second advent, just as the days of Noah were the days preceding the flood. See Matt. xxiv. 37. It should be noted that the universality of the flood is asserted in both passages, and thus valuable collateral evidence is furnished of the totality of that catastrophe, as recorded in Genesis. In the days of Noah, the old world being entirely unaffected with the admonitions he gave them, while building the ark, and with the threatenings which he then denounced, went on as usual, following their ordinary occupations, and pursuing their pleasures, both lawful and unlawful, in great security, even until the point of time when Noah took possession of the earth. The consequence was, that, ere they were aware, the flood came and destroyed all except those who were in the ark. It is thus plainly taught that the coming of Jesus will be unlooked for by the mass of mankind. They will be engaged in the business and pleasures of the world, little expecting, little thinking of the universal ruin of the ungodly, till it come upon them, notwithstanding the express predictions and declarations of Christ and His Apostles. The hour of death and that of judgment are uncertain. This should lead us to live in constant preparation for these unspeakably solemn events. We should shun the sottishness and strange stupidity of worldly men, who are entirely taken up with this present life, and regard not in the least the threatenings of Divine wrath. It is not enough to do as others, and buy, and sell, and plant, and build, and eat, and drink, and marry, as if we were born for nothing else. Exclusive attention to these things may ruin us as thoroughly as open sin. We must come out from the world and be separate. We must set our affections on things above, not on things that are on the earth.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What does Christ do in ver. 20?
2. What is said of the question of the Pharisees?
3. What was common with our Lord?

4. What is said of "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation?"
5. What are we to understand by, "neither shall they say," &c.?
6. What do some understand by "the kingdom of God is within you?"
7. What do others understand?
8. How do they support this view?
9. What did Christ say to His disciples?
10. What was His object in thus speaking to them?
11. What is the meaning of His address?
12. How were these words of Jesus fulfilled?
13. What did our Lord next proceed to give?
14. Why was this warning the more important?
15. To what times is this warning meant to apply?
16. What is said of the coming of false Christs?
17. What, of the coming of Jesus?
18. What is distinctly declared of Christ's second advent?
19. What is said of the suddenness of this advent?
20. To what is the reference in ver. 25?
21. Explain the words "of this generation."
22. What is said of suffering and the cross of Christ?
23. How is the coming of our Lord represented?
24. Where is the same illustration used?
25. What is said of the flood?
26. What is said of the days of Noah?
27. Will the coming of Jesus be unlooked for?
28. What is said of the hour of death and that of judgment?
29. What effect should this uncertainty have on us?
30. Is it enough to do as others?

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LESSON CVI.

vs. 28-37.

28. 'Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

† Gen. xix.

29. But <sup>†</sup>the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all.

‡ Gen. xix. 16, 24.

30. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man <sup>‡</sup>is revealed.

‡ 2 Thess. i. 7.

It will be observed that the history of Lot and the destruction of Sodom, and of Lot's wife, are here referred to as real, true historical facts. This second example of the coming desolation Luke alone relates. See Jude v. 7. *Eat . . . drank . . . bought . . . sold . . . planted . . . builded*—all these describe not any special course of sinfulness, but a regular train of careless daily life, expecting no sudden advent of destruction; they also show that the people were active and enterprising, as well as earthly-minded and corrupt. *It rained.* Instead of *it* rained, Gen. xix. 24 justifies the insertion of

the pronoun *He*, designating Jehovah. *Fire and brimstone* denote sulphureous flames. There is here a terrible likeness of a *flaming fire*, described in 2 Thess. i. 8, as attending the *second coming* of the Son of man. The suddenness of the doom of Sodom is seen from the narrative in Gen. xix. 1-29. *Even thus, &c.* These are words of faith, which assure us that the wrath of God shall pour down upon sinners like a rain, and swallow them up like a deluge, and that multitudes shall fail to escape His justice. A false notion which men frame to themselves of a mercy without rule or means, encourages the greatest part of the world in the neglect of their salvation. It becomes us to escape for our lives like Lot. We must flee to the ark like Noah. This alone is safety. Then, and then only, we shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, and avoid destruction when the Son of man is revealed. Zeph. ii. 3.

31. In that day, he <sup>which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away:</sup> and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

x Matt. xxiv. 17; Mark xiii. 15.

*He which shall be upon the house-top, &c.* The Saviour gives the counsel to immediate flight, with the abandonment, in the case of need, of all that is possessed on earth. It is well known that the houses of the Jews, as well as those of the ancient Greeks and Romans, were flat on the top, for them to walk upon, and had usually stairs on the outside by which they might ascend and descend without coming into the house. In the walled cities, these flat-roofed houses usually formed continued terraces from one end of the city to the other, which terraces terminated at the gates. The counsel here given is, that those who were on the house-tops should not come down, neither should those who were in the field return to take with them their valuable goods, which they might feel greatly disinclined to leave behind. In either case, there must be an urgent flight. If this is to be regarded, as it may be, as having reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, through Vespasian and Titus, we are also to see its deeper and more direct significance, as well as that of the verses which immediately follow, in its application to the time when the Lord Jesus, by the trumpet of the archangel, shall suddenly summon the world to judgment—the time when believers must give up all thought of worldly goods, beware of lingering and looking back to the world. Nothing but singleness of eye, wholeness of heart, and unworldliness of spirit will be able to abide the fire of that day.

32. Remember Lot's wife.

y Gen. xix. 26.

The manner in which our Lord introduces this short but emphatical warning is suited to excite our deepest attention. The incident referred to is recorded in Gen. xix. 26: "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." This judgment followed her disobedience. The more common opinion of interpreters is, that she was suddenly petrified, and changed into a statue of rock salt, which either by its own nature or by miraculous power was made capable of continuing undissolved by the action of the elements. In conformity with this is the testimony of Josephus, who says expressly that Lot's wife "was changed into a pillar of salt, for I have seen it, and it remains to this day." Clement, of Rome, also says, that it was standing there to his time, which was about the time of Josephus; and Irenæus says that it was there a century still later. In view of the swift destruction about to come upon the Jews, and in order to warn still farther His followers against any vacillation of purpose in making their

flight, (see Matt. xxiv. 16,) and the folly and danger of looking back, with longing desire to return to a city doomed of God to be overthrown for its sins, which surpassed even those of Sodom, our Lord adduces the example of Lot's wife. Ecclesiastical history informs us that, though Jerusalem was "compassed with armies," no Christians perished in its siege. By a marvellous dispensation of Providence, these armies, after having prosecuted the siege several days, and having captured and burned a considerable portion of the city, suddenly broke up the siege and departed. Josephus says: (War, ii. ; xix. 7,) "without having received any disgrace, he (Cestius, the Roman general) retired from the city without any reason in the world." This gave the Christians, who were watching for it, the opportunity to escape. Under the warning of our Lord, they fled to a city called Pella, beyond the Jordan, the road to which ran over a mountainous region along which armies could not follow them, and thus they survived to hand the gospel to future times.

The example of Lot's wife is replete with solemn instruction. Though she was the wife of a "righteous man," and connected through him with Abraham, the father of the faithful, and though she fled with her husband from Sodom in the day when he escaped for his life by God's command, yet she had left her heart behind her. She wilfully disobeyed the strict injunction which the angel had laid upon her, looked back towards Sodom, and probably turned back, and hence became a monument of the Divine displeasure, and of her own folly and sin. Her case is a most impressive warning against unbelief, disobedience, worldly-mindedness, contempt of God's threatenings, and lingering desires for wicked company. It is possible to be *almost* saved—yet *lost*. We must, even with joy, relinquish our friends and relations, our wealth and temporal advantages, and dismiss them from our memory, whenever they become obstacles to our salvation. We love them with a criminal fondness when we leave them with grief and anxiety. Many such separations as Lot then endured will take place when Christ comes again.

33. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

\* Matt. x. 39 and xvi. 25; Mark viii. 35; Luke ix. 24; John xii. 25.

These or similar words were spoken on other occasions. See Matt. x. 39 and xvi. 25; Mark viii. 35; Luke ix. 24; John xii. 25. In all these instances the meaning is substantially the same. There is no doubt that this saying, in a lower or subordinate sense, was illustrated on the one hand in many a hair-breadth escape, and on the other, in many an unexpected and sudden death, where the chances, combined with wise and vigorous action, seemed to promise certain safety. But this is by no means the main idea of the passage. The word translated "life" signifies both life and the soul. The person who *seeks to save his life* is the person who, from a fear of losing the wealth, or honors, or pleasures of this life, or life itself—from a fear of exposing himself to poverty, contempt, suffering and death—neglects duty, or commits sin—refuses to become a follower of Christ, or having become one, abandons his profession, or acts a part unworthy of it. That person *shall lose his life* in a far higher sense than he has retained it—he shall lose his soul. He shall not cease to exist, but his everlasting existence shall be but a capacity of feeling everlasting loss—of enduring everlasting misery. He who *shall lose his life* is he who acts as if he considered wealth, honor, pleasure, life itself, all things, of comparatively no value, brought into competition with the claims of truth and duty—who readily sacrifices the former to the latter—who, when these things claim to be regarded above those, rejects the claim, and readily parts with all rather than disobey God or deny

Christ. That person *shall preserve his life, to eternal life*; when he seems to be throwing away his life, he is securing it. He shall live eternally, and his eternal life shall be life indeed—the highest measure of the highest kind of life of which man is capable. One hour's life in that world to which death conveys him who has laid down his life in the cause of Christ, is worth millions of ages in this world, so polluted with sin, so darkened with sorrow. At the Saviour's coming, it will be found that it was not enough for any one to have made the first step towards escaping the future destruction, and then to have vacillated, and finally returned to the beggarly elements of the world.

34. \*I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left.

\* Matt. xxiv. 40, 41; 1 Thess. iv. 17.

35. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left.



WOMEN GRINDING AT A MILL.

36. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

*Two women shall be grinding, &c.* Corn was then ground, as it still is, in the East, by a hand-mill, and generally by women. The mill consisted of one stone turned upon another by a handle, a woman sitting on each side of it, one of them moving the stone, the other supplying the grain. See Exod. xi. 5; also Isa. xlvi. 2. The Saviour in these verses strengthens His admonition still more by allusion to the definitive terrible *division*, which will coincide with the great *decision*. At His coming, that will be torn asunder which outwardly, as well as inwardly, appeared to be as closely as possible joined together. The suddenness of separation at the judgment-day is here most strikingly described. *Two*—one is a Christian, the other is a sinner. The holy angels come and snatch one, to bear him to the right hand of Christ. The other is left, to be borne by evil angels to his doom at the left hand. Sad, indeed, will be the separations which will then take place. Those who were most tenderly united and attached to each other,

wives and husbands, parents and children, brothers and sisters, will part to meet no more. The visible Church will no longer be a mixed body. The wheat and the tares shall no longer grow side by side. "Converted or unconverted," will be the only subject of inquiry. It will matter nothing that people have worked together, and slept together, and lived together for many years. They will be dealt with at that day according to their religion. Those members of the family who have loved Christ will be taken up to heaven, and those who have loved the world will be cast down to hell. How unspeakably important is it for us to lay to heart these things!

37. And they answered and said unto him, "Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

<sup>b</sup> Job xxxix. 30; Matt. xxiv. 28.

*Where, Lord?* Not an expression of terror, but a definite inquiry after the *locality* in which all the things just mentioned should take place. *Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.* This reply of our Lord was somewhat enigmatical. He gave them neither an evasive nor an entirely definite answer, but only recited a proverb. This proverb, as used by Him, has received a great variety of interpretations, of which the following are the most important: 1. As eagles find out, and gather round a carcass, see Matt. xxiv. 28, so, wherever wicked men are, the judgments of God will pursue them. 2. The Roman armies (which had eagles upon their standards) shall gather for the destruction of the guilty city of Jerusalem, whose moral condition is represented by a *carcass*, as ravenous birds collect upon their prey. 3. Wherever Christ's professing Church, which is "His body," is, there the angels shall gather together at the last day, (Matt. xiii. 49,) and make the separation between the wicked and the just, which, as is said in the three immediately preceding verses, shall take place at our Lord's appearing. As already suggested, this saying of our Lord is dark and mysterious, and probably was intentionally made so by Him to keep the disciples ignorant of His full meaning, inasmuch as they were not at the time able to bear it. It belongs to the "things hard to be understood," which shall only be fully explained at His second coming. That great event, which, though as to its certainty has been placed beyond all doubt, yet as to the time of its occurrence, and the circumstances that are to accompany it, has been revealed so dimly, will explain many things which we cannot now fully comprehend. It is enough for us to know that death will be to us the end of the world. Let us not be too curious to pry into the "secret things" which "belong unto the Lord." Far better is it for us to prepare for that blessed period when Jesus shall come "to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe." God is willing and waiting to grant us such preparation. The way is open, and the invitation is free. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What are said to be referred to as true historical facts?
2. Who alone relates this second example?
3. What do "eat," "drank," &c., describe?
4. What is said of "it"?
5. What do "fire and brimstone" denote?
6. What is there here a terrible likeness of?
7. Of what do these words assure us?
8. What is said of a false notion men frame to themselves?

- 9 How alone can we find safety?
- 10 Explain "he which shall be on the house-top," &c.
11. What is said of ancient houses?
12. What was the counsel here given?
13. To what has this counsel reference?
14. What is said of ver. 32?
15. Where is the incident, here referred to, recorded?
16. What is the common opinion of interpreters in relation to the judgment on Lot's wife?
17. What is the testimony of Josephus?
18. What of Clement of Rome?
19. Why was the example of Lot's wife adduced?
20. Of what does ecclesiastical history inform us?
21. How is the example of Lot's wife replete with instruction?
22. Against what is her case a warning?
23. What is said of verse 33?
24. Who is the person that seeks to save his life?
25. How shall he lose it?
26. Who is he that "shall lose his life?"
27. How shall he preserve it?
28. What is said of "two women shall be grinding," &c.?
29. What does Christ do in verses 34-36?
30. What will take place at His coming?
31. Explain "Where, Lord?"
32. Explain "Wheresoever the body is," &c.
33. State the various interpretations of this proverb.
34. Is this saying of our Lord mysterious? Why?

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### LESSON CVII.

vs. 1-8.

THIS parable is closely connected with the preceding chapter, in which there is a reference to the troubles and persecutions which should precede the coming of the Son of man. In view of these tribulations, prayer, patience, and perseverance, would be greatly needed, and hence these duties are here inculcated with the cheering assurance of the success with which they would be crowned.

1. And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought *\*always to pray, and not to faint;*

\* Luke xi. 5 and xxi. 36; Rom. xii. 12; Eph. vi. 18; Col. iv. 2; 1 Thess. v. 17.

*To this end, that men ought always to pray.* This parable is signalized by the distinctness with which its object is announced at the commencement. As an old divine has said, "the key hangs at the door." We are not to understand that a man should be incessantly performing the act of prayer. The life of Jesus was a prayer, yet there were seasons in which He especially applied Himself to prayer with His heavenly Father. Men ought to pray

constantly at stated times; to be habitually in that spirit of humble dependence, desire, and expectation, which give life to prayer; to be frequently offering ejaculatory petitions, and to be always ready for prayer, secret, social, or public, when opportunity is afforded.

*And not to faint*, i. e., not to flag or be remiss. Jesus, knowing how easily we become discouraged when our petitions are not immediately granted, and that the preservation of the higher life of prayer involves a contest, inasmuch as it has constantly to labor with the oppression of earthly things, here earnestly warns us against yielding to such discouragement and growing tired of such internal warfare. It is far more easy to begin a habit of prayer than it is to keep it up. When we are inclined to become weary, and to give way to the suggestion of Satan, that "it is of no use," that is the time when this parable ought to be carefully remembered.

2. Saying, There was \*in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man :

\* Gr., *In a certain city.*

According to Deut. xvi. 18, Israel must have in all the gates of the city judges, to administer justice, without respect to persons. In the days of our Lord, also, such municipal tribunals existed. Matt. v. 21, 22. What is here said about the *judge*, it will be observed, is said, irrespective of the special case about to be detailed in the parable. It is the description of what this man was, always and under every circumstance, thoroughly, radically, lawless and unjust. *Which feared not God*: was altogether destitute of awe of God, and of that reverence which belongs to Him, as our infinite superior. As practically atheistical, he had no inducement from religion to do justice. See Exod. xxiii. 6-9; Lev. xix. 15; Deut. i. 16, 17; 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7. *Neither regarded man*. Occupying a position of power, in which men could not injure him, he did not feel any concern as to what they said or thought of him, and hence, in all his decisions, he was influenced merely by passion or interest. It is evidence of a sad decline in the morality of any community, when unprincipled and corrupt men occupy the sacred office of a judge. The difficulty which some have found in the fact that such a man as this judge should stand in the position of a type and emblem of God, vanishes at once when we rightly comprehend the design of the parable. The object of the Saviour is not *comparison* but *contrast*. In order to bring out that aspect of God's character which He wished to present, there must be a dark background on which it could be exhibited. As a pure judgment seat would not have supplied the required example, it was *necessary* for Him to go to a corrupt tribunal in order to find a suitable case.

3. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

*A widow*. The helpless and friendless condition of a widow in Eastern countries and Bible times, should be carefully remembered. See Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. x. 18; xxiv. 17; xxvii. 19; Job xix. 13; 1 Kings xvii. 9, 12; Mal. iii. 5. *In that city*. The judge had doubtless seen this poor widow very frequently. She was no stranger to him. He could more easily put aside her claims than those of one who had a stranger's acknowledged right to receive a redress of wrongs. *And she came unto him*. This widow, having no friends to assist her, could neither defend herself from injuries nor obtain satisfaction for them when committed; hence, in an instance where she was greatly oppressed, she found herself obliged to petition the judge for redress. *Avenge me of mine adversary*, or, rather, as the original means, *do me justice on mine adversary*. The word properly signifies to judge a

cause and defend the injured, judicially, from the injurious person. The English word *avenge*, therefore, does not exactly convey the sense here intended, although, in the application of the parable, ver. 7, it answers better than any other term. If the woman had come to get *revenge*, we may well suppose our blessed Lord would never have permitted her to have the honor of a place in the sacred records. She desired to have *justice*, and that only. She felt deeply her oppressed situation, and wished the judge to make an end of her tedious suit, and to deliver her forever from the *adversary* who was wickedly and obstinately oppressing and persecuting her. The fact that the suppliant here is a widow conveys the idea of perfect helplessness, and gives a still more frightful idea of the hard-heartedness of the judge, which continued unmoved by the circumstance of a desolate woman pleading, not for revenge, but only for her just and righteous claims against the wrongs of her oppressor.

4. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5. <sup>b</sup> Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xi. 8.

*He would not for a while*, literally, *for a time*. He was so addicted to his pleasures, and of so indolent a disposition, that he would not put himself to the trouble of even examining her cause, notwithstanding that the grievous injustice which had been done to her pleaded powerfully in her behalf. Though the strength of the parable lies in the unlikeness between the righteous Judge of the world and this ungodly earthly judge, it may not be denied, as is here, indeed, taught, that God often *seems to man* to be acting as this unjust judge, to be turning a deaf ear to the prayer of His people. Under this *apparent* indifference, Christians are tempted to say, with the storm-tost disciples, "Carest thou not that we perish?" The parable, however, is intended, as we shall presently see, to meet this very difficulty and temptation, to which believers, suffering long under sore earthly trials, are exposed. *But afterward he said within himself*, or thought within himself. How many actions which appear *good* have neither the *love of God*, nor that of our *neighbor*, but only *self-love* of the basest kind, for their principle and motive! *Though I fear not God*, &c. He is so shameless, as not to be ashamed of his ungodly state; rather, indeed, takes pleasure in proclaiming it. His language shows his belief in the existence of God, but he makes the most open and shameless avowal of his utter contempt of the Divine authority. He negatively confesses what did not move him to fulfil the prayer of the widow: it was neither the fear of God, nor a sense of duty. He is anxious to clear himself of the possible *weakness* of acting in the widow's case from principles of justice and truth. This confession gives great emphasis to the point here to be illustrated: the force of *importunity*, which could prevail on *such* a judge to do a right action. *Yet because this widow troubleth me*. Here, in a special manner, the unrighteous character of the judge displays itself in the very act of granting the solicited relief. He has taken no pains to discover whether the woman's cause is right or not, yet he determines to yield to her request; and his sole reason for doing so is, the fear of being constantly annoyed by her importunity. *I will avenge her*. I will do her justice. He assumes that she is the injured party, without inquiring whether she really needed to be defended from another, or was herself only anxious to inflict an injury. *Lest by her continual coming*, literally, *coming to the end*, i. e., forever. *She weary me*. This exaggerated language is like the common expression, "tire me to death." The word rendered *weary* properly signifies *to beat on the face*, and particularly under the

eye; and hence, to beat in general, as 1 Cor. ix. 27. In this passage, it has a metaphorical meaning, and signifies *to give great pain*, such as arises from severe beating. The sense of the clause, therefore, is, that the uneasy feelings which this widow raised in the judge's breast, by the frequent and earnest presentation of her case, determined him, for his own comfort's sake, to dispose of it.

### 6. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

Here the application made by our Lord begins. *Unjust judge.* Properly, godless, reckless, as in Luke xvi. 8. Our Lord intimates that we should reason thus with ourselves: "If a person of such an infamous character as this judge was, could yield to the pressing and continual solicitations of a poor widow, for whom he felt nothing but contempt, how much more ready must God be, who is infinitely good and merciful, and who loves His creatures in the tenderest manner, to give His utmost salvation to all who diligently seek it."

### 7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

c Rev. vi. 10.

How these words—*his own elect*—touch in the tenderest manner the great and eternal contrast between this unjust judge and God! The latter yields to the prayer of the suppliants, first, because it is *right* to do so, and then He does it with his whole heart; it is His joy and delight to do so. The suppliants are His own beloved people, whether regarded as the Church as a body, or as individual Christians—they are His chosen ones, very precious in His sight—so precious, indeed, that it is said of them, "he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." And so His gift comes to them distinguished by that "holiness which becometh God's house forever," as well as of "a love which passeth knowledge." The very contrasts which the parable presents only tend to confirm the blessed assurance it conveys to God's people, that He will without fail grant their requests. *Shall not God*, must be to the suppliant as clear and certain, as the sun shines at noon-day. *Avenge his own elect*, i. e., maintain the right of those whom He has chosen to salvation; see that redress is obtained for them. *Which cry day and night unto him.* Thus they manifest their faith in God's power and love. Observe the fulness and force of the expression—*cry*, i. e., fervently beseech—*day and night*, i. e., continually, for these two periods, in their alternate revolutions, make up the entire term of our earthly pilgrimage. *Though he bear long with them?* The Greek word translated *bear long* is generally rendered "have patience," "is long-suffering." The word is commonly used for delaying to punish a bad man. Here it has another sense, and signifies the delaying to help a good man. So Peter seems to use the expression, "long-suffering," when he says, "account that the long-suffering of God is salvation," that is, that though He delays long to save you, yet He will save you at the last. 2 Pet. iii. 15. To the inquiry, Why does God delay at all to answer the prayers of His people? it may be replied, that this is done with wisdom and love combined. It would be, so to speak, easier for a father who is at once rich and benevolent, to comply immediately and fully with all his child demands, but it requires and exercises a deeper, stronger love to leave the child crying and knocking for a time in vain, that the bounty given at the proper time may in the end be a greater boon.

8. I tell you 'that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?'

<sup>4</sup> Heb. x. 37; 2 Pet. iii. 8, 9.

*I tell you, &c.* This is the last ground of confidence and continued prayer—the true and faithful promise of Divine help. God will interpose *speedily*, i. e., suddenly, unexpectedly, before His people, with their weak faith, and under their formidable trials, looked for it. *Speedily*. What is *distant* to man's eye is *near* to the vision of Him who measures by the chronology of His own eternity. *Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh*. Every special interposition of the Lord in behalf of His own is a coming of Him, and He comes most unexpectedly when prayer and faith are well nigh extinguished. It is, however, undoubtedly, the last coming of the Son of man to which reference is here made. The Saviour transports Himself in spirit to the time of His second manifestation, which shall be preceded by the last conflict, and the deepest tribulation of His Church, and which His disciples on earth are to endure in faith, prayer, patient waiting. *Shall he find faith on the earth?* That is, when the Son of man shall at length come—arise to take vengeance—to bring in the year of His redeemed, will He find a faith among His people at all commensurate to the truth, love, and fulness of what He has promised on His side? Or, like the disciples in the garden, will there be "sleeping for sorrow," or, the "love of many waxing cold," by reason of abounding iniquity? Solemn questions, indeed. Enough to make each child of God tremble for himself. Enough to make any one, as he desires to be saved, take good heed to the weighty lesson taught in the parable: to *pray always*, not merely in the sunshine of peace and quiet, and when there is little comparatively to try faith, but equally when the storm and the tempest are abroad, and nothing but a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul can prevent it from drifting away to everlasting ruin. There is doubtless an implied lesson here, that persevering prayer is the secret of keeping up faith.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of this parable?
2. How is it signalized?
3. What is meant by "men ought always to pray?"
4. What is said of "not to faint?"
5. What is said of judges?
6. What is said about the judge?
7. What was his character?
8. What is evidence of a decline of morality in any community?
9. How does such a judge stand as a type of God?
10. What is said of "a widow?"
11. What did this widow do?
12. What did she ask of the judge?
13. What is meant by "avenge me," &c.?
14. What does the fact that the suppliant was a widow do?
15. Explain "he would not for a while."
16. What is said of God *seeming* to act as this unjust judge?
17. Explain "he said within himself."
18. Explain "though I fear not God," &c.
19. To what does this confession give great emphasis?
20. What is said of "yet because this widow," &c.?
21. Explain "I will avenge her."
22. Explain "lest by her continual coming," &c.
23. How does Jesus intimate we should reason with ourselves?
24. What is said of the words "His own elect?"

25. Who are here designated ?
26. Explain "shall not God?"
27. Explain "avenge His own elect."
28. Explain "which cry day and night unto Him."
29. What is said of "though he bear long with them?"
30. Why does God delay at all to answer the prayers of His people ?
31. What is said of "I tell you?"
32. What is meant by "speedily?"
33. What is said of "nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh," &c. ?
34. Explain "shall He find faith on the earth?"

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### LESSON CVIII.

vs. 9-14.

9. And he spake this parable unto certain \*which trusted in themselves \*that they were righteous, and despised others:

\* Luke x. 29 ; xvi. 15.

\* Or, as being righteous.

This parable, like the last, treats of prayer. Each presents a different aspect of the same subject. *That* recommends generally the duty of prayer, *this* gives us to understand the property of a right prayer. *That* teaches that prayer must be earnest and persevering, *this* that it must also be humble. *That* dissuades from indolence, *this* from confidence in ourselves. The two extremes are remarkable. Indolence and improper confidence are opposed in verses 1, 9, as proper confidence and indolence are, also, in 2 Cor. iii. 4 ; iv. 1 ; Eph. iii. 12, 13.

*Unto certain*—the multitude, among whom were doubtless persons belonging to both the classes here represented. It is not improbable that even among His own followers, Jesus detected the seeds of self-righteousness, which needed to be cast out of their hearts. *Who trusted in themselves that they were righteous*—who had confidence in themselves—the false ground of their confidence standing in the conviction, that they were righteous, in possession of the Divine favor ; a vain imagination, a mere conceit. They who have the least righteousness always trust the most in such as they have, as if they were inwardly conscious that they had very little. *And despised others, disdained, made nothing of others, treated them with sovereign contempt*, and, no doubt, it was used as designating one prominent feature in the character delineated. Many, on different grounds, may have confidence that they are righteous persons, and something in themselves may be either the *support* or the *evidence* of that confidence, but when any look with disdain on other men, it is manifest that their self-confidence is that of the character here described. *Others*, "the rest," "all others, who did not comply with their rules." The Pharisees were especially intended, who relied on exemption from gross immoralities, attendance on the externals of religion, and exact observance of the traditions of the elders.

10. Two men went up into the temple to pray ; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

*Two men.* These two persons are introduced into the parable as representing two distinct classes of mankind in general. The Pharisee represents

the moral, the respectable, the externally correct. The publican represents the wicked, the profligate, and the utterly irreligious. Our Lord does not present the truth He wished to communicate, in an abstract form, but He paints a true picture. He teaches, not obliquely, by a figure, but directly, by a fact. *Went up into the temple to pray.* It was usual with pious people to do this at that time, when the temple was not only the place, but the medium of worship, God having promised, in answer to Solomon's request, that whatever prayer should be offered in a right manner in, or toward that house, it should, therefore, the rather be accepted. Christ is our temple, and to Him we must have an eye in all our approaches to God. There were other points of resemblance between these two men, beside their going up to the temple to pray, and thus indicating their reverence for God's house. Isa. lvi. 7; Matt. xxi. 13. They were both sinners. Their sins as to outward form were diverse, but in essential character the sinfulness was in both the same. Both adopted the same attitude in prayer. Both alike looked into their own hearts and lives, and both permitted the judgment thus formed to determine the form and matter of their prayer. *The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.* (See Appendix.)

11. The Pharisee 'stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not <sup>h</sup>as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

<sup>f</sup> Ps. cxxxv. 2.

<sup>g</sup> Isa. i. 15 and lviii. 2; Rev. iii. 17.

<sup>h</sup> Isa. lxxv. 5; Matt. iii. 7, 10, and xix. 18, 20; Luke xx. 47; Gal. iii. 10; Phil. iii. 6; James ii. 9, 12

*Stood and prayed.* There was nothing to be blamed, as indicative of pride, in the Pharisee's attitude. The publican, whose prayer was an humble one, stood also. Standing was the usual posture among the Jews, 1 Kings viii. 22; 2 Chron. vi. 12; Matt. vi. 5; Mark xi. 25. Sometimes, however, in moments of more than ordinary humiliation or emotion of heart, they changed this attitude for one of kneeling or prostration. Exod. xxxiv. 8; 2 Chron. vi. 13; xxix. 29; 1 Kings viii. 54; Ezra ix. 5; Dan. vi. 10, 40; Ps. xcvi. 6; Matt. xxvi. 39; Acts ix. 40; xx. 36; xxi. 5. Each of these postures has its own peculiar appropriateness. Either is a seemly and Scriptural method of bringing the position of the body into significant harmony with the desire of the soul. Such being the case, all sorts of forms being recognized by the Old and New Testament Scriptures, how foolish, how useless, to say nothing else, is it to dispute about these forms! The all-important matter is to have the heart in a proper frame. "Standing and kneeling," says Burkitt, "are praying postures, but sitting is a rude indecency, except in cases of necessity." "In prayer," says Bishop Hall, "I will either stand as a servant to my Master, or kneel as a subject to my Prince."

*Thus with himself.* The words *with himself* strictly and properly belong to the word "stood." "*The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed.*" This structure of the passage agrees with the spirit of the Pharisees, who were separatists not only in spirit, but also in outward act. See Is. lxxv. 5. This man did not pray with himself, in the sense of praying internally or secretly, that nobody might hear him, for it was one of his main designs that everybody should hear him. He spoke for himself, for his own satisfaction, and with much complacency of heart. *God, I thank thee.* In the Jerusalem Talmud, three benedictions are mentioned, which the Jews were expected to repeat every day. "Blessed be thou, O God, who hast not made me one of the ignorant. Blessed be thou, O God, who hast not made me a Gentile. Blessed be thou, O God, who hast not made me a woman." The two last, with many other daily benedictions, are included in the prayer-books of the modern Jews. In these a woman is directed to exchange the last cited clause for. "Blessed be thou, O God, who hast made me according to thy

will." It was not wrong in the Pharisee to begin his prayer as he did. It is right to thank God. Praise is comely. We are to "make known our wants by supplication with thanksgiving." See Ps. 103. It was, then, the proud, boastful spirit of the Pharisee that made his thank-offering vain. *That I am not as other men* are, literally, *the rest of men*, with the exception of the Pharisees, to which class he belonged. He may even have considered himself in pious works above the generality of the Pharisees. Here, again, there would have been nothing wrong in what the Pharisee said, if it had sprung from a proper feeling, if he had been conscious of his unworthiness, and amazed at God's long-suffering. But this was not his spirit. He was proud, self-righteous. This was shown by the two classes which he formed, into the one of which he threw the whole human race, he himself appearing to constitute the other and better one. He presumed to give thanks not for what he had received, but for what he was and did. His thoughts of others excited in his heart the very opposite of that real gratitude which was expressed by one who, seeing a felon led to the gallows, exclaimed, speaking for himself, "But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford!" *Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican*. Inasmuch as there is no reason to believe that this Pharisee was a hypocrite, the good things which here, and in the next verse, he affirms of himself, may be supposed to be true. And how searching and suggestive is the character here drawn to many who profess and call themselves Christians! He was free from gross and scandalous sins. He was not an *extortioner*, not a usurer, nor an oppressor to his debtors or tenants, but equitable and kind to all dependent upon him: and not *rapacious*, seizing other men's property under false pretences. He was not *unjust* in any of his dealings, did no wrong to any man, did not take advantage of any man's ignorance, want of experience, or necessity in buying or selling. He was not an *adulterer*, but avoided every species of uncleanness. How solemn the truth that all this may be true of a man who is yet far from the kingdom of God! *Or even as this publican*. He here drags into his prayer the poor publican, on whom his eye alighted, making him to supply the dark back-ground on which the bright colors of his own virtues shall more gloriously appear, doubtless congratulating himself that he had no need to beat his heart, or cast his eyes in shame upon the floor, because he had done nothing to call for this. How arrogantly he presumed to judge of hearts, and judge of them, too, after the appearance, guided by prejudice!

## 12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

According to Lev. xvi. 29-31 and Num. xxix. 7, a yearly fast only was enjoined; but the Pharisees, and others, who laid claim to peculiar sanctity, observed two fast days every week—the second and fifth days—for reflecting on the ascent of Moses to Mount Sinai, when he went to receive the law, and on his return thence. This observance they accounted meritorious. *I give tithes of all that I possess*. The law commanded only to tithe the fruit of the field and produce of the cattle, (Num. xviii. 21; Deut. xiv. 22; Lev. xxvii. 0,) but he tithed mint and cummin, (Matt. xxiii. 23,) *all* that came into his possession, probably not capital but income, down to the trifles on which there was question, even in the Jewish schools, whether it was needful to tithe them or not. Hos. xii. 8. "I thank thee that I am not as other men." "I fast." "I give tithes." It will be observed how self predominates. How different the spirit here displayed from that of the Apostle when he said, "By the grace of God I am what I am!" To fast is right, and to give tithes is right, but this Pharisee spoiled all he had done by his proud and self-righteous pretensions; or this showed rather, that every thing on which he relied, which bore externally the appearance of good, was internally rotten and lifeless. His prayer exhibits no sense of sin and need; contains no con-

fession and no petition—no acknowledgment of guilt and emptiness—no supplication for mercy and grace. It is a mere boasting recital of fancied merits, accompanied by an uncharitable reflection on a brother sinner. The man praised rather than prayed, and praised himself rather than God. He knew neither his own heart nor God's law. His performance is divided into two parts. Under the form of thanks, he, 1, enumerates the bad things that the rest of men are, but he is not; 2, enumerates the good things he does, and there he closes.

13. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

The *publican*. The difference between the men does not lie in that this was a good man, while the other was bad. This is a sinner too, but he has come to know it, and therein lies the distinction between him and the Pharisee. *Standing afar off*. If he was a Pagan, he stood in the court of the Gentiles; but if he was a Jew, such was his humility and sense of unworthiness, that he did not presume to approach the place where stood the Pharisee and other chief men. He wished to keep out of sight. He had no desire to be seen of men in this act. Outward things—the people surrounding him—do not enter into his thoughts. It is enough for him that he is in the presence of an all-seeing, a heart-searching God. *Afar off* is really the proper description of man by nature. Sin has borne him far off from God. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven*, much less his hands, as was usual in prayer. He lifted up his heart, indeed, to God, in holy desires, but, through shame and humiliation, did not lift up his eyes in holy confidence and courage. His iniquities were gone over his head as a heavy burden, so that he was not able to look up, and his downcast looks were an indication of the dejection of his mind at the thoughts of his sinfulness and guilt. See Luke xv. 18; Ezra ix. 6. *But smote upon his breast*, literally, *kept smiting upon his breast*. Smiting the breast was a token of excessive grief commonly practised in all nations. It seems to intimate a desire, in the penitent, to *punish that heart* through the evil propensities of which the sin deplored had been committed. "The sinner's heart," says one, "first smites him in a penitent rebuke, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10, and then he smites his heart with penitent remorse." In this instance it was the outward expression of the penitent's sorrow for sin and sense of exposedness to God's righteous displeasure. *God be merciful to me a sinner*. This prayer of the publican was short; fear and shame hindered him from saying much; sighs and groans swallowed up his words, but what he said was to the purpose. Observe: 1. He owns himself to be a sinner, and guilty before God. The Greek words rendered *a sinner*, literally, signify "*the sinner*," that is, "*the great sinner*." As the Pharisee had compared himself with all mankind, and concluded that he alone was good, so the publican, in the depth of his shame, seems to count himself the only sinner. He casts about for no palliation—thinks of no excuse. He has none to condemn but himself. 2. He has no dependence but upon the mercy of God. He does not present himself as a *reformed* sinner, nor yet as a *penitent* sinner, nor yet as a *praying* sinner, but simply as the *sinner*. He disclaims all thought of merit, and flees to mercy as his city of refuge, with nothing to promise, nothing to extenuate, nothing to pledge, nothing to pay. 3. He earnestly prays for the benefit of that mercy. Unreservedly, fully, and yet confidently, he leaves himself in the hands of God. The only thing he can plead with such a God is, "*Be merciful*," be propitious to me, forgive my sins, be reconciled to me, and receive me graciously. We are not to understand that the publican sought from God absolute and unconditional mercy. His prayer, as the original imports, was, "*Be propitious toward me*,

through sacrifice, or, let an atonement be made." The Greek word, rendered "be merciful to," is only found in one other place, and is there applied to our Lord Jesus Christ, as a High Priest, "making reconciliation" for the sins of the people. Heb. ii. 17. The publican may have learned the great truth, that "without shedding of blood there can be no remission," from seeing the lamb slain morning and evening, as the daily sacrifice, and the lamb slain once a year as the Passover-lamb. Hence the peculiarity of his prayer, as having reference to a Mediator, a Saviour.

With all the encouragement which this prayer of the publican affords to the true penitent, however great his sins may be, let it not be forgotten that many offer prayers like the Pharisee's, while they use the *words* of the publican. It is possible for us to use the strongest hyperboles of self-abhorrence, and be proud of the intensity of our self-condemning phrases. The true Christian can sincerely say, with the dying Grotius, "I am that publican!" and, with Bishop Beveridge, in his final hour, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" yet, fixing his eye on Christ, can thank God that, through the grace given him, he has a cheering sense of the Divine acceptance, and a good hope of heaven.

14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Job xxii. 29; Matt. xxiii. 12; Luke xiv. 11, Jas. iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 6

*I tell you.* With what emphasis and power did this *tell you* come from this Divine *I!* *Justified*; i. e., accepted and approved in the sight of God. Of course, it is not meant that the prayer of the publican justified him. That the man who pleaded merely for mercy should be justified merely by his prayer is absurd. He was justified, forgiven, his sin pardoned, his guilt remitted, by that mercy which he had invoked; but it was mercy in answer to prayer. See Rom. iii. 26. Neither are we to suppose that the Pharisee was a little justified, and the publican very much, and that the difference between them was only one of degree. There are no degrees in justification. The Pharisee was not justified at all, except by and before himself. The form of the comparison by the words *rather than* is according to Hebrew usage, when absolute negation even is intended. The idea designed to be conveyed by these words is, that there was such essential difference in the religious act of these two men, that one only could be acceptable with God; and that such was the deep self-abasement of the publican, that his was the prayer which was accepted, *rather than* the one so offensive to God as that of the Pharisee. *Went down to his house justified.* Not merely was he justified in the secret, unsearchable counsels of God; but he returned to his home with a sweet sense of a received forgiveness shed abroad in his heart. Ps. l. 15; li. 3-5, 19; Is. lvii. 15. How great, sudden, and happy a change!

*For every one that exalteth himself, &c.* See Luke xiv. 11. The repetition of such a maxim will cause us the less surprise, if we consider that it expresses the unalterable fundamental law of the kingdom of heaven, according to which all men are judged, and, at the same time, gives the deepest ground why the justification of the Pharisee and the rejection of the publican were each entirely impossible. These words also form a beautiful transition to the bringing of the children to Jesus, the incident next recorded by the Evangelist.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Of what does this parable treat?
2. How does it differ from the one preceding it?
3. To whom was it addressed?

4. Explain the words "trusted in themselves," &c.
5. What is meant by "despised others?"
6. Whom was the parable especially intended to reach?
7. Whom do the "two men" represent?
8. What is said about going up into the temple to pray?
9. To whom must we look in our approaches to God?
10. What were the points of resemblance between the two men?
11. What is said about the Pharisees?
12. What, about the publicans?
13. What attitude did the Pharisee assume in prayer?
14. What is said about the posture in this exercise?
15. To what do the words "with himself" properly belong?
16. Did the Pharisee pray silently?
17. What is said about the benedictions in the Talmud?
18. What is said about thanking God in prayer?
19. Who were the "other men" to whom the Pharisee refers?
20. What was defective in the Pharisee's thanks?
21. What is meant by the Pharisee not being an extortioner, unjust, and an adulterer?
22. Why did he drag the publican into his prayer?
23. Was it right for him to do so?
24. What kind of a fast did God enjoin?
25. How many fast days did the Pharisees observe?
26. What did the law of tithes require?
27. What is said about the Pharisee's fasting and giving tithes?
28. What were the defects of his prayer?
29. In what did the difference between the Pharisee and publican lie?
30. Where did the publican stand?
31. Why did he take this position?
32. What is said about his not lifting up his eyes?
33. What was the smiting of his breast a token of?
34. Why was his prayer short?
35. What did he confess himself to be?
36. What was his only dependence?
37. For what did he earnestly pray?
38. Through what medium did he expect mercy?
39. Does the publican's spirit always accompany the use of his words?
40. What did the dying Grotius say?
41. What, Bishop Beveridge, in his final hour?
42. What is meant by "justified?"
43. Was the publican justified by his prayer? or how?
44. Was the Pharisee justified at all?
45. What is the right understanding of the words "rather than?"
46. What is meant by the Pharisee's going to his house justified?
47. What is said about the latter part of ver. 14?

## LESSON CIX.

vs. 15-27.

15. <sup>1</sup>And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them : but when *his* disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them.

J Matt. xix. 13; Mark x. 13.

From here on, the narrative of Luke runs parallel with that of Matthew and Mark. See Matt. xix. 13, &c.; Mark x. 13, &c. The connection between this passage and the parable preceding it, in which humility is inculcated, should not be overlooked. Here is an illustration of the truth there taught. *Also infants, literally, even the infants.* They were not only *little children*, but infants. Mark says that they were taken by the Saviour in His arms. *They brought unto him.* Reference is here doubtless had to the parents. Thus they, 1, testified their respect for Christ, and the value they set upon His favor and blessing; and, 2, manifested their love to their children. *That he would touch them.* See Matt. xix. 13. It was customary among the Jews, when one prayed for another who was present, to lay his hands upon the person's head, Gen. xviii. 14; Matt. ix. 18; Acts vi. 8, viii. 17. This imposition of hands was practised especially in paternal blessing. Gen. xlvi. 14-20. *They rebuked them.* We learn from Mark x. 13, that the persons rebuked were those who brought the infants to Jesus. In administering this rebuke the disciples thought most probably that compliance with the request of these persons would be mere waste of their Master's time, and that infants could derive no benefit from being brought to Christ. It is our duty to consecrate our children to the Lord in reliance upon His promise and power. *The promise is to us, and to our seed.* The faith of the Syro-Phenician woman brought a miracle of mercy upon her daughter. The souls of young children are evidently precious in God's sight. They are capable of receiving grace. The imperfection of charity and knowledge in the present life, exposes the humble and the little ones to suffer frequent repulses even from good men.

16. But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for <sup>1</sup>of such is the kingdom of God.

K 1 Cor xiv 2: 1 Peter ii. 2.

*Called them, i. e., the children themselves.* Mark says that when Jesus saw the disciples rebuking those that brought the children, Jesus *was much displeased*, x. 14. The opposition between the friendly countenance of the Master and the contracted brow of the disciples is indescribably beautiful. *Suffer little children to come unto me, &c.* This shows that some were children, while others were yet in their infancy. Our Lord does not merely say *suffer these children*, but *suffer all little children to come unto me.* He was not only not offended, but delighted, with the presence of the little ones. *For of such is the kingdom of God.* Here is the reason why the children should be brought. That these words were not meant to teach that children are born sinless and innocent, is abundantly clear from other parts of Scripture. John iii. 6. They teach, 1, That the Church of God on earth is largely composed of children. "Of such is the kingdom of God." We cannot approve of rendering the original words translated "of such," *such as resemble these.* This idea is presented in the next verse. 2. That the Church of God is to be

perpetuated and prospered mainly by those who, in their childhood, are dedicated to His service, and receive a religious training. 8. That the kingdom of God in glory will be largely composed of little children. The salvation of all who die in infancy may confidently be expected. Though sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. Rom. v. 20.

17. <sup>1</sup>Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 15.

*The kingdom of God* here means the requisitions of the gospel. We must stand affected to Christ as little children to their parents. Whilst we are not to be like children in their inconsiderateness or ignorance, (1 Cor. xiv. 20,) or inconstancy, (Eph. iv. 14,) we are to resemble them in exemption from prejudice, 1 Cor. ii. 14; in sincerity, in simplicity or artlessness; in humility, Ps. cxxx. 1; 1 Pet. v. 2; James iv. 6, 10; in freedom from covetous desires, Ps. cxxx. 2; Luke xviii. 24; Mark x. 17-22; 2 Tim. iv. 10; in a teachable spirit, 1 Cor. i. 23; in a meek and loving spirit, without malice, 1 Cor. xiv. 20; Ps. xxv. 9; cxlvii. 6; cxlix. 4; without dependence on our own works, as children have nothing whereon to depend, Rom. ix. 30-33; x. 33; in faith, as children readily believe their parents in whatever they say; in confidence and trust, as children rely on the power, love, and faithfulness of their parents, Rom. iv. 18-21; Heb. xi. 13; in prayer, as children ask their parents, expecting to receive; in submission, as children are not without trials and discipline to which they are subjected. Heb. xii. 6, 7. This requisition of our Lord is not peculiar in its application to Christianity. Lord Bacon says, in the introduction to his book on the "Interpretation of Nature," "It is fit and necessary in the very front and beginning of this work, without hesitation or reservation, to be professed, that it is no less true in this human kingdom of knowledge, than in God's kingdom of heaven, that no man shall enter it except he first become as a little child."

18. <sup>2</sup>And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xix. 16; Mark x. 17.

The case of this young man (see Matt. xix. 20) is here introduced to show that he who would be saved must be ready to give up all for Christ in the fullest sense of the words, and that he who cannot do this is deceived in supposing that he has so kept God's law as to be thereby saved. A man may miss heaven for want of a child-like indifference to worldly riches. *A certain ruler.* It is probable that this person was not a member of the Sanhedrim, but rather a magistrate in some other court, or a ruler of a synagogue. Many of the poor had followed Christ from the beginning; now a rich man came to Him. *Asked him.* Mark's statement, (x. 17,) that he came "running, and kneeled to him," shows that he was deeply in earnest. *Good Master.* Many other applicants had called our Saviour "Master," but this appears to have been the only instance in His history in which He was addressed as "Good Master." It will not do to suppose that this difference in the appellation is ascribable to the fact that these words were spoken by a noble Jew, who felt bound to give a polite address. The ruler was persuaded that Christ was a Divinely-commissioned Teacher, and thus manifested his affection and peculiar respect to Him as such. *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* In Matt. xix. 16, "What good thing shall I do," &c. ? From this question it is evident, 1. That he believed in a future state. 2. That he was anxious to secure eternal life. 3. That he felt that in order to

this end something must be done. 4. That he thought he was willing to do what was to be done. 5. That he was under the spirit of legality. How shall I be saved, is the most interesting and important question that any soul can ask of God. It is peculiarly gratifying to see an interest on this subject prevailing among the young. The first step towards being saved is to get instruction in the way to heaven.

19. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, *that is*, God.

Before replying to the young man's inquiry, the Saviour comments for a moment upon the singularly unusual epithet which he had applied to Him. There is nothing here to disprove our Lord's supreme Divinity. If, as Socinians allege, Jesus here denies that *He is God*, He also denies that *He is good*. Now as we know Christ to be *good*, if the passage proves any thing on this point, it proves *that He is God*. It is evident from the title of *good* which the ruler gave to Jesus, a title which the rabbies affected, that he supposed Him to be a mere man. The meaning of our Lord, then, was evidently this: "*None is good*, essentially and perfectly, but God; why, therefore, *callest thou me good*, since thou hast never yet been taught that truth, which flesh and blood cannot have revealed to thee, that I am indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God?" If the ruler had professed a belief in this vital truth, our Lord would never have called in question the propriety of his epithet, but would have confirmed it, as He did the declaration of Pilate, by the strongest possible affirmative and acquiescence. Our Lord never refused any homage offered Him, however high.

20. Thou knowest the commandments, "Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, 'Honour thy father and thy mother.

• Exod. x. 12, 16, Deut. v. 16-20; Rom. xiii. 9.

• Eph. vi. 2; Col. iii. 20.

This reply of our Lord differs widely and importantly from other answers given both by Himself and by His disciples to similar inquiries. John vi. 28, 29; Acts xvi. 31. The reason of this difference is probably to be found in the state of mind of him whom He addressed. He was, as his reference to *doing* shows, a man evidently living under the covenant of works, and Jesus simply met him on his own ground. As a wise physician, He administered to the sick patient the medicine most likely ultimately to conduce to his spiritual health. He addressed him in the way most likely to bring him to self-knowledge. The Jews were not accustomed, in ordinary discourse, or in the commonly published books, to recite the precepts of the Decalogue in the *very words* in which they were expressed, but in *other* words, or in another order. The Saviour names the commandments of the second table, because, when the ruler had once seen his lack of love to his neighbor, the conclusion as to his lack of love to *God* could not be difficult.

21. And he said, All these things have I kept from my youth up.

From the statement of Mark x. 21, *Jesus beholding him, loved him*, it seems probable that the young man, in expressing himself as in this verse, did not mean to make a self-righteous boast, but to say that he knew the will of God as contained in the law, and that he had directed his life generally according to that law. Otherwise we should hardly be told that Jesus *loved him*, except as He loves all mankind; He would hardly have felt a special interest

in him. It is evident, however, that like the generality of the Jews of our Saviour's time, this young man had interpreted the Decalogue by its letter, not according to its spirit.

22. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

p Matt. vi. 19, 20, and xix. 21; 1 Tim. vi. 19.

*Yet lackest thou one thing*, namely, to love God more than mammon. Our Saviour knew his heart, and soon put him upon a trial which laid it open to the ruler himself. *Sell all that thou hast, &c.* This command was given to cure his love of the world, which could not, in him, be cured otherwise. What a touchstone for his sincerity! What a trial of the power of the law, to convict of disobedience all who profess to keep it! When God commanded Abraham to offer up his only son Isaac, he stood the test, and proved that he loved the Lord above all. This young man did *not* stand the test. He might have stood an *easier* test, but this one he could not endure. To sell not *half*, but *all* his possessions, all his *great* possessions, too, and then to distribute the precious wealth, with his own hand, piece by piece, among the poor, and thus see the source of his earthly joy, pride, and hope, as it were, drop by drop, dry up—this was more than he could bear to do. Thus was he shown, that, instead of preferring God and His commandments to every thing else, as he professed, he really loved mammon more than God. We are not to understand that all Christians are required to do what was enjoined on the rich ruler. The language of Peter to Ananias contradicts the idea. Acts v. 4. Reason itself shows that if all acted on this system, idleness would be encouraged, and all men would ultimately come to poverty. See 2 Thess. iii. 10. Yet it is true that the gospel requires such a consecration of all property to God, that, when the duty is made known, to give some, or much, or all to God, the offering can be made. Hence there was nothing required in this instance, so far as the condition of the heart was concerned, which is not required of every man. *Treasure in heaven*—in place of thy *treasure* on earth. *And come, follow me.* Here was the gospel hidden in this brief command. Jesus preached faith to this inquirer. His invitation to him was the very language in which He called almost every one of the disciples, who doubted not the meaning, knowing, that, in following Christ, they were to acknowledge Him as the Messiah of God.

23. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

*Very sorrowful.* Men undergo great agony of mind while they are in suspense between the love of the world and the love of their souls. When the first absolutely predominates, then they enjoy a factitious rest through a false peace; when the latter has the upper hand, then they possess true tranquillity of mind, through that peace of God that passeth knowledge. *For he was very rich.* What was his wealth—which he had found could not give him comfort—in comparison with peace of conscience, and eternal life? Yet he chose to retain his earthly treasure, which he could only hold for a few years, and to refuse the offer of imperishable treasure in heaven! Looking back through eighteen hundred years upon this choice, how does it seem to us stamped with unutterable folly! Let us profit by the example.

24. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

q Prov. xi. 28; Matt. xix. 23; Mark x. 23.

This may be considered as the moral of the story, the extreme increase of difficulty which worldly possessions cast in the way, to the attainment of the heavenly glory. In Mark x. 24, it is, "them that trust in riches." This somewhat modifies the declaration here; but how few are there to be found who really possess wealth, and never trust in it?

25. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Some would read a *cable*, instead of a *camel*, but this is unauthorized. The camel being the largest animal they were acquainted with in Judea, its name became proverbial for denoting any thing remarkably large, and a *camel's passing through a needle's eye* came, by consequence, as appears from some rabbinical writings, to express a thing extremely difficult, or apparently impossible. Our Lord here represents the salvation of a rich man as being next to an impossibility. Riches powerfully tend to increase pride, covetousness, self-indulgence; they purchase flatterers, exclude faithful reprovers, prejudice the mind against the humbling truths and self-denying precepts of the gospel, and they increase the number and force of those obstacles which must be broken through, and the supposed value of those objects which must be renounced, if a man would be a disciple of Christ.

26. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

The scene with the ruler, as well as the last earnest utterance of Jesus, taught the disciples to cast a deeper look into their own hearts. They saw that not earthly good in itself closes the gate of heaven to any one, but that it does so only when the heart is unduly and supremely attached to it, and that therefore, even without being in possession of riches, one may be excluded as a rich man. In the living consciousness of the wide prevalence of earthly-mindedness, both among the rich who have, and the poor who are not able to acquire, they express wonder or surprise, if not doubt, as to the salvation of any.

27. And he said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

r Jer. xxxii. 17; Zech. viii. 6; Matt. xix. 26; Luke i. 37.

There was much tenderness and sweetness in this reply of our Lord, to the question proposed. It will be observed that He does not retract what He had said, nor even soften it in the least degree, but rather strengthens it by representing the salvation of a rich man as the utmost effort of omnipotence. The energy of Divine grace is able to make a man despise the world, with all that it contains, when no efforts of man, no arguments, eloquence, or persuasions are able to do it. Money will not keep us out of heaven if our hearts are right before God. *Grace*, and not *place*, is the hinge on which our salvation turns.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of the narrative of Luke from this point?
2. What should not be overlooked?
3. What is said of "also infants?"

4. Who brought the infants?
5. What did they thus testify?
6. Explain "that he would touch them."
7. What do we learn from Mark x. 13?
8. What is our duty in reference to our children?
9. What is said of young children?
10. Whom did Jesus call?
11. What did He say?
12. What does His language show?
13. What were His words not intended to teach?
14. What do they teach?
15. What does the phrase "the kingdom of God," here mean?
16. How must we resemble children, if we would enter this kingdom?
17. What does Lord Bacon say?
18. Why was the case of the "certain ruler" here introduced?
19. Who was this ruler?
20. What is said of "Good Master"?
21. Explain the question "What shall I do," &c.
22. Explain "none is good," &c.
23. What is said of our Lord's reply?
24. What is the reason of this difference?
25. What is said of the precepts of the decalogue?
26. What did the ruler reply to Jesus?
27. Did he mean to make a self-righteous boast?
28. What one thing did the ruler lack?
29. Explain "sell all that thou hast," &c.
30. Did this young man stand the test applied to him?
31. Are Christians required to give all that they have to the poor?
32. Explain "treasure in heaven."
33. Explain "come, follow me."
34. Explain "very sorrowful."
35. Why was the ruler sorrowful?
36. Explain verse 24.
37. What is said of "a camel"?
38. What were the disciples taught?
39. What is said of verse 27?

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## LESSON CX.

vs. 28-48.

28. "Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

• Matt. xix. 27.

*We have left all.* Peter speaks for himself and the rest of the Apostles. Had he spoken this in pride, he would have received *rebuke* instead of *encouragement*. He had seen the rich young man go away grieved, and had heard the Lord's declaration concerning the danger of riches, and now his mind reverts with gratitude to the period when he, and those associated with him, had been called, and had obeyed the call. The disciples had, indeed, but little to leave, yet it was their *all*. A poor man's "all" is as dear to him, in a certain sense, as the rich man's palace. There is no season in life upon which the believer looks back with so much joy as that in which he first determined to engage in his Redeemer's service. A man may leave all without

having ever possessed any thing. It is by the heart that we cleave to earthly possessions; it is by renouncing them in our heart, that we disengage ourselves from them.

29. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, 'There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

† Deut. xxxiii. 9.

30. "Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

▪ Job xlii. 10.

*Verily, I say unto you.* Luke gives the answer of the Saviour less precisely and less in detail than Matt. xix. 27-30, and Mark x. 28-31; yet, with all, the chief thoughts are the same. *There is no man that hath left, &c.* Sacrifices like these were doubtless often necessary when the gospel was first preached, and were bitterly opposed by prejudiced Jews and ignorant heathen. At the present day, a converted Jew is often obliged to separate from his nearest and dearest relatives, and a converted Hindoo is cast off by all his family. Our Lord spoke, with foresight, of cases like these, and His words are singularly full of comfort. *Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time.* In Matt. xix. 29, it is "a hundred-fold." This number is manifestly symbolical, as the expression of an immeasurable advantage. The compensating retributions in this world and the next are definitely distinguished. From Mark x. 30, we learn that the reward *in this present time* is to be received "with persecutions," i. e., not merely in the midst of persecutions, and in spite of them: the persecutions are rather part of our best possessions. See Isaiah xxvi. 8; Matt. v. 12; Acts v. 41; Rom. v. 8; 2 Cor. xii. 10; James i. 2, 4; 1 Pet. i. 6; Heb. xii. 6; 1 Pet. i. 8. Even with all their losses and trials, the joys of Christians are much greater than their sorrows. Rutherford says, in his letters, that when he was imprisoned in Aberdeen, he discovered a sweetness in Christ that he had never conceived before. Dr. Payson, when racked with pain, in his last illness, said: "God has used a strange method to make me happy. I could not have believed, a little while ago, that, in order to render me happy, He would deprive me of the use of my limbs, and fill my body with pain. But he has taken away every thing else, that He might give me HIMSELF." And the Apostles bore the same testimony when they said, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." 2 Cor. i. 5. *And in the world to come life everlasting.* To the earthly advantages of godliness, which make it profitable for the life that now is, life everlasting is to be superadded. What believers need, is more daily practical faith in Christ's words that He will make up for the sacrifices they submit to for His sake. The well of living water is always near to us, as we travel through the wilderness of this world. Yet for want of faith, we often fail to see it, and faint by the way. Gen. xxi. 19.

31. ¶ "Then he took *unto him* the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

• Matt. xvi. 21, and xvii. 22, and xx. 17; Mark x. 32.

γ Ps. 22; Isa. liii.

Jesus the third time foretells His death and resurrection. (See Matt. xx. 17-19; Mark x. 32-34.) *Took he unto him the twelve—took them apart.* This

was done because He did not choose to declare before His enemies the deeds which they would commit against Him, for such declaration would have emboldened them in wickedness, and thus, moreover, He might have seemed to purposely procure the fulfilment of the prediction concerning His sufferings. *We go up to Jerusalem.* There was the site of the Old Testament theocracy. There the sacrifices of the law, and the blood of the Old Testament atonements, had shown forth His death for ages. And from there, the royal city of David, must go forth an announcement of the kingdom of the Son of David to all the world. The word *up*, is naturally used of Jerusalem, as being situated, like many great ancient cities, upon high grounds. The Saviour went *willingly* to the appointed spot of His sufferings. It will be observed with what calmness and submission He spoke of the painful trials that awaited Him. We know not the time of our trials, and hence it is so much the more necessary for us to think seriously of them, and prepare ourselves for them. We should so live that we will not have either to think of our death with trouble and anxiety, or to strive not to think of it at all. *And all things that are written by the prophets, &c.* The Messianic prophecies of suffering stand before the Saviour's eyes, as a great whole put in writing, and are referred to as though for every detail of His passion sketched in verses 32, 33, there must also be at least an intimation to be found in the prophetic record. Such passages as the following were meant: Ps. xxii.; Isa. liii.; Dan. ix. 26. The doctrine of a Messiah who should *suffer* before He reigned, though distinctly taught in the passages just quoted, had been gradually lost among the Jews, and was now confined to that small class who still looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Luke ii. 38. The teaching even of the Scribes presented the Messiah as a conqueror and an earthly monarch who was to restore the throne of David and Solomon, and the long lost privileges of the chosen people. This delusion seems to have been shared by the Apostles, so far as they had any views upon the subject, and of this Christ now undertakes to disabuse them, by foretelling His various sufferings, and His resuscitation on the third day after His decease.

32. \*For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be marked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on:

\* Matt. xxvii. 2; Luke xxiii. 1; John xviii. 28; Acts iii. 13.

33. And they shall scourge *him*, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.

*Delivered, &c.* This prediction is a remarkable proof of the extraordinary measure of prophetic spirit which dwelt in Christ. It was more probable that He would be privately slain, or stoned to death in a tumult. And when He was delivered back to the Jews by Pilate, with permission to judge Him according to their law, it is wonderful that He was not stoned. But all was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. *The Gentiles*—this word is from a Latin one, signifying a *race*. The Jews, from their own stand-point, called other peoples the Gentiles, that is, *the nations*. Here the word specifically designates the Romans. For the *mocking* of Jesus by Herod and his Roman soldiers, see Luke xxiii. 11. *Spitefully entreated and spitted on*, to express their abhorrence of Him as a blasphemer. *Scourge him, and put him to death.* In Matt. xx. 19, "crucify him." This was done by *Pilate*, the Roman governor. The punishment of the *cross* was *Roman*, not *Jewish*, but the *chief priests* condemned Him to it, and the *Romans* executed the sentence. How little did they know that they were, by this process, jointly offering up that sacrifice which was to make an atonement for Gentiles and for Jews; an atonement for the sin of the whole world! How often may it be literally said, *The wrath of man shall praise thee! And the third day he shall rise again.*

Christ mentions His resurrection and glory, 1. To encourage Himself in His sufferings. 2. To comfort His disciples, who would be overwhelmed with sorrow and terrified by His death. 3. To direct us, under *all the sufferings of this present time*, to keep the eye of our faith fixed upon *the glory to be revealed*. Nothing is so capable of giving us comfort, and fortifying our weakness against the fear of painful trials and the dread of death, as the remembrance of the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The grave is no longer what it once was. It is the place where the Lord lay. If the great Head of the body looked forward to the grave with calmness, much more may all His believing members. For them He has overcome death. The mention by Jesus of His rising on the third day, was full notice to the Jews, so that they had time to prepare to prevent it, if this had been possible.

34. \*And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

\* Mark ix. 32; Luke ii. 50 and ix. 45; John x. 6 and xii. 16.

The blindness of the disciples about our Lord's crucifixion and sufferings is, at first sight, very extraordinary. The words just spoken by Him seem so plain that we can scarcely conceive how any one could have failed to understand them. But, perhaps, as the Lord often used figurative language, the disciples supposed that His prophecies concerning Himself were figurative. They saw, and heard, and imagined a great many things that seemed to contradict the natural import of these prophecies, and hence declined to accept their literal interpretation. In judging them, we must remember that they were all Jews, and trained from their infancy to expect a Messiah in glory and majesty. In their ignorance as to the import of Christ's words, we see the effect of prepossession in precluding the exercise of ordinary intelligence. As they had *wished* a different manifestation of Christ's Messiahship than that, though differing, they seem, thus far, to have been unable to understand or believe what He here, and at other times, so plainly foretold. The mind of man is naturally shut against the knowledge of the cross, of sufferings, and of death.

35. † And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side, begging :

† Matt. xx. 29; Mark x. 46.

‡ 1 Sam. ii. 8; Luke xvi. 20, 21; John ix. 8; Acts iii. 2.

*And it came to pass.* That our Lord should meet this blind man when and where He did, while it was one of those marvellous coincidences which, seeming accidental, are yet deep laid in the councils of His wisdom, and of His love, is, at the same time, a natural circumstance, to be explained by the fact that it was common at that time for beggars to sit by the side of the public roads. *Jericho* was a stronghold of the Canaanites, and was the first city subdued by Israel, after the crossing of Jordan and entering the Holy Land. See Josh. vi. 26. At the time of our Saviour, it had been lately enlarged and beautified by Herod the Great, who often made it his residence. The glory of Jericho has long ago departed. There is now a miserable hamlet called *Rihah*, or *Rah*, situated on the ruins of the ancient city, (or, as some think, three or four miles east of it,) which a modern traveller describes as a poor, dirty village of the Arabs. *As he was come nigh*, &c. Matthew and Mark, referring (as is generally supposed) to the same miracle, say that it was wrought when our Lord was "departing" from Jericho. Matt. xx. 29-34; Mark x. 46-52. There was more than one Jericho, namely, an *old* and a *new*, situated at a little distance one from the other, so that, if the

Saviour was really leaving one and approaching the other, the apparent discrepancy is easily reconciled.

*A certain blind man, &c.* Matthew speaks of two blind men. By reading the phrase here, *while he was* (yet) *nigh unto Jericho*, on his way out of the city, (which reading does no violence to the language and is natural and simple,) the seeming discrepancy is removed. It is, also, a rule in the reconciliation of parallel histories, that the silence of one narrator is not to be assumed as the contradiction of the statement of another. In Mark x. 46, this blind man is referred to as "Bartimeus, the son of Timeus." This is a name and its translation. *Bar* is Syrian for "son," equivalent to the Hebrew, *Ben*, and it occurs rather commonly in the New Testament, in such names as *Bartholomew*, *Barnabas*, *Barjona*, *Barjesus*. It is incorporated with the proper name, as a patronymic, on the same principle as our "son," in such names as *Johnson*, *Jackson*, *Thomson*, *Nelson*, and others. The only difference is, that we place the term of relationship at the end rather than the beginning of the name. The sense of sight is the highest bodily privilege, the purest physical pleasure which man has derived from his Creator. When indigence and blindness are united, they present a truly sad instance of wretchedness. *Begging*. He had placed himself by the road-side in order that travellers might see him and give him help. Except in extraordinary cases, it is in all respects most advisable to relieve those who are known by us both as to their wants and conduct, and, provided less be not given in charity, and no *extreme* case neglected, the refusal of relief to vagrant beggars is rather a proof of *discretion* than an indication of defect in beneficence. If this conduct were generally adopted, the indigent would, in ordinary cases, be compelled to abide where they are known; the sums expended in charity would be far more profitably applied, the interests of morality and religion better secured, and the poor themselves far more adequately relieved. The provident compassion of the gospel is a strong proof of its authenticity. It studies *classes* and relieves every misery of our nature. Under its benign influence each individual calamity experiences a distinct compassion, is cherished with its appropriate comforts, and healed by its specific remedies. In every Christian country, edifices abound which are consecrated to mercy, and in this magnificent benevolence, the misfortunes of the blind have not been overlooked.

36. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

The sound of numerous feet, and the clamor of many voices, drew the attention of the blind man, and he was led to inquire what great person was on the road, attended by this great throng of people.

37. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

*Jesus of Nazareth*. The people name our Lord according to the customary style. The "Prophet of Galilee," the raiser of Lazarus from the dead, the Teacher and Miracle-worker of Perea, is not unknown by fame to this poor man. To the sufferers throughout the land, that name would have a special interest. Its report would have a rapid circulation among the sons and daughters of affliction.

38. And he cried, saying, Jesus, *thou* Son of David, have mercy on me.

No sooner was our Lord's name mentioned, than the blind beggar, deeply impressed with a sense of his own affliction, and not knowing whether he should ever again have so good an opportunity, earnestly appealed to Him.

*He cried.* In the midst of judgments God remembers mercy. Though God had deprived this man, for wise reasons, of his *eyes*, He left him the use of his *speech*. It is never so *ill* with us, but it might be *much worse*. We should, therefore, be submissive and thankful. *Jesus, thou Son of David.* The blind man, by thus greeting Christ, shows that his faith has reached a higher grade than that of the people who had just told him who was passing by. There was, on his part, a double confession of faith: first, that Jesus could heal him; and secondly, not merely as a prophet from God, but as *the Prophet*, as the one who should come, according to the words of Isaiah, to give sight to the blind. He recognized Him as the true descendant of the ancient king of Israel, the promised Messiah for whom Israel was looking. *Have mercy on me.* He asked for mercy, conscious that he *deserved* nothing.

39. And they which went before rebuked <sup>4</sup>him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.*

<sup>4</sup> Luke viii. 49, and xi. 52, and xix. 39.

*They which went before.* Of the great multitude who accompanied Jesus on His way to Jerusalem, some preceded, others followed Him. *Rebuked him, that he should hold his peace,* rather, *charged him that he should be silent.* At this time the multitude were respectful to Jesus. We are not, of course, to understand the historian as meaning to blame the poor man for his importunity. Our Lord frequently commended such importunity, sometimes expressly in words, and always by making the application successful. Neither are we to suppose that the rebuke which the blind man received from those who preceded Jesus arose from his use of the Messianic address. *Son of David.* It resulted simply from the desire in those, for the most part spiritually undeveloped men, that the procession to Jerusalem, where they anticipated a public and open avowal by Jesus of His Messiahship, even, perhaps, the assumption of the regal dignity, might not be delayed by an affair of comparatively such trivial importance, as the giving sight to a poor blind man. *But he cried so much the more, &c.* The beggar regarded not the rebuke that was given him. His case was urgent. The occasion was precious; and he called louder and more fervently than before, using the same form of address and appeal as at first.

40. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him,

41. Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

Above the respectful clamor of the multitude, the voice of earnest prayer reached the ear of Jesus. He would not yield to their haste to press forward. He *stood*. It was impossible for Him to pass on without turning an eye of compassion toward him who had uttered the cry of misery—the prayer of faith. *Commanded him to be brought unto him.* He would not perform the miracle till the blind man came to Him, that, by the manner of his walking, the spectators might be convinced that he was truly blind. *What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?* This question of our Lord was, in part, an expression of His readiness to aid; in part, also, for the calling out into yet livelier exercise the faith and expectation of the petitioner. Matt. ix. 28. *Lord, that I may receive my sight.* The man's cry had hitherto been a vague general cry for mercy, now he singles out the blessing which he craves, declares the channel in which he desired the solicited mercy to run. "My eyes are thirsty for the light. To me the wonderful realities of creation have long

been a dark and dismal blank. Thine is the power that can again reveal them like a new creation to my view."

42. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

• Luke xvii. 19.

*Receive thy sight.* Here, and in the verse preceding, as well as in the one following, the Greek word so rendered means, literally, "look up," or "see again." It is worthy of observation, that giving sight to the blind was peculiar to our Saviour. No instance is recorded in Scripture of this miracle having been wrought, either by prophets before His coming, or by His Apostles afterwards; nor is it mentioned among the miraculous powers which He conferred on them. In answer to Elisha's prayer, indeed, the Lord smote with a temporary and partial blindness the men who came to the prophet, and afterwards, at his request, their eyes were again opened; but this was very different from giving sight to those who were born blind, or who had become blind by disease. Our Lord was "the Light of the world." *Thy faith hath saved thee.* This expression seems to indicate very plainly that the blind man did not call Jesus "Son of David" as a mere appellation of dignity, and that he had some real belief that our Lord was the Messiah. Some miracles, early in His ministry, our Lord performed before the faith of the persons healed or restored, in order to create faith; other miracles He performed subsequent to the exercise of faith, to reward and thus increase faith. This assurance must have been dearer to the poor beggar than even his bodily sight; for it implied a promise of eternal blessedness.

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

† Luke v. 26; Acts iv. 21 and xl. 18.

The cure, by the power of Christ's word, was instantaneously effected. How great and welcome the change! The man who had hitherto been tied by his infirmity to one place was now free to go where he listed; and he chose well, for he chose to follow Jesus, by the way glorifying God. *And all the people, &c.* All the multitude, deeply impressed with the miracle they had witnessed, united with the blind man in his doxology. In recording the effect of this miracle, it is as if Luke would cause us 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. See Ch. xix. 37. That the Saviour Himself no longer desired to check this triumphant praise, appears even from the fact that He did not impose on the blind man any silence about what had been done; nor require that he, like the demoniac, Mark v. 19, should go home; but willingly allowed Bartimeus to swell the enthusiastic throng and go before it.

In viewing the case of Bartimeus, let us not fail to see an emblem of the blindness, ignorance, misery, and poverty, into which man is cast by sin, with respect to heavenly things. It is, alas! one property of spiritual blindness to keep the person from perceiving it. The conversion of a sinner is sometimes linked to, and depends upon, a first motion, which seems natural, upon curiosity or mere chance; and yet it is really no other than a gift of God, who intends to save him. There are times when Jesus passes specially near to us: we should improve them, lest the opportunity may be lost forever; we should not sit lazily at home, and wait for relief to come to Christ. We are insensible of our spiritual diseases, when we do not find ourselves

inclined and moved to pray. In prayer we must expect, not because we deserve, but because we need. When a man is first in earnest about his salvation, and begins to cry that his eyes may be opened, he will find strong hindrances, and these even sometimes from such as seem, like this multitude, to be with Jesus, and on His side. These hindrances, however, should only stimulate him to still greater earnestness. The man who will overcome obstacles will find such as began by reprehending will finish by applauding. Mark x. 49. What power has the prayer of faith! *Joshua* prayed, and the sun in the heavens stood still that he might fully beat down the enemies. Now, *Jesus*, the Sun of Righteousness, which, in mid-course, was soon to descend, also stood still, at the cry of a poor sufferer. Nothing is so attractive to the Son of God as the cry of a believing penitent. If our wish is a good one, God will surely fulfil it. We cannot pray too often for the bright and active light of faith. When Divine grace has changed our hearts, the praise of our salvation should be given to God. We should resolve to show our gratitude by becoming followers and disciples of Jesus. Never will men take up the cross and confess Christ before the world, and live to Him, until they feel that they are indebted to Him for pardon, peace, and hope. It is our duty to praise God when we witness displays of His saving power.

## QUESTIONS.

1. For whom did Peter speak?
2. Did he speak in a proud spirit?
3. Were great sacrifices necessary when the gospel was first preached?
4. What is meant by " manifold? "
5. What is said about persecutions?
6. What is to be added to the earthly advantages of godliness?
7. Why did Jesus tell the twelve alone of His approaching death and resurrection?
8. What is said about Jerusalem?
9. Did the Saviour go willingly to suffer?
10. What is said about " all things that are written, " &c. ?
11. What did the Jews generally think of a Messiah who should suffer?
12. What is the significance of the word " delivered? "
13. What is meant by " the Gentiles? "
14. What part had the Romans in the sufferings and death of our Lord?
15. State the reasons why Christ mentioned His resurrection.
16. What does the resurrection of our Lord teach us?
17. How are we to account for the disciples' ignorance of Christ's sufferings?
18. What does this ignorance show?
19. Was the meeting of Jesus with the blind man fortuitous?
20. What is said about Jericho?
21. Does the place still exist?
22. How is this narrative to be reconciled with those of Matthew and Mark?
23. What does Mark say this blind man's name was?
24. What is the meaning of " Bartimeus? "
25. What is the best method of treating beggars?
26. What is said of the influence of the gospel on the poor and afflicted?
27. How did the blind man know that Jesus was approaching?
28. What did the people call our Lord?
29. How had Bartimeus heard of Christ?
30. What did the beggar call Jesus?
31. What is said about his faith?
32. In what sense did the people rebuke the blind man?

83. Why did they rebuke him ?
84. What did he do when rebuked ?
85. What did Jesus command concerning the beggar ?
86. Why did He do this ?
87. Why did Christ ask him what he wished ?
88. What did Bartimeus answer ?
89. What are we to understand by the words "receive thy sight ?"
40. Did any Prophet or Apostle ever restore sight to the blind ?
41. What does Christ's commendation of the man's faith indicate ?
42. Did the Lord always require faith in performing His miracles ?
43. What was the meaning of the assurance He gave the beggar ?
44. How was the cure effected ?
45. Did it take place immediately ?
46. What was the effect upon the blind man ?
47. What was the effect upon the people ?
48. Did Christ impose silence on the blind man concerning the cure ?
49. Why not ?
50. Did He allow him to follow Him ?
51. Repeat the practical lessons which this narrative teaches.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### LESSON CXI.

vs. 1-10.

MANY, no doubt, were converted to the faith of Christ, of whom no record is kept in the Gospels ; but the conversion of some, whose case had something extraordinary in it, is recorded, as that of Zaccheus, with the record of which this chapter begins.

#### 1. And *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho.

*Entered and passed through.* This might be more literally rendered, "was passing through." *Jericho.* An ancient city in the plain of Jordan, about six miles west of that river, and nineteen east of Jerusalem. Josh vi. See Notes on ch. xviii. ver. 85. This was our Lord's last journey toward the scene of His approaching betrayal and sufferings. Luke, after having detailed many contests in this region, of our Lord against the Pharisees in behalf of the publicans, brings the strife to a triumphant close in the case of Zaccheus. See xv. 1, xvi. 14, xvii. 10, xviii. 9.

2. And, behold, *there was* a man named Zaccheus, *which was* the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

<sup>a</sup> Ezra ii. 9.

*Behold.* This word serves to call attention to the incident which follows. It is frequently found in the New Testament, when something wonderful is about to be narrated. It is both great and good news to hear of a soul converted unto God, especially such a remarkable sinner as Zaccheus was. *Zaccheus* is a Hebrew name, signifying "Pure." This Hebrew name, with

Greek ending, of itself denotes him as a man of Jewish origin. See also ver. 9. *Which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.* The employment of publicans in the collection of the revenue, was the only civil office in which native Jews were employed by the Romans. The office of chief of the publicans at so important a place as Jericho must have been one of great importance and responsibility, and, as we learn from the text, lucrative to him who held it. We may understand that Zaccheus was a sort of comptroller-general to whom the inferior publicans rendered their account, and was himself the responsible officer to whom the Romans looked. Or it may not be unlikely that he farmed the revenues of this district from the Romans. How difficult the salvation of the rich man, who is abandoned to the love of his wealth, and, besides, in a post wherein he grows every day richer! Luke xviii. There is, however, nothing too hard for God's grace to accomplish. A covetous tax-gatherer may be transformed into a liberal Christian. The opening of the *eyes* of Bartimeus was not so great a work as opening the *heart* of Zaccheus. We should never be afraid to maintain that Christ is "able to save to the uttermost," and that the vilest of sinners may be freely forgiven if they will only come to Him. A man should not continue in any position he occupies, if his eternal salvation requires that he should leave it.

3. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

† John xii. 21.

He felt a strong desire to see Jesus, of whose kindness to his despised order he had, doubtless, heard much from other publicans, and who had, in fact, a publican among His chosen friends and followers. But how could he see Him? Jesus would not be likely to pass his house, nor did He travel in any chariot, or upon horse or camel, so as to be seen from far; but walked on foot along the dusty roads, undistinguished, probably, in stature or appearance, from the crowds around him. Besides, Zaccheus himself was a little man, who could not even thrust his way through a crowd, or overlook the heads of others. It cannot be doubted that he was influenced by curiosity to behold one of whom he had heard so much, but it may also be believed that he was also under the power of a vague longing for some spiritual good from the great Teacher, whose miracles and instructions were so widely talked of. His wealth did not yet satisfy him, and some degree of desire for higher treasures had been awakened in his heart. We may suppose his state of mind to have been like that of the Greeks, John xii. 21. A desire to know spiritual and invisible riches is an extraordinary grace in a person who abounds in earthly. Two impediments hinder the conversion of such a person—the crowd of the world and its affairs, and the littleness of the heart of man for the things of salvation.

4. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.

‡ Luke v. 19.

§ 1 Kings x. 27; 1 Chron. xxvii. 23; Is. lx. 10.

So strong was his anxiety to see the good Prophet of Nazareth, that he first left his dwelling, and placed himself on the way where the caravan going to the feast must pass by—then, having striven in vain to discover a spot that would secure him a comfortable standing place and an unobstructed view, he ran in advance of the company, and *climbed up into a sycamore tree*, more frequently called the *sycamine tree*. Sycamore trees abounded in the neighborhood of Jericho. Trees generally might be planted at twenty-five cubits' distance from the walls of a town, but the carob and sycamore trees

not nearer than fifty cubits. This restriction was on account of the large branches of these latter trees. *For he was to pass that way.* It was publicly



SYCAMORE TREE.

known that the Saviour's route lay toward Jerusalem. Dr. Thomson says: "Nothing is easier than to climb into these sycamores, and, in fact, here is a score of boys and girls in this one; and, as its giant arms stretch quite across the road, those on them can look directly down upon any crowd passing beneath. It is admirably adapted to the purpose for which Zaccheus selected it." The running and climbing of so wealthy a man and so prominent an official as Zaccheus to see a religious teacher, would, of course, call forth mockery from all who saw him. But he cared not for man's opinion. He did not, like Nicodemus, come to Jesus by night, but in open day, surrounded by spectators, and he exposed himself to ridicule in his efforts to see Him. It is necessary in order to true conversion, for a man to have a holy eagerness to raise himself above

earthly things, that he may see and know Christ. Almost all the outward obstacles in the way of seeking salvation are surmounted, when once we rise above the judgments and talk of men. Upon the little action of Zaccheus climbing the tree, so far as man's eyes can see, there hinged the salvation of his soul. We must never "despise the day of small things." Zech. iv. 10. The ways by which the Holy Ghost leads men and women to Christ are wonderful and mysterious.

5. And when Jesus came to the place, *he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.*

• Ezek. vi. 6; John i. 48. † Gen. xviii. 3, 5; John xiv. 23; Eph. iii. 17; Heb. xiii. 2; Rev. iii. 20.

Zaccheus came to look upon Christ and resolved to take particular notice of Him, but little thought of being noticed by Christ. That was an honor too great, and too far above his merit, for him to have anticipated. *Looked up, and saw him, and said.* Zaccheus did not cry for mercy as Bartimeus did. How much astonished must he have felt when Jesus, glancing upward to the overhanging branch on which he rested, addressed him as he did! He must have been ready to exclaim, as Nathanael once did, "Whence knowest thou me?" John i. 48. It was evident the Lord knew not only his name, but his *circumstances*. He knew that he had a *house* in which he could receive guests. He knew *more* than this, He knew his *heart*. He was sure that Zaccheus was *willing* to entertain Him beneath his roof; He must have known it, for He himself had made him willing. *Make haste, and come down.* Hurry and have done with such expedients and concealments. *For to-day.* My call to suffer at Jerusalem brooks no delay. *I must abide at thy house.* Knowing already the more than readiness of the publican to extend a hospitable reception, and his ability to do so, Jesus did not ask him if it would be agreeable or convenient for him to receive Him and His disciples as guests, but assumed that his hospitality would be cordially extended. As our Lord was passing through Jericho without making any pause, it is

probable that this incident took place in the latter part of the day, and that He spent the night with Zaccheus. On no other occasion is it recorded that He entered without invitation the house of a stranger. Christ sometimes comes to those who seek him not. Is. lxxv. 1. This instance in which our Lord, *unasked*, stopped and spoke to Zaccheus, offered Himself to be his guest though he was a sinner, and sent into his heart the renewing grace of the Spirit, is a remarkable illustration of His free compassion towards sinners, and His power to change hearts. Impenitent men must come down from their high opinion of themselves, if they would receive salvation from Him who is "meek and lowly in heart," and the urgency of their case requires that there should be no delay in doing so. God gives men a desire to know Him, and He even goes beyond this desire, by giving Himself to be possessed by them.

6. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

He rendered a prompt and cheerful obedience to the command he had received to descend from the tree. *And received him joyfully.* He had now *seen* who He was, and he wished to *hear* what He was, and therefore he rejoiced in the honor that God had now conferred upon Him, leading the Saviour's way to the courts of his home. No wonder he rejoiced in the prospect of an opportunity of conversation with Him who knew all things. The very condescension of such a famous Teacher of religion in offering to be a publican's guest, touched and softened his heart, which doubtless Jesus had already changed by heavenly influence conveyed with the invitation to come down from the tree. We are to go to Christ just as we are, and not wait in the vain hope that we can make ourselves fit and worthy to approach Him and receive Him. How often does Jesus make the proposal of lodging, not only in our house, but in our heart, without its being accepted! Rev. iii. 20. When Jesus calls us, we should hasten to obey. Ps. xxvii. 8.

7. And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, "That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner."

† Matt. ix. 11; Luke v. 30.

*Saw it*—Jesus entering the house of Zaccheus. *They all murmured.* The "all" here mentioned must doubtless be the Pharisees, and the Pharisaical portion of the crowd which followed our Lord. It cannot of course mean His disciples. The self-righteous Pharisees were indignant that He who claimed to be the Messiah should compromise His dignity, and risk the reputation of His holiness by availing Himself of the hospitality of a *sinner*. Publicans and sinners were classed together, because many of the tax-gatherers were bad men and were despised by the Jews, and hence to be a publican came to be equivalent to being a sinner. This accusation against our Lord was indeed a truth, and one not confined to any person or to any time. As it was then, so is it now; the Saviour is the sinner's frequent guest. No heart so vile, so polluted, so sin-defiled, that Jesus refuses to enter there.

8. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by <sup>h</sup>false accusation, <sup>i</sup>I restore *him* four-fold.

<sup>h</sup> Luke iii. 14.

<sup>i</sup> Exod. xxii. 1; 1 Sam. xii. 3; 2 Sam. xii. 6.

What took place in the house of Zaccheus is not fully reported by the Evangelist; but the result is given, and is such as to show that the publican profited well by the Divine teachings he was now enabled to receive from the mouth of Jesus. He stood forth in the presence of the whole company, and professed his readiness to make all the restitution in his power for his ill-gotten gain. From the very hour the tree was planted, it began to bear. *The half of my goods I give to the poor, not have given.* Here was no boasting of what had already been done in days of ignorance, but a simple declaration of what he was now ready, from this moment, unhesitatingly to perform. He did not say he would give it by his *will*, as many give away their money in charity when they can no longer keep or enjoy it, but that he would give it *now*. However uncharitable to the poor he may have hitherto been, he now resolves to relieve them, and to give so much the more for having neglected the duty so long. This he would do, not expecting to be justified by his works, but merely by his good works, through the grace of God, to evince the sincerity of his faith and repentance. He addresses himself to Christ, in making this declaration, and not to the people, who were not to be his judges. He stands, as it were, at Christ's bar. The good that we do, we must do as unto Him. We must appeal to Him, and approve ourselves to Him in our integrity, in all our good purposes and resolutions. *And if I have taken any thing from any man.* A better rendering would be, *whatever I have taken.* *By false accusation.* The word so translated is very peculiar. Luke iii. 14. The Greek word from which it is formed is the origin of our English word "sycophant." It is said to have been originally applied at Athens, to persons who informed against those who illegally exported figs, and who were therefore called *fig-exposers*. Afterwards the word seems to have been applied to every one who wronged another by false, or frivolous, or vexatious information, and finally, to any extortion under pretence of law. *I restore him four-fold.* In our days he would probably have expressed himself as meaning to restore principal and interest; but the law forbade the Jews to take interest of one another. The same law required a fourfold restitution, upon conviction, from a man who stole a sheep, (Exod. xxii. 1.) but he had only to add one-fifth of the value, when, without being detected or tried, he made a voluntary confession of his offence. Num. v. 7. Some have alleged that oppressive publicans were, by the Roman law, required to restore four-fold, but this was only after judgment obtained, where they had been guilty of extorting by force; whereas, before conviction, it was enough to make restitution of what had been taken; and even after it, in common cases, all that the law required was restoring twice as much. Zaccheus, therefore, showed the unflinching character of his repentance, by voluntarily subjecting himself to the stringent penalties incurred only by a conviction in the courts of law. True conversion shows itself by the change of life. He who has wronged his fellow-man must make restitution, if he have it in his power. The man who feels the evil of sin, and longs for a deliverance, will feel that restoration is not a law of hardship, but a relief and a delight. If we would give proof that we are believers, we must, like Zaccheus, renounce the sins which have formerly most easily beset us, and follow the Christian graces which we have formerly most habitually neglected. Faith that does not purify the heart and life is not Faith at all.

9. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iv. 11, 12, 16; Gal. iii. 7.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiii. 16.

*Said unto him, rather, concerning him, as He addressed the crowd. This day is salvation, &c.* Salvation has here, as in ch. i. 77, its highest spiritual sense of deliverance from sin and its consequences, and the bestowment of

eternal life and blessedness in the kingdom of Christ. An indirect allusion may also have been made in the use of the term, to the name of Jesus, (*Saviour*), who had been the guest of Zaccheus. The publican had really shown himself to be another man from what he appeared to be in the eyes of the multitude. *Forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.* Jesus pronounced this eulogy upon him whom the murmuring crowd had just before named as "a man that is a sinner." "Notwithstanding all the sins he has committed, it is now manifest that even this man also is a true son of Abraham, and that, not only in respect of his lineal descent, but of his faith and holiness." There is a period in the history of some families, when true religion *first* finds admittance. Various are the *means* by which it gains entrance. Sometimes it is through a pious friend, and sometimes through a pious servant. In some cases the family are led to hear a faithful minister, in others to read a holy book. But whatever are the *means* employed, that period is memorable, indeed, when the *first* member of a family turns to the Lord with all his heart. That member will not rest satisfied with serving God *alone*, he will offer prayers, and use persuasions, till his children or his parents, his brethren and his sisters, unite in the same blessed service. Salvation in a house will show itself by honoring God, secret and family prayer, restitution where it is right, charity towards the poor, and religion pervading tempers, words, and conduct.

10. <sup>m</sup>For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

<sup>m</sup> Matt. xviii. 11. See Matt. x. 6 and xv. 24.

Though our Lord was continually healing the lame and the blind, it was *not* to heal *them* he came into the world. *It was to seek and to save that which was lost*, lost in sin, as we all are by nature. This was His blessed and glorious errand. He came to suffer and die that we might be saved. And the greater the depth of sin and misery into which we have fallen, the more urgent should be the demand we make upon the love of Him who "died for our offences, and rose again for our justification," and who is able to save to the uttermost—in point of number, as well as of the heinousness of sin—all who come unto God through Him. It is more than probable that in this verse our Lord alludes to the parables of the lost sheep, lost money, and lost son, which He had lately delivered, to prove how agreeable it was to reason, to the duties of His mission, and to the will of God, that He should keep company with the worst of sinners, in order to recover them unto God, their rightful owner. And therefore, though Zaccheus had been really as bad a man as the multitude regarded him, and his vocation bespoke him to be, Jesus was in the exercise of His duty when He went to lodge with him. The cavillings of our Lord's enemies drew forth many of His most precious sayings.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is to be understood by "entered and passed through?"
2. What is said about Jericho?
3. Was this our Lord's last journey toward Jerusalem?
4. What is the significance of "Behold?"
5. What kind of a name is Zaccheus?
6. What does it mean?
7. Why is he called "chief among the publicans?"
8. Why did he wish to see Jesus?
9. Why did he climb the tree?
10. What is said about the sycamore tree?
11. What does his running and climbing teach?

12. What did Jesus say to him when He saw him?
13. Why must these words have astonished Zaccheus?
14. Why did Jesus say He must abide at the house of Zaccheus?
15. How does our Lord's treatment of the publican show His compassion for sinners?
16. What did Zaccheus do under Christ's command?
17. How are we to go to Jesus?
18. Who murmured when Christ went home with Zaccheus?
19. Why did they murmur?
20. Why was Zaccheus referred to as "a sinner"?
21. Is Jesus willing now to be the sinner's guest?
22. Do we know what took place in the house of Zaccheus at this time?
23. What did the publican declare his readiness to do?
24. Was this in the spirit of boasting?
25. What did he wish to show by this declaration?
26. What is meant by "false accusation"?
27. Was Zaccheus required to restore four-fold?
28. What was the Jewish law on this subject?
29. What did the readiness of Zaccheus to restore more than was required, show?
30. Is restitution to those we have wronged, a duty?
31. How can we give proof that we are true believers?
32. What is meant by "salvation"?
33. Why did Jesus call Zaccheus "a son of Abraham"?
34. What is said about the period when religion *first* enters a family?
35. How will religion in a household show itself?
36. Did Christ come into the world merely to heal the physically diseased?
37. For what purpose, then, did he come?
38. Are we all lost by nature?
39. How are we lost?
40. Have we strong encouragement to go to Jesus?
41. Why?
42. To what parables did Christ probably allude in ver. 9?
43. Why did He allude to them?
44. What drew forth many of our Lord's most precious sayings?

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## LESSON CXII.

vs. 11-17.

11. And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

= Acts i. 6.

Our Lord had just spoken of Himself as one who had come into the world for a great end, to seek and to save that which was lost, ver. 10. Through a misunderstanding of these words, the disciples may have been confirmed in the error which they held in common with the mass of the people, that Jesus was to establish, and probably during this very visit to Jerusalem, which He was now making in so open and public a manner, an earthly kingdom, from which they, as His friends, would receive honor, power, and great glory.

This error was two-fold : 1. That this kingdom should be *immediately*, without any further delay, set up ; and, 2. That it should *appear*, should stand forth as a visible institution. Before reaching Jerusalem, which was about twenty miles distant from Jericho, our Lord undertook to correct these erroneous views and expectations concerning the Messiah's kingdom, by declaring its true nature, and showing how men would stand related to it. This was done in the parable which follows, and which was probably addressed to the listening multitude from the gallery of the court of the house of Zaccheus.

Some have regarded this parable, and that of the talents, in Matt. xxv. 14-30, as one and the same. But they are not so. Although in many of their features there is a strong resemblance, in others there is a decisive difference. *This* parable was spoken before Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, and at the house of Zaccheus ; *that*, while He was seated on the Mount of Olives, the third day after His entry into the city. *This* was addressed to a mixed multitude ; *that*, to Christ's own immediate disciples. In *this*, there are ten servants ; in *that*, there are three. *This* shows that Christians differ in the diligence they display ; *that* shows that they differ in the amount of gifts they receive. The parable of the pounds supposes a case in which all the servants receive equal privileges, and shows that even those of them who are faithful may be unequal as to the amount of their success. The parable of the talents supposes a case in which unequal privileges are bestowed upon the servants, and shows that when unequal gifts are employed with equal diligence, the approval is equal in the day of account. The parable of the talents was designed to illustrate and enforce the duty of so improving our time, talents, and privileges, that we may be in a state of constant readiness to account therefor, whenever our Lord shall summon us to a reckoning. The parable of the pounds was designed to disabuse the multitude of the notion that Christ was at this time to be publicly received and acknowledged by the Jews as their long-expected Messiah. Thus, though both Matthew and Luke show that the Lord bestows privileges on His servants, and demands faithfulness in return, and both show that the diligent are rewarded and the unprofitable condemned, yet the parables differ in many important respects.

12. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

• Matt. xxv. 14 ; Mark xlii. 34.

A *certain nobleman*—a man of noble birth, through his birth, family, ancestry, distinguished from the rest of the people, ver. 14. The reference is to our Lord Himself, who being descended from Abraham and David, after the flesh, was of kingly origin, and, besides, was the Son of God. See 1 Tim. i. 17. *Went into a far country*. Heaven is here meant, which Isaiah calls "the land that is afar off." The reference is to the exodus which Christ soon afterwards accomplished at Jerusalem, comprising His death, resurrection, and ascension. *To receive for himself a kingdom*. Those in Judea who, by hereditary succession or by interest, had pretensions to the Jewish throne, travelled to Rome, in order to have it confirmed to them. Not long before this time, Herod the Great first went that long journey to obtain the kingdom of Judea from Antony, in which he succeeded, and having "received the kingdom," he afterwards travelled from Judea to Rhodes, in order to obtain a confirmation from Cæsar, in which he was equally successful. Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod, did the same. To this transaction our Lord is supposed here to allude, making it the basis of the parable. Jesus ascended into heaven to take possession of the kingdom, the right to which, as Messiah, He had acquired, and the foundation of which He had laid by His obedience and sufferings. Dan. iv. 3 ; Isa. ix. 7 ; Luke i. 33 ; Philip. ii.

8, 9; Heb. i. 3, 8, 9. All power was given to Him in heaven and on earth. He was invested with the kingdom by God, His Father. In virtue of that investiture, He has right to rule supreme over that world, on which before He had not where to lay His head. He has His kingdom in heaven, and from thence He exercises His power, (Matt. xxviii. 18; Philip. ii. 9-11; Eph. i. 17, 20-22,) until He comes at the last day to the judgment. Matt. xxv. 31.

13. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten \*pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

\* Gr. *mina*.

*Called*, summoned into his presence, *ten servants*. The word *ten* is here used of an indefinite number. Some think the original expression should rather be rendered, *having called ten of his servants*. By *servants*, are represented all who profess and call themselves Christians. Only two classes of persons are mentioned as having remained in the country while the nobleman was absent—servants and adversaries, ver. 14. In a spiritual point of view, only two classes exist: those who serve Christ as the Lord that bought them, and those who, being at enmity with God, refuse to obey the gospel of His Son. *Ten pounds*—in Greek, *ten mina*. A pound was the sixtieth part of a talent, or about \$15, so that the servants, in the parable of the talent, received much more than those here. There, the lord left his whole property in the hands of his servants; here, he committed to them only a slight gift to prove their faithfulness. The distribution of the pounds is made equally, to show unequal fidelity to equal trusts; that of the talents unequally, (Matt. xxv. 15,) to show equal fidelity under unequal trusts. All Christians do not enjoy *equal* opportunities of usefulness. The nobleman gave the pounds to his servants, not that they might enjoy themselves therewith, but that, through application, they might increase them and give employment to others. Matt. x. 27; ver. 14, 15; 1 Cor. xii. 4-11. The Greek word translated "occupy" is only found here. It means, literally, "employ in business, or trading." *Till I come*, i. e., all the time of my absence. The place and age in which our lot has been cast, our early education, our bodily members and mental powers, our station in society, and the circle of our homes, money, time, health, wealth, and influence, and, in addition, the graces of the Spirit, in whatever measure they may have been conferred, all that we are and have belongs to God, and must be used for His glory, and the good of our fellow-creatures. For the use we make of all our gifts, graces, and opportunities, we are to give account. Our belief of the return of Christ, and the uncertainty under which He has left us as to the time of His coming, ought to make us ever active and diligent in improving the sacred trust which He has committed to us, in whatever way and sphere this can best be done.

14. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us.

p John i. 11.

Those who suppose that the visit of Archelaus to Rome furnished the basis of this parable, find the groundwork of this message in the deputation of fifty persons sent by the Jews to Augustus, to complain against Archelaus. *His citizens*. By these are doubtless meant in the first instance the Jews. They are here thus named, as by John they are called Christ's "own," for, according to the oldest predictions, He was the King of Zion. They sent messages after Him to show that they would not acknowledge Him as their king, when they incited the heathen to persecute the followers of Him whom they crucified. They still send after Him such messages, because they pronounce the curse over all their members who venture to receive the Christian

faith. All persons, however, are included in the number of these "citizens," who will only recognize Jesus as an enlightened Teacher, but not as their Lord and Saviour. *His citizens.* It was not a foreign kingdom this nobleman went to obtain, but the sovereignty over His own state. *Hated him.* The original imports a permanent, settled hatred, entertained toward the nobleman, even before he set out on his journey. That they hated him "without a cause" is evident from the fact that in the message which they sent to the potentate, they alleged no crime against him. *Sent a message after him,* would be better translated, *sent an embassy, &c.* *We will not have this man to reign over us.* This very declaration twice found formal utterance from the lips of the Jews—once when they cried to Pilate, "We have no king but Cæsar," and again, when they said, "Write not, The King of the Jews." *We will not.* The verb *will* here, as in several places of the New Testament, loses much of its force by being mistaken for the auxiliary verb *will.* Let it here be rendered, "we *will* that this man shall not reign over us!" It is a wicked, insulting *will* that originates and continues the foul rebellion. This is no more than a mere shadow of the rebellion of a sinner against his God. None who refuse to have Jesus Christ to reign over them can possibly avoid being slaves to sin under the dominion of the devil. All who follow the maxims of the world, which is an enemy of Christ, declare plainly enough by so doing, the sad and startling truth, that they disclaim and reject the authority and government of Christ. This "message" will have its full and final and fearful fulfilment in the great apostasy of the last days, (Ps. ii.; Rev. xiii. 5, 6; Dan. vii. 25;) and at the day of judgment, when all evil men, not by deed only, but also by word openly, will deny their relation and subjection to Jesus, as their Lord and King.

15. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given \*the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

\* *Silver*—and so verse 23.

*When he was returned.* The message which the citizens sent after the nobleman had no effect; he received the kingdom, and returned with full authority, which he exercised in calling his servants to account, and in punishing his rebellious subjects. Thus Jesus was constituted King in Zion, at the time the decree went forth, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Compare Ps. ii. 6-12, where is the prophetic annunciation of the very enthronement set forth in this parable. Christ will come again, notwithstanding all the unbelief, mockery, and opposition of His enemies. When the servants are summoned one by one to meet their Master, they are tried as to their faithfulness and diligence in their high and holy trust. *He commanded, &c.* These words refer to the general judgment. *That he might know.* As the Omniscient, Christ knows all things, but the conduct of one and all must be made known before the whole world, as also the righteousness of the Lord be acknowledged in rewarding and punishing. *How much every man had gained by trading.* The inquiry was two-fold. 1. As to who had been diligent. 2. As to the gain that had been made. The nobleman had not given them weapons for fight. The Lord reserves justice and judgment for His own hands. What the nobleman gave to the servants was the current coin and the peaceful business of the realm. It is thus the duty of Christ's servants not to advance His power by persecution, but to enrich His spiritual realm with its fitting toils and sacrifices. On the day of judgment all shall reckon with the Judge. The dead shall be raised from their graves. The living shall all be summoned to the bar. The books shall be opened. High and low, rich and poor, shall stand "before the judgment-seat of

Christ," to account for the powers, privileges, and opportunities with which they were favored in the time of their probation. How solemn will that reckoning be!

16. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

*Then came.* Literally, came forward to the royal tribunal, where they were to render their account. With a sweet and cheerful boldness does the faithful servant come before his Lord. The investigation is carried on with each one separately. Each must stand or fall on his own merits. *Thy pound hath gained ten pounds.* In deep humility he acknowledges that the gain is not his own, but the Lord's; therefore, he says, with emphasis, **THY POUND.** So Paul speaks: "I, yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me." See 1 Peter iv. 10. He is not said to have *doubled* his pound; but, instead of this, to have gained *ten* pounds by his *one*. By this we are given to understand the unbounded power of expansion in the gift of God's grace in Christ, when really, and faithfully received by His servants. It is not said *how* the gain was accomplished by this servant. Such a result may be reached by a minister in the Church of God who faithfully discharges his office, or by the faithful Sabbath-school teacher or tract distributor, or by the wealthy man who liberally distributes his means for the good of man and the glory of God, or by the magistrate who, in the fear of God, well discharges the duty of guarding the morals and peace of society. How great will be the consolation of the Christian, whose conscience shall give testimony of his fidelity at the hour of death!

17. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

¶ Matt. xxv. 21 · Luke xvi. 10.

*Well, thou good servant.* Though we are not saved for the merit of our works, (for our sins infinitely overbalance all our good,) yet, having been forgiven all our sins by the merits of Christ, all that we have done of good, or avoided of evil, by faith in Christ, our final Judge will graciously applaud and reward. *Well.* A word of approval; brief, but comprehensive and final. *Because thou hast been faithful in a very little.* The sum intrusted to him was comparatively small, but it served to test his industry and fidelity, and therefore was not permitted to limit his reward. However small a man's gifts and opportunities, he is as much accountable for using them rightly as if they were very great. And the poorest and the humblest Christian, if he uses his one pound well, shall be as carefully noticed and rewarded as the mightiest king. *Have thou authority over ten cities.* An allusion to the custom formerly (as it seems) prevalent in the East, of assigning the government and revenues of a certain number of cities or towns, as a reward to favorites and faithful officers. Thus Cyrus the Great bestowed upon Pytharchotus, the Cyrican, his favorite, seven cities; and Artaxerxes assigned to Themistocles two cities, or, as some say, five. The favor which Christ will show at last to his faithful servants will be, first of all, this: He will show greater confidence in them now than ever. They have had a certain charge committed to them; they have been faithful in *that*; He will now enlarge His trust exceedingly, which He will place in their hands, on the principle He Himself enunciated: "He that is faithful in that which is least, will be faithful also in much." The work of the saved, in their Master's service, measures, in some way, their recompense at their Master's side. In all cases,

the wages given, seeing they depend on the merits of the Mediator, must be immeasurably greater than the work done; but it would appear that the differences, which shall obtain in heaven, will bear some proportion to the productiveness of the service here. How much a city is greater in value than a pound, we cannot calculate exactly; but the difference represents the gain that all the true servants will make at the coming of their King. All the faithful are made great; but the greatest worker is the greatest winner when the accounts are closed. He who has made the *best* use of grace on earth is, on that very account, fitted for the highest place in heaven.

## QUESTIONS.

1. In what error, possibly, may the disciples have been confirmed?
2. What is said of this error?
3. When, and how, did Jesus undertake to correct it?
4. Is this parable and that of the talents identical?
5. How does it appear that they are not the same?
6. To whom is reference made in the words "a certain nobleman?"
7. Explain "went into a far country."
8. What is said of "to receive for himself a kingdom?"
9. What did Jesus ascend into heaven to take possession of?
10. By whom was He invested with this kingdom?
11. What right has He in virtue of that investiture?
12. What is said of the word "ten?"
13. Who are represented by "servants?"
14. What two classes of persons are mentioned in the parable?
15. How much was a pound?
16. How was the distribution of the pounds made?
17. Why were they given?
18. Explain "Occupy till I come."
19. To whom does all we are and have belong?
20. How should our belief of the return of Christ influence us?
21. Who are meant by "his citizens?"
22. Explain "sent a message after him."
23. What is said of "hated him?"
24. What is said of "we will not have this man," &c.?
25. What is said of those who refuse to have Jesus reign over them?
26. Explain "when he was returned."
27. Explain "he commanded," &c.
28. Explain "that he might know," &c.
29. What is said of "thy pound hath gained ten pounds?"
30. What was said to the first servant?
31. Explain "because thou hast been faithful," &c.
32. To what is there an allusion in "have thou authority," &c.?
33. What is said of the favor Christ will show to his faithful servants?

## LESSON CXIII

vs. 18-27.

18. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

*The second.* We hear nothing of the other seven servants, but we need not, for this reason, conclude that they had wholly lost or wasted the money intrusted to them. Rather may we believe that the three who come forward are adduced as specimens of classes, and that the rest, while all we are to learn is learned from the three, are, for brevity's sake, omitted. *THY pound.* Here, as in the former case, humility is shown by the servant in acknowledging that the gain is not his own, but the Lord's. It will be noticed that this servant had received an equal amount with the first. *He hath gained five pounds.* The limitation as regards the productiveness of God's grace, in this case, does not spring from any thing in that gift itself, but from the less degree of faithfulness and unceasing diligence on the part of him who has it.

19. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

The commendation bestowed on the first servant is here withheld from the second, who, with the same pound, had only gained the half of what the first had gained, in order thereby to intimate that the reward should be different in just that proportion in which the profit of the labor is greater or less. The gain, indeed, creates the capacity for the reward. *Over five cities.* The honor, riches, power, and authority of a temporal government are but a faint shadow and resemblance of that which he shall receive at the hands of God, who has faithfully managed and improved the wealth of his sovereign Master. Rev. iii. 21, iv. 6; Matt. xix. 28; 1 Cor. viii. 2, 5. The doctrine of reward according to works is here plainly taught, as it is also in other places of Scripture. "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." "There are degrees of glory in heaven. Every vessel will be alike full, but not alike large. And the degree of glory there will be according to the degrees of usefulness here." 1 Cor. iii. 8. The people of God receive little apparent recompense in this present time; but the day comes, when they shall find, to their amazement, that their Master will repay them a hundred-fold for every thing they have done and borne for Him. There is a "glory" to be "revealed." Rom. viii. 18. Let the thought of that glory cheer us in every time of need, and sustain us in every dark hour. Many, no doubt, "are the afflictions of the righteous." One great receipt for bearing them patiently is to "have respect," like Moses, "to the recompense of the reward." Ps. xxxiv. 19; Heb. xi. 26.

20. And another came, saying, 'Lord, behold, *here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:*

† Prov. xxvi. 13, 16; Matt. xxv. 24, ver. 13; Luke iii. 9 and vi. 46; James iv. 17.

Two are represented to have been diligent and only one indolent; but no information is thereby given regarding the proportions of mankind in

general, or within the Church, who shall be found faithful in the great day. We can well understand why this servant should have lingered to the last, being reluctant to appear in the presence of his Lord. *Here is thy pound.* Our Lord does not mean by this, that men of inferior responsibilities are less likely to discharge them than those of higher. The words, *here is*, are not in the original, so that the expression, literally rendered, is, "Lord, behold thy pound." *Which I have laid up in a napkin.* The word rendered "napkin" literally signifies a handkerchief, or "sweat-cloth," "which," says one, "not exerting himself, this idle servant does not need for its proper use, ('in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,' Gen. iii. 19,) hence uses it for the wrapping up of his pound. That he had it disengaged, and so free to be turned to this purpose, was itself a witness against him." This servant did not waste the money committed to him. He is a totally distinct character from the unjust steward, who wasted his master's goods, and from the prodigal, who spent his father's endowment in riotous living. He is the representative, not of the reckless that scatter, or of the infidel that denies; but of the professor who has a talent of some sort, yet refuses, or neglects to make a right and diligent use of it. Let it be noted that this man's laying up his pound in the handkerchief was not because the sum he had received was less than that of the others, or different from it, and therefore incapable of increase. Neither was it because he had no opportunity of turning it to account, or no inherent energy of action able to do so. Neither was it because he had no intelligible instructions, for this is not pleaded. He said in effect, "I give you back all you gave me. I have done no harm." He was mistaken in supposing that he could return the pound as he had received it, because not to use is to waste.

21. 'For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

• Matt. xxv. 24; Rom. viii. 15.

*Feared thee.* He justifies the caution and timidity he had shown, and how it was that he would attempt nothing and venture upon nothing: he feared to trade on that pound, lest in the necessary risks of business, seeking to gain other, he might lose that one, and so enrage his master against him, even as men might profess to fear to lay themselves out for the winning of other souls, lest, so doing, they might endanger their own. The man who feels deeply the value of his own soul feels most for the situation of others. *Austere.* Harsh, stern, unforgiving. The word is literally employed of that which is harsh and bitter to the taste. *Thou takest up, &c.* This is a proverbial description of an unjust, rigorous character. The slothful servant, by impudently applying it to his lord, and assigning it as the true reason why he had not increased his pound, as the others had done theirs, aggravated his crime not a little. Many will doubtless finally perish from moral cowardice. The fearful, as well as the unbelieving, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. (Rev. xxi. 8.) The heart of the unconverted man is figured in a very striking manner in this verse. Like Adam and Eve, when they had eaten the forbidden fruit, he is afraid of his Master in heaven, and does not love Him. Like the murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, he finds fault with God's appointment and dealings, and charges Him with hardness and injustice. All the value of service rendered by intellectual and moral beings depends on the thoughts of God which they entertain, and the thoughts which they entertain of God depend on the attitude in which He presents Himself to them—that is, upon the revelation of the Father in the person and work of the Son. Obviously, the conception which this man had formed of his Master's character was the direct,

efficient cause of his unprofitable idleness. The picture, at this point, represents a human heart secretly conscious of guilt, and reconciled through the gospel, and dreading the wrath of the righteous Judge. When one is at peace with God in the Redeemer, perfect love casteth out fear; but here, in the absence of this reconciliation, perfect fear casteth out love. Many a man fears to make a profession of religion, because he thinks a hard Master demands more than he can render.

22. And he saith unto him, 'Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. "Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow :

† 2 Sam. i. 16; Job xv. 6; Matt. xii. 37.

• Matt. xxv. 26.

\* *Out of thine own mouth, &c.* From your own acknowledgment, you are condemned. That which the servant had contrived for his justification the Lord applies to his confusion. *Thou wicked servant.* Sloth does not appear so much in the condemnation of this man, as doing wickedly. He had not listened to the entreaty, "We beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." A man is wicked who does not improve the gifts which God has bestowed upon him. The tree which brought forth no fruit was hewn down, and cast into the fire. *Thou knewest, &c.* The master echoes the culprit, in order to condemn him on his own grounds. This is not an acknowledgment of the vile and detestable charge of God's demanding of men more difficult services than He has furnished them for, and would assist them in, which would be a most unrighteous thought of God, but the servant's lord only argues with him on his own base principles, and shows that, even on them, he would be justly condemned for his negligence.

23. Wherefore, then, gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

• Exod. xxii. 25, 27; Deut. xxiii. 19, 20.

The lord draws from the accusation brought against him a conclusion just the opposite of that which the servant had drawn. "If thou didst really believe me to be the rigorous person thou sayest I am, why didst not thou lend out my money on proper security, that I might have received mine own with interest?—a method of improvement of thy pound which would have occasioned thee no trouble at all. Thy excuse, therefore, is a mere pretence." Men sometimes think that the doctrine of eternal condemnation is too terrible to believe, and so refuse to believe or repent. The infinitely better way is to say: "The eternal condemnation is so terrible I will make sure not to incur it."

24. And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

*Them that stood by.* The angels are here meant, who never fail to appear and take an active part in all scenes descriptive of the final judgment. *Take from him the pound.* Take what was intrusted to him, from that idle, suspicious, unfaithful servant, who otherwise might have had that and much more allotted him for his own property. All opportunity of serving Christ is now forever withdrawn. *And give it to him that hath ten pounds.* The lord ordered this pound thus to be disposed of, because it was agreeable to the rules of all wise administrations to bestow the most and the greatest trusts

on them who, by their fidelity in offices already enjoyed by them, had shown that they best deserved them. By having another pound given to him, it was intimated that this man's "ability" had become greater than before. Matt. xxv. 15. It will be observed that in this parable no other punishment is inflicted on the indolent servant than the deprivation of his capital. This may possibly be intended to intimate that culpable unfaithfulness in a true believer may sometimes descend so far as to be undistinguishable by human eyes from the entire neglect of the unbelieving. There is, however, in all cases, a dividing line, although we may not be able to trace it—"the Lord knoweth them that are His." Nor does this conception really weaken the motive to diligence; for if any one should slacken in his efforts to serve the Lord on the ground that a great deal of negligence, although it may diminish his reward, does not imperil his safety, this very thing would conclusively prove that he has no part in Christ.

25. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

They said, *i. e.*, those mentioned in the last verse, by whom are represented the angels. *He hath, &c.* They speak this in surprise at his assigning the pound taken from the wicked servant to one who had received so ample a reward, thinking there was no occasion to give an additional pound to one who had so many already. Perhaps they thought it more proper to give it to him who only had five pounds.

26. For I say unto you, "That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

*• Matt. xiii. 12 and xxv. 29; Mark iv. 25; Luke viii 18.*

Here the Lord unfolds the deep ground of His procedure, which, so far from being arbitrary, consists in the highest righteousness. Matt. xxv. 29. *Which hath.* Obviously from the whole circumstances of the case this means "which possesseth and useth aright." The wicked servant was distinguished from the others, not by not having, but by not using. The law announced here is, that they who employ well what they have shall retain it all, and receive more in addition; whereas, they who do not rightly employ what they have, will be deprived of that which they possess and do not use. "The earth which bringeth forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing," that is, a farther blessing—the gift of a continued fruitfulness "from God." Heb. vi. 7. Nor is it merely that the one receives more, and the other loses what he had, but *that very gift* which the one loses the other receives: he is enriched with a pound taken from the other. We see this continually; one, by the providence of God, steps into the place and the opportunities which another left unused, and so has forfeited. 1 Sam. xv. 28. *From him that hath not, &c., i. e.*, from him that does not use. This is a natural as well as a penal effect, of not using what we were bound to turn to proper account. If we cease to use a limb, its muscles die away, and its strength utterly departs. Corn hoarded up in the granary is soon destroyed. Intellect not drawn on, soon flags. This taking away is a process. It is steadily going forward in this world. It will be completed in the next, where all farther probation and chance for doing service will utterly and eternally cease.

27. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them; bring hither, and slay *them* before me.

It can hardly be questioned that the destruction of Jerusalem is here primarily intended, but it would deprive the passage of its principal force to limit it to the temporal punishment of Christ's enemies. The language has a more extensive signification, and includes the final overthrow and punishment of all the enemies of truth in the world to come. 1 Cor. xv. 24-58. *Those mine enemies.* They are here named contemptuously, as they previously had named their lawful king, ver. 14. *Bring hither.* The command is given to those who were addressed in ver. 24. *Slay them,* expresses strongly the severity and hopelessness of the coming retribution. The sudden breaking off of the parable heightens not a little its beauty. They who will not submit to Christ the Crucified will be crushed by Christ the King. Every eye shall see Him, they also who pierced Him. Meekly, now, he stands at the door and knocks; then He comes as the lightning comes. Those who surrender to Him *now* will be His friends *then*.

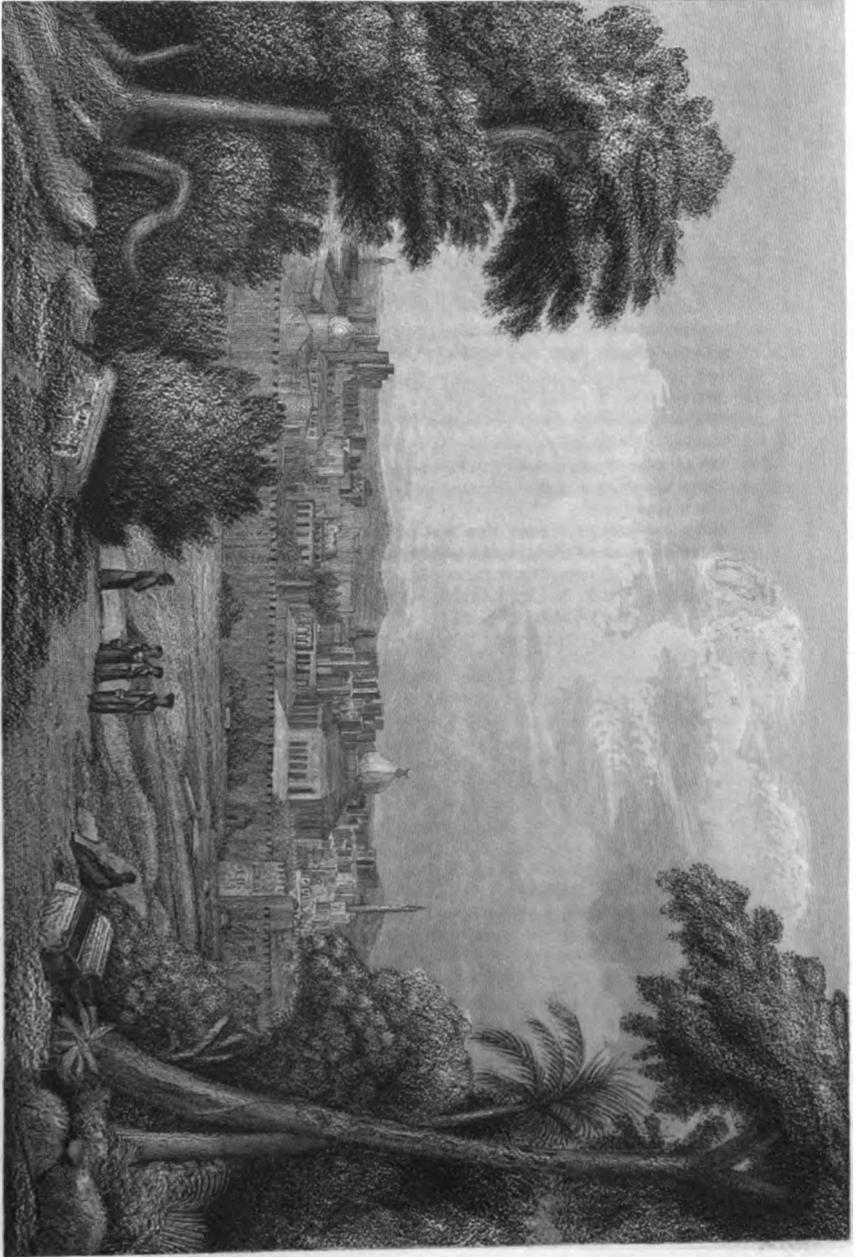
### QUESTIONS.

1. What did the second servant say?
2. What is said of the other seven servants?
3. What is said of "thy pound?"
4. What, of "hath gained five pounds?"
5. What reply was made to the second servant?
6. Why was the commendation withheld from him which was bestowed on the first?
7. What is said of "over five cities?"
8. What is said of the doctrine of reward according to works?
9. What is said concerning the diligent and the indolent?
10. Explain "here is thy pound," &c.
11. What is said of this servant?
12. What is to be noted in this man's case?
13. Explain "I feared thee."
14. What is said of "austere?"
15. Explain "thou takest up," &c.
16. From what will many doubtless finally perish?
17. What is said of the service rendered by intellectual and moral beings?
18. Explain "out of thine own mouth," &c.
19. Explain "thou wicked servant."
20. What are we to understand by "thou knewest," &c.?
21. What explanation is given of verse 23?
22. What is said of the doctrine of eternal condemnation?
23. Who are meant by "them that stood by?"
24. Explain "take from him the pound."
25. Explain "give it to him that hath ten pounds."
26. What explanation is given of verse 25?
27. What does our Lord do in verse 26?
28. What is meant by "which hath?"
29. What law is announced here?
30. What is said of "from him that hath not," &c.?
31. What is primarily intended in verse 27?
32. What is said of "those mine enemies?"
33. To whom is the command "bring hither" addressed?
34. What do the words "slay them" express?
35. What is said of those who will not submit to Christ the Crucified?

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## LESSON CXIV.

vs. 28-40.

28. ¶ And when he had thus spoken, \*he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

\* Mark x. 32.

*Thus spoken*—finished the preceding parable in the house of Zaccheus. *Went before.* On the next morning He continued His journey, and led the way as foremost of the company, thus showing His readiness to suffer. *Ascending up to Jerusalem*—being determined to appear there at the approaching Passover, though He knew that persecution and death awaited Him there. This city was geographically several thousand feet above the Jordan, on which was the Plain of Jericho. It is our duty to follow Jesus toward the cross, ready to make any sacrifice that fidelity to Him may require.

29. ¶ And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called *the mount* of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

† Matt. xxi. 1; Mark xi. 1.

*Bethphage*, i. e., “the house of figs,” a village between Bethany and Jerusalem, near the summit of the Mount of Olives. No trace of it now exists. *Bethany*, i. e., “the place of dates,” stood near the foot of the eastern side of the Mount of Olives, nearly two miles from the limits of Jerusalem. It was the residence of Lazarus and Mary. From the contiguity of these two villages, Jesus might very properly be said to have *come nigh* to both. The designation of their locality does not proceed from the position of the travellers from Jericho, but from their distance, respectively, from Jerusalem. Bethany is now known by a name derived from Lazarus—*el-Azariyeh*, or *Lazarieh*. It is a dilapidated and wretched village, a wild mountain hamlet of some twenty families. In the village are shown the traditional sites of the house and tomb of Lazarus. The house of Simon the leper is also exhibited. *The Mount of Olives.* The well-known eminence on the east of Jerusalem, separated from that city by the Valley of Jehoshaphat. It is, however, not so much a “mount” as a ridge, of rather more than a mile in length, running in general direction north and south, covering the whole eastern side of the city. The “Mount of Olives” is the usual form of the name in the New Testament, but in Acts i. 12, we find it called “the mount called Olivet.” It doubtless had its name from the abundance of olives which grew upon it, some of which, of remarkable age and size, are still standing. *He sent two of his disciples.* The object of this transaction was to make to the Jewish nation a last proclamation of His Messiahship, to show Himself to them as their King, accepting the homage of such as believed in Him, and claiming the recognition of all. The two disciples were probably Peter and John. Compare xxii. 8.

30. Saying, \*Go ye into the village over against *you*; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring *him hither*.

\* 1 Sam. x. 2, 9; John xiv. 29.

*Village over against you, Bethphage. A colt tied.* This was an ass's colt. Matt. xxi. 2. The Messiah was predicted as coming on an ass. Zech. ix. 9. Asses and mules were in common use in Palestine; horses were seldom to be met with. The horse was an animal of pride and war, the ass, of humility and peace. Hos. i. 7; Mich. v. 10, 11. Even Solomon rode on a mule in state. 1 Kings i. 38. See Gen. xxii. 3; Exod. iv. 20; Judges x. 4. *Whereon yet never man sat.* Animals that had never been used were put to sacred purposes. Num. xix. 2; Deut. xxi. 3; 1 Sam. 6, 7. Jesus was born of a pure virgin, and laid in a new sepulchre. Thus his birth, triumph, and tomb, were alike. We have here a wonderful instance of Christ's prescience in very minute matters. He says, 1. You shall find a colt. 2. On which no man ever sat. 3. Bound with his mother, Matt. xxi. 2. 4. In a place where two ways meet, Mark xi. 4. 5. As you enter into the village. 6. The owners shall at first seem unwilling to have him loosed. 7. When they hear the Lord has need of him, they will let him go.

31. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose *him*? thus shall ye say unto him, 'Because the Lord hath need of him.

a Ps. xxiv. 1; Luke x. 12; Matt. xxi. 2, 3; Mark xi. 3, 6; Acts x. 36.

*If any man ask you, &c.* Without doubt the owners of the beast belonged to the many concealed friends of Christ, and He knew that a command addressed in His name to these men would not be in vain. *The Lord.* The Proprietor of all things. There is not, we think, one instance, in which this word, with the article, and without either noun or pronoun, is used in speaking of any other person, than Jesus, except when used of the glorious God absolutely. In His humility Christ is ever giving proofs of His Divinity. He has a right to every thing, and He can so control men's hearts as to make them willing to obey Him.

32. And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

*And found even as he had said unto them.* This, though omitted in the narrations of the other Evangelists, is implied in them, especially in that of Mark. Christ intended, by sending the disciples, to exercise them in unconditional obedience, even where something remained inexplicable to them: also to establish their confidence in His superhuman foreknowledge. God's promises shall all at last prove to be true.

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.

*The owners, i. e.,* persons belonging to the family of the owner. What the Saviour foresaw, actually occurred. Objections were raised, but at the appointed watchword they were withdrawn. We must not hesitate to obey when God commands.

35. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

b 2 Kings ix. 13; Matt. xxi. 7; Mark xi. 7; John xii. 14.

*They brought him.* The owner allowed the beast to be taken, assured that it would be safely and speedily restored, and satisfied that it was now to be appropriated to the Master's use. *Cast their garments.* The disciples spread

their mantles, instead of a saddle, upon the colt, which, though never used before for riding, was now perfectly tractable. This was done as a token of honor. It was the custom of the people, as an acknowledgment of an appointed king. See 2 Kings ix. 13. *And they set Jesus thereon, more literally, they assisted Jesus to mount thereon.* We are to be workers together with the Lord.

36. \*And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

\* Matt. xxi. 8.

*Spread their clothes in the way.* This was in conformity with a very ancient and still existing custom on state occasions, of honoring royal and illustrious persons, by covering the ground over which they are to pass. Clothes and rich tapestries were regularly employed for the purpose, but when the occasion was extemporaneous, and no other provision was made, the robes and mantles of the persons in attendance supplied the deficiency. With this honor Alexander was received, as also Agrippa when he came to Jerusalem. So natural is this custom that it has prevailed in modern times, even in Christian countries. Garlands were strewed in Washington's path by his admiring countrymen. Dr. Robinson mentions a striking instance which took place in Bethlehem, under his own eye, when the people threw their garments under the feet of the English consul, whose aid they were imploring. It is generosity well becoming a Christian to make every thing subservient to the triumph and reign of Christ in the Church. We must, if necessary, strip ourselves of all, that he may rule in our hearts.

37. And when he was come nigh, even now 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 mighty works that they had seen ;

*Even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, i. e., where the road over the summit begins to descend toward the valley of Kedron. Multitude of the disciples.* Most probably many of the disciples here mentioned were not really disciples in heart, but had followed our Lord in much ignorance, and under very mistaken expectations. The enthusiasm which broke forth when the point was reached from which the city could be seen, spreading itself like a grand panorama, increased in intensity while the way began to descend. *Began to rejoice and praise God, more literally, began rejoicing, to praise God. With a loud voice*—all speaking at once, and very earnestly. This is added as a heightening circumstance. *For all the mighty works, &c.* Matter for praise and jubilant joy was not wanting. Doubtless some of Christ's wondrous works were recounted to them by one another. The sight of the capital city awakened the remembrance of many miracles, and the name of Lazarus was upon the lips of all. John xii. 17.

38. Saying, \*Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord : \*peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

\* Ps. cxviii. 26 ; Luke xiii. 35.

\* Luke ii. 14 ; Eph. ii. 14.

*Blessed be the King.* Christ was, indeed, a king, but His kingdom was not, as they supposed, of this world. John xviii. 36. They expected the kingdom of "our father, David," to be restored, enlarged and glorified by this His more glorious Son. See Mark xi. 10. As David was the conqueror of surrounding nations, so, they supposed, this his illustrious descendant would emancipate Israel, subdue Rome, make Jerusalem mistress of the world, and

thus be, in accordance with their desires, a temporal Messiah. *Cometh in the name of the Lord*, i. e., in the name and authority of Jehovah, the ancient God of Israel, as His messenger and representative. "The Coming One" was an appellation of the Messiah. *Peace in heaven*. This may refer to the blessing of peace to be dispensed upon earth as the gift of heaven. Or, it may have been a Scriptural phrase used at any period of great religious rejoicing. *Glory in the highest*. Glory and salvation be ascribed to Him in the highest heavens, and in the uttermost degree.

39. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

*Rebuke thy disciples*. The Pharisees, who were present to watch Christ's movements, evidently considered the multitude to be treating Jesus as the Messiah, and Jesus to be claiming the Messiahship by His not checking the language His attendants used. Their spirit was just that of modern Socialism; the prophetic expressions used, the lofty epithets applied to Him, who was simply, in their view, a *Teacher*, offended them.

40. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, 'the stones would immediately cry out.

'Hab. ii. 11.

*If these should hold their peace, &c.* This is a proverbial expression, denoting the impossibility of repressing or concealing an important fact. "If, at a crisis so intense, so awful, even *these* should hush, and no human voice should welcome the Messiah, we might expect that God would literally rebuke the criminal indifference and stupidity of men by making the very stones upon which they trod utter voices and *cry out*." It is possible that the words also contain a covert intimation of the destruction of Jerusalem, in which the stones of the city and the temple should proclaim the majesty of our Lord.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by "thus spoken?"
2. What is said of "he went before," &c.?
3. What does "Bethphage" signify?
4. What is said of this village?
5. What does "Bethany" signify?
6. Where did it stand?
7. What is said of these two villages?
8. What is said of the "Mount of Olives"?
9. Explain "he sent two of His disciples?"
10. What village is referred to in verse 30?
11. Explain the words "a colt tied," &c.
12. How does Christ's prescience here appear?
13. To whom did this colt belong?
14. What is said of "the Lord"?
15. What is said of "found even as he had said unto them?"
16. Who were "the owners"?
17. What is said of "they brought him?"
18. Explain "cast their garments."
19. What is said of "spread their clothes in the way?"
20. What instance does Dr. Robinson mention?
21. What is meant by "the descent of the Mount of Olives?"

22. Who are meant by "the whole multitude of the disciples?"
23. What did they do?
24. Explain "Blessed be the King."
25. What is meant by "cometh in the name of the Lord?"
26. To what does the phrase, "peace in heaven," refer?
27. Explain "glory in the highest."
28. What is said of the request of some of the Pharisees that Jesus should rebuke His disciples?
29. What did Jesus reply?
30. Explain the proverbial expression He employed.

## LESSON CXV.

vs. 41-48.

41. † And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it,

† John xi. 35.

*Come near*: descending the slope of the hill toward Jerusalem. *Beheld the city*: gazed upon the metropolis which was spread out before Him in all its beauty and magnificence, and which He was now about to enter in a more public manner than ever before. *Wept over it*. Men, generally, are glad when approaching a city, but Jesus now was sad. Here is evidence of Christ's true humanity. Whilst the multitude were in triumph, Jesus was shedding tears. This He did, notwithstanding He had already received much ill usage from the inhabitants of the city, and was at this very juncture to be put to death by them. A sense of the guilt and future ruin of the city overwhelmed the Saviour's spirit. The cause of the destruction of impenitent sinners is in themselves. Christ loves and pities all, even those who are His open enemies. None are hated, though none but believers are finally saved. The true Christian feels a deep concern about the souls of unconverted people. Ps. cxix. 136; Rom. ix. 2. The existence of a union between awful, inflexible justice, denouncing sentence against the criminal, and benevolence sympathizing in his misery, even to tears, is most affectingly shown in this verse and the two verses immediately succeeding. Ez. xviii. 23; Rom. ix. 1, 2, 3; Jer. ix. 1, 2, 10, 11. It is affecting to see a great man like Newton or Bacon weep. How tremendous the significance of the tears of the Son of God! They are awfully foreboding in regard to the incorrigible, and yet full of encouragement to penitent sinners.

42. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

*If thou hadst known*, or in the optative form which the phrase admits, "O that thou hadst known." It implies a wish. It is like Isaiah xlvi. 16. *Even thou*, rather, *thou also*, thus placing the unbelieving inhabitants of Jerusalem in opposition to the disciples of our Lord. *At least in this thy day*. The language of the original is abrupt and interrupted, and peculiarly expressive of the deep interest felt by the Saviour for those of whom He was speaking. These words refer to the time of thy visitation, spoken of in ver. 44. The whole time of Christ's public activity in Jeru-

salem was a respite of two years, which had been prepared for, more than twenty centuries, and now, as it were, concentrated itself in the one day on which He entered as King into Jerusalem. There is a time when the offer of mercy may be withdrawn from the obstinately impenitent. *The things which belong unto thy peace.* Just as our Lord's words to the people, "would have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," (Matt. xxiii. 37,) do not mean that He would have been a temporal Prince, which He so often and earnestly declined and disclaimed; so here, the things over their ignorance of which He lamented, were not mainly the things pertaining to their continued amity with the Roman state, but to their peace with heaven. It was over the alienation of men's minds from God, their disaffection to the only means of recovery, their indifference to the time of their visitation, and their consequent subjection to Divine wrath, that Jesus wept. *But now they are hid from thine eyes.* They were hidden by a voluntary rejection of the evidence which our Saviour gave of His Divine mission. God's keeping silence is not approbation. His long-suffering is not even connivance. He can be merciful, without allowing us to trifle, and insult Him, for even His patience has its rules and bounds. And Jerusalem knew this. We are not authorized to say any one is beyond hope, while he is yet in life. Manasseh would have seemed very likely to be such a desperate character, but he obtained mercy.

"And while the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return."

Whilst, however, this is true, there are several things relating to this subject, which are of fearful import: 1. The language of the Word of God is fearful. "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." "Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts' lust." "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation." 2. Final impenitency is irrecoverably hopeless, and *with life* all our opportunities end. 3. This life, upon which every thing depends, is very brief. 4. Our continuance here is as uncertain as it is short. 5. Before this short and uncertain period terminates, many opportunities and advantages may elapse, to return no more.

43. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall <sup>h</sup>cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

<sup>h</sup> Is. xxix. 3, 4; Jer. vi. 3, 6; Luke xxi. 20.

*The days shall come, &c.* This, with the next verse, is one of the most striking predictions ever uttered. It was literally fulfilled at the siege of Jerusalem under Titus. *Josephus* gives a very particular account of the building of this *trench*, by which we are to understand a mound set with palisades, or *abattis*. He says it was effected in three days, though it measured thirty-nine furlongs, or almost five miles, and the towers were thirteen in number, every one of them being ten furlongs in compass. By this means the inhabitants were kept in on every side, cut off from all hope of safety by flight, and reduced to the most terrible distress by the famine which ensued.

44. And <sup>h</sup>shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and <sup>h</sup>they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; <sup>h</sup>because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

<sup>h</sup> 1 Kings ix. 7, 8; Micah iii. 12.

<sup>h</sup> Matt. xxiv. 2; Mark xiii. 2; Luke xxi. 6.

<sup>h</sup> Dau. ix. 24; Luke i. 68, 78; 1 Peter ii. 12.

*Lay thee even with the ground.* Josephus says that the Roman emperor commanded the whole city and temple to be demolished, which command was so executed, that strangers coming thither would not believe that the place had ever been inhabited. Comp. Ps. cxxxvii. 9. *Thy children within thee.* Thy children and thyself shall be laid in one common ruin. By *children* is meant, not minors, but native-born inhabitants of any age. *One stone upon another;* literally, *they shall not leave in thee stone upon stone.* This was a proverbial and figurative expression to denote an utter destruction, and need not be interpreted that not a single stone would be left lying upon another. The city was burnt and destroyed. The Romans burned the extremest parts of it, and demolished the walls; three towers only and some part of the wall were left standing, for the better encampment of the soldiers, and to show to posterity what a city, and how fortified, the valor of the Romans had taken. As for the temple, after it was burned, the Roman general ordered the very foundations of it to be dug up; and, later still, Terentius Rufus ordered its site to be furrowed with the ploughshare. In relation to the destruction of Jerusalem, let the following things be noted: 1. It seemed exceedingly improbable that any thing like this should happen in that age, considering the peace of the Jews with the Romans, and the strength of their citadel, which forced Titus himself to acknowledge that it was the singular hand of God which compelled them to relinquish fortifications which no human power could have conquered. 2. It was not usual with the Romans to destroy either the cities or the temples of the countries they conquered. 3. Titus was very desirous of preserving the temple and the city too, and sent messengers again and again to persuade the Jews to a surrender. But God had determined and declared that both should be destroyed; accordingly, both were wrapped and ruined in flames. The Jewish historian, already mentioned, says, that one of the Roman soldiers, in defiance of the order of Titus, that the holy place should be preserved, and urged by a certain Divine impulse, mounted the shoulder of his companion, thrust a burning brand in at the golden window, and thus set fire to the temple. *Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.* God's visitations are either of wrath, Exod. xxxii. 34, or of mercy, Jer. xxix. 10. The term is here used by our Saviour in the latter sense, and refers to His visiting them by the prophets, John the Baptist, and Himself. Churches, nations, and even individuals, are sometimes visited with special manifestations of God's presence, and the neglect of these manifestations is the turning point in their spiritual ruin.

45. 'And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;

<sup>1</sup>Matt. xxi. 12; Mark xi. 16; John ii. 14, 15.

*He went into the temple.* He did not go up to the court, or to the palace, though He came in as a King, but to the temple; for His kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world. *And began to cast out, &c.* A similar transaction occurred about three years before. John ii. 13-15. Thus Christ purified the temple from profane uses at the beginning and at the end of His ministry. A large place, furnished with shops, was appropriated in the southern part of the spacious outer court of the temple, called the Court of the Gentiles, for the sale of animals and birds for sacrifices, and whatever else might be required for offerings and sacrifices, such as salt, wine, oil, &c. This arrangement, made at first for convenience, afterward became a mere matter of gain and exaction—a sad profanation of the sacred place. The house of God should not be devoted to secular purposes. Christ's zeal for the holiness of the Church and the sanctification of souls is here indicated.

46. Saying unto them, "It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

■ Is. lvi. 7

■ Jer. vii. 11.

*It is written.* Even in purifying the temple from profane uses, our Lord supports His conduct by a text of Scripture. All reformations in Churches should be built upon God's Word. It is more than probable that the Court of the Gentiles had become a harbor of wicked men who cheated in their traffic, and lived by deceit and extortion. *Den of thieves* is a terrible antithesis to the house of God. The word *den*, probably, is an allusion to the caves and recesses of rocks in Judea in which the robbers and bandits found shelter. The offenders, when cast out from the place of their traffic, do not appear to have made the least resistance; doubtless, they were struck with a panic by the secret energy of Christ's omnipotence. See Mark xi. 1-3. Perhaps the casting out may be regarded as a miracle. We should be grave, reverent, solemn and decorous, whenever we go to a place of public worship. Prayer is good in all places; but there is a particular blessing attends it when offered to God in the house of prayer. He who passes through religious exercises carelessly and negligently, robs God of that glory which he does not pay Him.

47. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the Scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him,

○ Mark xi. 18; John vii. 19 and viii. 57.

*Taught daily in the temple.* Having just called the temple "the house of prayer," our Lord proceeds to show, by His own example, that it is to be the house of "teaching," as well as praying. His crucifixion being near at hand, He employed Himself without intermission in instructing as many people as possible, and in the most public place. He exhibited courage, composure, and energy of spirit. Christ's example furnishes the strongest motive for not being weary in well-doing. Some suppose that it was on Monday, in the passion week, that Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and purified the temple, and on Thursday He was seized late at night: during these four days He taught in the temple, and lodged each night at Bethany, which was about two miles from Jerusalem, returning to that city each morning. See Matt. xxi. 17. *But the chief priests, &c.* All this time irreconcilable hatred and thoughts of murder were rankling in the breasts of the worldly aristocracy, which counted itself mortally endangered by Him. Jesus endured the contradiction of sinners, and was exposed to their wicked designs in accomplishing His mission.

48. And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

*Were very attentive; literally, they hung upon him, hearing.* They listened with so great attention and pleasure, that they hung, as it were, on His lips while He spake. Doubtless our Lord's words, in these His last days, were of peculiar depth, tenderness, and solemnity. Meanwhile His enemies were visibly perplexed. *They could not find what they might do, or rather, could not find the (way) in which they might do it.* The Passover had brought numbers of Christ's friends from Galilee, His preaching had won many followers in the region beyond Jordan, the raising of Lazarus in Bethany had made His name wonderful in and around Jerusalem, and thus the Saviour and the people alike were for the moment an obstacle to the accomplishment of the malicious purposes of His foes. A true Christian should think nothing troublesome and grievous when he finds himself useful in advancing the work of God.

## QUESTIONS.

1. What is meant by "come near?"
2. What is said of "wept over it?"
3. What is the cause of the destruction of impenitent sinners?
4. What is said of "If thou hadst known?"
5. Explain "at least in this thy day."
6. Explain "the things which belong unto thy peace."
7. What is meant by "but now they are hid from thine eyes?"
8. Are we authorized to say any one is beyond hope while he is yet in life?
9. What things relating to this subject are of fearful import?
10. What is said of "the days shall come," &c.?
11. What does Josephus give?
12. What is said of "lay thee even with the ground?"
13. Explain "they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another."
14. What is the first thing observable in the destruction of Jerusalem?
15. What, the second?
16. What, the third?
17. Explain "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."
18. What is said of "He went into the temple?"
19. What of "began to cast out," &c.?
20. How did Jesus support His conduct in purifying the temple?
21. On what should all reformations in Churches be built?
22. What is said of the Court of the Gentiles?
23. Did the offenders offer any resistance to our Lord?
24. In what spirit should we go to a place of public worship?
25. What is said of prayer?
26. What is said of "taught daily in the temple?"
27. On what days is Jesus supposed to have taught in the temple?
28. What is said of the chief priests?
29. Explain "were very attentive."
30. How are we to understand "they could not find what they might do," &c.?

## CHAPTER XX.

## LESSON CXVI.

vs. 1-18.

THIS chapter is remarkable, because of the variety of attacks on our Lord which it describes. Whether the whole of the events here narrated took place on one day, is a question on which Commentators do not agree. If they did not all happen on one day, they must, at any rate, have happened on two successive days.

1. And it came to pass, *that* on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the Scribes came upon *him* with the elders,

• Matt. xxi. 23.

*One of those days.* Supposed to have been one of the four last days of our Lord's life, mentioned chap. xix. 47; probably the last Tuesday. *As he taught, literally, was teaching.* Mark has it, ii. 27, "as He was walking." Teachers often communicated their instructions while walking in the midst of their pupils. Perhaps we may understand that Jesus passed into various parts of the temple, now into the Court of the Israelites, next within that of the Gentiles. *In the temple.* Our Lord persisted calmly in the work of teaching, while He knew that danger beset Him, and that death was close at hand. *Came upon him.* This conveys at once the idea of suddenness and deliberateness. As the persons referred to were different elements of the Sanhedrim, it is probable they were sent as an official deputation from that body. This was a proper sequence to their consultation the day before how they might find or make occasion for putting Him to death. Luke xix. 47.

2. And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, <sup>b</sup>by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?

<sup>b</sup> Acts iv. 7 and vii. 27.

*Tell us.* Declare plainly to us; let there be no further concealment. Previous efforts had been made to ensnare our Lord in His own words, but now this is attempted in a more refined way, and with united force. After three years' exhibition of proof, they ask Jesus again to tell them! *By what authority doest thou these things?* They could not deny that He had approved Himself by miracles, hence they felt justified only in asking Him for His authority. They asked this question, not because they did not know, but because they would not acknowledge. They were disposed to make it a reproach, that He taught other gods, and a new religion. If Christ had replied, "by the authority of God," then they would have accused Him of blasphemy, and if He had said, "by my own," of rebellion. The "things" referred to were, His entering the city with such a numerous train of attendants; His taking upon Him to reform the economy of the temple, and His receiving from the people the title of the Messiah. *Or who is he that gave thee this authority?* The first question related to the nature of the authority by which He acted, whether it was as a prophet, a priest, or a king, no other person having a right to make any reformation in Church or State. This second question was, that if He claimed the authority of any or all of these characters, He should state from whom He derived it—what proof He had that it had a Divine source. It was the province of the Sanhedrim to give authority to teachers in the temple, an authority which Jesus had never received. John i. 19-27.

3. And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me:

*I will also ask you one thing.* To an honest inquiry on the point mentioned, Jesus, notwithstanding He had already furnished such overwhelming proofs of His Divine mission, would, no doubt, have given a *direct* answer, but He knew that their purpose was malicious, and hence adopted the method which He did. *Answer me.* Literally, *tell me*, responding to the *tell us*, in ver. 2. Their attempt to overawe Christ was ineffectual.

4. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

*The baptism of John, i. e.,* the religion of which the baptism was a profession. Baptism is mentioned as representing John's ministerial work. *From heaven, or of men?* A Divine or a human institution? Our Lord's question,

it will be perceived, was in reality an answer to the question of His inquirers. His meaning evidently was that John the Baptist had expressly testified that He was the Messiah. They knew this. They could not deny it. Now, if they really believed that John was a prophet, they would see by "what authority He did what He did"—it was as the Messiah, whom John had proclaimed Him to be.

5. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not?

*They reasoned.* They retired an instant, and made the matter an object of common deliberation. They saw and felt the dilemma in which they were placed. *If we shall say, From heaven.* They knew that in acknowledging John's mission to be from God, which they believed it to be, their sagacious opponent would confound them with the inquiry, *Why then believed ye him not?* i. e., Why did ye not believe the testimony which he, as my forerunner, bore to me as the Messiah? John i. 29-34; iii. 28-36.

6. But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.

• Matt. xiv. 5 and xxi. 26; Luke vii. 29.

Here was the other horn of the dilemma. *Of men.* If they denied John's Divine mission, they feared violence from the people. Every way Christ's reply was calculated to silence His enemies. It subjected them to the charge of gross inconsistency on the one hand, or to personal peril on the other. *Stone us.* See Acts vii. 54-60; xxi. 27-36. *John was a prophet.* The rulers, from political motives, had deserted John; but with all the ranks of the common people, even to the publicans and harlots, there was a deep feeling that John was a messenger from God. Even Herod, who slew him, trembled at his name as of a holy and God-sent man. These chief priests and Scribes feared the people, as Herod did before them. They had often taught the people the efficacy of mob violence, when argument and reason failed them; and now they were afraid that their teaching would react upon themselves, and bring down punishment, if they pronounced John an impostor.

7. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was.

*They could not tell;* literally, *they did not know.* They did not like to confess. They feigned an ignorance which they did not possess, for the two possible cases lay open to their discernment; but, in their depravity, they could not bring themselves to give honor to the generally admitted truth. Their internal thoughts and outward conduct were in discord and opposition to each other, which is the essence of hypocrisy.

8. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

*Neither tell I you.* If they had really not known, and inquired in order to know, our Lord would readily have answered them. But it was useless to proffer any further proof of His Messiahship to men who, if they would not believe John's testimony in His favor, would not, of course, believe that which He should offer for Himself. He, therefore, simply exposed their ob-

stinacy to themselves, leaving them to reflect upon it. Both were now silent; He, because on good grounds He would not speak; they, because through their own fault they could not speak. The people present could easily decide which had been victorious.

*Practical Reflections.* 1. Every true-hearted Christian who tries to do good in the world, must expect that the self-righteous and worldly-minded will dislike his ways. 2. It is a great sin for any one to be willing to acknowledge and proclaim the truth only so far as will subserve his selfish designs. 3. He who forbears speaking against the truth only through fear of men, has betrayed and dishonored it already in his heart. 4. Pharisaic pride, according to its different interests, either pretends to know every thing, or affects to know nothing. 5. Many will say any thing rather than acknowledge themselves to be in the wrong. 6. Lying is one of the commonest sins in the world. Gehazi, Ananias, and Sapphira have more followers and imitators than Peter and Paul.

9. Then began he to speak to the people this parable 'A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. xxi. 33; Mark xii. 1.

*To the people.* The statement that this parable was spoken to the people, does not conflict with that of Matthew and Mark that it was addressed to the Pharisees and elders, for Luke, both in the preceding part of the chapter and in ver. 19, notes the presence within hearing of those Scribes and Pharisees. The Saviour was heard not only by them, but also by the people. *A certain man planted a vineyard.* This represents God's attention to Israel, His covenant people, "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." Rom. ix. 4. These eminent privileges were conferred upon them as a sacred trust to be cultivated and improved. A vineyard was customarily used in both the Old Testament and the New as a figure for the Israelitish people. See Deut. xxii. 32; Is. v. 1-7; Ps. lxxx.; and Matt. xx. 1. This "*certain man*" was more than possessor of this vineyard. He had himself "*planted*" it. Exod. xv. 17. The planting of this spiritual vineyard found place under Moses and Joshua, in the establishing of the Jewish polity in the land of Canaan. It is described Deut. xxxii. 12-14. See Ezek. xvi. 9-14; Neh. ix. 23-25. *Let it forth*—leased or rented it, with rent to be paid from the produce—to *husbandmen*, the Jewish people, especially their rulers and priests, who were the chief instigators in all those things which were bringing wrath upon the nation unto the uttermost. *And went into a far country for a long time.* This means either that after the open manifestation of Himself, which God made to Israel at the giving of the law from Sinai, and in the miracles which accompanied their deliverance from Egypt, and their introduction to Canaan, He did not, in so open and extraordinary a manner manifest Himself to the people again, (Deut. xxxiv. 10-12,) or it indicates the feeling of the vine-dressers, who think that God has no regard to their conduct. Ez. viii. 12; ix. 9; Ps. x. 4, 5; Luke xii. 45. The time of God's forbearance is intimated, during which men act according to their own will. Matt. xxv. 14; Mark xiii. 14.

10. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent *him* away empty.

*At the season.* An intimation of the period in which the proper prophetic activity began in Israel, which, as is known, was a considerable time after

the founding of the theocratic state, so that the fruits had had abundant time to come to maturity. *Sent a servant.* By the servants mentioned are meant extraordinary ambassadors who were sent from time to time in the owner's name, to demand the stipulated tribute—prophets, such as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, men not of the number, or in the confidence, of the ordinary rulers, but specially commissioned by the Supreme, to approach them with reproof and instruction. *That they should give him of the fruit, &c.* He had reason to expect fruit, because all the arrangements and agreements were to this effect. So with the Jews, whom God had taken into solemn covenant, and otherwise highly favored. *Beat him, &c.* The word *beat* signifies literally, in the Greek, to flay or skin, which in this case is supposed to be done by beating. The established authorities of the nation, exercising their office for their own pleasure or profit, rejected the counsel, and assaulted the person of the messenger; dismissing him without any fruit. Jer. xx. 1, 2; 1 Kings xviii. 13; xxii. 24; 2 Tim. vi. 31; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16; Matt. v. 12; xxiii. 34, 37, Acts vii. 52; Heb. xi. 36, 37. Isaiah was sawn asunder, Jeremiah was stoned, Amos was murdered with a club.

11. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated *him* shamefully, and sent *him* away empty.

12. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast *him* out.

The repeated messages sent by the prophets, generation after generation, indicate not only the continued patience, long-suffering, and wonderful compassion of God; but also the growing wantonness and wickedness of the people, by whom His servants, although sometimes effecting temporary reforms, were almost uniformly rejected and maltreated.

13. Then said the lord of the vineyard, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved Son: it may be they will reverence *him* when they see him.

\* Is. v. 4; Hos. vi. 4, xi. 8.

† Matt. iii. 17, xvii. 5; John i. 34.

*What shall I do?* The Lord of the vineyard is brought before us in soliloquy, that the act of love may be exhibited in the most striking and affecting manner. When men's hands were stained with the blood of the Prophets, it might have been expected that the judgments of God would descend upon them, and crush them, but He whose "ways are not as our ways," determined on another and far more earnest effort to win the wicked and rebellious people to love and obedience. *I will send my beloved Son.* The Lord Jesus here speaks of Himself. He is God's "beloved Son in whom He is well-pleased"—the "only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." God will send even *Him*, as the last trial of Divine mercy with His covenant-people, *as such*. In the fulness of time Christ became the messenger of the covenant. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Already the Jewish rulers who listened to this parable were plotting to cast Him out of the city, and to crucify Him. *It may be that they will reverence him, &c.* This expression is natural and appropriate in the lips of a human proprietor, but obviously when applied to God, it means only that such reverence was claimed, was due, and might justly be expected. The Omniscient knew beforehand that the Jewish rulers would not yield even to this last and tenderest appeal.

14. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned

among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.

*Reasoned among themselves.* A deliberate plot against his life, such as the priests and scribes had been concocting against Jesus. **xix. 47.** *This is the heir*—the owner of the property. They confess his being *the heir, among themselves*, but they utter no such confession to Him. *Come, let us kill him.* The owner being absent, they imagine that if the son was dead they could find none to interfere with them in holding the vineyard without paying the rent. *That the inheritance may be ours.* These rulers were determined to retain the power over Israel. They were afraid of the growing popularity of Jesus as likely to dispossess them of their place and authority. See John xi. 47, 48. Their meaning here was, "If we let this man alone, all men will believe on *him*. Then the Romans will come and take away our place and nation. Thus *our* position will be irretrievably ruined. *He* will get the heritage, if we do not take instant measures to prevent it. It is expedient *for us* that one man die for the people. Let us therefore put him to death. This is our only hope for continued authority and power."

15. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed *him*. What, therefore, shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?

*Out of the vineyard.* A striking prophecy of the crucifixion outside of the city. Heb. xiii. 12, 13; John xix. 17. By that, as in the Pentateuch by the exclusion from the camp, was signified the cutting off from the people of God, and from all share in their blessings. See 1 Kings xxi. 13. *What therefore, &c.* Christ makes an appeal to His hearers as if willing that they shall judge of the righteousness of the punishment so richly deserved by the vine-dressers. *Unto them.* It is observable how the successive generations, who for so many centuries had been filling up the measure of the iniquity of Israel, are considered, throughout the entire parable, but as one body of husbandmen. God will deal with nations as indeed *being*, as having a living unity in themselves, as in fact *bodies*. They are something more than mere aggregations of individuals.

16. He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard *it*, they said, God forbid.

The judgment pronounced is two-fold. *Destroy*, bring all sorts of evil upon *these husbandmen*, in Matt. xxi. 41, "those wicked men," i. e., the Jewish state and nation. *And give the vineyard, &c.* He was about to take their privileges from them and give them to the Gentiles, who should cultivate the ground on which they were placed, and render Him the fruits. *God forbid.* This sudden ejaculation by the people showed that they fully understood the awful application of the parable. The exclamation was either an expression of fear, desiring that such evil might be averted, or of unbelief, "That shall never be, it is impossible that our privileges can ever be so forfeited."

17. And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?"

℣ Isa. xxviii. 16; Acts iv. 11; Eph. ii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7; Ps. cxviii. 22; Matt. xxi. 42

*What is this then, &c.* He thus gives them to understand that if they were right in their deprecation, the prophecy of the Scripture would not be ful-

filled, which yet is an absolute impossibility. *The stone which the builders rejected.* This refers to Christ, and His rejection by those who called themselves leaders and builders in the Jewish Church. He was cast off by them as a stone which the architect or workman, thinking too unshapely to work into the structure, throws aside as unfit and of no value. *The same is become the head of the corner!* The very man Christ Jesus whom the official but false builders refused, dishonored, and slew, God raised up and made King upon His holy hill of Zion. It is a dreadful discovery for those husbandmen to make, that the Son whom they murdered lives, and has become their Lord. *The head stone of the corner* is the large stone placed in the corner of a stone edifice, for the purpose of binding the two walls firmly together. Jesus Christ is the strong and firm corner stone of the new building of the Christian Church, in which those who were hitherto divided, Jews and Gentiles, have been united into one glorious body. Eph. ii. 13, 20.

18. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but <sup>h</sup>on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

<sup>h</sup> Dan. ii. 34, 35; Matt. xxi. 44.

*Whosoever shall fall.* Note the rapid yet harmonious changes of our Lord's illustration of the stone. The same stone is first a *rejected stone*; then, second, a *head-corner stone*; then, third, a *stumbling-stone*; and lastly, a *stone falling from above*. Jesus becomes more and more stern, as in His Prophetic office He approaches the subject of His own kingly judgment. *Shall be broken—grind him to powder.* Two kinds of punishment are here referred to, not two different degrees of the same punishment. In the one, the person offending is active, (he stumbles and is broken;) in the other, passive, (he is fallen upon and crushed.) In the first case, whatever evil is experienced is self-inflicted by the person who endures it; in the second, that which is experienced rushes upon the sufferer with irresistible force, from the offended and now avenging Saviour. The one is a punishment only of this life, where alone sinners have the opportunity of stumbling on the rock of salvation, and consists in all the loss of peace, consolation, and blessing, together with all that judicial blindness, bitterness of spirit, hardness of heart, and manifold disquietudes of mind, which inevitably blight and desolate the moral condition of those who resist the claims of Messiah. The other punishment belongs to eternity, and consists in the fearful and everlasting retribution which Christ will inflict upon all His adversaries when He takes to Himself His power and great glory—consigning them to final perdition in utter darkness. Some suppose the expression, "grind him to powder," is chosen with reference to the mysterious stone in Dan. ii. 34, 35, which grinds to powder the image of the monarchies. It clearly denotes the fearful punishment of the finally impenitent and unbelieving.

*Practical Reflections.* 1. Civil and religious liberty, the Bible and the Sabbath, the Church and its ministry, have been provided and preserved for us by our Father's care. We are permitted to enjoy all for our own benefit, under deduction of a tribute to the Giver. Our offerings cannot directly reach Him, but He has made them payable to the poor. 2. Men not only refuse to obey God, but are angry with those who *reprove* their disobedience. 3. Unconverted men become more and more hardened in sin, as they resist calls to duty. Every sin they commit, and do not repent of, prepares for the commission of a greater. 4. Abuse of God's ministers because of their character or faithfulness is a gross insult to Him who sent them. 5. God has done all to secure the salvation of men which, consistently with the highest wisdom and goodness, it was possible for Him to do. 6. God overrules the wrath of man so as to make it contribute to His glory. 7. The nation that will not render to God the fruits of His vineyard, may have their

privileges in judgment taken away, and given to another nation. 8. The blessed-Saviour, who might, like a stone, be a support and defence, will become, if we refuse to believe in Him, the instrument of our destruction.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is this chapter remarkable for?
2. Did all the events narrated in it take place in one day?
3. What day is probably referred to?
4. How did ancient teachers often communicate instruction?
5. What evidence have we here of Christ's fearless fidelity?
6. What idea is conveyed by the words "came upon him?"
7. Who were the persons that came upon Jesus?
8. What was requested by these persons?
9. What was their object?
10. Why did they propose their questions to Christ?
11. What were the "things" they referred to?
12. To what did the first question relate?
13. What did the second question mean?
14. What was it the province of the Sanhedrim to do?
15. Why did not Jesus give a direct answer to the questions proposed?
16. What is said of the attempt to overawe Christ?
17. What are we to understand by "the baptism of John?"
18. What did our Lord ask concerning this baptism?
19. Was His question really an answer to His enemies?
20. What is meant by "they reasoned?"
21. Did His enemies see their dilemma?
22. How did they show that they did?
23. What did they fear if they denied John's Divine mission?
24. Was our Lord's question adapted to silence His enemies?
25. Mention the cases of punishment by stoning which are referred to.
26. Why did the rulers desert John?
27. What did the common people think of him?
28. What is said of Herod in relation to John?
29. What did our Lord's enemies answer?
30. Why did they feign ignorance?
31. In what did the evidence of their hypocrisy consist?
32. Why did not Jesus answer them?
33. What did He do?
34. What is said about the silence of both?
35. Mention in their order the practical reflections given.
36. What parable did Christ speak?
37. What is said about the statement that this parable was spoken to the people?
38. What is meant by the planting of the vineyard?
39. Was a vineyard a common figure of the Israelitish people?
40. What did this certain man do beside owning the vineyard?
41. When did the planting of the vineyard find place?
42. What is meant by "let it forth?"
43. Who were the husbandmen?
44. What is meant by "went into a far country," &c.?
45. What are we to understand by "the season?"
46. Who were the servants sent?
47. Why had the owner a right to expect fruit?
48. How was the first servant received?
49. How were the second and third received?
50. What does the sending so many servants show?

51. Why is the owner of the vineyard represented in soliloquy?
52. Did God at once send judgments on the persecutors of the prophets?
53. What did the proprietor of the vineyard next do?
54. Who is the "son?"
55. Was this the last trial of mercy to the Jews?
56. What is said about "they will reverence him?"
57. Explain the words "reasoned among themselves."
58. Did the enemies of Jesus know Him to be God's Son?
59. What did they propose to do to him?
60. Why did they so propose?
61. What "inheritance" did they wish to have?
62. What is said about the words "cast him out of the vineyard?"
63. Why did Christ appeal to His hearers?
64. What is said about nations?
65. Was the judgment pronounced two-fold?
66. What is meant by "destroy?"
67. What is meant by "give the vineyard to others?"
68. What did the exclamation, "God forbid," signify?
69. What did Christ next proceed to show?
70. To whom is reference made by "the stone?"
71. How was Christ rejected by the builders?
72. What did this rejected stone become?
73. What is the head-stone of the corner?
74. Who is the corner-stone of the Christian Church?
75. What is said about the changes of our Lord's illustration?
76. How many kinds of punishment does Christ describe in ver. 18?
77. State what they are.
78. Repeat the practical reflections.

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## LESSON CXVII.

vs. 19-26.

19. ¶ And the chief priests and the Scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

A guilty conscience needs no accuser. These enemies of our Lord, instead of yielding to conviction, were exasperated at Jesus as they saw the application to themselves of the truth He had just uttered. Only fear of the people prevented them from at once putting Him to death. A man is in a very desperate condition when wholesome admonition and the denunciation of misery only provoke him to greater wrath and iniquity. Fear of men restrains only the hand; the heart is abandoned to sin so long as it is not controlled by the fear of God.

20. 'And they watched *him*, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 16.

*Watched him*; better and more literally, *having watched* their opportunity. After the defeat just suffered, nothing was more natural than that the Pharisees should look around, partly for other confederates, and partly for other weapons. *Spies*. The Greek word so rendered is only found here. It means persons who *crouch* in some secret place to *spy, listen, catch, or hurt*. *Which should feign, &c.*, i. e., pretend to be scrupulously conscientious in every point. No doubt these persons were men of the basest principles, and were hired by the malicious Pharisees for their purpose. Some of them, at least, belonged to the Herodians, who were a political party rather than a religious sect. Matt. xxii. 16. *Take hold of his words, &c.*, if He answered as it was hoped He would. This refers to the chief priests, and not to the spies, who were only their tools and agents. *Might deliver him, &c.* The Roman power is meant. They now wish to engage the civil power to remove this man out of the way, against whom the spiritual authority has in vain armed itself. The mask of piety is often serviceable to the wicked in the execution of the worst designs. Charity forbids us to judge of our neighbor's heart, and prudence requires us not to trust to outward appearances.

21. And they asked him, saying, <sup>†</sup>Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of *any*, but teachest the way of God <sup>\*</sup>truly:

<sup>†</sup> Matt. xxii. 16; Mark xii. 14.

<sup>\*</sup> Or, of a truth.

*We know*: they speak the truth, though this was done with a most false intention, and in palpable contradiction of the confession of ignorance made by the elders, ver. 7. *Sayest*, in private, *teachest*, in public. *Acceptest*, showest no partiality to any man, not even Herod himself. *Truly*, teachest the true path of duty. There was something peculiarly artful in this flattering address. "Their words were smoother than butter," yet there was "war in their hearts." Ps. lv. 21; Prov. xxvi. 23; Rom. xvi. 18. Persons of this description will be met with as long as the world stands. The *language* of Christianity is precisely that part of religion which a false Christian finds it most easy to attain. The walk of a man's daily life, and not the talk of his lips, is the only safe test of his character. We ought always to suspect the praise which is given by men devoted to the world.

22. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no?

*Is it lawful*, i. e., may we do this without a breach of our duty to God? *Tribute*, the annual poll-tax of a denarius upon every person levied by the Roman emperor. This was a matter of fierce dispute at this time, the Herodians holding the affirmative, and the fanatical Pharisees, on the ground of Deut. xvii. 15, the negative. *Cæsar*. This was the general title given to the Roman emperors, as Pharaoh was for the Egyptian kings. Tiberius *Cæsar* was at this time emperor. This question involved one of the most cunningly-devised snares which was ever laid for Christ. If He had answered in the affirmative, they calculated rightly that He would alienate and offend His disciples and all the people, for there was never a people by whom the yoke of bondage was felt more heavily than by the Jews. On the other hand, had Christ declared the tribute unlawful, or let fall one word which might have been tortured to that meaning, they would doubtless have denounced Him to the Romans as a promoter of sedition, and, under the reign of Tiberius, His death would have been the inevitable consequence of such an accusation.

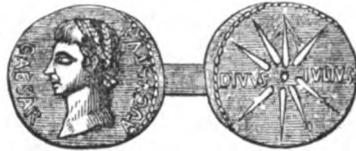
23. But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

*Craftiness.* The Greek so translated is the same word that is used in describing Satan's "subtlety" in tempting Eve. 2 Cor. xi. 3. *Tempt ye me? try me by such an ensnaring question, and endeavor to draw me into danger by it.* Jesus saw at once the trap laid for Him by His enemies, and avoided it with the same admirable address which had confounded them the day before. He who is to judge all things sees them all, and will, by the light of the great day, expose every thing to open view which is now so carefully disguised and concealed from the sight of men.

24. Show me a 'penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar's.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 28.

*A penny.* This was the *denarius*, a Roman silver coin, the principal money at the time. It became the current coin in Judea after its subjection. It was the price of a day's labor in Palestine, Matt. xx. 2; a soldier's pay was less. Under the consular government, the denarius was the seventh part of an ounce, and just equal to the *drachma*; but the denarius struck under the emperors, and called imperial, was the eighth of an ounce, about seven and a half pence, or about fourteen cents of our money. *Denarius*, like our word *dime*, signifies *ten*; that is, ten ases, to which it was originally equivalent, whence its name. It does not follow that a single piece of this coin formed the entire amount of the tribute to be paid; but the amount, whatever it was, was paid in this coin. As the Jews were averse to this and other coins of idolaters, the Romans probably required the tax to be paid in this coin, in order to render it current, as an evidence of their dominion over the country.



DENARIUS.

*Whose image and superscription hath it?* Our Lord, of course, knew whose effigy and inscription it bore, but He made the inquirers answer to their own confusion. With this inquiry the question was in effect already decided; for the Jewish doctors themselves taught, that to admit the impression and inscription of any prince on their current coin, involved an acknowledgment of their subjection to him. *Cæsar's*. Thus they acknowledge that Cæsar's superiority is peacefully submitted to in the quiet of society and the commercial exchanges. The consular denarius bore on one side a head of Rome, an X or a star, to denote the value in *ases*, and a chariot with either two or four horses; but afterwards the reverse bore the figures of Castor and Pollux, and sometimes a victory in a chariot of two or four horses. At a later date the busts of different deities were given on the obverse, and these were finally superseded by the heads of the Cæsars.

25. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

*Said unto them.* "The meekness of wisdom" was never more beautifully manifested than in this answer of our Lord to so insidious a question, and nothing can be more worthy of imitation than this: that He always took occasion, even from the most captious and frivolous questions, which would have excited contempt, or indignation, in others, calmly to call the attention of the hearers to some very important instruction. *Render therefore unto Cæsar.* They had just confessed that Cæsar exercised temporal authority over them. They used the money which Cæsar had coined, thus admitting that

they were under his government. This admission was the stronger because, not *Tiberius*, but the official title *Cæsar* was given, showing that not a person, but a principle was involved. Let them, therefore, render unto him his dues. If they consented to receive the gift of peace and order from Cæsar, they must consent to render the payment of the expenses of his government. *The things which be Cæsar's.* What is Cæsar's? 1. *Honor.* The civil government under which a man lives, and by which he is protected, demands his honor and reverence. 2. *Obedience.* The laws which are made for the suppression of evil-doers, and the maintenance of good order, which are calculated to promote the benefit of the whole, and the comfort of the individual, should be religiously obeyed. 3. *Tribute.* The government that charges itself with the support and defence of the whole, should have its necessary expenses repaid by the people in whose behalf they are incurred, hence tax should be paid. Cæsar, however, has no right to infringe the rights of God. Human laws are limited by the Divine law. The Christian must, as far as possible, comply with both. Where the human law conflicts with the Divine, he must obey the latter and suffer the consequences. It is not an easy matter to determine precisely in all cases what are "the things of Cæsar," and what are the "things of God"—where the claims of Cæsar end, and where the claims of God begin. It would, perhaps, be safe to say, that the former include things political, secular, and temporal, and the latter include things sacred, moral, and spiritual. Sometimes a question of a mixed character arises, involving both political and moral elements; in this case duty in relation to the question is to be performed by the individual under a sense of double responsibility, regard for the moral aspect always being supreme. Such a question is also to be treated by the Church and by the State according to the view of it which brings it under their control respectively. "Among the peculiar qualities of our holy religion," says *Paley*, "is to be reckoned its complete abstraction from all views of civil policy. Christianity, while it declines every question relating to particular forms of government, is alike friendly to them all, by tending to make men virtuous, and therefore easier to be governed; by stating obedience to government in ordinary cases, to be not merely a submission to force, but a duty of conscience; by inducing dispositions favorable to public tranquillity, and by recommending prayers for communities and governors, of every description, with a solicitude and fervency proportioned to the influence they possess upon human happiness." *And unto God the things which be God's.* We are not to recognize antagonism here, but unity. Their civil duties did not release them from religious obligations, 1 Pet. ii. 17, nor did their duties to God absolve them from duties to the State. Rom. xiii. 1. Instead of one class of duties being set at variance with the other, our Lord harmonizes and confirms them both. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. He has not divorced them, but united them. We must never do any thing contrary to the rights of God in obeying the government, and never violate the rights of government under pretence of doing service to God. Honor, love, obedience, faith, fear, prayer, spiritual worship, were payments to God which these "spies" might daily make, and payments with which the Roman government did not interfere. Such payments Jesus directed them to make. We can learn how to render to every one his own, by saying, "Show me the coin." As we see the image and superscription of God, on the Sabbath, for example, we can easily decide whether that day is to be used for earthly activity or for participation in the sweet services of the Sanctuary. If it be sinful not to render unto men the things which belong to men, how much *more* sinful is it not to render unto God the things that belong to God! Yet, it is in this point, alas! that we are most negligent!

26. And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

*Could not take hold.* This refers to ver. 20, where the intent with which they came to Jesus is declared. *And they marvelled at his answer.* Our Lord's reply was made with such consummate wisdom as to command the admiration of His very tempters. Well might they be astonished. It was an extrication of Himself from the toils they had spread so artfully for Him that escape seemed to them impossible. By Christ's answer, *Cæsar* is satisfied; he got *his own* to the uttermost farthing. *God* is glorified; His honor is, in every respect, secured. The *Pharisees* cannot complain; for His decision is but their own confession put in shape. The *people* are edified: one of the most difficult questions that could possibly come before them is answered in such a way as to relieve their consciences, and direct their conduct. The very *Gaulonites* cannot complain, for He does not decide that there are no just grounds for revolutionizing the government and asserting independence: all He decides is that government is right; and that while *Cæsar's* government is the *acknowledged* government, it must receive its dues. This answer, moreover, contained a principle for all following centuries, by which, on the one hand, the independence, on the other hand, the practically social direction, of the religious life, is sufficiently secured. Well, therefore, might His listening enemies be vexed and ashamed, being clearly and unexpectedly confuted on their own principles. In the presence of those who watch for our halting, it is a great thing to know what to say, and how to say it; when to be silent, and when to speak.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What was the effect of Christ's parable upon His enemies?
2. What restrained their wrath?
3. What sign is it when wholesome admonition exasperates?
4. What is said of the heart not controlled by the fear of God?
5. What does the word "spies" mean?
6. Were these persons of base principles?
7. By whom were they probably hired?
8. Who were the Herodians?
9. What did the chief priests desire to do?
10. What "power" is meant?
11. What is said about charity and prudence?
12. Were the spies sincere in saying "we know?"
13. What are we to understand by "acceptest?"
14. What does "truly" mean?
15. What is the only safe test of character?
16. What do the words, "is it lawful," import?
17. What was the "tribute?"
18. What is said about *Cæsar*?
19. Who was at this time emperor?
20. What is said about the question proposed to Jesus?
21. What is meant by "craftiness?"
22. What, by "tempt?"
23. Will all secret things be exposed at the "judgment?"
24. What was a penny?
25. What is said about it?
26. How much was it worth of our money?
27. Whence did it derive its original name?
28. Is it certain that the tribute was only a penny?
29. Why, probably, was the tribute paid in this coin?
30. Why did Christ inquire about the superscription?
31. What is said about the several inscriptions on the denarius?
32. What is said about Christ's wisdom in the answer He gave?

33. What had our Lord's enemies just confessed?
34. What did His answer teach them?
35. State what is due to civil government under which men live.
36. Has Cæsar a right to infringe the rights of God?
37. What is said about human laws in relation to the Divine?
38. What must the Christian do in regard to both?
39. What must he do when these laws conflict?
40. What are we to understand by "the things of Cæsar?"
41. What, by "the things of God?"
42. How are questions of a mixed character to be treated?
43. What does Paley say of Christianity in its relation to civil policy?
44. Is there any antagonism between the two precepts in ver. 25?
45. What are the things that belong to God?
46. How may we know what is God's?
47. What is said about men's unwillingness in rendering unto God?
48. What effect did Christ's answer produce upon His enemies?
49. How was it calculated to produce this effect?
50. What is it a great matter to know in the presence of those who wish to ensnare us?

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### LESSON CXVIII

vs. 27-47.

27. ¶ "Then came to *him* certain of the Sadducees, "which deny that there is any resurrection, and they asked him,

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxii. 23; Mark xii. 18.

<sup>b</sup> Acts xxiii. 6, 8.

*Then came.* Matthew says, "the same day," xxii. 23. The attempt to entice the Saviour within the sphere of the controversy between politics and religion having entirely miscarried, they now seek to allure Him upon another not less dangerous territory, to entangle Him in the strife between the purely sensual and the strictly religious view of the world. Malice is ever active; let it be defeated ever so often, it returns to the charge. Jesus and his gospel give no quarter to vice; the vicious will give no quarter to Him or it. *Sadducees which deny, &c.* A Jewish sect often mentioned in the New Testament. Its founder was Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus, who was president of the Jewish Sanhedrim, and lived about two hundred and sixty years before Christ. They taught, among other things, that God was not to be served from mercenary motives, that there were no future rewards or punishments appointed unto men, and, consequently, no world of retribution, and no angels or spirits. Matt. xxii. 23; Acts xxiii. 8. The sect was insignificant in numbers as compared with the Pharisees, but this deficiency was compensated by the dignity and eminence of those who embraced this persuasion, who were generally persons of the highest distinction. They were a sort of infidel, latitudinarian sect, whom we should call Rationalists.

28. Saying, Master, "Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

<sup>c</sup> Deut. xxv. 5; Ruth i. 11, 12.

29. There were therefore seven brethren : and the first took a wife, and died without children.

30. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless.

31. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also : and they left no children, and died.

32. Last of all the woman died also.

33. Therefore, in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? For seven had her to wife.

*Moses wrote, . . . If any man's brother die, &c.* As their object was to show that Moses could not possibly have presupposed a resurrection, they proposed to Jesus a difficulty that would grow out of their law, if the relations which it prescribed were to be extended beyond the grave, viz., if several brethren had come by the law to have successively the same woman to wife, who should claim her, of those seven, in the future world? The law referred to, Deut. xxv. 5, 6, which required a man to marry the widow of a deceased elder brother, and raise up children, as being his, was intended to prevent the loss of the memory of a son of Abraham. It was a part of the system by which the memory of the institutes of the old and true religion was to be preserved. *Seven brethren.* It is very likely that the Sadducees increased the number, merely to make the question the more difficult. *In the resurrection.* With their gross, materialistic views, they thought that if there was any future state, it must resemble the present, and assumed it to be a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the resurrection, that every man's wife should be restored to him. This method of arguing by *insinuation, from imagined difficulties, against authenticated revelation, or even stubborn facts,* forms a species of logic for which infidels, ancient and modern, have shown a peculiar predilection, and indeed it is the best method which can be taken of perplexing weak minds, and amusing superficial inquirers. There is great comfort in the thought that truth must triumph. Infidelity may, from time to time, make a stir in the world, but can produce no lasting impression. The great evidences of Christianity remain, like the Pyramids, unshaken and unmoved.

34. And Jesus answering, said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage :

*Answering.* The very fact that our Lord replied to a question so unreasonable, and proposed with so dubious an intent, is evidence of His condescending grace. *Children of this world, &c.* By this is simply meant those who live in this world, not such as are wholly given to the world, as before. Ch. xvi. 8. There is no reflection on matrimony. It is merely a declaration that the condition of men and women in a world to come is utterly unlike their condition in this world.

35. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage :

*They which shall be accounted worthy, &c.* Reference is had here not to the abstract idea of immortality beyond the grave, but to the condition and blessedness of the righteous in the future state. As the question of the Sadducees, (briefly feigning to be orthodox,) which Christ here answers, regarded solely the children of Abraham, who were assumed to be of course heirs of the *blessed* resurrection, it is of the blessed resurrection, or the blessed side of the resurrection, only, that Jesus now speaks, to which the

worthy alone do in fact attain. Nothing is said of the resurrection of the wicked, because it is only a resurrection to unmitigated suffering. Acts xxiv. 15; John v. 29. It will be an existence, but not *the life* which is promised to them that believe. Matt. xxv. 46; Phil. iii. 11. *That world.* The place where Christ reigns in glory. Those who "shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world" are not such as have personal merit, (which no one can have,) but such as are interested by faith in Christ's merit, who *purchased it for us*, and have a holy meetness for it wrought in them by the Spirit, who *prepares us for it.* *Neither marry.* Spoken of males. *Given in marriage.* Spoken of females. In the resurrection, the relations that are beautiful on earth shall be utterly unknown. Not that one shall fail to recognize another, but that the relationship that they have sustained the one to the other as man and wife shall have ceased, when all shall be perfectly holy and perfectly happy. In this world, the perpetuation of the race demands the ordinance of marriage, but in the future world, where they die no more, but are like the angels of God, the necessity of marriage no longer exists, and the ordinance, therefore, is not known. The happiness of the saints in glory is not carnal, but spiritual.

36. Neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

¶ 1 Cor. xv. 42, 49, 52; 1 John iii. 2

¶ Rom. viii. 23.

*Neither can they die any more.* Hence the necessity of marriage to perpetuate the race no longer exists. Soul and body are made incapable of separation, and both incapable of disintegration or extinction. *Equal unto the angels.* Our Lord here vindicates against the Sadducees the belief in the existence of angels as personal beings. Acts xxiii. 8. This is a stronger expression than Matthew or Mark uses, xxii. 30; xii. 25; yet we are not to understand an entire equality with the angels, in all respects. It is, indeed, the glorious scheme of redeeming love to incorporate angels and saints into one happy society, under Christ as their common Head, Eph. i. 10, but there are subordinations in united societies. And if the fall of the apostate spirits occasioned any thing like a vacancy in the celestial hierarchy, it would seem most probable it might be filled up from heavenly spirits of an inferior order, who might be preferred to the rank their degenerate brethren lost, as a reward for their approved fidelity to God. The meaning appears to be, that the saints shall be *angel-like*, in freedom from death and disease, in not being subject to the appetites and propensities of the body, and in complete deliverance from a condition of being in which marriage and birth are needful to supply the continual waste occasioned by death. From this comparison, it does not follow that the saints in heaven will not have bodies. Our Lord did not use the similitude at all to show this. The nature of the future bodies of the saints is described in 1 Cor. xv. 42, *seq.* *And are the children of God.* Not here in the sense of adoption through faith in Christ, but as partakers of the Divine nature, so that they cannot die. This means, evidently, that the saints are introduced into a state of peculiar privilege, as members of God's family, and residents in God's house, after a fashion that they know nothing of here on earth. *Being the children of the resurrection,* literally, *sons, or sharers of the resurrection,* because they have attained everlasting life and blessedness with Christ. Compare John xiv. 19; 2 Tim. i. 10.

37. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Exod. iii. 6.

*Are raised.* The present in a general and universal sense for the future. *Even Moses.* To whom ye appeal for the proof of the direct opposite. *Showed at the bush.* See Exod. iii. 6, 16, which was probably quoted because the Sadducees only acknowledged the Pentateuch. *When he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, &c.* Abraham was dead upwards of three hundred years before these words were spoken by Moses, yet still Moses called Him *the God of Abraham, &c.* Now, the Saviour argues, as God is not "a God of the dead," (that word being equal, in the sense of the Sadducees, to an eternal annihilation,) but of the "living;" it therefore follows, that, if He be the *God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,* these are not *dead,* but *alive*—alive *with God,* though they have ceased, for some hundreds of years, to exist among mortals. A being who is elevated enough to have a true, immortal God, to be *his* God, must himself be neither the creature of time nor annihilation. The same thing is true of all believers, for the promise is to them also, as Abraham's seed. Our Lord, in this argument, does not *directly* prove the resurrection of the body distinctively from the immortality of the soul, because He is arguing with those who hold the former to be included in, and inseparably identified with, the latter. To prove one, therefore, is to prove both. A future *personal* existence, where Abraham is Abraham still, involves a resurrection of the body.

38. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.

• Rom. vi. 10, 11.

*Not a God of the dead,* of those who, being (according to the Sadducean sense of the word "dead") destitute of life, and consequently of sensibility, can neither know nor honor Him. *But of the living.* He is the God only of those who love and adore Him, and are, by consequence, alive. Hence the patriarchs named must all be believed to be alive, in respect of God, whom they still worship and serve. *For all live unto Him.* All those living on the earth, or who have long been dead, buried, and removed from the world, are, in the sight of Him who inhabiteth eternity, living. As Christians, the thought of the resurrection should cheer us in every sorrow. Job xix. 26. There is no such thing as annihilation. How glorious the idea that all the saints are actually in existence! All the holy men whom we have read of in the Scriptures, all whom we have heard of, known, and love—all God's departed people *live.* How blessed will be the society of heaven, as the multitude, which no man can number, will sing, "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" Rev. vii. 10.

39. ¶ Then certain of the Scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said.

This was extorted praise. It was probably uttered by the Pharisees who had not yet left the field, and who could never be more inclined to forget their own recent defeat, and frankly and openly to praise our Lord, than just now, after He had thus publicly humbled their deadly enemies.

40. 'And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.

† Matt xxii. 46; Mark xii. 34.

*They durst not ask,* or, *did not venture* to ask any other question, for fear of being again confounded, as they had already been.

41. And he said unto them, "How say they that Christ is David's son?"

† Matt. xxii. 43; Mark xii. 35.

The Lord has answered all their questions, one by one, as the opposers brought them forth. He will now turn the tables upon them, to try them with a most deep and all-important question. *Unto them, i. e., the Scribes.* They were ready enough to approve of His answer to the Sadducees. But did they themselves understand the Scriptures? Jesus shows them that they did not. *How say they.* This expression implies that it was a common expression among Jewish theologians—an acknowledged and received opinion. *That Christ.* Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew Messiah. The question was not asked by our Lord concerning Himself, whom most of His hearers were far from allowing to be "the Christ," but concerning the Messiah whom they expected. *Is David's son.* This was a thing well known among the Jews, and universally acknowledged, (John vii. 42,) and is a most powerful proof against them that the Messiah is come.

42. And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

▼ Ps. cx. 1; Acts ii. 34.

43. Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

44. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?

The Psalm referred to is the 110th. Our Lord decides that David was the author of it, and that he wrote under *Divine inspiration*. See Matt. xxii. 43. This psalm was pressed by Peter on the Jews, in the first public sermon he addressed to them on the day of Pentecost. Acts ii. 34. *The Lord said unto my Lord;* that is, God the Father said to God the Son, who was to be incarnate, whom David called his Lord, both as God, and as Mediator, his Lord by right of creation and redemption. *Sit thou on my right hand.* Take the place of the greatest eminence and authority. *Till I make thine enemies thy footstool,* until I subdue both Jews and Gentiles under thee, and cause them both to acknowledge thee as their Sovereign and Lord. It is not implied that the Messiah's royal state will cease when this result has been reached. *How is he then his son?* Here was the point to be explained. The question concerning the Messiah's person could only be answered by admitting that He must be God as well as man, and man as well as God—David's son, as man; David's Lord, as God-man. As the Jews did not attempt to deny the conclusion of our Lord's question, it is evident they could not. Indeed, there was no other way of invalidating the argument, but by denying that the prophecy in question related to Christ; but it seems the prophecy was so fully and generally understood to belong to the Messiah, that they did not attempt to do this. In this question of our Lord to the Scribes, He had a twofold object: 1. To correct the erroneous opinion which generally prevailed touching the person of the Messiah, that he should be of the lineage of David only, and not the Son of God. 2. To strengthen the faith of His disciples, in view of the time that they should see Him suffer and rise again. The rest, glory, and almighty power, in heaven and on earth, to form the kingdom of God, which the sitting of Jesus at the right hand of the Father denotes, should be the continual object of our adoration, joy, and confidence. Numbers of Christ's enemies are subjected to Him in this life; and they who will not bow to Him willingly, shall be reduced by punishment.

45. ¶ "Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples,

▼ Matt. xxiii. 1; Mark xii. 38.

46. "Beware of the Scribes, which desire to walk in long

robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts ;

\* Matt. xxiii. 5

† Luke ix. 43.

47. Which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

\* Matt. xxiii. 14.

*In the audience of the people.* In tones loud enough to be heard by all the people who had gathered around Him for instruction, among whom were, doubtless, Pharisees, or their emissaries, watching His words to find some ground of accusation. *Beware of the Scribes.* Take heed that ye be not deceived by those who should show you the way of salvation. It is a great misfortune to be obliged to beware of those who ought to be our rule and pattern. *Long robes.* The Jews were required to wear a blue border, or fringe, on their outside garments, to remind them that they were God's people. Num. xv. 38; Deut. vi. 8; xxii. 12. These fringes the Scribes made excessively large, in order to impress on the minds of the common people an opinion of their own holiness and their great reverence for the law. *Greetings in the markets.* They were fond of resorting to the markets and other places of public concourse, to receive the marks of deference and respect which were generally given to men of rank and reputation by the great body of the people. There was nothing wrong in receiving such tokens of respect; but to "love" them, to court them, to put themselves in the way of receiving them, to be mortified if they were withheld, and elated if they were bestowed—all this was not only indicative of a weak, ill-judging mind, but it was also utterly inconsistent with the very elementary principle of a truly good character—supreme regard to what is true and right, whether it pleases men or not. John v. 24. *Highest seats in the synagogues.* The synagogues were fashioned, in imitation of the temple, with a central erection, supported by pillars, and a space surrounding it. In the centre of this, a place was prepared for reading the law and the prophets—an elevated platform, next to which were the seats for the rulers, which were raised above the other seats. The "highest seats," here, probably refer to the highest of the seats appropriated to the rulers—the highest of the uppermost seats. It was not wrong for the Scribes to occupy the seats set apart for them, but to be eager to get the most honorable of these showed a vain-glorious mind. This is self-idolatry; bad anywhere, but especially in places of worship. There to seek honor to ourselves, where we come to give glory to God, is to mock God, instead of to serve Him. It savors much of pride and hypocrisy, when people do not care to go to church unless they can present a fine appearance, and make a figure there. *The chief rooms at feasts;* literally, the uppermost reclining-places round a table at a feast. Here the same radical defect of character shows itself. *Devour widows' houses.* This was done sometimes by plotting with the children to deprive their widowed mother of her estate, and sometimes by inducing the widow to give up her estate to them for superstitious purposes. *Make long prayers.* A religious rabbi would pray nine hours a day. It was not the length of the prayers which was their crime, but the fact that they were a mere pretence—"for a show." *Greater damnation.* For this hypocrisy, doing the most despicable deeds under the show of piety, they should be the more severely punished in the future world. Whatever else we are in religion, let us be true. However feeble our faith, hope, love, and obedience may be, let us see to it that they are real, genuine, and sincere. Let us abhor the very idea of part-acting and mask-wearing in our Christianity. God requires "truth in the inward parts." The very first piece of Christian armor recommended by Paul is "truth." Eph. vi. 10. As the Bible teaches distinctly that there will be degrees of glory in heaven, so it teaches, with no less distinctness, both here and elsewhere, that there will be degrees of condemnation and misery in hell.

## QUESTIONS.

1. What did certain of the Sadducees attempt to do to the Saviour?
2. Who were the Sadducees?
3. What did they teach?
4. What is said of the sect in comparison with the Pharisees?
5. What difficulty did they propose to Jesus?
6. What was their object in proposing it?
7. To what law did they refer?
8. What is said of this law?
9. What is said of "seven brethren?"
10. What did these Sadducees assume in regard to the resurrection?
11. What is said of infidels?
12. What does our Lord's answer show?
13. What is said of "The children of this world," &c.?
14. Explain "they which shall be accounted worthy," &c.
15. What is said of the resurrection of the wicked?
16. Who are they who "shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world?"
17. What is said of "neither marry, nor are given in marriage?"
18. Explain "Neither can they die any more."
19. Explain "for they are equal unto the angels."
20. Explain "and are the children of God," &c.
21. What is the argument of our Lord in ver. 37?
22. What does not our Lord directly prove in this verse?
23. Explain "he is not a God of the dead," &c.
24. What effect should the doctrine of the resurrection have on Christians?
25. By whom was the praise in ver. 39 uttered?
26. What question did Christ ask?
27. Why did He ask it?
28. To what Psalm did He refer?
29. Explain "how is he then his son."
30. What two-fold object had Jesus in this question to the Scribes?
31. What is meant by "in the audience of the people?"
32. Explain "Beware of the Scribes."
33. What is said of the Scribes?
34. What is said of "the highest seats in the synagogues," &c.?
35. What is said of "for a show make long prayers?"
36. How was the hypocrisy of the Scribes to be punished?
37. Are there degrees of condemnation and misery in hell?

## CHAPTER XXI

## LESSON CXIX.

vs. 1-9.

IN this chapter Christ observes and approves a poor widow casting two mites into the treasury, 1-4. And in answer to the inquiry of His disciples respecting the destruction of the temple, He foretells the signs and calamities which would precede and accompany it, 5-19; the destruction and continued desolations of Jerusalem, 20-24; as well as the signs of His coming to execute these judgments, 25-33; and exhorts them to watch and pray, that amidst these great events they might be safe and happy, 34-36. A general account is also given of His preaching, and the people's attendance, 37, 38.

1. And he looked up, "and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

\* Mark xii. 41.

The time was near when Jesus would leave the temple, never to return. Before He left it, He sat for a while, Mark xii. 41, in the court called the *women's court*. The inner court was called the court of Israel, and *there* no one was permitted to sit down, but in the women's court sitting was allowed. *And he looked up.* The expression conveys the idea of watching attentively for some time. Notwithstanding the successive contests with His enemies were scarce concluded, and their rage was burning like a fire, Christ would avoid the slightest appearance of having gone away in any excitement, or from any fear of further attacks, and therefore remained in the temple. No unholy passion disturbed His soul; no wounded recollection haunted His conscience; no plot of murder excited His fancy. Seating Himself in self-possessed repose, He watched the doings at the temple treasury. *Saw the rich men casting*; more literally, *the rich who were casting*. Mark says, "cast in much." *Their gifts into the treasury.* This does not mean the treasure chamber, where the wealth of the temple was deposited, but the chests which were placed in the court of the women, under the pillars that adorned the court, to receive offerings and contributions. There were eleven of these chests, of a trumpet form, standing constantly there, and each chest had written on it the class of offerings which it was designed to receive, so that every contributor knew where to cast in what he had to offer. The money was not for alms, but for the supply of the various sacrifices and services of the temple.

2. And he saw also a certain poor widow, casting in thither two \*mites.

† See Mark xii. 42.

*A certain poor widow.* She is singled out from the whole crowd of donors. The condition of a poor man's widow, in the countries where our Lord was, was an exceedingly depressed and dependent one. She may have been one of those whose houses the proud had devoured. Ch. xx. 47. She had to earn her own livelihood. She must have been a believer in the promises of God, or she could not have presented an acceptable offering. Heb. xi. 6. *Two mites.* A mite was the smallest copper coin in use among the Jews, in our Saviour's time. It seems to have been a native coin. Two made one Roman *quadrans*, which was equal to the fourth of an *as*: ten or sixteen *asses* were equal to a

*denarius*. See Notes on xx. 24. It was equal to the fifth part of our cent. We call it *mite*, from the French, *miette*, which signifies a crumb, or very small morsel. Probably, the reason that the widow did not give the quadrans itself, but two mites that made a quadrans, was, because it was not considered lawful to take such heathen coins to the temple treasury, although they were admitted into the general circulation. Less than a mite she could not contribute. To give a mite was a fair donation, but she will be munificent to God's house, and double the sum.

3. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all :

4. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God : but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

b 2 Cor. viii. 2.

*Of a truth*. Equivalent to *verily*. *Cast in more than they all*. More in proportion to her means ; more in the faith and love which prompted the gift ; more in God's sight, who looks at the motives and the circumstances of givers. Our Lord does not at all censure or lightly esteem the gifts of the rich, only He extols far above their beneficence, the gift of the poor widow, whose offering was brought, not like that of most of the Pharisees, from ignoble impulses. The fact of men being rich destroys not the merit of a genuine liberality. The wealthy man presents a noble spectacle who, rich in soul, from his abundance, gives his *much*. Mark xii. 41. *Of their abundance*. This means that what the rich gave, they gave, as the original literally signifies, *of their overflow*, and thus hardly felt what they contributed, because much was left behind. *Unto the offerings*, is equivalent to *into the treasury*, ver. 1, implying the additional idea that these were offerings made to God. *Of her penury*. In Mark xii. 44, "Of her want." Both representations are substantially the same, and mean that what the widow gave, she gave out of a store so small that, after giving, nothing seemed to be left. *All the living that she had*. Her offering was the whole of her income for that day, or, perhaps, the whole of the money in her possession at that time. A person so poor as she, would necessarily live from hand to mouth, and possess no capital or property, except what was received from one source or another, day after day.

*Practical Reflections*.—1. Christ is omniscient. He knows and observes all men and all things—all we do in public and in private. Jer. xvii. 10 ; Prov. xv. 3 ; Heb. iv. 13. 2. He observes our state and situation. He knew the abundance of the rich men, and the poverty of the widow ; how much they had given, and what they had left. 3. He sees the motives which lead men to perform their actions, and the *different* motives from which they perform the *same* action, whether we act from vanity and hypocrisy, or from love and zeal for His glory. 4. We are to judge *impartially* in cases of this kind, not permitting ourselves to be carried away to decide for a person by the largeness of the gift, on the one hand, or *against* him, by the smallness of the bounty on the other. 5. The Saviour estimates liberality according to the ability of the giver. Men judge the heart according to the deeds, the Lord judges the deed according to the heart. It is not said that He loveth a *liberal* giver, but a *cheerful* giver. *He accepteth the gift according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*. 6. Jesus measures littleness and greatness by a very different measure from the measure of man. Those actions only are great in His sight which are done with a true Christian heart. He looks with gracious favor upon the least offering which is only presented in the right spirit. He is now the same as when He marked the gift of one "poor widow" as attentively as the gifts of many "rich men." 7. There is great power in little things. Penny clubs have done much for

the cause of Christianity. 8. The poor are expected to give to God what they can, trusting in His Providence, and looking for His blessing. 9. If people would "give their mite" really and literally as the widow gave hers, many would have to give far more money than they ever give now. 10. "O, our God!" says one, "the poorest of us, Thy servants, have our two mites, also, a soul and a body. Persuade and enable us to offer them both unto Thee. Though they are Thine already, yet Thou wilt graciously accept them: and O, happy shall we be in thy acceptance!"

5. ¶ And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

• Matt. xxiv. 1; Mark xiii. .

*Some* refers to disciples. Matt. xxiv. 1. *Spake of the temple.* The feeling with which all Jews, in our Lord's time, regarded the temple, was something far beyond what we can imagine in the present day. *Goodly stones.* As the whole temple was built with the greatest cost and magnificence, so nothing was more stupendous than the uncommon measure of the stones, some of which, particularly those employed in the foundations, were in magnitude forty cubits, and the superstructure was worthy of such foundations. A cubit was about twenty-two inches of our measure. Some of the stones were of the whitest marble, forty-five cubits long, five cubits high, and six broad. "The appearance of the temple," says *Josephus*, "was such as to strike the mind, and astonish the sight. For it was on every side covered with solid plates of gold, which reflected, when the sun rose upon it, such a strong and dazzling effulgence, that the eye could not sustain its radiance. At a distance, it appeared a huge mountain covered with snow. For where the plates of gold were not, it was extremely white and glistening." *Tacitus* describes it as "of immense opulence." *Gifts*, which persons had, in gratitude for deliverance from imminent dangers or from respect to the building, hung on the walls and pillars. The hanging up of *consecrated gifts* in their temples was common among the ancients. Temples were sometimes plundered for the sake of these treasures. See 1 Maccab. vi. 1-4. Although so great and universal was the respect for their gods, that this was done by those only whose conduct evinced great and glaring impiety. Among the other treasures of the temple at Jerusalem, there was a golden table, given by Pompey, and several golden vases, of exquisite workmanship, as well as of immense size, which some have thought referred to God's representing the Jewish nation under the emblem of a vine. Is. v. 1-7; Ps. lxxx. 8. Must then so noble a pile be destroyed? No one who was not conscious of speaking with Divine authority, would have ventured to deliver such a prediction as that which follows.

6. *As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

• Luke xix. 44; 1 Kings ix. 7, 9; Isa. lxxiv. 10, 11; Jer. vii. 11, 14.

*As for these things which ye behold; literally, These which you see. There shall not be left one stone upon another.* To comprehend the full force of the antithesis, we must represent to ourselves the whole magnificence of the sanctuary, over which later Jewish scholars exclaimed with wonder: "He that hath not seen the temple of Herod, has never beheld any thing glorious." This prediction will strike us the more, if we bear in mind that these huge stones were bound together with lead, and fastened with strong iron cramps. *Josephus* says, War, Book vii., ch. 1: "Cæsar gave orders that they should now demolish the whole city and temple, except the three towers, Phaselus, Hippicus, and Mariamne, and a part of the western wall,

and these were spared, but, for all the rest of the wall, it was laid so completely even with the ground, by those who dug it up from the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited." *Maimonides*, a Jewish rabbin, in Tract. *Taanith*, chap. iv., says, "That the very foundations of the temple were dugged up, according to the Roman custom." His words are these: "On that ninth day of the month Ab, fatal for vengeance, the wicked Turnus Rufus, of the children of Edom, ploughed up the temple and the places round about it, that the saying might be fulfilled, Zion shall be ploughed as a field." See Notes on xix. 44. It is a very common practice in the prophetic writings, to carry on two subjects together, a principal and a subordinate one. In Isaiah, there are no less than three subjects, the restoration of the Jews from Babylonish captivity, the call of the Gentiles to the Christian covenant, and the redemption of man by the Messiah, which are frequently adumbrated under the same figures and images, and are so blended and interwoven together, that it is extremely difficult to separate them from each other. In the same manner, our Saviour seems to hold out the destruction of Jerusalem, which is His principal subject, as a type of the dissolution of the world, which is the under-part of the representation. By thus judiciously mingling these two important catastrophes, He gives at the same time a most interesting admonition to His immediate hearers, the Jews, and a most awful lesson to all His future disciples, and the benefit of His predictions, instead of being confined to one occasion, or to one people, is by this admirable management extended to every subsequent period of time, and to the whole Christian world. Learn hence, 1. That sin has laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms; Jerusalem, the glory of the world, is here by sin threatened to be made a desolation. 2. That the threatenings of God are to be feared, and shall be fulfilled, whatever apparent improbabilities there may be to the contrary. 'Tis neither the temple's strength nor beauty that can oppose or withstand God's power.

7. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign *will there be* when these things shall come to pass?

*When . . . and what sign.* The disciples inquired concerning two things: 1. The precise time of the approaching catastrophe. 2. The sign of it. Our Lord answered only the last question, while He in reference to the first gave to them only general intimations. Comp. Matt. xxiv. 34-36. The signs which He gives are at the same time of such a nature that they, in fact, are only to be seen precursoryly at the destruction of Jerusalem, but will appear decisively and in their full force only at the end of the world. Happy were it if we were as anxious to obey the declaration of God's revealed will, as we are to pry into the counsels of His secret will.

8. And he said, \*Take heed that ye be not deceived; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; \*and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

• Matt. xxiv. 4; Mark xiii. 5; Eph. v. 6; 2 Thess. ii. 3. \* Or, *and, The time.* Matt. iii. 2 and iv. 17.

*Take heed, &c.* The disciples, it is probable, believed that the time when Jerusalem would be destroyed would be the end of the world. Our Lord, therefore, wishing first of all to set them right upon that point, warned them that no future false Christ should tempt them to believe that His second advent had arrived. This caution is very significant. The mistakes that have been made about the fulfilment of prophecy, in every age of the Church, have been many and great. In our own day we see some persons putting a

literal meaning on figurative prophecy, and others putting a figurative meaning on literal prophecy. Amidst this tangled maze of discordant opinions, we need greatly the solemn warning of our Lord, "Take heed that ye be not deceived." *For many shall come in my name, &c.* This part of the prophecy began soon to be fulfilled. Among the false Christs that appeared, were *Dositheus*, the Samaritan, who pretended that he was the Christ foretold by Moses, and *Simon Magus*, who boasted himself among the Jews as the Son of God. *Josephus* says, "Many affirmed the time of the advent to have arrived," and *Hegesippus* says, "Many false Christs came." Many false prophets also arose. Such was the Egyptian, who collected together above thirty thousand Jews whom he had deceived, Acts xxi. 88; and *Theudas*, a magician, who, as *Josephus* says, deceived many; and a multitude of others, who deluded the people even to the last, with a promise of help from God. And in the reign of Nero, when Felix was procurator of Judea, such a number of these impostors made their appearance, that many of them were seized and put to death every day. *The time draweth near*, i. e., the time of the Messianic kingdom. These are the words of the false Christs. How much were they like the enthusiasts and fanatics who have in our day, at different times, filled the whole land with their predictions of an immediate end of the world! *Go ye not therefore after them*—become not their followers, countenance not their schemes.

9. But 'when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

[Ps. xxvii. 1, 3; Prov. iii. 25, 26, Is. li. 12, 13.

*Wars and commotions.* That there were wars and great disturbances during the interval of forty years, appears from all the historians of that period, especially *Josephus*. To relate the particulars would be to transcribe a great part of his history of the Jewish wars. *Be not terrified*; in Matthew and Mark, *be not troubled*. *Must come to pass*, i. e., take place, happen. *But the end*—the end of the Jewish state. *By and by*. This phrase, which by a singular reverse of meaning now signifies *after a while*, meant in the old English of our translators, *immediately*.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What are the contents of this chapter?
2. What is said about the time of Christ's leaving the temple?
3. Where did He sit for a while?
4. What is said of the inner court?
5. What is said of the expression "he looked up"?
6. What were the gifts referred to?
7. What is meant by the treasury?
8. What is said of the eleven chests?
9. What is said of a poor man's widow in the countries where our Lord was?
10. What is said of this widow?
11. What is said of the mite?
12. What was its value in our money?
13. Why, probably, did not the widow give the quadrans?
14. How did she show her munificence?
15. What did Jesus say of her?
16. What is meant by "of a truth"?
17. What is meant by "cast in more," &c.?

18. Does our Lord lightly esteem the gifts of the rich?
19. What is said of the fact of men's being rich?
20. What is meant by "of their abundance?"
21. What are the words, "unto the offerings," equivalent to?
22. What are we to understand by "of her penury?"
23. What do the words, "all the living that she had," mean?
24. Is Christ omniscient?
25. Does He observe our state and situation?
26. Does he see the motives which lead men to perform their actions?
27. How are we to judge in cases of this kind?
28. How does the Saviour estimate liberality?
29. How does Jesus measure littleness and greatness?
30. What is said of little things?
31. How are the poor expected to give to God?
32. What would be the result if people really gave as the widow did?
33. What is said of the soul and the body?
34. To whom does "some" refer?
35. How did all Jews regard the temple in our Lord's time?
36. What is said of the "goodly stones?"
37. What does Josephus say of the appearance of the temple?
38. How does Tacitus describe it?
39. What were the "gifts" referred to?
40. What prediction did Christ make about the temple?
41. How will this prediction strike us the more?
42. What does Josephus say?
43. What does Maimonides say?
44. What is a common practice in the prophetic writings?
45. How does our Saviour seem to hold out the destruction of Jerusalem?
46. By mingling this destruction and the dissolution of the world, what does He give?
47. What do we here learn, first?
48. What second lesson is taught us?
49. What two things did the disciples inquire concerning?
50. How did our Lord dispose of their inquiries?
51. What is said of the signs He gives?
52. Why did He warn the disciples to take heed, &c.?
53. What is said about this caution?
54. What is said about "for many shall come," &c.?
55. What false Christs arose?
56. What is said of "the time draweth near?"
57. What is said of wars and commotions?
58. What "end" is referred to?
59. What does "by and by" signify?

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### LESSON CXX.

vs. 10-24.

10. "Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."

8 Matt. xxiv. 7.

*Nation shall rise against nation.* This portended the dissensions, insurrections, and mutual slaughter of the Jews, and those of other nations who

dwelt in the same cities together, as particularly at Cesarea, where the Jews and Syrians contended about the right of the city, which contention proceeded so far, that about twenty thousand Jews were slain, and the city was cleared of the Jewish inhabitants. The whole Jewish nation being exasperated at this, flew to arms, and burnt and plundered the neighboring cities and villages of the Syrians, making an immense slaughter of the people. The Syrians, in return, destroyed not a less number of the Jews. *Kingdom against kingdom.* This portended the open wars of different tetrarchies and provinces against one another: as that of the Jews who dwelt in Peræa against the people of Philadelphia, concerning their bounds, while Cuspius Fadus was procurator, and that of the Jews and Galileans against the Samaritans, for the murder of some Galileans going up to the feast at Jerusalem, while Cumanus was procurator, and that of the whole nation of the Jews against the Romans and Agrippa, and other allies of the Roman empire. But there was not only sedition and civil war throughout Judea, but likewise in Italy, Otho and Vitellius contending for the empire.

11. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

*Great earthquakes.* In the time of Claudius and Nero there were great earthquakes at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse, in Crete also, and Campania, and one at Rome in the reign of Galba. In Judea, likewise, there were judgments of the same kind. It is probable that Jerusalem herself was warned most loudly by a terrible earthquake, accompanied by thunders, lightnings, and overwhelming storms. *Famines.* It is evident from Josephus, as well as Eusebius, Suetonius, and several other profane historians, that, in addition to earthquakes, there were famines and pestilences in divers places. The first-named historian says, that the famine under Claudius Cæsar, predicted by Agabus, Acts ii. 28, was so severe that at Jerusalem many died of starvation. *And fearful sights, &c.* Josephus enumerates a great variety of astonishing signs and prodigies, which he says preceded the calamities that impended over the Jews, and which he expressly affirms, in perfect conformity to our Saviour's prediction, were signs manifestly intended to forebode their approaching destruction. This account is confirmed by the Roman historian Tacitus, who says that many prodigies happened at that time, armies appeared to be engaged in the sky, arms were seen glittering in the air, the temple was illuminated with flames issuing from the clouds, the doors of the temple suddenly burst open, and a voice more than human was heard, "that the gods were departing," and soon after a great motion, as if they were departing. War, pestilence, and famine, are judgments and calamities inflicted by God upon a sinful people for their contempt of Christ and gospel grace.

12. <sup>h</sup>But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and <sup>i</sup>into prisons, <sup>j</sup>being brought before kings and rulers <sup>k</sup>for my name's sake.

<sup>h</sup> Mark xiii. 9; <sup>i</sup> Rev. ii. 10. <sup>j</sup> Acts iv. 5, and v. 18, and xvi. 24. <sup>k</sup> Acts xxv. 23. <sup>l</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 13.

*Before all these*—before all these events and ominous sights. Our Lord here appears to have a special reference to the persecutions undergone by the early Christians between the time of His ascension and the destruction of Jerusalem. There is a noticeable climax in the indicated persecutions. Every circumstance here mentioned was minutely and exactly verified in the

sufferings of the Apostles and disciples. We learn from the Acts of the Apostles, that the lives of the Apostles were one continued scene of affliction and distress of every kind. They were imprisoned, beaten, brought before councils, and sanhedrims, and kings, such as Herod, Agrippa, and the Roman emperor, for the sake of Christ, that is, for being called by His name. Most, if not all of them, except John, suffered violent deaths from the hands of their enemies before the Romans beleaguered Jerusalem.

13. And 'it shall turn to you for a testimony.

<sup>1</sup> Phil. i. 28; <sup>2</sup> Thess. i. 5.

*To you for a testimony.* This means either that their persecutions would prove an evidence of the truth of Christianity, or that they would be, in the judgment-day, a testimony to their faithfulness in behalf of Christ.

14. "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 19; Mark xiii. 11; Luke xii. 11.

15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, "which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

<sup>1</sup> Acts vi. 10.

The Apostles being, in general, persons of ordinary education, and wholly unacquainted with the laws of the different countries whither they were to go, and with the forms of their courts, might have been painfully anxious at the thought of appearing before kings and rulers, and other persons of distinction, and might have feared lest, in their agitation, they should be betrayed into some impropriety of language or behavior by which the cause of the gospel might be injured. Our Lord, therefore, bade them renounce all earthly tempers and human ingenuity, and cast themselves in simple dependence on His aid. He would give them *a mouth* to utter, and *wisdom* in the matter of utterance. None but One who was very God could have made such a promise as this.

16. "And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and <sup>1</sup>some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

<sup>1</sup> Micah vii. 6; Mark xiii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vii. 59 and xii. 2.

We learn from *Tacitus*, that Christians were delivered up by their parents, brethren, kinsfolk, friends; from *Josephus*, that contention sprang up in their very houses, and that the Idumeans slew many of their own kindred; and from the Scripture, that the Jews persecuted those of their own country. 1 Thess. ii. 15.

17. And 'ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 22.

*Of all men*; that is, of all men out of the Christian community. *Tacitus*, the Roman historian, says, like a true pagan, that "the Christians were convicted of enmity to the human race"—Jews hated them as revolters from their own religion. Pagans could tolerate each other, and respect and worship each other's gods. But the Christians abhorred all paganism, and so all pagans abhorred them; thus, Christians were hated of all men, whether Jews or Gentiles. *For my name's sake.* For your attachment to me and my cause. See Rom. viii. 35-37; 1 Cor. iv. 9, 10; 2 Cor. xi. 28-29; Heb. x. 32-34.

18. 'But there shall not a hair of your head perish.

r Matt. x. 30.

*But, literally, and, (notwithstanding this universal and deadly opposition,) a hair from your head shall not be lost.* A strong proverbial expression, indicating that they should be inviolable upon earth so long as they were necessary for the service of the Lord; and that life and happiness, in the higher, truer sense, would not be affected in the least by these temporal persecutions.

19. In your patience possess ye your souls.

Be calm and serene, masters of yourselves, and superior to all unreasonable and disquieting passions, trusting in God, and waiting the performance of His promises. By keeping the government of your spirits, you will both avoid much misery, and guard the better against all dangers. There are three degrees of Christian patience: 1. Silent submission to God's will. 2. A thankful acceptance of God's fatherly rod. 3. Serious cheerfulness under sorrowful dispensations. This patience gives us the possession of ourselves.

20. 'And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

• Matt. xxiv. 16; Mark xiii. 14.

*When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies.* Luke here explains the language of the prophet Daniel, and that of the other Evangelists. Matt. xxiv. 15; Mark xiii. 14. The same general idea of an array of the idolatrous ensigns of Rome against the devoted city is referred to in both forms of expression. *The desolation thereof*; i. e., the process of its desolation.

21. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

*In Judea.* In the heart of the population. *Flee to the mountains.* Lonesome and inaccessible retreats, to which an army could not follow them. There is a commendation of a hasty flight as the only means of deliverance. *In the midst of it*; i. e., Jerusalem. *Countries*; i. e., the open country, or fields round about the city. These kind admonitions were not lost upon the disciples. Ecclesiastical history informs us that no Christians perished in the siege of Jerusalem. When the Roman general Cestius Gallus, three years before the siege by Titus, invested the city, he again, "very unadvisedly," as Josephus says, withdrew his armies. From this attack, a large number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem took alarm, and withdrew from the city as soon as the Roman army had retired. In the language of the historian just referred to, "they daily fled from the city as from a sinking ship." Among those who escaped were the Christians; some of them retiring to Pella, and some to Mount Libanus. The result of this was, that when the last great war, under Vespasian and Titus, broke out shortly afterwards, the Christians almost entirely escaped its desolation.

22. For these be the days of vengeance, that 'all things which are written may be fulfilled.

• 1' an. ix. 26 27; Zech. xi. 1.

*Days of vengeance.* Not days in which the one people takes vengeance on the disobedience and refractoriness of the other people, but in which God accomplishes His judgments upon His enemies. *May be fulfilled.* Our Lord thus declares that the fall of the city and the temple was already prophesied in the Old Testament. See Lev. xxvi. 14-40; Deut. iv. 25-28; xxviii. 49-57; Ps. lxxix. 22-28; Dan. ix. 25-27; Zech. xi. 1-3; Mal. iv. 1.

23. "But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

<sup>u</sup> Matt. xxiv. 19.

This is not an imprecation, but a bitter lamentation, in which the compassion and sympathy of the Saviour expresses itself. Sad would it be for those who, in such a time of terror and distress, had any natural impediments to obstruct their flight. *In the land, i. e., Judea. Great distress.* The anguish and suffering brought upon the people by the siege was terrible. Although the seat of war was eventually and finally transferred to the city of Jerusalem, yet the whole land had previously been overrun by the Roman soldiery, and suffered the most dreadful calamities.

24. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

<sup>x</sup> Dan. ix. 27 and xii. 7; Rom. xi. 25.

*Fall by the edge of the sword.* Josephus computes the number of those who perished in the siege at eleven hundred thousand, besides those who were slain in other places. *Shall be led away captive into all nations.* The number of the Jews taken by the Romans during the war amounted to about ninety-seven thousand, besides eleven thousand who were either starved through neglect, or starved themselves through sullenness and despair. Some of the youngest and handsomest were sent to Rome to adorn the triumph of Titus; many were distributed to the several cities of Syria, where they perished in the theatres, being compelled to fight with wild beasts, and to engage in mortal combats with each other. The remainder of those above seventeen years of age were sent to labor in the Egyptian mines, and those under that age were sold for slaves. Besides this, and before the upper city was taken, there was a great multitude of deserters, who, having not come over till the last extremity, and after Titus had declared that he would receive no more, were treated as captives. A great number of these, including many persons of consideration, were sold at the most trifling prices; but the remainder, consisting of forty thousand persons, chiefly of the lower orders, were liberated, because no one would take them at any price. Thus, at once, was fulfilled the prediction of our Saviour in this verse, and that which Moses delivered about sixteen hundred years before—"Ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you." *And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles.* Their city has remained for the most part in a state of ruin and desertion, from its destruction by the Romans to the present time, and never has been under the government of the Jews themselves, but oppressed and broken down by a succession of foreign masters, the Romans, the Saracens, the Franks, the Mamalukes, and the Turks. It is not, therefore, only in the history of Josephus, and in other ancient writers, that we are to look for the accomplishment of our Lord's predictions; we see them verified this moment before our eyes, in the desolate state of the once celebrated city and temple of Jerusalem, and in the present condition of the Jewish people, not collected together into any one country, into

one political society, and under one form of government, but dispersed over every region of the globe, and everywhere treated with contumely and scorn. *Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* The times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled when Israel is gathered into the Christian Church, "*and so all Israel shall be saved.*" Rom. xi. 26. In the same chapter, ver. 12, Paul says: "Now if the fall of them (the Jews) be the riches of the world, (i. e., be the occasion of spiritual blessings to the Gentile world,) and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness (i. e., their restoration to God's favor)?" And again, ver. 15: "If the casting of them away be the reconciling of the world, (i. e., the occasion of the conversion of many in the Gentile world,) what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" In the light of these quotations from Rom. xi., the passage appears to refer to the full measure of Gentile conversion which is to precede the conversion of the Jews. *Until* that time Jerusalem shall continue to be subjugated and debased, but *then* God will look again with favor upon His long-rejected people, and restore them to the spiritual rights and immunities of which they had so long been deprived. Jerusalem will cease to be trodden down, and recover her ancient glory. Then shall there be one Shepherd and one fold, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. It cannot but seem probable to every reflecting mind that the Jewish race is preserved for some great and providential reason.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of the phrase "nation shall rise against nation?"
2. What is said of "kingdom against kingdom?"
3. How was the prediction of great earthquakes fulfilled?
4. What do Josephus and Tacitus say of "fearful sights," &c.?
5. To what does there seem to be special reference in "before all these?"
6. Was every circumstance here mentioned minutely fulfilled?
7. What is meant by the words "for a testimony?"
8. Why was the injunction in ver. 14 necessary for the Apostles?
9. What did our Lord bid them do?
10. What did He promise to give them?
11. Could any but one who was God make such a promise?
12. What do we learn from Tacitus about Christians?
13. What does Josephus say on this point?
14. What is meant by "all men?"
15. What does Tacitus say of Christians?
16. How and why were Christians hated of all men?
17. What are we to understand by "for my name's sake?"
18. What is meant by "a hair of your head shall not perish?"
19. Explain the precept in ver. 19.
20. What does Luke explain in ver. 20?
21. What same general idea is referred to in both forms of expression?
22. Explain the words "in Judea."
23. Why flee to the mountains?
24. What is meant by "in the midst of it?"
25. What is meant by "countries?"
26. Were these admonitions lost upon the disciples?
27. What does ecclesiastical history say?
28. What is meant by "days of vengeance?"
29. What does our Lord declare in the words "may be fulfilled?"
30. What is said of verse 23?
31. How were the words "great distress" fulfilled?
32. What does Josephus say of those who perished in the siege?
33. How many Jews were taken by the Romans during the war?
34. How were the captives disposed of?

35. How has Jerusalem remained since its destruction by the Romans?
36. Has it ever been under the government of the Jews?
37. Who have been its foreign masters?
38. Where do we see our Lord's prediction fulfilled?
39. When will the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled?
40. What does Paul say on this subject?
41. How long shall Jerusalem continue to be subjugated and debased?
42. When will God look again with favor upon His long-rejected people?
43. What is said of that period?

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## LESSON CXXI

vs. 25-38.

25. ¶ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

† Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24; 2 Pet. iii. 10, 12

The prophecy, from this verse down to the end, describes the last days of the world, the coming of Jesus Christ for the judgment, the circumstances which will attend that coming, and the duties which the prospect of it entails on all Christians. *Signs in the sun . . . moon . . . stars.* By some, these are regarded as figurative expressions. There is, however, no good reason for doubting that they will receive a literal fulfilment. Both Josephus and Tacitus tell us that a variety of astonishing signs and prodigies preceded the calamities that impended over the Jews. The frame of nature was convulsed when the law of God was given at Sinai, and when Christ died on the cross. It was known, even from the Old Testament, that fearful signs in the realm of nature would herald the day of the Lord. See Jer. iv. 23; Joel ii. 30, &c. It may well, therefore, be expected that Christ's return to judge the world will be accompanied with cosmic revolutions. *And upon the earth distress of nations, &c.* As in the animal world, important alterations in the atmosphere are instinctively perceived, as often an inexplicable presentiment of a terrible calamity, whose breaking in is feared, makes even the most courageous pale with terror, so does our Lord give us to expect that an obscure presentiment of a great event, shortly before His coming, will produce in many a heart "oppressive anguish." The "roaring of the sea and waves," as it seems excited from its lowest depths, and surges with tempestuous violence, will remind even those who do not live in expectation of the judgment, of terrible things, nevertheless, which are about to come upon the earth, while the evil conscience testifies to them that they have the worst to expect thereafter, and they feel at a loss what to do in order to avert impending ruin.

26. Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

† Matt. xxiv. 29.

*Failing them.* The original signifies "to faint from fear, to become, not dead, but as if dead." *For looking after,* i. e., through fearful apprehension of still greater calamities. *On the earth.* The Greek word so translated, in all the other fourteen places in the New Testament where it is used, is ren-

dered, "the world." *For the powers of heaven shall be shaken.* This indicates, probably, a disturbance for the time of the fixedness of the planetary system.

27. And then shall they see the Son of man <sup>a</sup>coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxiv. 30; Rev. i. 7 and xiv. 14.

*And then.* The signs above referred to are the effects of Christ's coming, and hence there is no contradiction here of the repeated declaration that the coming will be without warning, and sudden. *See the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.* Matthew and Mark say *clouds*, referring to a cloud made up of clouds upon clouds, while Luke refers to it as a whole or single cloud. The appearance of Jesus will be visible to all. "Every eye shall see Him." Both Matthew and Mark mention the appearance and activity of the angels at the last day. Compare the assurance of the angels, that the Lord shall come "in like manner" as He ascended. Acts i. 9-12.

28. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for <sup>b</sup>your redemption draweth nigh.

<sup>b</sup> Rom. viii. 19-23.

We have in this verse a parallel between the events predicted as preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, and those to go before the world's judgment. When the former events, however ominous of evil, and however depressing and distressing, began to occur, Christ's disciples were to be no longer dejected and alarmed, but to be cheerful and joyfully expectant, for under His protection their deliverance from the horrors and carnage which accompanied the siege of the city was at hand. When the latter events occur, which are to precede the judgment, and on which the world shall gaze with helpless terror, believers are to rouse themselves to joyful expectation, for their complete deliverance from the power and consequences of sin is just about to take place. The heads which hitherto had often been bowed under all manner of misery and persecution, must then be lifted up. Comp. Rom. viii. 19; James v. 8.

29. <sup>c</sup>And he spake to them a parable, Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

30. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves, that summer is now nigh at hand.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xxiv. 32; Mark xiii. 28.

This comparison was designed by our Lord to show that the signs of which He had spoken were as indubitable precursors of the appearance of the Son of man, as the sprouting of the fig-tree, and other trees, was an indication of the approach of summer. Whoever sees the one, knows then of himself that the other is at hand. As in the kingdom of nature, so in the kingdom of Providence, there is a sequence of one event on another.

31. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

*Come to pass*; literally, *coming to pass.* *Know ye, &c.* Our Lord here teaches that His kingdom will not be nigh at hand until after a period of fearful wars and tribulation.

32. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

Commentators widely differ as to the meaning of this difficult verse. It would only be perplexing to state the numerous and various interpretations it has received. Its true signification appears to be, "This generation shall not pass away without the beginning of the end of the world, here foretold you, having come to pass, in the actual destruction of Jerusalem." The justness of this interpretation is rendered the more probable if we connect the verse with the first question in verse 7, which referred to the destruction of the temple. Jerusalem was taken A. D. 70, or forty years after this prediction. It was, therefore, within the lifetime of many then living.

33. "Heaven and earth shall pass away : but my words shall not pass away.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. xxiv. 35.

This was a peculiarly strong and solemn mode of declaring the certainty of the whole prophecy being fulfilled. The words evidently reach far beyond the destruction of the Jewish state. The heavens were to pass away like a scroll, at our Lord's coming. But His word was to stand forever. Nothing could prevent its being accomplished. Possibly there is an allusion to the new heavens and new earth which are to succeed the destruction of the earthly economy.

34. ¶ And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

• Rom. xiii. 13; 1 Thess. v. 6; 1 Pet. iv. 7.

*Take heed to yourselves.* Having disclosed as much as He thought fit with respect to His departure and return, our Lord now teaches how His disciples ought to act during His absence. *Hearts.* The heart is the part which the Christian must guard, if he would live ready to meet Christ. *Overcharged,* literally, *made heavy,* which is generally one of the hateful consequences of intemperance in eating or drinking. *And cares of this life,* anxious cares about visible and temporal things, and the inordinate pursuit of them. The former constitute the temptation of those given to their pleasures; *these,* the temptation of men of business in acquiring or possessing riches. *Unawares,* sudden, unexpected, unforeseen. Do not make an improper use even of lawful things; do not make this earth your portion: expect its dissolution, and prepare to meet your God.

35. For 'as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. iii. 3 and xvi. 15

*As a snare.* Here is an announcement of the suddenness and unexpectedness of our Lord's coming. A snare has a threefold property, to catch suddenly, to hold surely, to destroy certainly. The destruction of Jerusalem was not a sudden, but a very slow, long-foreseen, well-forewarned event. But Christ's coming to judgment shall be as the falling of a trap upon a thoughtless bird or animal, in which it finds itself inextricably taken. *On all them that dwell,* &c., literally, *that are sitting,* but the additional idea of carnal ease and security is also conveyed. They are to be taken at once, as soon as the snare is sprung upon them. See Amos vi. 1-16; Jer. xxv. 29; Rev. xviii. 7, 8.

36. <sup>a</sup>Watch ye therefore, and <sup>b</sup>pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and <sup>c</sup>to stand before the Son of man.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xxiv. 42 and xxv. 13; Mark xiii. 33.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xviii. 1.

<sup>a</sup> Ps. i. 5; Eph. vi. 13.

This is the general conclusion of all that precedes. *Watch ye therefore*, guard against every temptation to negligence and sin. The uncertainty of the event requires an unremitting vigilance. *And pray always*, i. e., continually, or, be always in a prayerful frame of mind. The word "continually," belongs equally to both. *Watch and pray*. Watching and praying are here joined together, as in Matt. xxvi. 41; 1 Pet. iv. 7, 8. *That ye may be accounted worthy*, not "become worthy," but regarded as worthy, through the mercy and grace of God. The word here rendered "accounted worthy," sometimes implies an honor conferred on a person, as when the Apostles are said to be *counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ*, Acts v. 41, sometimes the being meet or fit for any thing, or suitable thereto, as when John the Baptist exhorts to *bring forth fruits worthy of repentance*, Luke iii. 8. Hence, to be *accounted worthy to escape* is to have the honor of it, and to be fitted and prepared for it. Peter speaks of an "abundant entrance," and Paul speaks of some "saved so as by fire." 2 Pet. i. 11; 1 Cor. iii. 15. *To escape all these things*, &c. Here, as in ver. 32, the premonitions of Christ's coming are considered exclusively on their terrifying side. To escape, is not to be carried away by persecutions, brought to apostasy by misleaders, or robbed of courage by trial. *And to stand before the Son of man*, i. e., before His throne, with courage and acceptance, acquitted and approved, in order to view Him, to serve Him, and to glorify Him. This "standing" is not only the beginning, but also the substance, of the highest happiness, the opposite of which is described, Ps. i. 5; Nahum. i. 6; Rev. vi. 16, 17.

37. <sup>a</sup>And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and <sup>b</sup>at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called *the mount* of Olives.

<sup>a</sup> John viii. 1, 2.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xxii. 39.

*In the day time*, during the day, probably, also every day. This appears to relate to the four last days of Christ's life already mentioned. *In the temple*, where the people would naturally assemble for religious instruction. *At night he went out*, &c. He taught all day in the temple, and in the evening withdrew, and lodged with hospitable friends in Bethany, a village on the southeast side of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem. This was done that He might not, at night, fall into the hands of His enemies, who had now fully resolved to effect His death, and who were afraid to attack Him in the midst of His followers by day.

38. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

*Early in the morning*. According to Eastern custom, as thus described in Dr. Hackett's Biblical Illustrations: "During the greater part of the year, in Palestine, the heat becomes so great, a few hours after sunrise, as to render any strenuous labor inconvenient. The early morning, therefore, is the proper time for work, mid-day is given up, as far as possible, to rest, or employments which do not require exposure to the sun. The arrangements of life adjust themselves to this character of the climate. It happened to me often to observe how universal was the habit of early rising. Men and women may be seen going forth to their labors in the field, or starting on journeys

at the earliest break of day." See Luke xxii. 66; Mark xv. 1; Gen. xxii. 3, xxviii. 18; Exod. xxxiv. 41.

Our Lord, having exhorted His disciples, in the foregoing verses, to diligence and prayer, here set an example of both before them. Busy in God's service all day in the temple, He spent much time at night in prayer on the Mount of Olives. What an example of indefatigable zeal and diligence has He set before His ministers and members!

### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of the prophecy in verse 25?
2. How are we to understand "signs in the sun.....moon.....stars?"
3. What is the testimony of Josephus and Tacitus?
4. What is said in the Old Testament about signs heralding the day of the Lord?
5. Will there be cosmic revolutions at Christ's return to judge the world?
6. What is said of "upon the earth distress of nations," &c.?
7. What, about "the sea and the waves roaring?"
8. What is said of men's hearts?
9. What is said of the Greek word translated "earth?"
10. How shall the powers of heaven be shaken?
11. Are the signs here referred to *effects* of Christ's coming?
12. Does the prediction of these signs contradict what is elsewhere said of that coming being without warning?
13. What is said about "a cloud?"
14. Will the appearance of Jesus be visible to all?
15. What do Matthew and Mark say about angels?
16. What have we in verse 28?
17. What direction was given to Christ's disciples?
18. How are believers to act under the events which precede the judgment?
19. Why are they to act thus?
20. What was the comparison in verse 29 designed to show?
21. What does our Lord teach in verse 31?
22. What does the true signification of verse 32 appear to be?
23. How is the justness of this interpretation rendered the more probable?
24. What is said of verse 33?
25. To what is there possibly an allusion in it?
26. How did our Lord teach His disciples to act?
27. What is said of "overcharged?"
28. What are "cares of this life?"
29. What is said of "unawares?"
30. What is said of lawful things?
31. What is said of "a snare?"
32. Explain the words "all them that dwell," &c.
33. What is meant by "watch ye, therefore?"
34. What, by "pray always?"
35. Where else are watching and praying joined together?
36. What is meant by "that ye may be accounted worthy?"
37. What are we to understand by "escape all these things," &c.?
38. What is said of "stand before the Son of man?"
39. What is meant by "the day time?"
40. Where did Jesus teach?
41. Where did Christ retire in the evening?
42. Why did He thus retire?
43. What is said of "early in the morning?"
44. What is said of Christ's example?

## CHAPTER XXII.

## LESSON CXXII.

vs. 1-18.

A. D. 33. 1. The Jews conspire against Christ. 3. Satan prepares Judas to betray Him. 7. The Apostles prepare the Passover. 19. Christ institutes His holy supper. 21. Covertly foretells of the traitor. 24. Warns the rest of His Apostles against ambition. 31. Assures Peter his faith should not fail, and yet he should deny Him thrice. 39. He prays on the Mount, and sweats blood. 47. Is betrayed with a kiss. 50. He heals the ear of Malchus. 54. He is thrice denied of Peter. 63. Shamefully abused. 66. Confesses Himself to be the Son of God.

1. \*Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.

\*Matt. xxvi. 2; Mark xiv. 1.

*The feast of unleavened bread—which is called the Passover.* The Passover was the great festival among the Jews, in celebration of their deliverance from Egypt, when the destroying angel that slew the Egyptian first-born had passed over the houses of the Israelites marked with blood, and they escaped from Pharaoh. Exod. xii. This was associated in the type, and to be associated in the fact, with a greater deliverance of God's people by the blood of Christ. This joyous festival lasted seven days. Here, and elsewhere, it is called "the feast of unleavened bread," because the people were forbidden to allow any *leaven*, or fermented food or yeast, in their houses during this time. Exod. xii. 18. *Drew nigh.* This feast was to be celebrated within two days after our Lord had delivered the prophecies and admonitions above recorded.

2. And the chief priests and Scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.

† Ps. ii. 2; John xi. 47; Acts iv. 17

The *chief priests and Scribes*, with "the elders," Matt. xxvi. 3, constituted the Sanhedrim, or great council of *seventy*, the supreme legislature, especially in ecclesiastical matters, of the Jewish nation. *Sought how they might kill him.* This consultation was held in the palace of the high-priest. Matt. xxvi. 3. They were determined to remove Jesus out of the way at any cost, but they felt it important to be yet further agreed upon the manner in which to carry out their purpose. *For they feared the people.* The result of their deliberation seems to have been that it was still impossible to take Christ publicly in the temple, because it remained at least doubtful which side the people would take, and the attempt was certain to breed some kind of tumult, which would hardly fail to bring down upon them the Roman garrison, (always present during the Passover;) who would probably, after their manner, smite right and left, and defile the sacred courts with blood, without regard to the cause or circumstances. It was therefore desirable to obtain possession of His person privately by some craft or contrivance, and the treacherous proposal of Judas was just what was required to meet the desperate strait to which they were driven in carrying out their murderous intentions.

3. ¶ Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

• Matt. xxvi. 14; Mark xiv. 10; John xiii. 2, 27.

*Judas surnamed Iscariot.* Iscariot is the Greek form for Isch Kerioth, or man of Kerioth, which was a small town of Judea, mentioned in Josh. xv. 25. Dr. Hackett identifies it with Khureitun, "a few miles south of Bethlehem." "A dark spirit would find its own element in the gloomy scenery of Khureitun." See Notes on ch. vi. 16. *Entered Satan into, &c.* This is not to be interpreted as an actual possession of Judas, but as an infusion into his soul, by Satan, of his devilish spirit and purpose. His heart was filled with *avarice*. The preparatory influence thus exerted by Satan upon him was followed by another, stronger and more decisive. John xiii. 2. *Being of the number of the twelve.* This circumstance, which was so high an aggravation of the baseness of treachery, is mentioned with emphasis by all the Evangelists.

4. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains how he might betray him unto them.

*He went his way.* He went from Christ and His company, who were at Bethany, in the house of Simon, Matt. xxvi. 6, 14, to the house of Caiaphas, the high-priest, whom he knew to be a most bitter enemy of Jesus. *Commun-ed—conversed—with the chief priests and captains.* The captains were not Roman officers, but commanders of the Jewish guard of the temple. *How he might, &c.* The experience and judgment of these captains would be of great use to determine the question whether the proposal of Judas was worthy of acceptance. It is no uncommon thing for the vilest sins to be committed by such persons as make the most eminent profession of holiness.

5. And they were glad, and <sup>4</sup>covenanted to give him money.

<sup>4</sup> Zech. xi. 12.

*And they were glad.* Not only because there was now a prospect of the fulfilment of their murderous purpose, but also because in the band of the Apostles a spirit of unfaithfulness and hatred began to reveal itself. *Covenanted, bargained and agreed at once.* *To give him.* This shows that the money was not to be paid until Jesus had been actually delivered into their hands. *Money, literally, silver.* Matthew says, xxvi. 15, "thirty pieces of silver"—or shekels. This was the ordinary price of a slave, Ex. xxi. 32, being about 15 dollars. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Zech. xi. 12: "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." Every minute particular of Christ's death was just what had been foreseen and predicted. The sum which the traitor received seems trifling, if we estimate it by the immense consequences. But, after all, the whole service Judas did was to inform the foes of Jesus where He might be found and taken without tumult, and guide them to the place. Besides, why may we not assume that the sum received was only intended as a preliminary payment, to be followed by a more considerable one if the plan should be carried out successfully? Covetousness is the root of sin, and eager and insatiable thirst after the world is the parent of the most monstrous and unnatural sins. Hence our Saviour doubles his caution. Luke xii. 15.

6. And he promised, \*and sought opportunity to betray him unto them \*in the absence of the multitude.

• Zech. xi. 12.

\*Or, without tumult.

*He promised.* The original conveys the idea that he promised with professions of thankfulness. *Sought opportunity to betray him,* kept on the watch for a convenient occasion to put Him into their hands in as private a manner as possible: *in the absence of the multitude*—that, knowing nothing of what was done, they might not raise a tumult, and rescue Him out of the hands of those that seized Him.

7. ¶ Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.

† Matt. xxvi. 17; Mark xiv. 12.

*Then came the day.* They called the day on which the passover, or paschal lamb, was killed, one of the days of unleavened bread, and the first day thereof, Matt. xxvi. 17, because it was preparatory to that feast, and on that day, the Jews began to eat unleavened bread, Exod. xii. 18, though properly speaking, the feast of unleavened bread did not begin till the day after the passover, the *fifteenth* day of the month Nisan. Lev. xxiii. 5, 6; Num. xxviii. 16, 17.

8. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.

*He sent Peter and John*—from the place where He had spent the night before in retirement with them, *saying, Go and prepare us the passover.* They were to buy a lamb, have it inspected by the priests, get it killed, have the blood sprinkled at the foot of the altar, obtain bread, and wine, and bitter herbs, and make other necessary preparations, as to a room, &c. The inhabitants of Jerusalem prepared rooms, with the necessary furniture, in their houses, where strangers might celebrate the passover. These apartments were not let out for the occasion, nor was any compensation taken, but were of common right, for any persons by whom they were wanted, and were freely allowed to any who came to claim them. *That we may, once more, eat it together.*

9. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?

They meant at what house. As in Matthew and Mark, the question would seem to have been put first by the disciples, where—as here we see that it arose from the previous command of our Lord, it is probable that at a preliminary inquiry of the disciples, as to the *where*, our Lord gave Peter and John a definite command to go away to prepare the passover, and that now they repeated with more definiteness the natural inquiry as to the place.

10. And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

*Into the city*—the city of Jerusalem, for a paschal lamb could be eaten at no other place. *There shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water*—doubtless a servant who was a water-carrier. *Follow him, &c.* The man came with water from the western part of the city, as the Apostles entered the eastern part. They were directed to follow him, without saying any thing to him, because as he was carrying the water home, he would lead them straight to his master's house, with which, it seems, the Apostles were not acquainted. This direction, in connection with the others given by Jesus to His Apostles, as well as the predictions He uttered, were intended

to show them how completely He foreknew every thing that should befall Him, and to convince them that His sufferings were all predetermined of God, and that, on His part, they were all submitted to voluntarily.

11. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples ?

*Ye shall say.* Not a prophetic, but an imperative future. *The good man of the house*—the master of the family. *The Master saith unto thee.* The word *Master* is correlative to the word *disciple*, and thus it is clearly implied that the householder is a *follower* of Jesus. Indeed, when we recollect that the rulers were afraid of the multitude, as being adherents of Jesus, we may reasonably infer that the number of those who would call Him "*Master*" was not a few. *Where is the guest chamber, &c.* See Notes on ver. 8.

12. And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

*Large upper room.* Such as those which the Jews used for the same purposes as those to which our dining-rooms, parlors, and closets are applied. *Furnished*, i. e., with beds, couches, or sofas, carpets, pillows, stools, &c., such as among Oriental nations supply the place of chairs, tables, and, indeed, almost all the other furniture of a room. *There make ready.* See Notes on ver. 8. Our Lord did not direct one or both of these disciples to return and inform Him and the others where they had made this preparation, and to direct them to the house. This was unnecessary, for as Jesus could predict these circumstances, of course He could at once find the house. A *large room*, is the emblem of a heart enlarged with love, joy, and thankfulness; an *upper room*, is an heart exalted, not puffed up with pride, but lifted up by heavenly meditations; and a *room furnished*, is a soul adorned with all the graces of the Holy Spirit.

13. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

*And they went, &c.* The disciples, at Christ's bidding, went into the city, and found every thing to happen exactly as Jesus had foretold. This would tend no little to confirm their faith in Him, and prepare them for the trial they would so soon have to pass through in His death, as well as to proclaim the everlasting gospel to the guilty world. The foretelling and fulfilling of all these circumstances furnishes the strongest evidence of our Lord's knowledge of every event, and of His influence over every heart. *And they made ready, &c.* See Notes on ver. 8.

14. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

† Matt. xxvi. 20; Mark xiv. 17.

*When the hour was come*—the hour of partaking of the paschal feast. Between three o'clock and nine was the time for killing the lamb, called, also, between the *evenings*, Exod. xii. 6, in the Hebrew. *They sat down.* At the ancient meals there was no sitting in chairs, but reclining on *couches*, at the table. *And the twelve apostles with him.* Matthew says, "with the twelve." All the Apostles were present, Judas not excepted.

15. And he said unto them, \*With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer :

\* Or, *I have heartily desired.*

The present passage, 15-18, narrates that part of the supper which belonged to the Passover. That which belonged to the institution of the Lord's Supper is verses 19, 20. *With desire I have desired.* The Hebrew mode of saying I have had a most intense desire. Some refer the reason of our Lord's great desire to the whole work of redemption, which He was about to accomplish that week, and the strong desire which He felt to accomplish it. Others, and with a much greater plausibility, refer it to the institution of the Lord's Supper, and the affectionate desire which our Lord felt, not only to manifest Himself further to His own disciples, but, also, to establish and celebrate for the first and only time during His brief sojourn on earth, this sacramental festival, which has ever since bound together and cemented the hearts of His followers, and served more than any ordinance to keep in vivid remembrance His dying love for men. *With you, my beloved disciples. Before I suffer.* This is the only place in the Gospels in which this absolute use of the word is found. It is like the expression in the Apostles' creed, "He suffered."

16. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, <sup>b</sup>until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xiv. 15; Acts x. 41; Rev. xix. 9.

*Eat thereof.* Whether as Passover or Lord's Supper, both being the same thing in successive stages of development. *Until it be fulfilled, &c.* That is, until that of which the Passover is a type, is fulfilled in my death, through which the kingdom of God, or of heaven, see Matt. iii. 2, shall be established among men. The particle, "until," does not imply that after the accomplishment of the salvation of men, our Lord was to eat the Passover. It is a Hebrew form of expression, signifying that the thing mentioned was no more to be done forever. See 1 Sam. xv. 35.

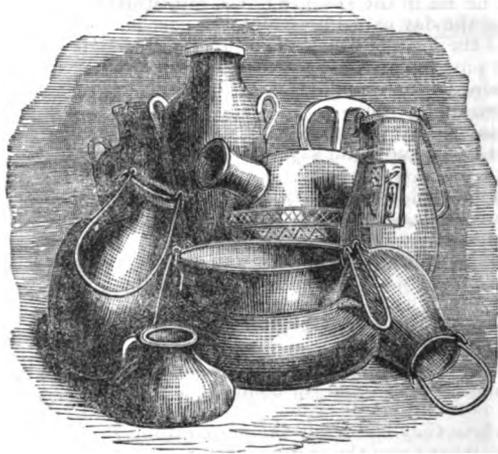
17. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves.

*The cup.* The Passover cup. Jesus took into His hands the cup of wine which it was customary to bring at the beginning of the paschal solemnity. *And gave thanks,* to Almighty God for His great goodness to His people, mentioning, no doubt, some of the principal instances of it, especially their redemption from Egypt, and then from Babylon. *Take this, and divide, &c.* Pass the cup from one to another, until all have partaken of it. Some maintain that Christ did not drink it Himself, but there seems little reason to doubt that He did, as He had just spoken of His desire to eat of the Passover, of which this cup was a part.

18. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

<sup>i</sup> Matt. xxvi. 29; Mark xiv. 22.

*I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, i. e., wine.* This may have been an intimation that this was the last paschal supper Christ would partake of with His disciples, and though He ate and drank with the disciples, after His resurrection, as we know He did, in order that they might know that He was really alive, Acts x. 41; yet He would not make use of any wine, and we do



VARIOUS FORMS OF ANCIENT CUPS.

not find that He was ever present at any feast; at least we are sure He never celebrated another Passover with them. Nor does it appear that He partook of the Eucharist with them, or ever administered it, but at this time of its institution. *Until the kingdom of God shall come.* See Notes on ver. 16.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What was the Passover?
2. What was it associated with?
3. How long did it last?
4. Why was it called "the feast of unleavened bread?"
5. How near was the celebration of this feast at this time?
6. Who constituted the Sanhedrim?
7. What did the chief priests and Scribes do?
8. Where was this consultation held?
9. Why was it held?
10. What was the result of their deliberation?
11. Why did it thus result?
12. What did Satan do to Judas?
13. What is said of "Iscariot?"
14. What is meant by Satan entering into Judas?
15. Why is it said Judas was "of the number of the twelve?"
16. Where did Judas go to?
17. With whom did he converse?
18. Who were the captains?
19. Why did he converse with the captains?
20. Why were the chief priests and captains glad?
21. What did they do?
22. How much did they agree to give Judas?
23. What prophecy was thus fulfilled?
24. What is said of the sum the traitor received?
25. What is said of covetousness?
26. What course did Judas pursue?

27. Why did he act in the absence of the multitude?
28. What was the day called on which the paschal lamb was killed?
29. When did the feast of unleavened bread properly begin?
30. For what purpose did Jesus send Peter and John?
31. From whence did He send them?
32. What were they to do?
33. What is said of the preparation of rooms in Jerusalem?
34. What did Peter and John say to Jesus?
35. What city was referred to?
36. Where alone could the paschal lamb be eaten?
37. What were Peter and John directed to do in reference to the man they would meet?
38. Do these directions given by Jesus show His foreknowledge?
39. What were they to say to the good man of the house?
40. Who was this?
41. What is said of the word "Master?"
42. What is meant by "the guest chamber?"
43. What kind of "large upper room is meant?"
44. How was this upper room furnished?
45. Why did not Christ tell either of the disciples to return and inform Him where they had made the preparations?
46. What is a large room the emblem of?
47. What does an upper room represent?
48. Did the disciples, when they went, find every thing as Jesus had foretold?
49. What hour is referred to?
50. What hour was it?
51. Who sat down?
52. What is said of "with desire I have desired," &c.?
53. What is said of "before I suffer?"
54. How are we to understand "eat thereof?"
55. What is said of "until it be fulfilled," &c.?
56. What cup did Jesus take?
57. For what did He give thanks?
58. What did He say to the disciples?
59. What is said of "I will not drink," &c.?
60. Did He ever partake of the Eucharist with them, or administer it, but at this time?
61. What is meant by "until the kingdom," &c.?

## LESSON CXXIII.

vs. 19-23.

WE now come to the first institution of what is termed the *Lord's Supper*. To every part of this most solemn and interesting ceremony the utmost attention should be paid. To aid in securing this result, we present in parallel columns the text of the three Evangelists who have transmitted the whole account, together with that part of Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians which speaks of the same subject, and which, he assures us, he received by Divine revelation.

MATT. XXVI.	MARK XIV.	LUKE XXII.	1 COR. XI.
26. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it; and brake it; and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.	22. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.	19. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.	23. . . the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread.
27. And he took the cup, and gavethanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;	23. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it.	20. Likewise also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.	24. And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.
28. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.	24. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.		25. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.
29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.	25. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.		

The Lord's Supper was *once* celebrated by anticipation, before the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the Lord's Supper, once before our ransom had been paid. The very fact that our Lord instituted His supper on the same evening as the paschal supper, shows that it is a *continuance* in a modified form. It simply drops off the bloody elements; so that it is in fact true that our sacramental ordinance has been continued from the departure of Israel to the present time, and will be continued until the full redemption and departure of the spiritual Israel under the greater Moses to the full fruition of the heavenly Canaan.

19. ¶ And he took bread and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: <sup>\*</sup>this do in remembrance of me.

<sup>\*</sup> Matt. xxvi. 26; Mark xiv. 22.

<sup>\*</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16.

*And he took bread, unleavened bread.* It was in the form of cakes. As we are not under the ritual law, and as nothing in this respect is spoken in the New Testament, it does not appear that unfermented bread is essential to the Lord's Supper. *And breaks it.* The breaking, under the old dispensation, represented the breaking which Israel suffered in Egypt, but in the new, it symbolizes the violence by which our Lord's body was put to death. 1 Cor. xi. 24. *And gave unto them.* Not only the *breaking*, but also the *distribution* of the bread are necessary parts of the rite. Saying, *This is my body which is given for you*, i. e., this bread signifies or represents my body, &c. This statement is made in accordance with the style of the sacred writers. Thus, it is said, "The three branches are three days." Gen. xi. 12. God says of the paschal lamb, our Lord's grand type, "This is the Lord's passover." Exod. xii. 11. Paul, speaking of Sarah and Hagar, says, "These are the two covenants." Gal. iv. 24. He also says, "They drank of the spiritual rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ." 1 Cor. x. 4. Our Lord could not have meant that the bread was His real body, because His body was present at the table breaking the bread, and He was speaking and acting in person among them. Observe, too, he broke it *after* it was blessed, when Papists think it was transubstantiated. On the same foundation on which Papists argue for transubstantiation from these words, they might prove from Ezek. v. 1-5, that the prophet's *hair* was the city of Jerusalem; from John x. 9 and xv. 1, that Christ was literally a *door* and a *vine*; from Matt. xxvi. 27, 28, and 1 Cor. xi. 25, that the *cup* was His *blood*, and that Christ commanded His disciples to *drink* and swallow the *cup*. *Which is given for you*, as a sacrifice for your sins, to purchase your redemption. *This do, break, take, eat this bread*—keep up the ordinance I have just appointed; *in remembrance of me*, no longer in remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt, under which your fathers groaned, but in remembrance of me, who, by dying for you, will bring you out of spiritual bondage, a bondage far worse than the Egyptian, and establish you in the glorious liberty of God's children. We thus learn that the celebration is to be a permanent memorial institution. The word rendered *remembrance* is, literally, the *recalling to mind*, and refers here to the vivid sense of Christ's sufferings and death, which this Supper is designed and adapted to produce in such as partake of it in penitence, humility, and faith.

20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.'

11 Cor. x. 16.

*Likewise also the cup*, i. e., having offered thanks to God, and holding it in His hand to give to His disciples. *Saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood.* The Greek word for testament should be rendered *covenant*. The same word is employed here as in Heb. viii. 8. It signifies a covenant or promise on the part of God to His people, sanctioned with the blood of victims, and depending upon certain stipulated conditions. The old covenant made by God through Moses is found in Exod. xxiv. 3-8. *The fruit of the vine* is the symbol of the ratification of the new covenant; that is, the covenant of the new dispensation, so called in contradistinction rather from the Mosaic than from the Abrahamic covenant. Gen. xv. 1-18; xvii. 1-19; Gal. iii. 17. The old covenant was ratified by the blood of bulls, goats, and calves; the new covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ. See Heb. ix. 11-28. Here is an undeniable figure, whereby the cup is put for the wine in the cup. And this is called the *new covenant* in Christ's blood, which could not possibly mean that it was the new covenant itself; but only the seal of it, and the sign of that blood, which was shed to confirm it. In other words, as the expression, *this is my body*, signifies, This is the repre-

resentation of my body, so, *this is my blood of the new testament*, must signify, This is the representation of my blood. *Which is shed for you*. The emblem of the death of the Lord's body substituted in the place of the death of your soul. The meaning of Christ, in the passage, is: "All of you, and all my disciples in all ages, must drink this cup, because it represents my blood, shed for the remission of sins—my blood, in which the new covenant between God and man is ratified."

21. ¶ "But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

<sup>m</sup> Ps. xii. 9; Matt. xxvi. 21, 23; Mark xiv. 18; John xiii. 21, 26.

According to Newcome's Harmony, the following order shows the successive stages of the exposure of Judas by Jesus, after which the traitor departed:

HARMONY	MATT. XXVI.	MARK XIV.	LUKE XXII.	JOHN XIII.
1. Jesus indicates that it shall be one of them.	21.	18.	21.	21.
2. Answering their inquiries, he indicates that it is one near them, dipping into the same dish .....	22-24.	19-21	22-24.	22.
3. To John, in a low voice, he declares that the betrayer is the one to whom he shall give the sop, and gives it to Judas .....	.....	.....	.....	23-27.
4. Satan possesses Judas, and Jesus bids him do quickly. None but John yet knows the exact one .....	.....	.....	.....	25-29.
5. Judas at last asks, <i>Is it I?</i> and Jesus before them all, declares that <i>it is he</i> .....	25.			

*But behold.* Some maintain from this expression, which they regard as a proof that Christ's discourse was continued without interruption, as well as from ver. 14, which they hold as teaching that when He sat down to supper and began the discourse, the twelve were with Him; that Judas was present at the Lord's Supper, and partook of it. Others maintain, with equal confidence, that as Matthew and Mark both represent the incident referred to here by Luke, as taking place while they were eating the passover, and before the institution of the Lord's Supper, no one who compares the order of those two Evangelists with John xiii. 21-35, can well avoid the conclusion that Judas left the table on his dark and traitorous errand before the Lord's Supper was established. It is certain that it was our Lord's purpose to get rid of the presence of the traitor before the ordinance of the Supper was administered to His true-hearted disciples. Hence, His warning, John xiii. 10, 18. *The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.* Our Lord had said to the twelve: "One of you shall betray me." Matt. xxvi. 21. Here He narrows the circle and makes the exposure still more direct. The expression was an Oriental one to denote that a person was reclining at the same table with another. Matthew says, xxvi. 23, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." As the Jews ate the passover a whole family together, it was not convenient for them all to dip their bread in the *same* dish; they therefore had several little dishes or plates, in which was the juice of the bitter herbs, mentioned Exod. xii. 8, on different parts of the table; and those who were nigh one of these, dipped their bread in it. Hence, as Judas is represented as dipping in the same dish with Christ, it would appear that he had carried his effrontery and hypocrisy so far, as not only to have come to the feast, but to have taken a place near his

Master, as a disciple who deserved to be trusted. On this supposition, our Lord seems to have aggravated the crime of the traitor, by suggesting the language of the Psalmist: "He that did eat my bread hath lifted up his heel against me." Ps. xli. 9.

22. "And truly the Son of man goeth, 'as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

▪ Matt. xxvi. 24.

◦ Acts ii. 23 and iv. 28.

*The Son of man.* By this appellation we are to understand that Christ was a real man—a perfect man—the representative man, the predicted man. *Goeth*: This denotes His marching with unflinching step to the scene of His crucifixion, His return to His Father through death and the resurrection, His going down to the lowest point He could reach in this world—the depths of the grave—and His going up to the highest point He could reach in the world to come—the throne of God; and by the words, *as it was determined*, is meant, that He did both, in the character, for the purpose, with the dispositions, and in the circumstances, in which it was determined that He should go. The Divine foreknowledge and prediction of events does not affect their moral character. Judas was not the less guilty, because, by his perfidy, a Divine purpose was fulfilled, a Divine prediction accomplished. It was "by wicked hands" that Jesus, "being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," was "crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23. If God determined to leave Judas to himself, and foreknew how he would act, this did not interfere with his free agency and accountableness - it did not necessitate his treachery. It cannot be doubted that his will, left entirely to his own freedom, would have determined *just as it did*, if such determination had neither been foreknown nor foretold. No man can justify himself in going on still in wickedness, under the excuse that he cannot help sinning. Nothing can happen, in heaven or in earth, without God's knowledge and permission. But sinners are always addressed by God as responsible, and as free agents. Augustine remarks, that "God is said to will things, in the way of permission, which He does not will in the way of approbation." Bishop Hall says, "It is the greatest praise of God's wisdom that He can turn the sins of man to His own glory."

23. "And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 22; John xiii. 22, 25.

It is not wonderful that the disciples should have been amazed and shocked at our Lord's announcement. To think that their beloved Master was to be exposed to shame, and torture, and death, was most painful. Peter expressed the mind of all the rest, when, on his Lord speaking of His approaching sufferings, he said with eagerness, "Lord, this be far from thee." But how much more painful to think that the treason of a professed friend, and that professed friend one of themselves, was to be the means of bringing on their Master sufferings which they so deeply deprecated. Then the question comes up, "*which of them* it was that should do this thing?" All but one felt as if they could sooner die than betray their Lord to death, and none of them seems to have thought his brother capable of doing what he knew he himself was incapable of doing.

## QUESTIONS.

1. What do we now come to?
2. What is said of this sacrament?
3. Read the several accounts of it by the Evangelists and the Apostles.
4. What is said of our Lord's institution of His Supper on the same evening as the paschal supper?
5. What is said of the bread Christ took?
6. Is unfermented bread now essential to the Lord's supper?
7. What did the breaking of the bread by our Lord symbolize?
8. Is distribution of the bread a necessary part of the rite?
9. What is meant by "this is my body which is given for you?"
10. When did Christ break the bread?
11. What is said of the argument of the Papists for transubstantiation?
12. How was Christ's body given for us?
13. What is meant by "this do?"
14. What is meant by "in remembrance of me?"
15. Is the celebration of the ordinance to be permanent?
16. To what does the word rendered "remembrance" refer?
17. What is meant by "likewise?"
18. What is said of the Greek word for "testament?"
19. What is said of the phrase, "this cup is," &c.?
20. What is evident from the expression, "this cup is the New Testament in my blood?"
21. What is the import of the words, "which is shed for you?"
22. What is the meaning of Jesus in verse 20?
23. Repeat the successive stages of the exposure of Judas by Jesus.
24. Was Judas present at the Lord's Supper, and did he partake of it?
25. What is said of "the hand of him that betrayeth me," &c.?
26. What do we learn from the phrase, "the Son of man?"
27. What does the word "goeth" denote?
28. What is meant by "as it was determined?"
29. Does the Divine foreknowledge and prediction of events affect their moral character?
30. Can any one justify a course of wickedness by the excuse that he cannot help sinning?
31. What does Augustine remark?
32. What does Bishop Hall say?
33. Were the disciples amazed and shocked?
34. Why were they so?
35. What is said of Peter?
36. What question came up?
37. How did they all but one feel?
38. What do none of them seem to have thought?

LESSON CXXIV.

vs. 24-30.

24. ¶ And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

¶ Matt. ix. 34; Luke ix. 46.

This was when they first took seats at the table, as above remarked, ver. 14. *Which of them should be accounted the greatest.* The competition seems to have been as to who should have the chief reclining place at the table. The immediate introduction of "the kingdom of God" was doubtless considered by them as implied in what our Lord had before spoken; and they overlooked all He had said of His sufferings, as what they could not understand. The couch of honor was the more earnestly desired, because it was supposed that it would indicate its occupant's claim to the highest office or post of honor in the Messiah's kingdom, of the temporal character of which their minds were far from being wholly dispossessed. It is wonderful that when this strife arose, Christ did not at once state that Peter was he to whom all the rest must be subject, as a prince or head, if, indeed, Peter, according to the Roman Catholic theory, was the recognized head of the Apostles. A desire to be great, and to be *greater* than others, is deeply rooted in our sinful nature. Even after we have turned to God, we are troubled by this evil propensity. We often betray it in our conversation, when we are not aware of the spirit that actuates us. Even when we keep silence in regard to the esteem in which we are held, the exertions we have made, the plans we have suggested, and the influence we have obtained, because we think it unbecoming to praise ourselves, we often indulge *feelings* of self-complacency, and are elated when others notice and commend us. It would not be thus with us, if we were engrossed with the glory of Christ. Then we should desire only to speak of His wondrous works, and to talk of His power, and of the glory of *His* kingdom.

25. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

¶ Matt. xx. 25; Mark x. 42.

*Kings of the Gentiles*—especially of the Romans. *Exercise lordship.* Both the original words here used imply arbitrary, domineering authority; authority for authority's sake. They exercise dominion to gratify their love of rule. Jesus here does not condemn the exercise of a just governmental authority, in which the ruler, acting for the public good, is, in fact, the public servant. *Benefactors.* The Greek word so translated was a title often assumed by heathen monarchs, who prided themselves on being special benefactors of their subjects. One of the Ptolemies, king of Egypt, was so called.

26. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

• Matt. xx. 26; 1 Pet. v. 3.

† Luke ix. 48.

*But ye shall not be so*—your greatness shall not be like that of them who dwell in earthly courts—shall not consist in temporal power over your fellow-creatures, or in honor or dignity among them, though it should be joined with an affectation of titles which denote qualities truly honorable. Our Lord here condemns, not a true ecclesiastical government, but all ecclesiastical ambition, and all aspiration after selfish power. *Greatest* may here, perhaps, mean “greatest in age,” the oldest. It is opposed to *younger*. The sentiment is, that the eldest, to whom the pre-eminence and respect due to age would naturally and properly belong, should be as condescending and humble as the youngest of the number. The same idea is enforced and expanded in the corresponding clause—*he that is chief*, &c., where there is a strong antithesis between *chief* and *he that doth serve*, i. e., is servant of the company.

27. *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

<sup>a</sup> Luke xii. 37.

<sup>v</sup> Matt. xx. 28; John xiii. 13, 14; Philipp. ii. 7.

Our Lord, by proposing the question so easy of answer, as to the relative superiority of the guests over those who serve at the feasts, illustrates His own humility and condescension. *As he that serveth*. There is an evident reference here to the act of washing the disciples' feet, recorded by John, xiii. 14, and which had taken place a very short time before the conversation we are now considering. At the same time the expression describes the whole tenor of our Lord's course on earth. “He took on Him the form of a servant.” “He came not, to be ministered to, but to minister.” Usefulness in the world and Church—an humble readiness to do any thing, and put our hands to any good work—a cheerful willingness to fill any post, however lowly, and discharge any office, however unpleasant, if it can only promote happiness and holiness on earth—these are the true tests of Christian greatness.

28. *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.*

<sup>f</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

*Temptations*, literally, *trials*, and afflictions. Christ's whole life was little else than one continued series of them, particularly from the time of His entering on His public ministry. We know the weakness and infirmity of our Lord's disciples during the whole period of His earthly ministry. But here we find Him graciously dwelling on one good point in their conduct, and holding it up to the perpetual notice of His Church. They had been faithful to their Master, notwithstanding all their faults. Their hearts had been right, whatever had been their mistakes. They had clung to Him in the day of His humiliation. If we are true believers, let us remember for our comfort, that Jesus looks at our graces more than at our faults, that He pities our infirmities, and that He will not deal with us according to our sins.

29. *And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;*

<sup>z</sup> Matt. xxiv. 47; Luke xii. 32; 2 Cor. i. 7; 3 Tim. ii. 12.

30. *That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

<sup>a</sup> Matt. viii. 11; Luke xiv. 15; Rev. xix. 9.

<sup>b</sup> Ps. xlix. 14; Matt. xix. 28; 1 Cor. vi. 3; Rev. iii. 21.

Our Lord having mentioned what His disciples had done for Him, ver. 28, now adds an intimation of what He has purposed for them. *I appoint.* The Greek word so rendered might be translated, "I appoint unto you by covenant." It is the root of the words used in the well-known passage in Hebrews: "Where a *testament* is, there must be the death of the *testator*." Heb. ix. 16. Judas could not be intended in this promise; but as twelve apostles were at first appointed, and as the vacancy would soon be filled up after he "was gone to his own place," the original number was mentioned. *A kingdom.* The meaning of this phrase must probably not be pressed too closely. It signifies honor, dignity, reward, majesty, of which a king's position in this world furnishes the only emblem. Christ will have a real kingdom, covenanted to Him from all eternity. In that kingdom of Christ the Apostles will have a principal place. They will be like kings within a kingdom. *That ye may eat and drink, &c.* This language is derived from the custom of ancient and oriental kings, to invite to their own table their chief ministers and confidential servants, as a mark of royal favor and esteem. *And sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* See Matt. xix. 28. In ancient times kings performed all the functions of judges. See 2 Sam. xv. 4; 1 Kings iii. 9; 2 Chron. i. 11; Ps. lxxii. 2. When Christ shall come to judgment, then, as great kings have officers around them, dignitaries of the kingdom, ye Apostles shall be exalted to special honor, and shall sit on thrones of majesty, judging the people of God—the twelve tribes of Israel. It is generally believed that the mention in particular of twelve thrones which appears, Matt. xix. 28, was omitted here on account of the apostasy of Judas. The primary design of our Lord in this verse seems to have been, to say to the Apostles: "As the honors which I shall hereafter confer on you are incomparably beyond those about which you seem so solicitous, let a consideration of this awaken a nobler ambition in your minds than that which now seems to influence them, and, instead of contending for superiority over each other in my Church militant, in which you must expect to meet with continual reproach and suffering, aspire after higher degrees of that celestial glory which you are to share with me in my Church triumphant."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. When did this strife occur?
2. What was it about?
3. Why was the couch of honor the more ardently desired?
4. What is said to be wonderful?
5. What is said of a desire to be great, and to be greater than others?
6. What kings of the Gentiles are specially meant?
7. What do the words rendered "exercise lordship" imply?
8. Does Jesus condemn the exercise of a just governmental authority?
9. What is said of the Greek word translated "benefactors?"
10. What is meant by "but ye shall not be so?"
11. What does our Lord here condemn?
12. What may "greatest" here, perhaps, mean?
13. What is said of the clause, "he that is chief," &c.?
14. What does our Lord illustrate by the question in verse 27?
15. What is the reference in the words, "as he that serveth?"
16. What does the expression describe?
17. What are the true tests of Christian greatness?
18. What is meant by "temptations?"
19. What was Christ's whole life?
20. What good point in the character of His disciples does Jesus here hold up?
21. What, as true believers, should we remember?

22. What did our Lord intimate He had purposed for His disciples?
23. What might the Greek word rendered "I appoint," be translated?
24. Of what words is it the root?
25. What is said of the phrase, "a kingdom?"
26. What does it signify?
27. What place will the Apostles have in the kingdom of Christ?
28. What will they be like?
29. What is said of "that ye may eat and drink," &c.?
30. What did kings perform in ancient times?
31. Refer to the examples given.
32. What is said of the Apostles when Christ shall come to judgment?
33. Why was the mention of twelve thrones, Matt. xix. 28, omitted here?
34. What was it the primary design of our Lord to say in verse 30?

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### LESSON CXXV.

vs. 31-38.

31. ¶ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to *have* you, that he may *sift you* as wheat:

<sup>c</sup> 1 Pet. v. 8.

<sup>d</sup> Amos ix. 9.

*Simon, Simon.* Peter had probably had his full share; would seem, indeed, to have been one of those most forward in the contention for pre-eminence, in the preceding verses. The language of our Lord is designed to disclose to him the danger in which he stood from the adversary, and thus arm him against the force of temptation. He tells him that while he is seeking greatness, he is on the very point of making a grievous fall. Peter was, perhaps, here called by his former name, Simon, because, in the events referred to, his instability so little accorded to the signification of that which had been given to him. Our Lord addressed him in particular, and in a very emphatic manner, although the other disciples who also had that day been in a most fearful danger, were likewise concerned, and the pronoun is plural, *you*, not *thee*. The repetition of Simon's name implies solemnity and importance in the statement about to be made, his insensibleness to the danger impending, and deep concern by Christ on behalf of Simon's soul, than whom none was more imperilled. Some think that a double intimation of Peter's denial took place, the one even in the paschal hall, the other on the way to Gethsemane, which latter is exclusively mentioned by Matthew, xxvi. 31-35, and Mark, xiv. 27-31. Of the former John gives us an account, xiii. 36-38, with which vs. 31, 32 of Luke appear to run parallel. It took place, therefore, shortly after the institution of the Lord's Supper, immediately following the new commandment of brotherly love. John xiii. 34, 35. *Hath desired to have you*, ardently entreated for you, or demanded you, as Satan demanded Job to be put in his power, to test his integrity, *that he may sift you as wheat*. The word, *you*, is here again plural, and, therefore, includes all the disciples, except Judas, who had now left them to consummate his deed of treachery. The sifting Satan desired was to agitate their minds by his inward suggestions, concurring with their outward perils and difficulties, as the wheat is tossed about in the sieve, to be separated from the chaff. Probably the sifting process spoken of includes the idea of an endeavor of Satan to effect

the separation of some of the disciples, and Peter, in particular, from fidelity to Jesus. He would gladly have had the men who were to spread abroad the name of Jesus. He hoped that Judas was not the only hypocrite among them. Satan is continually making efforts to test and ruin all Christians. 1 Pet. v. 8. Let us fear an enemy who is always desiring and never weary in soliciting for leave to tempt us. Let us comfort ourselves, however, since it is hereby manifest that he is not able to do any thing against us without the permission of God.

32. But \*I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

• John xvii. 9, 11, 15.

† Ps. li. 13; John xxi. 16, 17.

I. In this discourse of our Lord, also, His person forms the immovable centre. The pronoun, I, emphasises the idea that Jesus had opposed himself in person to the adversary. *For thee*, concentrates the danger and final deliverance again upon Peter, as the special and repeated address, *Simon, Simon*, had done in the first instance, but which had been made by the plural, *you*, to include the whole. *I have prayed for thee*. For thee, as a believing Christian, and for thee as a tempted Christian. It is not said, *I will pray for thee*, but, *I have prayed for thee*. Christ prayed for Peter before Peter understood that he had need of His prayer. Christ prayed for Peter as soon as ever Satan desired to sift him. Our Intercessor is as prompt in His prayer for us, as Satan is in his accusations against us. Christ by no means prayed that Peter might entirely escape the sifting. Comp. John xvii. 15. *That thy faith fail not*. Not that thy faith be not assaulted, not that thy faith be not shaken, and become very feeble, but that thy faith may not fail by an absolute and total extinction. "Faith" is the root of the whole Christian character, and the part which Satan specially labors to overthrow. 2 Tim. iv. 7. Peter's faith did not fail as *life* fails in *death*. His faith was grievously interrupted in its *exercise* and *effects*, when he denied His Lord, but the *principle* did not fail in his heart. Rom. v. 7-10, viii. 32-34; 1 Pet. i. 2-5. *And when thou art converted*, that is, recovered from thy fall, when restored, upon thy repentance, to the Divine favor. This conversion was not from a *state* of sin, not such a conversion as that first conversion to God which takes place when an unconverted person becomes a Christian, for Peter was converted before, but it was from an *act* of sin, into which he should lapse and relapse. The verb in the original, rendered "art converted," is not passive, as is implied by our common version, but is intransitive, *when thou turnest* to duty, love, and obedience. This verb is similarly rendered in xvii. 4; Acts iii. 19, xxvi. 18. Our English translation of the verb, however, in the present instance, is faithful, because it was the grace of God in answer to our Saviour's prayer, which brought Peter back, with tears of repentance, to the fold, whence he had strayed away. *Strengthen thy brethren*, that is, establish others in the faith in which thou didst grievously decline. Our Lord does not here say, "*my*" brethren, as in John xx. 17, nor yet "*our*," but *thy* brethren, i. e., those who will have been shaken and enfeebled by thy fall, and who are afflicted with the same weakness which shall have brought thee to so deep a fall. After his fall and recovery, Peter was peculiarly earnest in encouraging the disciples to hope for a happy issue of their trials, and in animating them boldly to profess and preach the gospel, while the humiliating lessons which he learned by those events, had a very salutary effect on his own spirit, and tended to qualify him especially for encouraging and warning the tempted, the fearful, the desponding, or the fallen, even to the end of his days. How he afterwards strengthened his fellow-apostles by his word and example, appears plainly from the Acts. How he strengthened his fellow-believers, is manifest in his Epistles. It was

certainly Peter's advantage that our Lord prayed for him, but not so much his honor that he should stand in need of such a prayer, beyond all others. To Peter belonged *shame*, the *honor* was the Lord's. He who by sin disgraces the cause of Christ, should doubly honor it by a redoubled effort to prevent others from like folly. How it binds the hearts of believers to their Lord, to remember the various instances in which their backslidings have been healed! David declared, after his grievous fall, "I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Jesus expects of His restored backsliders that they should strengthen their brethren. It encourages a wanderer to return, to hear another wanderer say, "The Lord has forgiven *me*."

83. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death.

These words indicate how little Peter was yet fitted for the strengthening of others. He places himself first to designate the source from which his exultant feeling of strength proceeds. He doubtless felt all that he said, and his resolution to accompany Christ both to prison and to death was holy and good; but his too confident opinion of his own strength and ability so to do, without Divine aid and assistance, shows that he had not yet found out the weakness of his faith and the deceitfulness of his heart. There would seem to be an intimation that the Lord's intercession for him had not been so especially necessary. Self-confidence is a sin too incident to the holiest and best of men. Men little know what they will do till the time of temptation actually comes. 2 Kings viii. 18. 'Tis an humble fear of falling that must enable us to stand.

84. "And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

¶ Matt. xxvi. 34; Mark xiv. 30; John xiii. 38.

*I tell thee, Peter.* Now not *Simon*, though he might have doubly deserved it, but *Peter*, inasmuch as our Lord places Himself in the position of the man who, in his own eyes, stands there so rock-fast. It has been remarked that this is the only place in which our Lord addresses Peter by this name, the name which signified "stone." It was surely meant to remind him how weak even the strongest disciples are. What had been previously hinted at by Jesus in regard to Peter's defection, is now openly and emphatically asserted. *The cock shall not crow this day, &c.* We learn from John xiii. 37, Matt. xxvi. 38, Luke xxii. 38, that Peter had professed his zealous adherence to the cause of his Master three times. Jesus now most solemnly assures him that, on that very night, before the morning dawn, he would thrice deny that he knew Him. Our Lord is forced by Peter's boasts to bring out the clear, precise, sorrowful truth. This prediction, of what seemed at the time to be most improbable events, is a striking evidence of our Christ's foreknowledge. The fall of Peter, thus foretold unto him, admonishes us to renounce our own light and knowledge, especially as to what regards the disposition of our heart. God, and Christ, who is true God, know better than ourselves the use which we shall make of the freedom of our will, and yet this foreknowledge imposes no manner of necessity upon it.

85. "And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse,

and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

<sup>h</sup> Matt. x. 9; Luke ix. 3 and x.

When Christ first sent out the Apostles to preach, He desired them to make no provision by the way. They were to take neither *purse* nor *scrip*; the means, figuratively, of conducting their ministry. Matt. x. 9, 10. They obeyed this command, and, according to their own testimony, wanted *nothing* during their journey. They had been like children for whom the parent cared and provided. The disciples of Jesus can always testify that their Lord has kept His promises—not one of them has ever failed, or ever will. The providence of God is always watchful over such as forsake all to follow Christ, and continually mindful of their wants.

36. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take *it*, and likewise *his* scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

*But now*, childhood is past, and the Divine order is, that your powers be developed into the efficiency of manhood. They were not to expect such a constant miraculous interposition of God in their behalf as would make them independent of the use of means. *He that hath*. Whatever of means or instrumentalities you have got, cultivate and put them to strenuous use. We are not to neglect human instrumentality in doing Christ's work. *He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one*. Some persons think that the sword which our Lord means is the "sword of the Spirit" referred to, Ephes. vi. 17. If we thus understand the word "sword," then it would seem to be necessary also to give to the "garment," the "purse," the "scrip," or wallet, and the "shoes," a spiritual significance. The most satisfactory interpretation is that according to which these words are understood in a parabolical sense, indicating that a time was drawing near when all human means, of which the "purse," the "scrip," and the "sword" are emblems, must be diligently used by the Apostles. "Our Lord will simply, in a concrete pictorial form, represent to His disciples the right and duty of necessary defence, in order that they may, by the very opposition to the former command, (ver. 85.) finally come to the consciousness that an entirely peculiar danger shall break in upon them." Here is a warrant from our Lord for the standing up of His followers in their own defence. Christianity, however, has no license from this passage to draw the sword for its own propagation.

37. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, <sup>1</sup>And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

<sup>1</sup> Is. liii. 12; Mark xv. 28.

This is not the time for the true disciples of Christ to depend upon the good-will of men, when Christ Himself is to be reckoned and treated as a transgressor and a malefactor. Who would favor the followers of a crucified Master? He reminded them of the words of Isaiah, 53d chapter: "He was numbered with the transgressors." One of the trials the Saviour endured was *disgrace*. He was put to death as a *wicked* man, with wicked men, and *in the manner* in which wicked men were put to death. The *disciples* of such a Master ought to expect disgrace. They should not be surprised when they are insulted, reviled, and falsely accused. Let it be observed that our Lord, in speaking of His approaching crucifixion, does not

speak of it as His "death" merely. He specially describes it as His being "reckoned among the transgressors." The expression was evidently meant to remind us that the chief end of His death was not to be an example of self-denial, but to be a substitute for us—a sacrifice for us—to become sin for us, and be made a curse for us. *For the things concerning me have an end.* This does not refer simply to the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies, but there was to be a complete and final close to these predictions, and to that end all things were now rapidly tending. His sufferings and death were a part of the Messianic prophecy, and these also were to be fully accomplished.

38. And they said, Lord, behold, here *are* two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

*Here are two swords.* From these words it is evident that the disciples took what Christ said about the sword literally. They had these two swords evidently concealed from our Lord. They may have provided them for defence against assailants, as even the priests did in the passage (Luke x. 31) from Jericho to Jerusalem. But they may have been knives for slaying the Passover lamb. *It is enough*—to illustrate my metaphor, quite *enough*, and *too much*, if it is real bloodshed you contemplate. If Jesus had intended that His servants should fight, He would not have said that two swords were enough. The words gently rebuke the Apostles' mistake. These two swords were enough, and even too much, for Him who designed to defend Himself only by delivering Himself up, to fight only by suffering, and to conquer only by dying. These were enough to give occasion to Christ to instruct the Church, in one of the chief of the Apostles, concerning the use she was to make of the sword, concerning the mildness we ought to show toward our enemies, and the submission we ought to have for authority, and to give Christ an opportunity of doing good to His persecutors, of making known His power to them, and of showing them plainly that His being seized by them, and his death, were altogether voluntary on His part. When temptations come upon us, let us use the sword of the Spirit. Satan cannot resist it. We know not what great temptations may soon assail us. God often makes the first part of a believer's course very smooth, because He knows his weakness, and will not try him above his strength. But an *evil day* will come. How shall we stand in that day? Not by our own strength. We must take unto us *now* the whole armor of God, and when clothed in this armor, we must watch and pray: thus shall we be able to resist all the wiles of the devil. Eph. vi. 11.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of Peter in regard to the contention for eminence in the preceding verses?
2. What is the language of our Lord to him designed to do?
3. Why, perhaps, was Peter here called by his former name?
4. Though our Lord addressed Peter in particular, were the other disciples also concerned?
5. What does the repetition of Simon's name imply?
6. What do some think about a double intimation of Peter's denial?
7. When did the denial take place?
8. What is the meaning of "hath desired to have you"?
9. What is said about the word "you"?
10. What was the sifting Satan desired?
11. What did the sifting process probably include?
12. Is Satan endeavoring to test and ruin all Christians?
13. What ground of comfort have they under this effort?

14. What is said of the pronoun *I*?
15. What of the words "for thee?"
16. What is said of "I have prayed for thee?"
17. What did Christ pray for Peter?
18. What is said of "faith?"
19. Did Peter's faith fail?
20. What is meant by "when thou art converted?"
21. What is said of "strengthen thy brethren?"
22. Did Peter fulfil this command?
23. Where is the evidence that he did so, to be found.
24. What is said about it being Peter's advantage that our Lord prayed for him?
25. What should he do who by sin disgraces the cause of Christ?
26. What did David declare after his grievous fall?
27. What did Peter reply to our Lord?
28. What did these words indicate?
29. What is said of self-confidence?
30. What did Jesus say to Peter?
31. Why did He call him Peter?
32. Is this the only place in which Christ addresses Peter by this name?
33. What was this name meant to remind him of?
34. What do we learn from John?
35. What does Jesus now most solemnly assure Peter?
36. What is this prediction a striking evidence of?
37. What does the fall of Peter, thus foretold, admonish us to do?
38. What is said of verse 35?
39. What is said of verse 36?
40. What do some persons think of the sword referred to?
41. How are the words "garment," "purse," "shoes," to be understood?
42. What did our Lord represent to His disciples?
43. What is meant by verse 37?
44. How does our Lord speak of His approaching crucifixion?
45. Of what was the expression, "reckoned among," &c., intended to remind us?
46. To what does the phrase, "for the things concerning me," &c., refer?
47. What is said about the words, "here are two swords?"
48. Were these two swords concealed from our Lord?
49. For what may the disciples have provided them?
50. What did Jesus say?
51. What is meant by "It is enough?"
52. What is said about temptations?

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## LESSON CXXVI.

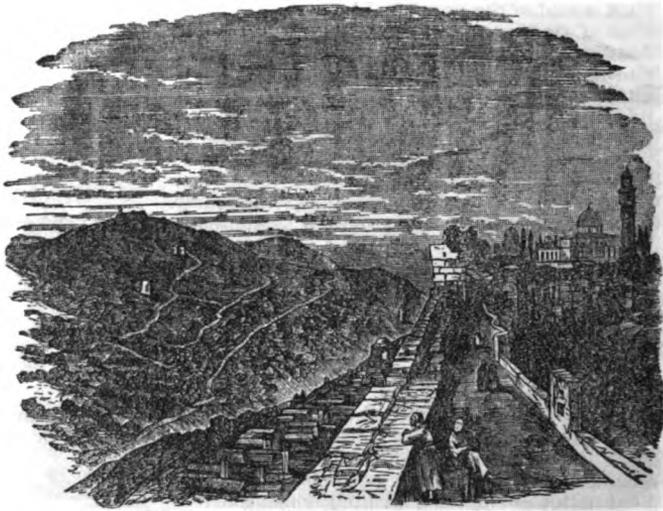
vs. 39-46.

39. ¶ <sup>1</sup>And he came out, and <sup>1</sup>went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives, and his disciples also followed him.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 36; Mark xiv. 32; John xviii. 1.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxi. 37

*He came out*—out of the city. Our Lord now changes the scene from the supper-table to the garden. *As He was wont* on the preceding days of this week of His passion. *To the mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him.*



MOUNT OF OLIVES.

The "mount of Olives" is the usual form of the name in the New Testament, but in Acts i. 12 we find it called "the mount called Olivet," the word *Olivet* being borrowed from the Latin, *Olivetum*, which is a translation of a Greek word, signifying a place where olives grow—an olive-garden, or olive-yard. It doubtless had its name from the abundance of olives which grew upon it, some of which, of remarkable age and size, are still standing. This mount overlooks Jerusalem on the east, so that every street and almost every house may be distinguished from its summit. It is about a mile in length, and about seven hundred feet in height. To a spectator, on the west it has a gently waving outline, and appears to have three summits of nearly equal height. At the base of Mount Olivet is Gethsemane, a retired place, containing about half an acre of land. The name indicates the fertility of the spot, especially in olives. It is called a *garden*, though it was probably a grove, laid out in walks, and furnished with fountains, affording shade and seclusion to those who resorted thither from the noise and distraction of the adjacent city. Modern travellers tell us that the garden is about a stone's cast from the brook Kedron, and that it now contains eight large and venerable-looking olives, whose trunks, the largest of which is six yards round, show their great antiquity. Captain Lynch says that these olives are one thousand years old, and as the olive-tree reproduces from the same root, these trees are the radical descendants from the same germ as those of our Saviour's time. The spot is sandy and barren, and appears like a forsaken place. A low, broken wall surrounds it. It was to Gethsemane Christ at this time went. If we suppose (as some do, see Note on xxii. 11) that the supper-room was situated somewhere upon the eastern horn of Mount Zion, from the supper-room we must trace our Lord going forth over the great "bridge" of the Tyropœon, passing through the temple precincts, and through the great front temple gate, (or, perhaps, through what was equivalent to the present St. Stephen's gate,) descending the valley of Jehoshaphat, crossing the brook Kedron, (about where its dry channel is now spanned by a small bridge of a single arch,) and walking, followed by the eleven, toward the ascent of Olivet, till He reached Gethsemane, a level place between Kedron



GARDEN OF GETHESEMANE.

and the foot of the hill. That our Lord went straight thither is a new proof that He no longer sought to go out of the way of His enemies; for, according to John xviii. 2, the place was known also to Judas, who would, therefore, undoubtedly seek Him there with the band, if he no longer found Him in the paschal hall. It is also a proof of the heavenly composure and clearness of mind which our Lord continually maintained, that He would surrender Himself over to the hands of His enemies, not in the city, in the midst of the joyful acclamations of the paschal night, but without it, in the bosom of open nature, after He had previously strengthened Himself in solitary prayer to His Father. The fact that Jesus accustomed Himself to retirement, teaches us to do so, for freedom of converse with God and our own hearts. It should be particularly our practice to retire after we have been at the Lord's table; we have then work to do which requires us to be alone.

40. "And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

= Matt. vi. 13 and xxvi. 41; Mark xiv. 38; ver. 46.

By the word *place* is generally understood a villa, or cluster of houses, to which the garden was an appendage. *Pray that ye enter not into temptation.* We are not to understand our Lord as having said this to all the eleven disciples, for from Matthew and Mark we know that He took three of them—Peter, James, and John—to attend Him, at a little distance from the rest, in the moments of His agonizing prayer. Christ's exhortation to them was intended to keep them, when they were in the greatest alarm and danger, from having any inclination to desert Him. Prayers are a sure succor against the most perilous assaults of our enemies. We must not wait until the time of temptation before we pray, but we must pray before it comes. To be assaulted by temptation is one thing, but to enter into it, quite another. To be tempted is a painful thing, and a heavy trial; but to "enter into temptation" is a sin.

41. "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast and kneeled down, and prayed,

42. Saying, Father, if thou be \*willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, 'not my will, but thine, be done.

\* Matt. xxvi. 39; Mark xiv. 33.

\* Gr., *willing to remove*

• John v. 30; vi. 38.

*Was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast.* Matthew says, "He went a little further." So that there were three divisions of the little band: there were the eight disciples, the three chosen ones, and at a distance of a "stone's throw" the suffering Saviour. The ancients very frequently noted short distances by such expressions as a *stone's cast* or *arrow's flight*, and, indeed, we have the same usage in our expressions, *within gunshot*, *within a stone's throw*, &c. *Kneeled down*, this denotes the posture of prayer which He first assumed. Afterwards, as His mental agony increased, we see from Matthew and Mark, He prostrated Himself with His face upon the ground. *And prayed.* The disciples were entreated to watch with our Lord, Matt. xxvi. 38, but not to pray with or for Him. That work He does alone, and asks no participation. They cannot pray His prayer. He may intercede for them, not they for Him. The example of the great Head of the Church shows believers what they ought to do in time of trouble. Both the Old and New Testaments give one and the same receipt for bearing trouble. Ps. l. 15; James v. 13. *Father.* However near the paternity of God, it still leaves Him the right and the reason to inflict upon us terrible sorrows. Yet true faith looks up, even to His frowning face, with a filial claim. *If thou be willing, remove this cup from me.* "If it can consist with thy counsel." This was the language of that innocent dread of suffering which Jesus, being really and truly man, could not but have in His nature. The sentence is incomplete in the original, which is literally, *if thou be willing to remove this cup from me.* This is, however, the natural expression of intense sorrow, the words, "I pray thee to do thus," being left to be supplied. It was customary among the ancients to assign each guest at a feast a particular cup, as well as a dish, and by the kind and quantity of the liquor contained in it, the respect of the entertained was expressed. Hence the word "cup" came in general to signify a portion assigned, whether of pleasure or sorrow. See Ps. xi. 6, lxxiii. 10, lxxv. 8; Is. li. 17; Jer. xxv. 15; Matt. xx. 23. The "cup" to which Jesus referred was the extreme inward anguish of spirit which He was suffering, the fear with which He was oppressed, the anxiety with which He was tortured, the sorrow with which He was overwhelmed, and the intense agony, mental and physical, which yet awaited Him. *Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.* The prayer of Christ was, as it were, taken back, before it was entirely uttered. It must be remembered that He who spake these words, having two distinct natures in one person, had a human will as well as a Divine. *Nevertheless*, inasmuch as I have entered into covenant engagements, and have become surety for sinners, inasmuch as "for this cause came I unto this hour," and to offer up atoning sacrifice in my death is the great design of all the Divine decrees and operations which have brought me to this point; inasmuch as without this sacrifice, the oracles of ancient prophecy will be falsified, and the redemption of men's souls, which is precious, cease forever: *not my will*, not the will of my human nature, but *thine*—the will of God, (as it is written concerning me,) *which I delight to do*, let that *be done*, Ps. xl. 7, 8, at whatever expense of agony. If we would imitate Christ in His prayer, we must, 1. Pray when alone; 2. Humble ourselves, internally, at least, and, if we are able, externally, also; 3. Be fervent; 4. Lay our condition before God with plainness and simplicity; 5. Be full of trust and confidence; 6. Resign ourselves to the will of God, and choose rather to have that done than our own; 7. Persevere in praying. The sacrifice of our own will is that which God loves the most, and which ought ever to accompany all others.

43. And there appeared 'an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

p Matt. iv. 11.

The appearance of a holy angel to our Lord, in this conflict, and when thus weighed down with the feeling of the wrath of God against our sins, was intimation of approaching victory, and calculated to strengthen Him by the brightening prospect of future joy which was thus symbolized to Him. The angel could not *efficaciously* communicate strength even to His human soul, but he might suggest encouraging topics; and it was doubtless a part of our Saviour's humiliation, and an instance of His condescension, that He was pleased to be thus "strengthened" by "a ministering spirit," though "all the angels of God worship Him." This verse supplies additional proof that our Lord was really and truly man. As man, He was for a little time "lower than the angels." Heb. ii. 9. As very God of very God, and Lord of angels and men, Jesus of course needed no angel to strengthen Him. But as very man, in the hour of His greatest weakness, He allowed an angel to minister to Him. We must, after the example of Christ, not reject those external consolations which God sends us in our troubles. In all things Christ has the pre-eminence, and how willing are His people to acknowledge it! But while He is the first-born among many brethren, all of them are predestinated to be conformed to Him. Angels, therefore, who attended Him, attend them also. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that are the heirs of salvation?" Their attendance is no less real than formerly, though it is no longer visible, according to the principle of the economy under which we live, and which is, to walk by faith and not by sight. They delight to do the will of their Lord and ours. These blessed beings have no envy, no pride. They are enemies to His enemies, but they are friends to His friends. They rejoice when a sinner repenteth, and carry the dying saint into Abraham's bosom.

44. 'And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

q John xii. 27; Heb. v. 7.

*Being in agony.* There can be little doubt, that at this mysterious moment, our Lord's distress of body and mind was most intense and bitter. He was assaulted by the prince of darkness with peculiar and special temptations. Hell came to meet him in the garden of Gethsemane. Satan, who had been defeated in the wilderness, returned with his legions, to make a last and fierce attack. But Christ's intense agony can only be satisfactorily explained by the fact that His death was a vicarious death. The sin of the world began to be laid upon Him in a special manner in the garden. He was being "made a curse" for us, by bearing our sins. This was the principal cause of His agony and bloody sweat. The words of Isaiah were being fulfilled: "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief." The Lord made the iniquity of us all to meet on Him. Isa. liii. 6. *He prayed more earnestly.* The expression *more earnestly* is derived from a verb signifying *to stretch out, to strain*, referring to the high tension of the nerves and muscles in extreme suffering. Jesus summoned up all His energies to an unremitting struggle of prayer. Comp. Hosea xii. 4, 5. The most striking commentary on this expression is found, Heb. v. 7-9, where strong crying and tears are spoken of with which our Lord offered up His prayers and supplications to Him who was able to save Him from death. The Divine nature, without separating itself from the human, leaves it to

the weakness common to other men, to the end that the Head may be the consolation of the weakest of His members, and the instruction of the strongest. We must pray the more earnestly, and redouble our fervency, when the affliction or temptation is redoubled. Prayer is the design, the refuge, the solace, the improvement of affliction; and the greater the distress and anguish we are in, the more necessary will it be, both for our sanctification and support. Let us, therefore, be the more importunate. *And his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* The physical frame of Jesus was now in full sympathy with His mental distress. Instances of what has been called bloody sweat are on record numerous and authentic. Galen says, "Cases sometimes happen in which, through mental pressure, the pores may be so dilated that the blood may issue from them, so that there may be a bloody sweat." The Latin poet, Lucan, in his poem, the *Pharsalia*, vividly describes a case in which *the sweat is ruddy*. Yet Luke, the only one of the four Evangelists who mentions the circumstance now before us, affirms not that the sweat was blood, but "*as it were great drops of blood.*" If we do not understand actual drops of blood, we must, at all events, conceive them as heavy, thick drops, which, mingled and colored for the most part with portions of blood, looked altogether like drops of blood. That our prayer may be effectual, like that of Christ, we must be prepared to resist even unto blood in fighting against sin. How adorable is this bloody sweat, which the violence of Christ's grief and sorrow for our sins forced out of His veins! What could have produced this sweat? Surely not the mere circumstances of dying. Socrates—Seneca, did not sweat thus; they were cool and calm. Look at the martyrs, and even those of the more timid sex; they were tranquil in the prospect, and in many instances came forth from prison smiling, and blessed the instrument of death—what was the reason of this difference? they had not to contend with the powers of darkness, but this was their hour, and the power of darkness. They had not to bear the sins of others, nor yet their own, whereas the Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all.

45. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,

*Rose up* from His incumbent position. *He found them sleeping for sorrow.* Luke is the only Evangelist who mentions the cause of the disciples being asleep. Sorrow, it is true, makes men sleepless sometimes, but when it is very great it may so weary down the whole outer and inner man that one, as it were, sinks into a condition of stupor. The same three who slept at the Transfiguration were the three who slept in Gethsemane. It seems as if the air of that night were dense with fearful, supernatural influences, weighing them down with stupor. In those circumstances of trouble and affliction which oblige us to pray, we must not forget even the wants of those who are intrusted to our care.

46. And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

† Ver. 40.

*Why sleep ye?* How gentle His reproof! "Is this a time to sleep, when your Master is in such danger, when He is going to lay down His life, and when all the powers of hell are seeking to thwart the work of human redemption?" *Rise* from your sleepy, recumbent posture. Some say of this, that a standing posture of the body is best suited for overcoming drowsiness in prayer. *And pray, lest ye enter into temptation.* Christ said this, because He knew what sharp trials were coming upon them. Prayer was their only

safeguard at this awful crisis. How often, shall we find, when we look back upon our past lives, that we received *warnings* before we fell into sin! While we exert our own energies against the evil powers, let us also supplicate Divine aid. As a fragile boat would avoid the rocks and reefs, so should the feeble Christian avoid the dangers of trials that threaten him.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. How did our Lord now change the scene?
2. What is meant by "as he was wont?"
3. What is said of the Mount of Olives?
4. What is said of Gethsemane?
5. How is our Lord's going forth probably to be traced?
6. What is Christ's going straight to Gethsemane a new proof of?
7. What is said about retirement, especially after we have been at the Lord's Table?
8. What is generally understood by "the place?"
9. To whom did Jesus deliver the exhortation in ver. 40?
10. What was the object of this exhortation?
11. What is said about prayers?
12. What is said about temptation?
13. What three divisions were there of the little band?
14. How did the ancients note short distances?
15. What is said about "kneeled down?"
16. What is said about "and prayed?"
17. What does Christ's example show?
18. What is said about the word "Father?"
19. How are we to understand the phrase, "if thou be willing?"
20. What did the ancients assign each guest at a feast?
21. What did "cup" hence come to signify?
22. What was the cup to which Jesus referred?
23. What is said of "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done?"
24. Had Jesus two distinct natures in one person?
25. What will did Christ refer to in the words "not my will?"
26. What is necessary if we would imitate Christ in His prayer?
27. What is said about the appearance of an angel to our Lord?
28. What could an angel do to Him?
29. What is said of Christ's humiliation?
30. Of what does verse 33 furnish additional proof?
31. What is said of the words "being in agony?"
32. How was Jesus assaulted?
33. How can Christ's intense agony only be satisfactorily explained?
34. What words of Isaiah were being fulfilled?
35. What is said of the phrase "he prayed more earnestly?"
36. Where is the most striking commentary on this expression found?
37. What is said of the Divine and human nature of Christ?
38. What is said about prayer?
39. What is said of the physical frame of Jesus?
40. What is said of instances of bloody sweat?
41. How are we to regard the sweat drops of Jesus?
42. What is said of prayer?
43. When Jesus rose up, how did He find His disciples?
44. Why were they sleeping?
45. Does Luke alone mention the cause of their being asleep?
46. What is said of sorrow?
47. What is said of the three who slept in Gethsemane?
48. What did Jesus say to the disciples?
49. Why did Jesus bid them rise and pray?
50. What is said of warnings before falling into sin?

## LESSON CXXVII.

vs. 47-53.

47. ¶ And while he yet spake, "behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.

• Matt. xxvi. 47; Mark xiv. 43; John xviii. 3.

*Behold a multitude.* They came in force, probably apprehensive of resistance from the disciples, or of some attempt of rescue by the way. Mark xiv. 47; John xviii. 10; Matt. xxvi. 47. By what authority was Jesus now arrested? and of whom or what did this multitude consist? To the first question we may answer, that in Judea there was an inferior native or Jewish government under the dominion of the Roman government. Of the Jewish government the chief magistrate was the high-priest. The legislative authority resided in the Sanhedrim. It was by the Jewish authority, or at least at their prosecution, that our Lord is now arrested and taken before their high priest, to answer for offence against the Jewish law. The multitude who apprehended Jesus were of the following four classes: 1. *The band*, John xviii. 3, being a detachment from the garrison of five hundred Roman soldiers who, in the fortress of Antonia, overlooking the temple, kept the Jews in awe. A detachment was ever ready to be sent when the commander was informed that a disturber needed to be taken in custody. So that thus much Jesus was apprehended by the loan of a Roman body. 2. *The captains of the temple*, Luke xxii. 52, who came, doubtless, attended by their guard or police—men who kept order at the temple. 3. Several of the Jewish dignitaries attended to see the work carefully done, namely: chief priests, zealous Pharisees and elders. 4. Servants of these dignitaries, John xviii. 18, both private and official, like Malchus. Our Lord was thus arrested by the Jewish authority, partly using Roman instrumentality. *One of the twelve.* With this name, as with a branding-iron, Judas is designated even unto the end. *Went before them*, in order to point out to the multitude the one whom they were to apprehend, by the preconcerted sign. See Matt. xxvi. 48. As the particular place at the base of the Mount of Olives, to which our Lord was in the habit of going, was well known to all the disciples, and to Judas Iscariot among the rest, he was able, though it was at night, to lead our Lord's enemies to the very spot where his Master was. *To kiss him.* According to the wonted familiarity to which our Lord admitted His disciples.

48. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

*With a kiss*—the hallowed token of friendship. Mark omits this utterance of our Lord. Matthew, on the other hand, has: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Matt. xxvi. 50. "Must the Son of man be betrayed by one of His own disciples, as if He had been a hard Master, or deserved ill at their hands? Must the badge of friendship be the instrument of treachery?" To *betray*, is bad enough; to *betray the Son of man*, is worse; to *betray Him with a kiss*, is worst of all. There are some who behave to Jesus *now* that He is in *heaven*, as Judas did when *He* was upon *earth*. When it seems to be their interest to appear to love Him, they put on the *mask of piety*; but when they

can gain worldly advantages by betraying His servants, they will do it, and yet all the time continue to observe the forms of religion. They do not consider how much their guilt is increased by their acts of apparent devotion. Satan employs such persons to do his darkest deeds. To bear the deceitful caresses of a false friend, requires more virtue than to endure the most violent attacks of an avowed enemy. The kindness of Jesus, as here displayed, His gentle reproof, and the discovery which He made of the bottom of the traitor's heart, make it evident that nothing external is sufficient to convert a sinner, if God vouchsafe not to speak to the heart itself. As the inordinate love of money, on the part of Judas, was the occasion of the treason, and the devil laid before him a temptation exactly suited to his inclination, which overcame him, we hence learn that persons are never in such imminent danger of falling into sin as when they meet with temptations exactly suited to their master lust.

49. When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

*They which were about him.* After the hour of agony had passed, Jesus, with the three disciples whom He had chosen to accompany him, (Matt. xxvi. 87; Mark xiv. 33,) returned to the body of the disciples, whom He had left on His entrance into the garden, with directions to pray for deliverance from temptation. *Saw what would follow*, literally, "the thing about to be, or about to take place." *Lord, shall we smite with the sword?* By the approach of the band, and the insult of Judas, they are at once persuaded that they themselves are no longer a step distant from the dreaded hour. They believed themselves hitherto to have dreamed, and appear now all at once to awake. Looking upon the weapons brought with them out of the paschal hall, they addressed this question to the Master, as if they would not have drawn the sword without permission from Him; but they were in too much haste and heat to wait for an answer; for already one of them has followed the ill-considered question with a hasty act. Christ and His cause are not to be defended by force of arms. He is very far from desiring to save His own life by exposing that of others, since He came to shed His blood, and to die for all mankind. There are many persons in the world, who, like Peter, consult God, and yet suffer themselves to be hurried away by their passion or their false zeal before they know His will.

50. ¶ And 'one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

† Matt. xxvi. 51; Mark xiv. 47; John xviii. 10.

*One of them smote the servant, &c.* What must have been the dismay of the Apostles, when they beheld their Master in the hands of His enemies! We can scarcely wonder that one of them drew his sword to attack the high priest's servant. John tells us, xviii. 10, this servant's name was Malchus, the Greek and Latin form of *Malek*, signifying *king*. We might have conjectured that it was Peter who committed this rash deed, but we are not left to uncertainty on this point. John informs us, xviii. 10, that it was Peter. Perhaps, as the other Evangelists wrote their Gospels during the lifetime of that Apostle, they were afraid of exposing him to danger by revealing his name, whereas John, who (it is supposed) wrote his account after Peter's death, had no inducement to conceal it. *Cut off his right ear.* He meant, doubtless, to cut off his head; but, perhaps, the same power that healed, prevented the true aim of the blow. It is much easier to fight a little for Christ, than to endure hardness and go to prison and death for His sake.

The zeal of Peter was very short-lived. His courage soon died away. The fear of man overcame him. By-and-by when our Lord was led away prisoner, He was led away alone. The disciple who was so ready to fight and smite with the sword, had actually forsaken his Master and fled!

51. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

*Suffer ye thus far.* Our Lord sees how the band are just addressing themselves to take Him prisoner, with the greater bitterness, perchance, because blood had already flowed, and He Himself is not minded to counterwork their designs. He only desires that they would leave His hands yet a moment free, that He might bestow yet one more benefit. "Leave me still free for the moment, that with my hand I may touch the ear of the wounded man." See Matt. xxvi. 50; Mark xiv. 46. *And he touched his ear, and healed him.* Although all the four Evangelists mention the cutting off of the servant's ear, yet Luke alone relates how it was healed. It seems this miracle was the *last* the Saviour performed. In one respect it was the *greatest*. No doubt the Lord's *power* was more fully displayed when the dead were raised, but His *grace* was most gloriously manifested when His *enemy* was healed. Multitudes had often surrounded Him, entreating Him with piteous cries to restore their blind parents to sight, and their sick children to health. But *this* multitude came, *not to entreat, but to assault*. Yet the gracious Saviour healed even one of this wicked company. Jesus permits evil, in order only to bring out of it a greater good. He teaches us to return good for evil. The sight of this miracle converted none. O, how insufficient are all outward means of conversion without the Spirit's inward operation!

52. "Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders which were come to him, Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves?"

• Matt. xxvi. 55; Mark xiv. 43.

*The chief priests.* Some of these were in Gethsemane, in order to convince themselves of the fact of the arrest of Jesus, and, in case of need, to encourage their servants by their presence. *Captains of the temple.* These are supposed to have been the leaders of the priests and Levites, who alternately kept guard at the avenues of the temple. *Be ye come out, voluntarily, not sent out by authority, like the poor soldiery.* These dignitaries were the principal and guilty movers. *As against a thief, with swords and staves?* Rather, *as against a robber.* *Staves, literally, wood, i. e., all kinds of sticks and cudgels.* This was the *manner* in which they would have sought to take a highwayman of desperate character, and armed to defend his life. They knew His purity, His holiness, His mysterious power of rebuke. Yet they would slay Him as a malefactor. He expresses His indignation at this. It adds not a little to the depth of our Lord's humiliation, that He consented to be *hunted down* thus by wicked men, and to be treated as if He had been the worst of mankind. The best of persons are more sensibly affected by the ill usage which wounds their reputation and honor, than they are by any other kind of injustice. It is in order to secure us from that excess to which this sense of human honor is apt to carry us, that Christ was willing to be treated as a thief—even He who had divested Himself of all, and who was now just going to lay down His life.

53. When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched

forth no hands against me: \*but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

\* John xii. 27.

*Daily with you in the temple*—for many days before the Passover. *Ye stretched forth no hands against me.* They refrained from violence, not through want of an eager desire to take Jesus, but because it was not permitted them of God. This utterance must have reminded them of many a fruitless plot which they had meditated, and many a word of rebuke which they had heard, although our Lord, who was not minded to eulogize Himself, was entirely silent as to the miracles which He had performed before their eyes, and as to the triumphs which He by word or deed had won over their perplexity and weakness. *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.* See John xii. 27. "How hard soever it may seem that I should be thus exposed, I submit, for so it is determined. This is the hour *allowed you* to have your will against me; there is an hour *appointed me* to reckon for it." Two parties are brought in here—the wicked Jews, who were about to deliver our Lord to Pilate, and the devil, under whose instigation they were acting. It was the brief "hour" of triumph which the unbelieving Jews, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, were to enjoy. It was the little season, during which the prince of the darkness of this world was to have "power," and to all appearance to prevail over the second Adam, as he had prevailed over the first. And yet neither wicked men nor a malicious devil could go a hair's breadth beyond the limit appointed by God, or triumph over the Son of God a minute beyond the time decreed by the eternal counsels. They knew it not, but so it was. Even now, our Lord would have them know they were only able to take Him prisoner, because He submitted, and because God permitted them a little season of "power." Christ determines the hour of His death, as a voluntary victim, who offered Himself, not out of necessity, but out of choice and love. Such is the blindness of sinners, who think they reign and triumph when they accomplish their wicked desires, whereas they are only the instruments of the devil, who makes them serve his design, as the devil is himself an instrument whom God makes subservient to His.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What took place while Jesus yet spake?
2. By what authority was He now arrested?
3. What was the first of the four classes of the multitude that apprehended Jesus?
4. What the second?
5. What the third?
6. What the fourth?
7. How is Judas designated?
8. Why did he go before the multitude?
9. Explain "to kiss him."
10. What did our Lord say to Judas?
11. Explain the words "with a kiss."
12. Are there some who behave to Jesus now as Judas did?
13. What does the kindness of Jesus, as here displayed, show?
14. When are we in the greatest danger of falling into sin?
15. What is said of "they which were about him," &c.?
16. Explain "Lord, shall we smite with the sword," &c.?
17. What is said of "one of them smote the servant," &c.?
18. What was this servant's name?
19. Who smote the servant?

20. Explain "cut off his ear."
21. What is said about this?
22. What is meant by "suffer ye thus far?"
23. Explain "He touched his ear, and healed him."
24. What is said of this miracle?
25. Did it convert any one?
26. What is said of the chief priests
27. Who were the "captains of the temple?"
28. What did Christ say to the chief priests and captains?
29. Explain "staves" and "swords."
30. What is said in verse 53?
31. Explain "this is your hour," &c.

## LESSON CXXVIII

vs. 54-63.

54. ¶ Then they took him, and led *him*, and brought him into the high priest's house. \*And Peter followed afar off.

† Matt. xxvi. 57.

\* Matt. xxvi. 58; John xviii. 15.

Then they took him, literally, *having taken Him*, i. e., having apprehended Him. *Into the high priest's house*. We are here to understand *Caiaphas*. Matt. xxvi. 57. John says, xviii. 13, that they led Him first to *Annas*, the father-in-law of *Caiaphas*. This was done, probably, as a mark of respect, he having been high priest, and, perhaps, distinguished for prudence, and capable of *advising* his son-in-law in a difficult case. From *Annas*, Christ was sent bound, to *Caiaphas*, who was then the high priest, and whose residence may have adjoined that of *Annas*. While Jesus was before *Annas*, the Sanhedrim was assembling at the palace of *Caiaphas*, preparatory to the arraignment of Jesus before them. *And Peter followed afar off*. By this he evinced two things: 1. Real attachment to his Master, a desire to be near Him, and to witness His trial. 2. Fear respecting His personal safety. He therefore kept so far off as to be out of danger, and yet so near as that he might witness the transactions respecting his Master. Perhaps he expected to be lost and unobserved in the crowd. Many, in this, imitate Peter. They are afraid to follow the Saviour closely. They fear danger, ridicule, or persecution. They *follow Him*, but it is at a great distance, *so far* that it is difficult to discern that they are in the train, and are His friends at all. Religion requires us to be near Christ. We may measure our piety by our desire to be near Him, to be like Him, and by our willingness to follow Him always, through trials, contempt, persecution, and death.

55. \*And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

† Matt. xxvi. 69; Mark xiv. 66; John xviii. 17, 18.

*Kindled a fire*. It is well known that the nights in Palestine, especially in the early year, are often very cold, particularly at Jerusalem, from its great elevation above the sea. *The hall*. The Greek word so rendered is more frequently translated "palace." Some suppose that here it means "an open court enclosed by buildings—a court-yard exposed to the open air." In Rev.

ii. 2, it is translated "court," and can there bear no other sense. *Peter sat down among them.* While the servants were warming themselves in the open court, Peter, assuming as well as he could the appearance of an indifferent observer, took his place in the midst of them, in order to be able to be eye and ear witness, in the immediate vicinity. He who loves danger, and takes no care to avoid the occasions of sin, runs the hazard of perishing. It is infinitely better for a man humbly to retire, acknowledging his weakness, and having recourse to Him who is the strength of the weak, till He vouchsafes to show him mercy, than wilfully to persist in performing a presumptuous promise, by endeavors which are still more presumptuous.

56. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

*As he sat by the fire.* The Greek word here rendered "fire" means, literally, "the light." It is evident that the word was used intentionally by Luke, in order to show us that it was "by the light of the fire" that Peter was recognized and charged with being a disciple. Had he kept in the background, and been content with a darker position, he might have escaped notice. *A certain maid . . . earnestly looked upon him, &c.* She did this because he was a stranger, one whom she had not seen before, and concluding that, at this time of night, there were no neutrals there, and knowing him not to be any of the retinue of the high priest, she judged him to be one of the retinue of this Jesus, or, perhaps, she had some time or other looked about in the temple, and seen Jesus there, and Peter with Him, and remembered him, hence she said, *this man was also with him.* Every enemy is formidable to a person not supported by God. An occasion which we entirely disregard is sometimes very fatal to our virtue.

57. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

The very unexpectedness of the assault demands an instantaneous repulse, and already Peter rejoices that he can preserve the guise of an external composure, and his answer is quick, cold, indefinite: *Woman, I know him not.* The love of life and the fear of death make men forget the best resolutions, when they have not been formed by God, and are not supported by our humble prayer.

58. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xxvi. 71; Mark xiv. 69; John xviii. 26.

The first cock-crowing, which Mark, xiv. 68, alone mentions, immediately after the first denial, is not even noticed by Peter. He appears, meanwhile, to have succeeded in assuming so indifferent a demeanor that he at first is not further disturbed. The disquiet of his conscience, however, now impels him towards the door, Matt. xxvi. 71; unluckily he finds this shut. He does not venture to seek to have it opened, that he may not elicit any unfavorable conjectures, and is therefore obliged to return to his former place. This very disquiet again excites suspicion. *Another* is masculine, referring probably to some male attendant to whom the maid had communicated her suspicions, and who charged Peter directly with having belonged to the company of Jesus. *Man, I am not.* One sin hardens the heart, and disposes it for the commission of another. God permits Peter to fall more than once, that he may have no room to excuse his sin as proceeding from surprise, and that he may seek the cause thereof in his own presumption.

59. 'And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this *fellow* also was with him, for he is a Galilean.

c Matt. xxvi. 73; Mark xiv. 70; John xviii. 26.

*And about the space of an hour after; Matthew, after a while; Mark, a little while after. Another confidently affirmed, &c.* Peter had now returned into the hall, and as he was discovered, by his peculiar manner of speaking, to have come from that part of *Israal* called Galilee, and as it was well known that most of Christ's disciples were Galileans, it was immediately supposed that he was one of them. We know from Jewish authorities that the rough provincial accent of the Galileans was very distinguishable from that of the metropolis. The space of one hour was allowed Peter to recover himself; and he made no use of it: in vain God gives men time for repentance, if He do not give them likewise a penitent heart.

60. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

On this occasion Peter not only denied his Lord, but he began to curse and to swear. Matt. xxvi. 74. He was now irritated beyond endurance. He could no longer resist the evidence that he was known. It had been repeatedly charged on him. His language had betrayed him, and there was a positive witness who had seen him. He felt it necessary, therefore, to be still more decided, and he accordingly added to the sin of denying his Lord, the deep aggravation of profane cursing and swearing, affirming what he must have known was false, that he knew not the man. Immediately, then, the cock crew, that is, the second crowing, or not far from three in the morning. Let us not be weary of considering the deplorable depravity of the heart of man when left to himself. These three falls are, as it were, three witnesses of human weakness, and show plainly that none but God knows perfectly how great it is.

The steps by which Peter fell, or the things which successively contributed to his fall, were the following: 1. Self-confidence, arising from too high an opinion of himself. 2. His worldly views and expectations, and his aversion to the cross of Christ. 3. His unbelief, as to the warnings Christ had given of his weakness and danger. 4. As a consequence of his unbelief, he fell into unwatchfulness, and neglected also to pray. 5. Venturing upon forbidden ground, by going in among the wicked servants of the high priest. 6. Yielding to distrust, dejection, and cowardice. The aggravating circumstances of Peter's sin were these: 1. The character of his person, a disciple, an Apostle, and one who had been specially honored by his Master. 2. The person whom he denied, his Master, Saviour, and Redeemer. 3. The repetition of the sin, denying Christ first with a lie, then with an oath, and next with a curse. 4. The persons before whom the denial took place—the chief priest's servants. 5. The time of the denial—a few hours after he had received the holy sacrament from Christ's own hands. 6. The smallness of the temptation to deny his Lord, a damsel only at first spake to him.

61. 'And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, 'Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

d Matt. xxvi. 75; Mark xiv. 72.

e Matt. xxvi. 74, 75; John xiii. 38.

*Looked upon Peter.* Probably our Lord cast this glance as He was led from Annas to Caiaphas. Or, at this third denial, the door of the apartment

where Jesus and Annas were, may have been opened upon the court, and Peter may have painfully found himself denying and swearing under his Lord's glance. That glance, doubtless, was turned full upon him with a significance that called Peter to his recollections. It does not appear that Peter came into the examination-room, or was present with his Lord. *And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, . . . and went out, and wept bitterly.* By a tender and compassionate look—a single glance of His eye—the injured Saviour brought to remembrance all Peter's promises, His own predictions, and the great guilt of the disciple. He overwhelmed him with the remembrance of his sin, and pierced his heart through with many sorrows. The consciousness of deep and awful guilt rushed over Peter's soul, he flew from the palace, he went alone in the darkness of the night, and *wept bitterly.*

In Peter's recovery and rising again by repentance, there is observable, 1. The suddenness of his repentance: as his sin was sad, so was his repentance speedy. Sin committed by surprise, and through the prevalence of a temptation that suddenly assaults us, is much sooner repented of than where the sin is presumptuous and deliberate. 2. The means of his repentance, which was two-fold, (1.) *the crowing of the cock.* As the voice of the maid occasioned him to sin, so the voice of the cock occasioned him to reflect. God who always can work without means, can ever, when He pleases, work by weak and insignificant means. (2.) *Christ's looking upon Peter, and Peter's remembering the words of Christ.* Though Jesus was upon His trial for His life, He found leisure to think upon Peter; He gave him a pitiful but piercing look; this look led him to remember Christ's prediction, and to apply it pointedly to himself, thus teaching us, that the efficacy of Christ's word, in order to sound repentance, depends not upon the historical remembrance of it, but upon the close application of it to every man's conscience. To these means the Holy Spirit gave efficacy. 3. Peter's repentance was secret; he sought a place of retirement where he might mourn unseen. Solitariness is most agreeable to an afflicted spirit. 4. His repentance was deep and thorough. Sin must always be followed with sorrow. 5. His repentance was abiding. Ecclesiastical history reports, that ever after, when Peter heard the crowing of the cock, he fell upon his knees and wept. Others say, that he was wont to rise at midnight, and spend the time in prayer and humiliation between cock-crowing and daylight. 6. Peter was pardoned freely and fully, (John xx. 21; Mark xvi. 7; John xxi. 15,) and having had much forgiven, he loved much. How must these people have been surprised, when they saw (as no doubt some of them did) this timorous disciple, within the compass of a few weeks, when he was brought with John before the council, not only maintaining the honor of Jesus, but charging the murder of "the Prince of life" on the chief men of the nation, and warning them of their guilt and danger in consequence of it.

The story of Peter teaches us, 1. How small and gradual are the steps by which men may go down into great sins. 2. How very far a believer may backslide. 3. The infinite mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. 4. How bitter sin is to believers, when they have fallen into it and discovered their fall. There are moments in the believer's experience, in which he learns more of his own wickedness, and of his Lord's goodness, than he has learned in years that have gone before. True penitence is a mixture of sorrow and faith. The penitent says with sorrow, "My sin is ever before me," and with faith, "There is forgiveness with Thee." Such is the broken heart which God will not despise. Let this be our prayer :

"If near the pit I rashly stray,  
 Before I wholly fall away,  
 The keen conviction dart :  
 Recall me by that pitying look,  
 That kind, upbraiding glance which broke  
 Unfaithful Peter's heart."

## QUESTIONS.

1. What are we to understand by "the high priest's house?"
2. Where was Christ led first?
3. Where was He sent from Annas?
4. When was the Sanhedrim assembling?
5. What did Peter evince by following afar off?
6. Explain "kindled a fire."
7. Explain, "the hall."
8. What is said of "Peter sat down among them?"
9. What is said of "as he sat by the fire?"
10. Explain "a certain maid . . . earnestly looked," &c.
11. What did Peter say?
12. What is said of the love of life and the fear of death?
13. What is said of verse 58?
14. What is said of "another?"
15. What is said of "Man, I am not?"
16. Explain "another confidently affirmed?"
17. Explain verse 60.
18. Did Peter add profane cursing to the sin of denying his Lord?
19. What time of the night was this?
20. Mention, in their order, the steps by which Peter fell.
21. Explain "looked upon Peter."
22. Explain "Peter remembered," &c.
23. What is observable in Peter's recovery and rising again by repentance?
24. What does the story of Peter teach us?

## LESSON CXXIX.

vs. 63-71.

63. ¶ And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him.

! Matt. xxvi. 67, 68; Mark xiv. 65.

64. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?

65. And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

The most remarkable night that has been known since the beginning of the world, was the night before the crucifixion of the Lord. There was an ingenuity in the torments inflicted on Jesus, worthy of Satan, their author. See Matt. xxvi. 67, 68; Mark xiv. 65. Perhaps there was a burst of applause when it was first proposed to blindfold those meek and sorrowful eyes, and no doubt a profane laugh was heard, as each blow was struck, and the question asked, *who is it that smote thee?* How much astonished those men would have been, had Jesus told them who had smitten Him! They little thought how well He knew their names, but they will find hereafter that He *did* know

who struck Him that night. *Many other things blasphemously spake they against Him*, though only a few of their blasphemies are recorded as a specimen of the rest. But insults could not degrade the Son of God. He bore all their taunts with Divine patience. 1 Pet. iii. 28. He regarded every injury as a drop in the cup His Father had given Him to drink. He knew the prophecies that had been made concerning His sufferings. Micah v. i.; Is. l. 6. Could we receive all that happened to us as the appointment of God, we should not be so easily provoked as we often are. Yet the malice of our enemies could never be vented against us, except by the permission of God.

66. ¶ "And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the Scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying,

† Matt. xxvii. 1.

‡ Acts iv. 26; xxii. 6.

*As soon as it was day.* There were three stages or processes of proceedings against Jesus: 1. The preliminary examination, which probably took place while the full Sanhedrim was assembling. Matt. xxvi. 57; Mark xiv. 53; Luke xxii. 54; John xviii. 13, 19-24. 2. The trial before the Sanhedrim. Matt. xxvi. 59-68; Mark xiv. 55-65. 3. The subsequent consultation as to the best method of effecting the death of Jesus. Matt. xxvii. 1; Mark xv. 1. After the council had condemned Jesus the first time, they seem to have separated, and met again early in the morning. It is to this second meeting of the council the words, "as soon as it was day," most probably refer. The sun rose, at that season of the year, in Judea, not far from five o'clock. According to the Talmud, capital causes were prohibited from being heard in the night, as was also the institution of an examination, pronouncing a sentence, and carrying it into execution, on one and the same day. These rules were flagrantly violated in this case. *The elders of the people and the chief priests and the Scribes*—the classes of which the Sanhedrim was composed, which consisted of seventy persons, of whom the high priest was the chief. There were other members of this great council, such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.

67. 'Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe.

† Matt. xxvi. 63; Mark xiv. 61.

68. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.

*Art thou the Christ?* As Jesus had already acknowledged Himself to be the Son of God, there was no necessity for repeating this question. The resource which the Sanhedrim adopted was one which our own rules of evidence would declare most infamous, and which was also wholly adverse to the first principles of Mosaic jurisprudence, and the like of which occurs in no circumstance of Hebrew history. It was that of putting the prisoner upon His oath to answer questions framed for His own crimination. See Matt. xxvi. 63. When Jesus was asked, *Art thou the Christ?* he showed by His answer that He would have proved His claim, had His judges been willing to listen. *If I also ask you, &c.* They would not reply fairly to any questions which He might propose, and by which His innocence might be proved, and His true character and mission vindicated. On former occasions He had asked them various questions by which He had shown He was the Christ, and that the Christ was the Son of God. This is the great truth that Jesus sealed with His own blood. By confessing it, men are saved. "Whosoever shall confess," &c. John iv. 15. By denying this truth, men are lost. "Who is a liar," &c. John iv. 22.

69. <sup>2</sup>Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 64; Mark xiv. 62; Heb. i. 3 and viii. 1.

Although nothing which Jesus could say would change their bloody purpose, yet He deemed it proper to reply to their questions, as this would leave them without any show of apology, on the ground that they could obtain from His lips no express declaration as to His Divine character and mission. *Hereafter . . . . Son of man . . . . right hand . . . . God.* There is a plain reference in these words to the prophecy of Daniel. Dan. vii. 9-14. Our Lord evidently implies that He was the person to whom that prophecy pointed; and that, although condemned by the Jews, He would shortly be exalted to the highest position of dignity in heaven. The Jews saw this at once, and proceeded to put the question of the next verse.

70. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, <sup>1</sup>Ye say that I am.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 64; Mark xiv. 62.

*Art thou the Son of God?* Our Lord in the preceding verse had called Himself the "Son of man." His enemies, in this question, ask Him if He is the "Son of God." They did so, because His solemn saying about sitting at God's right hand showed them that he claimed to be the Messiah and very God. *Ye say that I am*, which is a form of assenting or affirming, and equivalent to saying, "Ye say rightly that I am." The same in sense is given by Mark xiv. 62, "I am." Seldom in the course of His ministry did our Lord announce Himself as the Messiah. But here, in the great and trying moment, when questioned by the representatives of the Jewish nation, "Art thou the Son of God?" He returned the solemn reply, "Ye say that I am"—a Hebraistic form of affirmation. The incarnation and resurrection of the Son of God being the fundamental mysteries of the Christian religion, which were to make so many martyrs, it was necessary that Jesus Christ, as the head of them, should be Himself a martyr for those truths. He knew very well that they would cost Him His life, but He knew likewise that life is a debt which all men owe to the truth, and that to sacrifice it to God is not to lose it.

71. <sup>2</sup>And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvi. 65; Mark xiv. 63.

*What need we any further witness?* literally, *what further need have we of testimony?* For we ourselves, as opposed to what has been reported from other sources, *have heard of his own mouth* His blasphemous utterances. In claiming, as He has claimed, to be the Messiah, in asserting that He was the Son of God, and therefore equal in dignity with the Father, and that He would yet sit at His right hand, He has claimed what belongs to no man, and what is therefore an invasion of the Divine prerogative. See Matt. xxvi. 65. How different is the joy of these men, upon hearing the truth out of the mouth of Christ, from that of His true disciples! These find therein the words of eternal life, but those convert it into words of death, both for Christ and themselves, by the abuse they make of it.

The bold confession of our Master upon this occasion is intended to be an example to all His believing people. Like Him, we must not shrink from speaking out when occasion requires our testimony. The fear of man and the presence of a multitude must not make us hold our peace. Job xxxi. 34.

We need not blow a trumpet before us, and go out of our way to proclaim our own religion. Opportunities are sure to occur in the daily path of duty, when, like Paul on board ship, we may show "whose we are and whom we serve." Acts xxvii. 27. At such opportunities, if we have the mind of Christ, let us not be afraid to show our colors. A confessing Master loves bold, uncompromising, and confessing disciples. Them that honor Him by an outspoken, courageous testimony, He will honor, because they are walking in His steps. Matt. x. 32.

## QUESTIONS.

1. What is the most remarkable night in the world's history?
2. What is said of the torments inflicted on Jesus?
3. What is said of "who is it that smote thee?"
4. Explain "many other things blasphemously," &c.
5. How did Christ regard every injury He received?
6. How many stages of proceeding against Jesus were there?
7. What was the first?
8. What the second?
9. What the third?
10. Explain "the elders of the people," &c.
11. What is said of "art thou the Christ?"
12. What did Jesus show by His answer to this question?
13. What is the great truth that Jesus sealed with His blood?
14. Explain "Hereafter . . . Son of man," &c.
15. Why did Christ's enemies say, "Art thou then the Son of God?"
16. How did Jesus reply to them?
17. What is the meaning of His answer?
18. What is said of our Lord announcing Himself as the Messiah?
19. Explain "What need we any further witness," &c.
20. In asserting that He was the Messiah, what has our Lord claimed?
21. What was the bold confession of our Master on this occasion intended to be?
22. Whom does a confessing Master love?
23. Whom will Jesus honor?

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## LESSON CXXX.

vs. 1-19

AND the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

\* Matt. xxvii. 2; Mark. xv. 1; John xviii. 28.

*The whole multitude.* Not of the people, who were not as yet turned against Jesus, but of the parties mentioned in verse 66 of the last chapter, namely, the ruling classes. *Unto Pilate.* Pilate was at this time the governor or procurator appointed by the Romans over Judea. He was placed in this office by Tiberius, then emperor of Rome. The governor commonly resided at *Cæsarea*, but he came up to Jerusalem usually at the great feasts,

when most of the Jews were assembled, to administer justice, and to suppress tumults if any should arise. John says, xviii. 28, that they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the hall of judgment—that is, to the part of the *prætorium* or governor's palace where justice was administered. Pilate was noted for his severity, cruelty, and despotic will. Many Jews, at different times, were massacred by his order. His cruelty in the massacre of certain Samaritans, after they had submitted, proved his ruin. The Samaritan senate sent a complaint of his cruelty to Vitellius, president of Syria, by whom Pilate was ordered to Rome, to answer to the charge before the emperor Tiberius. Before he arrived Tiberius died, but Pilate was banished by his successor, Caligula, to Vienne in Gaul, where, in mortification for his disgrace, he committed suicide.

2. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, That he himself is Christ, a King.

† Acts xvii. 7.    • See Matt. xvii. 27 and xxiii. 21; Mark xii. 17.    † John xix. 12.

*Began to accuse.* The judicial authority properly rested with the president, though the procurator (as was Pilate) had the office of collecting the taxes. But in the smaller provinces, like Judea, which were not of sufficient consequence to have a president, the collector of taxes discharged also the judicial functions of the president. *We found*—a judicial expression, intimating that they had brought Christ, as one *convicted* of guilt after diligent examination. *Fellow*, is not expressed in the original. But it is rightly inserted, being understood in what is expressed. *Pervorting the nation, &c., &c.* They charged him with the political offence of forbidding the people to pay tribute to Cæsar (the very trap into which they had vainly tried to draw Him) and making Himself a king, a claim which they alone had desired Him to make in a form hostile to the emperor. This charge, if proved, would have exposed him to inevitable death, for never were *prosecutions for treason* more severe than under the reign of Tiberius. A charge of high treason, says Tacitus, was, at that time, an accumulation of all (possible) charges. There is no conduct or behavior in the world, however upright and innocent it may be, which can shield a man from calumny, since that of Christ could not secure Him from it.

3. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.

• Matt. xxvii. 11; 1 Tim. vi. 13.

Pilate, not unacquainted with the prevailing Messianic hope, formulated his question very precisely, and sought to find out whether Jesus was really the promised and long-sighed-for King of Israel. To this question our Lord could not possibly answer otherwise than, without delay and without the least equivocalness, with yes; *Thou sayest it.* See Note on xxii. 70. Christ is still willing to be called the King of this people, though they are so disloyal and ungrateful to Him as to clamor for His death.

4. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

† 1 Pet. ii. 23.

How Pilate came to the conclusion that a claim to be a king is *no fault* in this man, we learn from John xviii. 86, 87, where it is shown that Jesus satisfied Pilate that His kingdom was no way dangerous to the imperial

power. He was king in the realm of truth, where Cæsar was no rival. It is something, indeed, for a judge not to suppress and stifle the knowledge which he has of innocence, but he becomes the more guilty upon this account, if he abandons the defence of it, and delivers it up to its enemies.

5. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, <sup>6</sup>beginning from Galilee to this place.

<sup>6</sup> Acts x. 37.

As Pilate, under the impression that Jesus was simply a well-meaning religious enthusiast, innocent of any political offence, had declared to His accusers that he could find no fault in Him, a ferocious growl was the response from them. *Were the more fierce*—grew more desperate, more violent, more urgent. Since now they see that their last charge of the assumption of royal dignity finds no acceptance with the judge, they come with so much the stronger emphasis back to the first—namely, that He is perverting the people; and told Pilate that this man had set the whole country in an uproar from Judea even unto Galilee.

6. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean.

7. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to <sup>8</sup>Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

<sup>8</sup> Luke iii. 1.

As they expected, Pilate caught at the name of Galilee, which had lately supplied more than one dangerous demagogue; and having ascertained that Jesus belonged to the territory of Herod, see ch. iii. 1, he concluded to get rid of this troublesome affair by sending the accused to the tetrarch, whose immediate subject He was, and whom he might suppose better qualified than himself to judge in this case; nor did it escape him that he would be thus enabled to show a gratifying mark of attention to Herod, with whom he had lately been on ill terms. Jesus was accordingly sent to Herod, who had come to Jerusalem at the Passover—a practice by which he was accustomed to conciliate the Jews. *Sent*, rather *transferred*—the regular practice of the Roman law, though they had the *right* of trying all offences within their own provinces. How many Christians are there who, like Pilate, make Christ subservient to their temporal affairs and designs!

8. ¶ And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for <sup>9</sup>he was desirous to see him of a long *season*, <sup>10</sup>because he had heard many things of him, and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

<sup>9</sup> Luke ix. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Matt. xiv. 1; Mark vi. 14.

*Exceeding glad . . . desirous to see . . . heard many things, &c.* The expressions in this verse are very remarkable. They bring before us the fearful history of Herod's sins, and throw light on the power of conscience. Herod had not forgotten John the Baptist and his testimony. Moreover, he had probably heard much about our Lord from his steward Chuza, whose wife Joanna was one of our Lord's disciples. Luke viii. 3. He had long desired to see Him, in the hope of witnessing the performance of some wonder by one so renowned for His miracles. Many people of the world

learn the truths of Christianity with a joy arising only from curiosity, and not from any desire of being instructed in them, and of putting them in practice.

9. Then he questioned with him in many words, <sup>†</sup>but he answered him nothing.

<sup>†</sup> Pa. xxxviii. 12, 14; Ia. liii. 7; 1 Pet. ii. 23.

*In many words.* It was an extended examination, conducted probably before the tetrarch's courtiers, with many a cross-question and device to draw out the wonder-worker. *Answered him nothing.* It was no part of our Lord's calling to gratify an idle curiosity, nor could any object be gained by declaring His doctrine to one so utterly worldly. He therefore performed no miracle, and was silent to all the questions put to Him. A respectful silence is an instruction for some, and a refuge against others. That person says a great deal who speaks by his modesty, humility, and patience.

10. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

*The chief priests and Scribes.* It is clear that these bitter enemies of our Lord followed Him from place to place, and from court to court, with their accusations. *Vehemently accused him.* They saw very well that their interest required them to paint Him to Herod in colors as black as was any way possible, and accuse Him; therefore, they did so, with visible emphasis, (comp. Acts xviii. 28,) as if they feared that even Herod himself, perchance, might be too equitable with their victim, seizing, as it would seem, the favorable moment when the chagrin of Herod disposed him to listen. An affected moderation would have rendered those accusers less suspected, their accusations more probable, and their envy less visible, than this vehemence; but envy seldom or never consults prudence.

11. <sup>†</sup>And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked *him*, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

<sup>†</sup> Ia. liii. 2.

Herod was acute enough to see that Jesus was not really open to any capital charge, and after the odium he had incurred on account of John the Baptist, he was not willing to add the death of Jesus to the number of his crimes. Yet, being exasperated at the dignified passiveness of Jesus, he, with his guards, treated Him as though He was nobody, a nothing, then scoffed at Him, then caused Him to be arrayed in a gorgeous purple robe, (doubtless one of his own, and probably the same robe which was afterwards used by the soldiers of Pilate,) in derision of His Messianic dignity, then, not wishing to be outdone in a complimentary act by Pilate, he waived his claim of jurisdiction over Jesus, and sent Him back to the Roman governor, at whose tribunal He had first been arraigned.

12. ¶ And the same day <sup>‡</sup>Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

<sup>‡</sup> Acts iv. 27.

The cause of the enmity between these two men is unknown. Some think it may have been the massacre of the Galileans. Luke xiii. 1. It probably grew out of a conflict in regard to their respective jurisdictions. The

method of the reconciliation seems to indicate the nature of the previous alienation. The courteous act of Pilate in sending Jesus to be tried before Herod, and the equally courteous return made by the Galilean prince in remanding Jesus to Pilate's judgment-seat, it would appear, furnished the occasion for the renewal of friendship. Both these men agreed in despising Jesus, and insulting Him, and were utterly unbelieving as to His claim to faith and respect. The circumstance of their reconciliation struck the Apostles very much. They regarded it as a fulfilment of part of the second Psalm. They mentioned in prayer to God the union of Pilate and Herod and the Jews against their Master. Acts iv. 23-30.

The Lord Jesus stood before the tribunals of four judges. Two of them were priests, Annas and Caiaphas, and two were rulers, Pilate and Herod. Of Annas we know nothing, except that he did *not unbind* his sacred prisoner. John xviii. 24. Caiaphas had enjoyed frequent opportunities of hearing Christ, for his office obliged him to spend the whole of every day at the temple, where our Lord taught so often and wrought so many miracles. Pilate was an ignorant heathen, knew nothing of the Lord, and was desirous to release Him. Herod knew something of Him, but cared not what became of Him. Though all of these men, therefore, were wicked, they were not equally guilty, for they had not equal light, nor did they reach the same point in crime. Caiaphas accused Jesus—Herod made no effort to release Him, and Pilate condemned Him. There was one circumstance in Herod's case which aggravated his guilt. He was once under religious impressions. There was a time when he heard John gladly, and did many things that were right, but there was a sin that he could not renounce, and he shut up John in prison, then beheaded him, and now at last derides the Son of God. The case of Herod is not uncommon; there are many who once received good impressions, and who once struggled with strong convictions, who are now grown hard, scornful and hostile. They would not *obey* the truth, and therefore they tried to *disbelieve it*, and they have succeeded. Now, alas! no sermons make them tremble, no afflictions touch their hearts, they are steeled against warnings and persuasions, against mercies and judgments.

13. ¶ "And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

• Matt. xxvii. 23; Mark xv. 14; John xviii. 38 and xix. 4.

14. Said unto them, "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and behold, "I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

• Vs. 1, 2      p Ver. 4.

15. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him, and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

*Pilate* was doubtless embarrassed to find the case turned back upon his hands. *Called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people.* It was not enough for Pilate to communicate his peculiar views merely to the Sanhedrists. He therefore convened the people, the number of whom had considerably increased during the sending of our Lord back and forth, and who took a lively interest in the matter, in order that the declaration of our Lord's innocence might be as public and unmistakable as possible. *Have found no fault.* We ought to notice how many and what various persons bear testimony to the innocence of Jesus—Pilate, Herod, Pilate's wife, Judas Iscariot, the thief on the cross, and the centurion who superintended the

crucifixion. We cannot doubt that this was specially overruled and ordered by the providence of God. *Nothing worthy of death.* As a representative man, this Gentile stands before the Jew, and pronounces Jesus innocent. But while he thus confessed Him innocent, he did not make himself so. He shed innocent blood. So the Gentile nations pronounce Jesus innocent, yet it is their sin that ever crucifies Him afresh.

16. ¶I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*.

¶ Matt. xxvii. 26; John xix. 1.

*Chastise.* It was the Roman custom to scourge those who were about to be crucified, especially *slaves*, making this the most ignominious punishment. The scourge was composed of ox nerves, extremely sharp, interwoven with sheep bones, so as to lacerate the flesh. The victim was bound to a low pillar, in order that, stooping forward, he might curve his bare back to receive the full, fair stroke. It has been questioned whether Pilate intended this to be the scourging preceding the crucifixion, or whether it was intended as a sole punishment, whether as a compromise, or whether he hoped, by presenting Jesus under the cruel effects of the scourge before their eyes, he might melt them to pity. But as it is stated, ver. 25, that *he delivered Jesus to their will*, this was probably the scourging preparatory to crucifixion. The presenting Jesus, therefore, so scourged, to induce their pity, was doubtless an afterthought.

17. ¶For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.

¶ Matt. xxvii. 15; Mark xv. 6; John xviii. 39.

*Of necessity.* This habit of releasing a criminal unto the people at the feast of the Passover was one of such invariable practice and long continuance, that it became a fixed and necessary custom. From what the custom arose, or by whom it was introduced, is not known. It was probably adopted to secure popularity among the Jews, and to render the government of the Romans less odious. Any little indulgence granted to the Jews during the heavy oppression of the Romans would serve to conciliate their favor, and to keep the nation from sedition. It might happen often, that when persons were arraigned before the Romans on charge of sedition, some peculiar favorite of the people, or some leader, might be among the number. It is evident that if they had the privilege of recovering such a person, it would serve much to allay their feelings, and make tolerable the yoke under which they groaned.

18. And ¶they cried out all at once, saying, ¶Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas :

¶ Acts iii. 14.

¶ Acts xxi. 36.

19. Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.

*All at once*, literally, *the whole multitude together.* *Away with this man*, literally, *away this (fellow).* *Barabbas* is called (Matt. xxvii. 16) "a notable prisoner." He was distinguished for great crimes. He was, perhaps, a leader of a band who had been guilty of sedition, and had committed murder in an insurrection. As he and his adherents probably lived by plunder, he is called "a robber." As a fierce and brave Jewish patriot, he had become famous among the populace. He was, perhaps, like Robin Hood among the old English, hateful to the government, but popular with the masses.

What guilt there was in the few short words of the people, "Release unto us Barabbas!" They preferred a robber and a murderer to Him who came to give life unto the world! It was not one man only who made this wicked choice, but a whole multitude! Shame! The world prefers the vilest of the vile before Christ! And yet rejoice. Christ's death is the only hope for the vilest of men! Christ dies, and thus only is any Barabbas set free. 1 Tim. i. 15; Acts iii. 18. Jesus and the guilty sinner exchange places. The sinner, condemned and awaiting his dreadful death, is now freely released by this wonderful *substitution* of Christ. Not that the sinner has been found innocent, but that Christ has taken his place, and he is set free. Yet Barabbas will, after all, die eternally if he believe not in Jesus. Christ's interposition will do us no saving good, if we see not in Him our glorious and Divine substitute—on whom our sins were laid, and who freely died for us.

1. Who are meant by "the whole multitude?"
2. To whom did they lead Jesus?
3. What is said of Pilate?
4. Explain "began to accuse."
5. What is said of "we found this fellow?"
6. What, of "perverting the nation," &c.?
7. What did Pilate ask Jesus?
8. What is said of this question?
9. What did Christ reply to it?
10. What did Pilate then say to the chief priests, &c.?
11. How did he reach his conclusion about Jesus?
12. What effect was produced by Pilate's statement?
13. What did Pilate do when he heard of Galilee?
14. Why did he send Christ to Herod?
15. What is said of Herod when he saw Jesus?
16. Why was he "exceeding glad," and "desirous to see Him?"
17. How did Herod question Jesus?
18. Why did Christ answer Him nothing?
19. What is said of the chief priests and Scribes?
20. What is said of "vehemently accused him?"
21. What was done by Herod and his men of war?
22. Why did Herod send Jesus again to Pilate?
23. What is said of the gorgeous robe in which Christ was arrayed?
24. What is said of "Pilate and Herod were made friends together," &c.?
25. Before how many judges did Christ stand?
26. Who were they?
27. What is said of them?
28. What is said of Pilate when the case was turned back upon his hands?
29. What did he do?
30. What is said of "have found no fault?"
31. What, of "nothing worthy of death?"
32. What course did Pilate pursue?
33. What is said of "chastise him?"
34. What has been a question concerning Pilate?
35. What is said of "for of necessity," &c.?
36. What did they cry out all at once?
37. Who was Barabbas?
38. What is said of Christ's death?

## LESSON CXXXI.

vs. 20-26.

20. Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

The word rendered *willing*, expresses the idea of will combined with choice or purpose, and not simply one of mere inclination. *Spake again to them.* His address probably consisted of a few words, and those not essentially different from the ones which are communicated to us a little before and a little later. Pilate's desire to acquit our Lord, and set Him free, coupled with his great desire to please the Jews and get the praise of man, is a striking picture of the slavery to which a great man, without principle, may be reduced.

21. But they cried, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*.

For the first time the terrible cry is here heard, which, as the secret wish and thought of the chief priests, is now by these, placed upon the people's lips, and with fanatical rage raised by these. *Crucify him.* The cross was a Roman mode of execution, reserved for slaves and the vilest of the race, and was expressive of the strongest contempt. The halter, among us, is scarce so ignominious a term of shameful suffering. For explanation of this mode of execution, see Notes on ver. 3<sup>d</sup>. What sad evidence have we here of the inconstancy of the friendship of the world! The very same persons, but six days ago, cried out, "Hosannah to the Son of David," who now cry out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." What a strange forgetfulness was here, of so many benefits! But how great the goodness and love of Jesus, who foresaw all this ingratitude at the very time when He heaped His blessings upon them, and who loses nothing of His meekness even now, when they demand His death!

22. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: "I will therefore chastise him, and let *him* go.

• Verse 16.

*The third time.* Thrice did the Gentile demand of the Jews, *What evil hath he done?* Luke alone states that the governor, at this point of the trial, raised, for the third time, his voice, in favor of our Lord. Bishop Pearson says: "Pilate did not only declare, to the condemnation of the Jews, that he found nothing worthy of death in Christ, but left the same written to the Gentiles of the Roman empire. Two ways he is related to have given most ample testimony to the truth; first, by an express, written to Tiberius, and by him presented to the Senate; and, secondly, by records written in tables of all things of moment which were acted in his government." For this last statement, he gives the authority of Tertullian, Eusebius, and Justin Martyr. *I have found no cause of death in him.* Miserable temporizer! If he had found no fault in Him, why permit Him to be thus wantonly insulted, thus cruelly tormented? The fact is, for we see it through every feature and lineament of Pilate's character, that he would have been the friend of Christ if he could have been at no sacrifice of popularity, or self-interest; he would have liberated Him, for his conscience told him that he ought to do so, but

he feared the people, and therefore hoped, by taking a middle course, to satisfy his conscience, to please the people, and to save Jesus. It should be remembered that it was not open animosity, not undisciplined and reckless hostility, but this middle course, this temporizing policy, which placed the crown of thorns upon the Saviour's head. *Chastise him, &c.* See Notes on ver. 16.

23. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

*Instant*—urgent. The rabble, and the chief priests, by whom they were excited, joined in the infuriated cry. *Prevailed* with Pilate to comply with their wishes.

24. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

v Matt. xxvii. 23; Mark xv. 16; John xix. 16.

\*Or, *assented*.

25. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

He at length yielded to their importunity. The clamor of the people and chief priests overruled him, to act contrary to his reason and conscience. He had not courage to stem so strong a stream, but *gave sentence as they required*. Here was judgment *turned away backward*, and *justice standing afar off*, for fear of popular fury. Barabbas would thus be hardened in wickedness, and do the more mischief, yet him he released, but he *delivered Jesus to their will*, i. e., to the will of the Jews. Throughout Luke's account of our Lord's passion, He says much less of the things done by the Roman soldiers, than either Matthew, Mark, or John. The reason is obvious. Luke wrote specially for the use of the Gentile Christians. He desired to keep before their minds prominently, that though our Lord was crucified under Pontius Pilate, the persons most to blame for His death were not Gentiles, but Jews. He who loves any thing more than truth, will abandon it sooner or later. Christ is delivered up to the will of man, that man may deliver himself up to the will of Christ through His grace.

26. And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

v Matt. xxvii. 32; Mark xv. 21. See John xix. 17.

Luke says nothing about the cruel treatment which our Lord received from the Roman soldiers, after Pilate had condemned Him. See Notes on ver. 25. *Led him away* to the cross. The places of execution were always outside the walls of towns. At Jerusalem it was upon a swell of ground called Golgotha—the place of a skull—some say on account of the skulls of dead criminals that lay there, forgetting that the Jews never suffered either the bodies or bones even of criminals to remain unburied. The name was, therefore, doubtless derived from the skull-like shape of the hill—for we are not bound to credit the tradition, that it was thus named because the skull of Adam had been found there. Both among Jews and Romans, executions took place immediately after conviction. It was usual first to scourge those who were to be crucified, but Jesus had been already scourged, and was,

therefore, at once led away to this place of execution. *They laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country.* Cyrene was a city of Libya, in Africa, lying west of Egypt, in which, though consisting mostly of Greeks, a Jewish colony was located. Having much intercourse with Jerusalem, they maintained a regular synagogue at that city. Simon appears at this time to have been a resident, at any rate, temporarily, either of Jerusalem or its adjacent country, inasmuch as it is from the country he is coming when he is so sadly met by the procession of our Lord's executioners. *And on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.* John says, xix. 17, "And He, bearing His cross, went forth." There is no contradiction in these accounts. It was a part of the usual punishment of those who were crucified, that they should bear their own cross to the place of execution. It was accordingly laid first on Jesus, and He went forth, as John says, bearing it. Weak, however, and exhausted by suffering and watchfulness, He probably sank under the heavy burden, *and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus,* either entirely in Christ's room, or sharing a part of its weight. Matthew says, xxvii. 32, "him they compelled to bear His cross." We do not know certainly that Simon was *unwilling* to bear it, for the choice was not given to him. The soldiers *commanded* him to do this public service. It is supposed by some, that he had come from Cyrene to the Passover; for, as they say, there seems no reason why he should have been selected, but that his being seen to be a stranger marked him out for a task too degrading to be forced upon a native Jew. There were probably disciples in the crowd who would have been glad to volunteer to perform this office for their revered Master, but were deterred by the fear of bringing suspicion upon themselves. Others think Simon was known to be a favorer of Jesus, and that he was singled out on account of the special marks of interest and sympathy he manifested. This is rendered probable by the fact that a number of the early converts to Christianity were members of the Cyrenian synagogue. See Acts ii. 10; vi. 9; xi. 19, 20. The only difficulty in this view is that a disciple of Jesus should have been away that morning, and coming in just then. But the notice by Mark xv. 21, that he was "the father of Alexander and Rufus," persons evidently well known to the early Church, suggests that he and his did afterwards become eminent disciples, and that as now literally, so afterwards did he spiritually, take up his cross and follow Him, finding thus a glorious reward for his labor.

It is a great favor to be chosen of God to accompany an afflicted soul, and to keep it from sinking under the burden of its cross. Jesus, though now in heaven, can never forget that hour on earth in which He bore His cross, and never does He see a weak and fainting sufferer, upon whom fresh trials are accumulating, without calling to mind that heavy cross, the toilsome journey up Mount Calvary, or without stretching forth a hand to help and succor him. To bear the cross of Jesus, and to share His reproach, is reckoned in heaven more honorable than to govern kingdoms, or to discover worlds. Whether Simon knew it or not, no monarch on his throne occupied a place of such distinction as he did when bearing the cross of the Nazarene. The same thing is required of us. Has not Jesus said, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple?" We too at first may be ready to shrink back, but further information and experience induce us cheerfully to deny ourselves, and to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. We see Him before us—dignified and holy—enduring the curse for us—and leaving us only "this light affliction, which is but for a moment, and which worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

"We tread the path our Master trod,  
 We bear the cross He bore;  
 And every thorn that wounds our feet,  
 His temples pierced before.

“O, patient, spotless Lamb !  
 My heart in patience keep  
 To bear the cross so easy made,  
 By wounding Thee so deep.”

QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of “willing?”
2. Explain “spake again to them.”
3. What is said of “they cried?”
4. Explain “crucify Him!”
5. What is said of the friendship of the world?
6. What did Pilate say the third time?
7. What does Bishop Pearson say?
8. What is said of “I have found no cause of death in Him?”
9. What is meant by “instant?”
10. What is said of the rabble and the chief priests?
11. What effect did they produce on Pilate?
12. What is said of the course he pursued?
13. To whose will did Pilate deliver Jesus?
14. What is said of Luke's account of our Lord's passion?
15. What is said of him who loves any thing more than truth?
16. Explain “led Him away.”
17. Where was the place of execution?
18. Why was it called Golgotha?
19. Upon whom did they lay hold?
20. What is said of Cyrene?
21. Why was the cross laid on Simon?
22. What is said of John's and Luke's account of bearing the cross?
23. Was Simon unwilling to bear the cross?
24. Whence do some suppose Simon had come?
25. What do others think of Simon?
26. What is said to be a great favor?
27. What can Jesus, though now in heaven, never forget?
28. How is bearing the cross of Jesus regarded in heaven?
29. What is said of bearing the cross now?

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LESSON CXXXII.

vs. 27-34.

27. ¶ And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

*A great company of people*—a great crowd, as might be expected, followed the sad procession, many of them the same persons who, a few days before, had made themselves hoarse in shouting hosannas as Jesus entered in Messianic triumph the gate of the city opposite to that which He was now leaving, as a prisoner condemned to die. Doubtless there were in the company also disciples and friends of Christ, and persons who were moved to pity by the sight of an innocent person suffering. *And of women.* The most of these were probably drawn together from motives of curiosity, but among them we know to have been those noble women who followed Him from

Galilee, and who were first to visit His sepulchre on the morning of His resurrection. *Which also bewailed and lamented him.* They wept deeply for the sorrowful fate of the Just One. It has been remarked that no woman is mentioned as speaking against our Lord in His life, or having a share in His death. On the contrary He was anointed by a woman for His burial—women were the last at His grave and the first at His resurrection—to a woman He first appeared when He rose again—women ministered to His wants—women bewailed and lamented Him—a heathen woman interceded for His life with her husband, Pilate—and, above all, of a woman He was born.

28. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

*Turning unto them.* As he had now been relieved, at least in part, from the weight of the cross by Simon, He was enabled to turn partially around as He walked along, so as to address these women. *Daughters of Jerusalem*—a Hebraism for persons born and living in Jerusalem, or who resorted to it as the capital of their country. *Weep not for me.* Our Lord does not overlook the fact that the compassion of these women had not the three condemned, in equal measure, but Himself personally, as its object, therefore He does not say, “weep not for us.” A mere natural sympathy, awakened even over the narrative of the Saviour’s crucifixion, though serving to attract attention to the solemn subject, and to be the entrance to deeper views, has in itself no saving power. *But weep for yourselves, and for your children.* The Saviour does not condemn their tears for Him, but warns them that they have not more than enough for their own fate, and that of their children, alluding, in the latter, to the imprecation of the Jews, Matt. xxvii. 25. Many of the women to whom our Lord here spoke might easily have been living forty years after, when Titus took Jerusalem, to see and experience the indescribable horrors of the siege, but it must have been mostly the generation of their *children* who suffered the destruction itself. One of the fruits of our applying our minds to the contemplation of Christ’s sufferings, and raising in ourselves a compassion for them, is to receive instruction concerning those crosses and afflictions which will, in all probability, happen to us, to prepare ourselves to bear them like Christians, and to enter into the spirit of repentance for our sins.

29. \*For, behold the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bear, and the paps which never gave suck.

\* Matt. xxiv. 19; Luke xxi. 23.

*The days are coming.* These days mean primarily the period of the last wars between the Jews and the Romans, and in particular the siege of Jerusalem, but in all such predictions of judgments to come a more fearful doom lies far in the future, when all God’s enemies and those of His Son shall be arraigned at His bar, and receive the award of their impotence and unbelief in the righteous retributions of eternity. *They shall say*—here is a significant change from the *second* person to the *third*, from *ye* to *they*. Perhaps the *they* refers to *children*, perhaps impersonally to the wicked in the day of Jerusalem’s destruction. *Blessed are the barren, &c.* In those “days,” viz. : when, at the destruction of Jerusalem, all hope of deliverance would be cut off, those would be regarded fortunate who had never borne children. Although we have not any reason to fear the very evils which were to happen at the siege of Jerusalem, yet those calamities prefigure those of the

lost, who shall seek death without being able to find it, and shall suffer an eternal confusion. Nothing but repentance and faith can prevent these miseries.

30. \*Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us.

† Isa. li. 19; Hos. x. 8; Rev. vi. 16 and ix. 6.

At the time referred to, a sudden, even though a terrible death, would be regarded as a benefit. Comp. Hos. ix. 14; x. 8; Rev. vi. 16. Here again, while immediate reference is had to the destruction of Jerusalem, yet, in a higher sense, the great day of God's wrath at the final judgment is referred to, and the expressions, though figurative, signify the intense misery and distress, and the desperate helplessness of all on whom that wrath shall fall. If now we will say to Jesus, "Pardon us," we shall never say to the mountains, "Fall on us."

31. \*For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

† Prov. xi. 31; Jer. xxv. 29; Ezek. xx. 47 and xxi. 3, 4; 1 Peter iv. 17.

What is the meaning of these words? In the prophecy of Ezekiel, xx. 47, there is a little parable, in which the Jewish nation is compared to a *forest*, and the anger of God to a *fire*. A fire quickly destroys *dry* trees, but *green* trees less easily. *Dry* trees represent the *wicked*, who are prepared for destruction, *green* trees the *righteous*. God gives this explanation of Ezekiel's parable: "Say to the land of Israel, Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the *righteous* and the *wicked*." Ezek. xxi. 3. When Jesus, therefore, spoke of a *green* tree, he meant *Himself*; and when He spoke of a *dry* tree, His enemies. This seems to be the explanation of His words. "If *they* (that is, the Romans) treat me who am *innocent* so cruelly, what will be done to the *GUILTY*?"

32. \*And there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

† Isa. liii. 12; Matt. xxvii. 38.

*Two others, malefactors.* In Matthew xxvii. 38 they are called "thieves." Pilate did not reside in Jerusalem. When he came there on the great feasts, or at other times, it was, in part, to hold courts for the trial of criminals. These robbers had probably been condemned at that time, and to show greater contempt for Jesus, He was crucified with men of that abandoned character, and on a cross which should have been occupied by their companion and leader, Barabbas. Their names were joined with that of Jesus in the history of the executions of that day. Thus the prophecy spoken by Isaiah was fulfilled: "He was numbered with the transgressors." Is. liii. 12. Shame was one of the ingredients in His bitter cup. Shame is the consequence of sin, and He who bare *our sins* bare also *our shame*.

33. And <sup>b</sup>when they were come to the place which is called \*Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

† Matt. xxvii. 33; Mark xv. 22; John xix. 17. \* Or, the place of a skull.

*The place which is called Calvary.* In the other Evangelists, it is called *Golgotha*—a Hebrew word signifying a skull-place. It is in Latin *Calvaria*, and thus it is by Luke called *Calvary*, which is the common name in English. It is not known certainly why this name was given to this place. Some have supposed that it was because it resembled in shape a human skull. The most probable opinion, however, is, that it was a place of execution, that malefactors were beheaded there or otherwise put to death, and that the skulls of those whose bodies had been there buried often became visible. *Calvary* might have been a little elevated, but it could not have been a mountain or a mount. All the four gospel writers speak of it as "a place." Not one of them calls it a "mount." It is usually supposed to have been on the northwest of Jerusalem, without the walls of the city, but at a short distance. Jesus was put to death *out* of the city, because capital punishments were not allowed within the walls. See Num. xv. 35; 1 Kings xxi. 18. This was a law among the Romans, as well as the Jews. He also died there, because the bodies of the beasts slain in sacrifice as typical of Him, were *burned without the camp*. He, also, as the antitype, suffered *without the gate*. Heb. xiii. 11, 12. The place which is shown as *Calvary* now is within the city, and must also have been within the ancient walls, and there is no reason to suppose that it is the place where the Saviour was put to death. *There they crucified him.* The cross was composed of two pieces of wood,



THE CROSS.

one of which was placed upright in the earth, and the other crossed it. The upright part was commonly so high that the feet of the person crucified were two or three feet from the ground. On the middle of that upright part there was a projection, or seat, on which the person crucified sat, or, as it were, *rode*. This was necessary, as the *hands* were not alone strong enough to bear the weight of the body, as the body was left exposed often many days, and not unfrequently suffered to remain till the flesh had been devoured by vultures, or putrefied in the sun. The feet were fastened to this upright piece, either by nailing them with large spikes, driven through the tender part, or by being lashed by cords. To the cross-piece at the top, the hands, being extended, were also fastened, either by spikes or by cords, or perhaps in some cases by both. Our Lord was nailed both by the hands and feet, as the prophets had foretold, (Ps. xxxii. 16; Zech. xii. 10; John xx. 25, 27, &c.; Rev. i. 7,) a method more exquisitely painful at

first, though tending to shorten the torture. He was fastened to the cross as it lay upon the ground, and the shock, when it was dropped with a sudden jerk into the hole or socket prepared to receive it, must have been terrible. Death did not ensue, usually, for many hours after the criminal was affixed to the cross. *And the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.* See Notes on verse 32. Christ, in submitting to the punishment of slaves, joins the greatest of ignominies with the most violent of all pains, that nothing may be wanting to the example of patience and humility which He intends to give us in His death, and to the remedy which He prepares thereby for the cure of all our wounds. The mention of the cross often occurs in the New Testament. It was the instrument on which the Saviour made atonement for the sins of the world. The whole of the Christian's hope of heaven, and all his peace and consolation in trial and in death, depend on the sacrifice there made for sin, and on just views and feelings in regard to the fact and the design of the Redeemer's death.

34. ¶ Then said Jesus, Father, 'forgive them; 'for they

know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

• Matt. v. 44; Acts vii. 60; 1 Cor. iv. 12.

• Acts iii. 17.

• Matt. xxvii. 35; Mark xv. 24; John xix. 23.

Christ had often preached the doctrine of forgiving enemies, and praying for them, He practises it here Himself in a most exemplary manner. Observe, 1. The time—*then*, this prayer was probably uttered directly after His suspension on the cross. As soon as the blood of the Great Sacrifice began to flow, the Great High Priest began to intercede. 2. The character in which he prayed—*Father*—it was as Son He both atoned and interceded with the Father. 3. The mercy prayed for, forgiveness. *Forgive*—for the sacrifice which makes forgiveness possible is now being made. 4. The persons for whom this prayer was offered. *Forgive them, for they know not what they do.* The persons for whom the prayer was offered were those who were ignorant of the real nature of the act they were performing. This was undoubtedly true of the Roman soldiers.

How far the rulers and priests, the real murderers of our Lord, were included in the terms of this prayer, we cannot say. Paul, in his discourse at Antioch in Pisidia, Acts xiii. 27, seems clearly to assign ignorance as the reason why the rulers desired the crucifixion of Jesus. Peter says, Acts iii. 17, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it." Paul again says, 1 Cor. ii. 8, "Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Judas knew what he did, Caiaphas knew what he did; but as to the greater part of the enemies of Christ, a high degree of blindness was united with their wickedness. There were, doubtless, different degrees and shades of guilt in the transaction. If a case existed, like that of Caiaphas, of one who knew *without any ignorance*, this was no prayer for him. If, like Pilate, any one knew not that he was killing the Prince of Life, but knew he was slaying an innocent man, his guilt, proportioned to his knowledge, was heinous, but not beyond pardon *upon repentance*. It is highly probable, that many who engaged in the crucifixion of Christ, and many who composed the Sanhedrim, even of those who voted for His death, were influenced to do so by the great weight and authority of Caiaphas and his immediate abettors and counsellors, and knew not at the time the full amount of the wickedness they were committing—perhaps thought that they were doing service for truth in putting Him to death. Acts xxvi. 9, 10. But this blindness, which a strict righteousness might have been able to reckon to them as their own guilt, since it had by no means arisen without their concurrence, (John xv. 22-25,) the inventiveness of love makes the very ground of their intercession for grace to the guilty. Whilst, however, we conceive the prayer of Jesus to have had special reference to persons engaged directly and indirectly in His immediate crucifixion, we may not doubt that at this moment the whole world of mankind filled His spiritual vision. Inasmuch as our Lord, in the Jews who caused His death, beheld merely the representatives of the whole of sinful mankind, who were His crucifiers, being sharers by their own personal rebellion against God and His Holy Child Jesus, in the dreadful deed, we may say that Christ with these words, by implication, commended this race of men itself to the Father's compassion. To-day He does what He, in His intercessory prayer, had not expressly done. John xvii. 9. *For they know not what they do.* Our Lord does not mention the ignorance of those He prays for, as a plea for pardon, but as a description of their state. On the one hand, we must beware of supposing that ignorance is not blameworthy, and that ignorant persons *deserve* to be forgiven their sins. At this rate ignorance would be a desirable thing. All spiritual ignorance is more or less culpable. It is part of man's sin that he does not know better than he does. His not knowing God is only part of his guilt. Ignorance, to be an excuse, or to diminish the intensity of a crime, must be sincere and un-

avoidable, and it must be the ignorance of a will that would have done right had it known the truth. That those who aided in bringing our Lord to the cross were guilty, is evident, not only from the fact that Peter, in his sermon, Acts ii. 23, declared, "Him ye have taken, and by *wicked hands* have crucified and slain;" but also from the fact that three thousand were "pricked in their hearts," and said: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In this prayer of Jesus, He "made intercession for the transgressors," as had been foretold of Him, and afforded a grand example of magnanimity to all His followers who might suffer for righteousness sake. Not that the gospel requires of us an insensibility of wrongs and injuries, or that we deliver up our rights and properties to the lusts of every one that will invade them; but it forbids us to revenge injuries, and requires us meekly to receive evil, and readily to return good.

*And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.* Our Lord was evidently crucified naked. The shame and unseemliness of such a posture in death must, doubtless, have added much to the misery of the punishment of crucifixion. The literal fulfilment of the twenty-second Psalm, in this verse and the following one, ought to be carefully observed. Ps. xxii. 17, 18. Jesus gave up to His executioners these garments, made by the hands of men; but He left us garments far more precious than these—even His righteousness and grace to cover the nakedness of our hearts. A description is given of one of our Lord's garments, John xix. 23. It was a vesture without a seam. In the East, a sort of cloak, with arm-holes, is still worn. A seam generally runs down the middle, or divides it across. This seam is unsightly, and those cloaks that are made without it are highly prized. It is natural to inquire how it happened that the Son of man, who was so poor, possessed a valuable garment. Some have conjectured that one of those pious women, who ministered to Him of their substance, may have woven with her own hands the seamless vesture. In the days of the Reformers, pious women esteemed it an honor to prepare the garment in which the martyr was to be buried. How much greater was the honor to weave a vesture for Him who was the express image of the Father, and the brightness of His glory!

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Who followed Jesus?
2. Who were the women referred to?
3. Explain, "which also bewailed and lamented him."
4. What did Jesus say to the women?
5. Explain "Daughters of Jerusalem."
6. Explain "weep not for me."
7. Explain "but weep for yourselves," &c.
8. What is meant by "the days are coming?"
9. What is said of "they shall say?"
10. What is said of "Blessed are the barren," &c.?
11. What is referred to in ver. 30?
12. What explanation is given of ver. 31?
13. What is said of "two others, malefactors?"
14. What is said of Pilate?
15. What is said of these robbers?
16. What is said of Calvary?
17. Explain "there they crucified him."
18. Explain "and the malefactors," &c.
19. What is said of Christ's submission to crucifixion?
20. What prayer did Jesus offer?
21. What things are to be observed in this prayer?
22. What is said of the guilt in the crucifixion of Christ?

23. Had this prayer of Jesus sole reference to the persons engaged in His crucifixion?
24. Explain, "for they know not what they do."
25. Why was the ignorance of those Christ prayed for mentioned?
26. Of what must we beware of supposing?
27. Is all spiritual ignorance more or less culpable?
28. What must ignorance be, in order to be an excuse?
29. Explain, "they parted his raiment, and cast lots."
30. Of what prophecy was this a fulfilment?
31. Where is a description of one of our Lord's garments given?
32. What is said of pious women in the days of the Reformers?

## LESSON XXXIII.

vs. 35-42.

35. And 'the people stood beholding. And the rulers also, with them, derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

(Psalm xlii. 17; Zech. xii. 10.

Matt. xxvii. 39; Mark xv. 29.

The impious throng mocked the dying Saviour. It would appear that *the people* joined in this with *the rulers*. *Derided him*, literally, *turned up the nose (sneeringly) at him*. *He saved others, let him save himself*. Instead of addressing the Son of God Himself, they spoke to each other. It is more trying to hear our enemies speak against us to *others*, than to hear them address the same reproaches to *ourselves*. There is more contempt shown in such a way of attack than in a direct assault. It does not seem probable that they meant to admit that He had actually saved others, but only that He *pretended* to save them from death by miracles, or that He claimed to be the Messiah, and thus affirmed that He *could* save them. This is, therefore, cutting irony. A noble Saviour, forsooth, who cannot save himself! And yet, they know, or ought to know, especially the rulers, that the Old Testament foretold a suffering as well as a glorious Messiah—that it was by suffering that the Messiah was to save. How must it have wounded the soul of Jesus to hear the creatures for whom He was dying, saying, "let him save himself!"

36. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

37. And saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.

Luke is the only one who communicates to us the fact that the soldiers also took part in the mocking, which the example of the chief priests had excited. The soldiers, rather from the natural inclination of persons of their profession to join in any popular excitement and clamor, than from deep feelings of hatred, like that which rankled in the bosom of the priests and rulers, left their previous composed demeanor, and approached Jesus, pretending to share with Him their stimulating drink. *Vinegar*. This was

*posca*, a mixture of vinegar and water, a common drink for the Roman soldiers, not the medicated drink of wine and myrrh which was given to intoxicate and benumb, and which Jesus refused, because He would die undisturbed and unclouded in His mind. The soldiers also appropriated to themselves the words of the chief priests quite as eagerly and willingly as they had previously done the garments of the condemned, exclaiming, not without bitterness towards despised Judaism, *If thou be the King of the Jews, &c.*

38. <sup>h</sup>And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

<sup>h</sup> Matt. xxvii. 37; Mark xv. 26; John xix. 19.

It was usual for the Romans to put a "title" or inscription at the top of the cross, to denote the offence of the crucified person; a custom observed also by the Turks in their analogous punishment of impalement. In the provinces, these inscriptions were in different languages, so that all might be able to understand for what offence the criminal was executed. The title set upon our Lord's cross was in Greek, the language most generally spoken in the eastern parts of the Roman empire, in Latin, the language of the Romans, and in the vernacular "Hebrew," or rather Chaldo-Syriac, the language of Judea. John says, xix. 19, that Pilate wrote the title, and put it upon the cross. Probably Pilate wrote it, or caused it to be written, and directed the soldiers to set it up. The difference in the accounts the Evangelists give of this title (Matt. xxvii. 37; Mark xv. 26; John xix. 19) may be easily removed. It is not at all improbable that the inscription *carried* in the languages in which it was written. One Evangelist may have translated it from the Hebrew, another from the Greek, a third from the Latin, and a fourth have translated one of the inscriptions a little differently from another. Besides, the Evangelists all agree in the main point of the inscription, viz. : That He was the King of the Jews.

39. ¶ And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself, and us.

<sup>i</sup> Matt. xxvii. 44; Mark xv. 32.

*Malefactors*, the thieves, robbers or highwaymen. *Were hanged*. This form of expression is only used here, and Acts v. 30, x. 39, of crucifixion. In Gal. iii. 13, it is applied to our Lord's death, in a quotation from Deut. xxi. 23, where its meaning is *hanging* as generally understood. *Railed on him*. Matthew and Mark say both the thieves railed. It seems probable that if the penitent thief had railed at Jesus, he would have confessed that sin when he rebuked his companion for the same. It is probable that Matthew and Mark use the plural number in the general way that people sometimes use it, when describing a transaction. See Gen. xix. 29; Ps. ii. 2; Matt. xxi. 17; Heb. xi. 33, 34, 37. *If thou be Christ, save thyself, and us*. This was not a prayer, it was a reproach. He did not believe that Jesus was the Christ, or that he was able to save either Himself or His fellow-sufferers. By "save us," he meant only, "release us from the pangs of the cross," he thought not of *eternal* misery.

40. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41. <sup>1</sup>And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

J Lev. xxvi. 40; Joshua vii. 9, 20; Bars ix. 13.

*The other answering rebuked him.* Who this malefactor was, and what first struck his conscience and moved him to repent, we are not told. Perhaps it was witnessing the patient sufferings of Christ. *Doest not thou fear God?* The pronoun is emphatic in the original, and gives this shade of sense: *doest not even thou*, i. e., have you no fear of Divine justice, that at this awful moment, when, as a justly-condemned criminal, you are about to be ushered into God's presence, you can afford to unite with this mob in taunting one whom we both know to be innocent? *In the same condemnation*, i. e., condemned alike with him at whom you are railing. *We indeed justly*, so that the criminals are truly railing at the innocent. *We receive the due reward of our deeds.* He acknowledged that they had been so great sinners, that even crucifixion was not too severe a punishment. *Nothing amiss*—nothing censurable, evil. The mild expression denotes innocence the more strongly. This testimony of the malefactor presupposes a knowledge of the past history of Jesus. He could not thus say that He was pure from any wrong act, without an acquaintance with His doctrine and character. Even had the robber said nothing more than this, yet he would awaken our deepest astonishment, that God—in a moment wherein all voices were literally raised against Jesus, and not a friendly word is heard in His favor—causes a witness for the spotless innocence of the Saviour to appear on one of the crosses beside Him. This malefactor is the last man who, before the death of Jesus, deposits a testimony in honor of Him. But now he soon shows a yet clearer and firmer faith, while he directs his look upon the middle cross, and now begins to speak no longer of, but to Him Himself.

42. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.

There is no proof that this malefactor was at all penitent, even when nailed to the cross. We are sure he had led a very wicked life; but his "sin found him out," and the punishment following upon it might bring him to reflect seriously on his ways. Perhaps the cruelties and insults which were shown to Jesus, and His unexampled and patient resignation and patience under them—His pathetic prayer for His enemies, with other previous circumstances of His history—might have helped to convince this man that Jesus was an innocent and holy sufferer. Being a Jew, he might have some recollection of the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah, and comparing with them the meekness and patience of Christ, he might conceive Him to be the person of whom Isaiah wrote. Is. liii. 7. Whatever the way in which this thief was brought to repentance, it must be referred to the grace of Christ; and there is abundant proof that his repentance was genuine. He used for the honor of Christ his heart and tongue, the only faculties at liberty. His prayer was that of a believer. *Lord.* He acknowledges Jesus to be the King Messiah. He was concerned about eternal salvation. *Remember me.* Here was humility. He did not say, "Let me sit on thy right hand, or on thy left, in thy kingdom." *When thou comest into thy kingdom*—the sentiment is, *when thou comest to abide in thy kingdom.* Thus he showed his belief that the soul is immortal, that Jesus should enter into His kingdom, and, therefore, that His kingdom was not of this world; that Jesus would not only be glorious and happy Himself, but was able to make others so; and that He would do this of mere grace and mercy, for the unworthy, even for the vilest, who were penitent, and applied to Him.

## QUESTIONS.

1. Who mocked the Saviour?
2. What is meant by "derided?"
3. What did the rulers and people say of Jesus?
4. What is said of "He saved others," &c.?
5. What ought the rulers and people to have known?
6. What effect must their derision of Jesus have had upon Him?
7. Did the soldiers take part in the mocking?
8. What did they offer to Christ?
9. What was this vinegar?
10. What did the soldiers say?
11. What superscription was written over Jesus?
12. How was it written?
13. Why was it written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew?
14. Who probably wrote it?
15. What is said of the different accounts the Evangelists give of the superscription?
16. Who were the "malefactors?"
17. Explain "were hanged."
18. Explain "railed on him."
19. What is said of "If thou be Christ," &c.?
20. What did the other malefactor do?
21. Who was this malefactor?
22. What first struck his conscience, and moved him to repent?
23. Explain "Dost not thou fear God," &c.
24. Explain "we receive the due reward of our deeds."
25. Explain "this man hath done nothing amiss."
26. What does this testimony of the malefactor presuppose?
27. What is said of his testimony?
28. What is said of his penitence?
29. Explain "remember me."
30. Explain "when thou comest into thy kingdom."

## LESSON CXXXIV.

vs. 43-46.

43. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

*Jesus said unto him.* Over against all the voices of blasphemy Jesus had thus far observed steadfast silence, but such a petitioner He permits not to wait a moment for an answer. He does not upbraid him with his past thefts and other vices. He accepts his repentance and faith, though at the eleventh hour. *To-day, this day.* To refer the phrase *to-day* to the verb *say*, as a few interpreters have done, making Jesus mean, *To-day I say unto thee*, is a vapid, unnatural, and unwarranted construction. Perhaps the thief had feared that he should have to languish slowly away, hanging one or several days on the cross, as was not unusual before death ensued. *Shalt thou*, guilty as thou art, vile and debased as thou hast been, being renewed by grace, and made

meet, *be with me*, instead of being merely remembered, thou shalt be with me, perfect fellowship and communion is promised. *In paradise*—a word whose whole sweetness in such a mouth, for such ears, could only be experienced if one had himself hung there with the Saviour upon the cross. The word *paradise* is a strictly oriental one, signifying a *park*, or *pleasure-ground*. The Greeks borrowed it from the Persians. It became significant of any place beautiful or pleasant. It was used in the (Septuagint) Greek translation of the Old Testament. Thus the Septuagint has in Gen. ii. 8, *God planted a paradise in Eden*. As the paradise in Eden, the primeval place of beauty and happiness, had been closed to the human family after the apostasy, our Lord seems to have selected this term as expressive of the fact that a higher and more blessed paradise was now to be opened to the race, that the paradise *lost* was now to be *regained*, and rendered accessible to all, who by faith would so unite themselves to the *second* Adam, as to entitle them to be with Him in blessedness and glory. The paradise here, then, denotes the state of faithful souls between death and the resurrection, when, like Adam in Eden, they are admitted to immediate communion with God in Christ, and to a participation of the true tree of life. Not that we should reject the idea of some locality, where the blessed union of the thief with his Lord would take place, but this is not the main element in the promise of our Lord to him; it is simply, to-day shalt thou be *with me* (which expression, of course, implies some place in the world of spirits) *in paradise*, i. e., in a state of ineffable bliss. From this answer of our Lord, we learn, 1. That the soul does not die with the body, and may and does live when separate from it. 2. That no purification of any kind after death is needed for the person that dies a penitent believer. 3. That as soon as believers die they are “with Christ.” See Philip. i. 23. 4. That whilst there is life there is hope. It was like the Son of God to close His life upon earth by an act of *especial mercy*—the salvation of a notorious sinner. It has been well observed that *one* such instance is recorded, that none may *despair*, and *but one*, that none may *presume*. Certainly the *impenitent* thief is a striking proof that pain, suffering, and the approach of death, are not sufficient, without grace, to convert a soul. Let no one abuse God’s goodness, which is intended to lead to repentance.

44. <sup>\*</sup>And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the <sup>\*</sup>earth until the ninth hour.

<sup>\*</sup> Matt. xxvii. 45; Mark xv. 33.

<sup>\*</sup> Or, *land*.

45. And the sun was darkened, and the <sup>1</sup>vail of the temple was rent in the midst.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii. 51; Mark xv. 33.

*About the sixth hour*, that is, our twelve o’clock. The Jews divided their days into twelve hours, beginning to count at sunrise. *There was a darkness over all the earth*—over all the land, as it is translated in Matt. xxvii. 45. Not the globe, (for it was night at the antipodes,) nor, perhaps, was even all Palestine covered, but the vicinity and adjacent country. Nor was it an eclipse, since the Passover was at full moon. As the darkness was not universal but local, so it was not astronomical but atmospheric. *Until the ninth hour*, i. e., three o’clock. *The sun was darkened*. It left the world in darkness while He who was the Light of the world was about to expire. The darkness here, and in the preceding verse, was not what is sometimes called the sympathy of nature over the scene, for that is too poetical for the plain reality of the facts before us. But it was a token of Divine displeasure, calculated to dismay the hearts of those wicked men, and awaken in them some misgiving as to the being they were crucifying. How much thicker was the

darkness which covered the hearts of the Jews! *And the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.* In Matt. xxvii. 51, "from the top to the bottom." This was doubtless the veil, curiously wrought, which separated the holy from the most holy place, in which the Divine presence was supposed to dwell, thus dividing the temple into two apartments. Exod. xxvi. 31-33. This veil or curtain was some sixty feet long, and it was impossible for it to be thus rent, as some have imagined, by the force of the earthquake. This miracle must have been as striking and terrible to the priests who ministered in the temple as the darkness was to the inhabitants of Palestine. It signified the opening of the way into the holiest by Christ's death—the passing away of the Jewish dispensation—and the revelation of the gospel way of salvation to all mankind. God speaks even yet by inanimate creatures to the obdurate people who refuse to hear His Son. He makes use of every thing to awaken the sinner, but the sinner, by his obduracy, renders every thing ineffectual when God works not an internal and invisible miracle upon his heart. How is it that they do not now at least know that it is the Sun of their souls, whose light and life they have extinguished and put out, and that His death rends the veil of types and shadows, discovers the truth, and opens heaven? But the time is not yet come.

46. ¶ And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:" and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

▪ Pa. xxxi. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 23.

▪ Matt. xxvii. 50; Mark xv. 37; John xix. 30.

*Cried with a loud voice.* This shows that there was something peculiar and uncommon about our Lord's death. A dying man's voice is generally not "loud," but feeble. This was the expiring cry of nature. Inasmuch as the agony of the cross extorted from Jesus no cry of pain, and His only complaint had been His apparent desertion of God, may we not attribute, in part, at least, this last cry to His anguish of spirit, which was so great as to hasten His death much beyond what was usual? There are seven sentences recorded as spoken by Him while on the cross. *Three* were uttered *before* the darkness overspread the land, and *four* near its conclusion. The first three concerned others, not Himself. They were as follows: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," ver. 34. "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," ver. 43. "Woman, behold thy son!" "Behold thy mother!" John xix. 26, 27. The last four concerned Himself. One expressed the anguish of His *soul*, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark xxvii. 46. Another expressed the anguish of his *body*, "I thirst." John xix. 28. The next—"It is finished," John xix. 30, told that His sacrificial death, and all that was involved in it of His expiatory work was accomplished—completed. His whole course of obedience was now brought to a close. His fulfilment of the Divine purposes, and of His commission from the Father, so far as they looked to His death, was finished. His work of mediation on earth; His fulfilment of predictions, types, and shadows, pointing to Him as the Messiah, was finished. His suffering, which began at Bethlehem, was now finished on the cross. His conflict with the powers of darkness was now finished, and He was ready to triumph over them, nailing them to the cross, as those who were really crucified.

The last sentence spoken by Christ while on the cross was, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* These are the words of David, in the thirty-first Psalm. Pa. xxxi. 5. *Father.* As soon as Christ was nailed to the cross, He called upon His Father, and now, when He was just expiring, He again said, "Father." See Pa. lxxxix. 26. *Commend.* The original word thus rendered would be better translated, "commit." *My spirit.* Our Lord possessed a true body, and reasonable soul, united in close and mysterious union with

His Divine nature, yet each so distinct that acts and emotions could be predicated of the one which belonged not to the other. This soul He committed into the hands of His Father. These words of Jesus are full of faith and comfort, fit to be the last breathings of every gracious soul in this world. Dying believers are both warranted and encouraged by Christ's example believingly to commit their precious souls into the hands of God as a gracious Father. See Gal. iii. 26; John i. 12; Acts vii. 59; Rom. viii. 15; 2 Tim. i. 12. *And having said this, he gave up the ghost.* The proper meaning is, resigned His spirit, or expired. It is evident that the Lord Jesus did not die because He was obliged, but because He chose voluntarily and of His own free will to submit to death. Finding Himself in deepest dependence, He yet exhibited and used His true freedom. John x. 18. His death was "His own act." He "*offered Himself* without spot to God." None of the Evangelists say that Jesus *died*, although that expression is ever after used of His death, when stated as one great fact. Matthew says that He "yielded up the ghost." Mark, Luke, and John, though in different Greek words, say much the same, "He gave up the ghost." In all the five Old Testament passages which our translators have rendered "giving up the ghost," the Septuagint Greek translators have not used the expressions applied in the Gospels to our Lord's death, nor any thing like them. Gen. lxix. 83; Job x. 18, xi. 20, xiv. 10; Jer. xv. 9. The Greek expression about Sapphira, which is rendered, "yielded up the ghost," Acts v. 10, is totally different from those used about our Lord's death.

How large a field of meditation does every one of these last words of Jesus afford us! How much is there in them to be adored and imitated! How many other duties are we obliged to perform toward a God who died for us such a death, and by such a love! If we are Christians, like our Master, we should not be afraid to confront the king of terrors. We should regard him as a vanquished enemy, whose sting has been taken away by Christ's death. Jesus trusted in God. Even His enemies said, when they scoffed at Him, "He trusted in God." Worldly people cannot trust Him, for they do not *know* Him. They cannot trust Him to guide them one step which they do not *see*, nor to give them one blessing which they do not already *hold in their hands*. This is *not* to trust Him. But the children of God can trust Him while they live with their *earthly concerns*, and, when they come to die, with their *immortal spirits*. Martin Luther, the great Reformer, was remarkable for his trust in God. Three hours a day he set apart for calling upon his Father, and he received the most wonderful answers to his prayers. When he was dying, he was often heard to say. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." These were *almost* his last words. He added, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish."

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What did Jesus say to the penitent thief?
2. Explain "to-day."
3. Explain "shalt thou be with me."
4. What is said of "paradise?"
5. What does "paradise" here denote?
6. What do we learn from this answer of our Lord?
7. What is meant by "about the sixth hour?"
8. Explain "there was a darkness," &c.
9. What is meant by "the ninth hour?"
10. Explain "the sun was darkened."
11. What is meant by "the vail of the temple?"
12. How was it rent?
13. What is said of this miracle?

14. What did it signify?
15. Explain "cried with a loud voice."
16. To what may this last cry of Jesus, at least, in part, be attributed?
17. How many sentences were spoken by Christ, while on the cross?
18. What is said of them?
19. What is said of the whole course of Christ's obedience?
20. What was the last sentence spoken by Christ while on the cross?
21. What is said of "Father?"
22. What, of "commend?"
23. What, of "my spirit?"
24. What is said of these words of Jesus?
25. What is the proper meaning of "he gave up the ghost?"
26. Was our Lord's death voluntary?
27. Do any of the Evangelists say that Jesus *died*?
28. What is said of these last words of Jesus?
29. What is said of trusting in God?
30. What is said of Martin Luther?

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### LESSON CXXXV.

vs. 47-56.

47. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

• Matt. xxvii. 54; Mark xv. 39.

*The centurion*—a captain of a hundred men. He was doubtless the commander of the quaternion of soldiers who watched Jesus' death. *Saw what was done*—saw the supernatural darkness, the trembling of the earth, the rending of the rocks, and the opening of the tombs, and heard the Saviour's dying words. *He glorified God*. He had never seen such amazing instances of Divine power, and, therefore, took occasion to adore God as the *Almighty*. *Certainly this was a righteous man*. In Matt. xxvii. 54, "Truly this was the Son of God." The centurion knew that Christ was executed for claiming to be the Son of God. The report Matthew makes of the centurion's expression strikingly harmonizes with that given by Luke. Christ was *righteous*, in that His claim, for which He was executed, was sustained by God, by the supernatural phenomena. The utterance of the centurion is less the expression of an exactly defined conception of the understanding, than the outgush of a deeply-moved sensibility, and it is as unreasonable to deny the echo of superstition as the voice of sincere faith in his manly words. Christ had a testimony of His innocency and righteousness given by all sorts of persons. Pilate and Herod pronounced Him innocent; Pilate's wife proclaimed Him a righteous person; Judas, the traitor, declared it was innocent blood; the thief on the cross affirmed He had done nothing censurable; and the centurion owned Him to be a righteous man, yea, the Son of God.

48. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

At the time of the Passover, there were from two to three millions of Jews, gathered from all lands of the earth, in the capital, a multitude almost as

great as that which had come out of Egypt, and of these it may be supposed that there was no stranger among them that had not heard of Jesus of Nazareth. See Luke xxiv. 18. So far as the hills and plains around Calvary gave room for it, all were covered with beholders, who now, however, were found in a wholly different mood from that which is described, ver. 35. As the centurion glorified God by his confession, so did these beholders accuse themselves as sharers in the guilt of the death of Jesus, and as objects of the holy displeasure of God.

49. ¶ And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

¶ Pa. xxxviii. 11; Matt. xxvii. 55; Mark xv. 40; see John xix. 25.

*Acquaintance*, who personally knew Him. *The women that followed him from Galilee*. These women (as we are informed, Mark xv. 41; Luke viii. 2, 3) ministered unto Jesus of their substance while He was in Galilee. They had now come to Jerusalem for the same purpose. *Stood afar off*. They were, probably, not suffered to come near the cross, because it was surrounded by soldiers. *Beholding these things*, i. e., the convulsions of nature, and other wonders which attended the crucifixion of Jesus. These women stood the ground more firmly than the disciples of Christ. They witnessed, with intense feelings, His sufferings, from some convenient place, as near as they could approach. Christ has often curious and inquisitive spectators of His mysteries, who are only present in body, but love and fidelity were the things which kept these pious women there, as they were those which caused them at first to follow Jesus. His grace drew them to Him; His grace detained them.

50. ¶ And behold, *there was* a man named Joseph, a counsellor, and he was a good man, and a just:

¶ Matt. xxvii. 67; Mark xv. 42; John xix. 38.

51. The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them: *he was* of Arimathea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

¶ Mark xv. 43; Luke ii. 25, 38.

*Joseph, a counsellor*. Mark says, xv. 43, "an honorable counsellor," that is, probably, a member of the Sanhedrim. *Good man, and a just*. Good is here used of one who is kind, benevolent, compassionate, *just*, of one who is a strict observer of the law. *Had not consented*, &c. He had not agreed with his colleagues in conspiring to bring about the death of Jesus, but he seems to have lacked the courage to protest against their judgment. *Of Arimathea*. This was probably Ramathaim Tophim, lying a few miles west of Jerusalem. *Waited for the kingdom of God*. Waited for, or expected the coming of the Messiah. But this expression means more than an *indefinite* expectation that the Messiah *would* come, for all the Jews expected that. It implies that he believed *Jesus* to be the Messiah, and that he had *waited* for *Him* to build up the kingdom of God, and this agrees with what John says, xix. 38, that he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. He was a believer in Christ, but a timid one, not willing at first to acknowledge his faith. But God called him to a public profession of attachment, and gave him grace to evince it. So men often delay a profession of attachment to Christ. They cherish a secret love, they indulge a hope in the mercy of God, but they conceal it for fear of man. Whereas God requires that the attachment should be made known. Those who love the Saviour have no right to hide their light under a bushel. They are bound to profess Him before men. This is the command of God, and this is the way of peace.

52. This *man* went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

53. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

• Matt. xxvii. 59; Mark xv. 46.

*This man went unto Pilate.* No one had a right to remove the body but the magistrate. As an "honorable counsellor," his request would have weight with Pilate. Mark says, xv. 48, he "went in boldly unto Pilate." God had raised up this distinguished counsellor and secret disciple for a special and most important vocation. The disciples of Jesus had fled, and if they had not, they had no influence with Pilate. Unless there had been a special application to Pilate in behalf of Jesus, His body would have been buried *that night* in the common grave with the malefactors, for it was a law of the Jews that the body of an executed man should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath. At this critical juncture, God called forward this secret disciple, this friend of Jesus, though unknown as such to the world, and gave him confidence, he dared to express sympathy for the Saviour, he went in boldly, and begged the body of Jesus. It needed no small measure of courage to do this. Jesus had just been condemned, mocked, spit on, crucified—the death of a slave, or the most guilty wretch. To show attachment for Him *now* was proof of sincere affection. *Begged the body of Jesus.* This shows that Joseph believed our Lord to be dead. Mark says distinctly xv. 44, that Pilate only granted the request of Joseph on the express assurance of the centurion that Jesus was dead. As Joseph was a "rich man," he could afford an honorable tomb. It is a hopeful sign when men's faith grows in time of danger. Who shall despise the bruised reed, or the smoking flax, or the day of small things? Many a timid follower of Jesus, if he be sincere, is in time strengthened by God's grace for the front rank of the battle, and the most fearful onset of the enemy. *And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen*—a large square shroud or sheet. The head was wrapped



MODE OF ENSHROUDING THE DEAD.

separately in a napkin of this material. John xx. 7. Nicodemus came also, John xix. 39, and brought the liberal amount of a hundred pounds of spices to embalm the sacred body. The sindon, or clean linen winding-sheet was wrapped several times around the Saviour's body, the spices being placed in the first fold so as to bring them in contact with the body. A sacred Providence seems to have watched over the body of our Lord. Christianity does not contemn the corporeal frame in which the soul resides. *Laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone.* We must figure to ourselves a large room cut horizontally into the solid rock for a vault. In this room we enter, from the open air, by a large door. On entering you would see small, long cells, or niches, cut into the solid, adamantine sides, as depositories of the corpses: or from this first main room you may enter one or several smaller apartments, in whose walls the niches for corpses are cut. A person could enter into the first main vault, and then into either of the smaller apartments. *Wherein never man before was laid.* John says, xix. 41, that this sepulchre was in a garden that was *in* or *near* the place where

Christ was crucified. Probably Joseph had the new vault made for His own family. It was so ordered, in the providence of God, that Jesus was laid in a tomb where never man before was laid, that there might be no suspicion about His identity when He rose, that it might not be alleged that another person had risen. Besides, by being buried here, an important prophecy was remarkably fulfilled. Is. liii. 9.

The history of Joseph shows us that Christ has friends of whom the Church knows little or nothing, friends who profess less than some do, but friends who in real love and affection are second to none. These are they whom David calls "hidden ones," Ps. lxxxiii. 3, and Solomon compares to a "lily among thorns," Cant. ii. 2. All is not barren in this world, when our eyes perhaps see nothing. The day of judgment will bring forward men who seemed last, and place them among the first. 1 Kings xix. 18. God caused His Son to receive the honor of a burial that it might serve as a declaration of His innocence, and as a proof of the reality of His death and resurrection. Christians are well enough disposed to honor the death and resurrection of Christ, but few are mindful of His burial. This, according to Paul, is the model of a Christian life, which is a life hid from the world, a life wherein we labor not only to crucify, but likewise to bury the old man, so as that nothing may any longer appear but the new man, and such things as are worthy of him. It is an unspeakable consolation to the Christian to know that His Redeemer passed through the valley of the shadow of death, and that as the grave could not retain Him, so shall it retain none of His followers.

54. And that day was 'the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

† Matt. xxvii. 62.

*That day was the preparation.* As Saturday was the Jewish sabbath, so Friday, the day of the crucifixion, was the *day of preparation*. *The preparation of the Jews* began strictly at three o'clock in the afternoon, but the name *preparation* was properly applied to the whole day. *The sabbath drew on*, i. e., the evening was approaching, at which time the Jewish Sabbath commenced.

55. And the women also, "which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and 'beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

• Luke viii. 2.

• Mark xv. 47.

56. And they returned, and "prepared spices and ointments, and rested the sabbath day, 'according to the commandment.

• Mark xvi. 1.

• Exod. xx. 10.

*Which came with him from Galilee.* See ch. viii. 2. *Behold the sepulchre, &c.* The affection of these pious females never forsook them, in all the trials and sufferings of their Lord. With true love they followed Him to the cross; they came as near to Him as they were permitted to come, in His last moments; they followed Him when taken down and laid in the tomb. The strong, the mighty, the youthful had fled, but female love never forsook Him, even in His deepest humiliation. This is the nature of true love. In scenes of poverty, want, affliction, and death, it shows its genuineness. That which lives there, is genuine. That which turns away from such scenes is spurious. Let it be noted that these friends of our Lord who could not

possibly be mistaken as to His identity were witnesses to the fact of His burial, and actually saw His body laid in the grave. They saw the linen in which He was wrapped, and could therefore testify two days after, that the very same linen was found wrapped together in the empty tomb. *And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.* As but a short time remained until sunset, they must have hastened home with great diligence to the purchase and preparation of those ointments and spices. What they lacked, however, they procured when the Jewish Sabbath had ended, which was at sunset preceding the morning of the resurrection. *Spices and ointments.* The former refers to myrrh, aloes, and other preventives of putrefaction, and odorous perfumes; the latter, to the ointments and oils with which bodies were anointed. *And rested on the sabbath-day, according to the commandment.* See Exod. xx. 10. Eager as they were to perform the last offices of love to their Lord, yet these pious women would not transgress the commandment. How blessed was the result! How unblest would have been the impatient yielding to their own inclination! Had they presented themselves sooner at the grave, they would have been grieved by the presence or molested by the rudeness of the Roman soldiers, while their purpose could not possibly have been effected. By waiting till the Sabbath was past, they found the guard dispersed, and their Lord already risen. They unbound those limbs alive, which they had come to weep over and anoint in death. Let us bury and serve Jesus in the poor, since He has left them in His place, and has in them continual wants and necessities to be supplied.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of "the centurion?"
2. Explain "saw what was done."
3. What did he do?
4. What did he say?
5. What is said of his utterance?
6. What is said of the testimony of Christ's innocence?
7. What is said of "all the people," &c.?
8. Explain "beholding the things which were done."
9. What did the people do?
10. Who were the women referred to?
11. Why did they stand afar off?
12. Explain "beholding these things."
13. What is said of "a man named Joseph?"
14. Explain "had not consented," &c.
15. What is said of Arimathea?
16. Explain "waited for the kingdom of God."
17. What does this expression imply?
18. Was Joseph willing at first to acknowledge his faith in Christ?
19. What is said of a profession of faith?
20. What did Joseph beg of Pilate?
21. What is said of his request?
22. What is said of "begged the body of Jesus?"
23. Explain "and he took it down," &c.
24. Explain "laid it in a sepulchre," &c.
25. What does the history of Joseph show us?
26. Why did God cause His Son to receive the honor of a burial?
27. Explain "that day was the preparation."
28. What is meant by "the sabbath drew on?"
29. What is said of "the women also?"
30. Explain "they returned," &c.
31. Explain "rested on the sabbath-day," &c.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## LESSON CXXXVI.

vs. 1-12.

IN the histories of the resurrection, as given by the Evangelists, we may discern a Divine, overruling plan, giving a unity to the whole. This symmetry of plan could not have been fabricated by them; for each, with evident unconsciousness, furnishes his share without knowing what the other contributes, so that the whole is made up of unintentional parts. Luke is less detailed and exact than the other historians, so that he must rather be complemented from them, than they from him. But, on the other hand, he furnishes us new contributions to the knowledge of the risen and glorified Lord, the contents and tendency of which are in the most beautiful agreement with the broad humanistic character of his Gospel, as will appear from an examination of the individual accounts.

1. Now "upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

a Matt. xxviii. 1; Mark xvi. 1; John xx. 1

b Luke xxiii. 56.

*Upon the first day of the week.* This grammatically answers to the word *sabbath-day* in ver. 56 of the preceding chapter. The Jewish Sabbath was our Saturday. The first day of the week was our Sunday. Hence, this day of the week was called the Lord's day, Rev. i. 9. It is therefore recognized by inspiration as the sacred day in the Christian week. The day of the Saviour's sepulchral repose was the last of Jewish Sabbaths. The first day of the week has from that time to this succeeded to the honors of the fourth commandment. *Very early in the morning.* John says, "when it was yet dark;" Mark says, "very early . . . at the rising of the sun." The visit of the women to the sepulchre may have covered hours, extending from the first start from home until they left the sepulchre. Suppose they started at four o'clock, and after the company gathered proceeded on their way. By some unknown means, (perhaps the delay in the opening of the city gates,) they may not have arrived until "the rising of the sun"—a phrase which, as can be easily shown, may indicate not merely the time when the sun has visibly risen above the horizon, but the time when he is sensibly about rising to it. *They came unto the sepulchre.* The account is immediately connected with ch. xxiii. 56; and the women of whom Luke here makes mention can be no others than those of whom he said, ver. 55, that they had come with Jesus from Galilee. This early visit of those holy women to the sepulchre is a strong proof of their love and affection. It has been said of woman:

"Not she with trait'rous kiss her Master stung,  
Not she denied Him with unfaithful tongue:  
*She*, when Apostles fled, could danger brave,  
*Last* at His cross, and *earliest* at His grave!"

A woman was the first to eat the forbidden fruit. It was merciful in God to permit her to be the first to visit the sacred tomb. *Bringing the spices which they had prepared.* See ver. 56 of preceding chapter. The spices brought were aromatics, substances used in embalming. Nicodemus, and Joseph of

Arimathea, had embalmed the body of Jesus in a preparation of myrrh and aloes, John xix. 39; but this must necessarily have been hastily and imperfectly executed. The process of embalming and applying spices to dead bodies was usually repeated for several days together, in order that the aromatic and antiseptic compounds might have their full effect. See Gen. l 3. *And certain others with them.* See ver. 10. The diligence and earnestness of a soul which seeks God is represented in these holy women. The good works which we would offer God ought to be preceded by two conditions: we must prepare ourselves to perform them with holy dispositions, and we must set about them without delay.

2. <sup>a</sup>And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xxviii. 2; Mark xvi. 4.

They said to each other, as they approached the place: "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" Mark xvi. 4. How glad would they have been of the help of all the eleven Apostles? But greater help than theirs was afforded. An angel had rolled away the stone. Matt. xxviii. 2. *Rolled away.* The stone was lying in the hollow, cut deep into the



INTERIOR OF A ROCK SEPULCHRE.

rock, so as to form the door; "it was very great," Mark xvi. 4; and must accordingly be rolled forth from this recess outwards. How often there seems to be a great stone in the way of pious undertakings! How apt are Christians to be discouraged, and to say, "Who shall roll it away?" Let their answer be, "God." When He designs that a work should be performed, He removes every obstacle.

3. <sup>d</sup>And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>d</sup> Mark xvi. 5; ver. 23.

*They entered in, literally, having entered in. Found not the body of the Lord Jesus.* Jesus was deposited in the sepulchre a little before sunset on Friday, and rose very early Sunday morning, so that He was almost thirty-six hours in the tomb, being two nights and one intervening day; but, as this involved one whole day and parts of two days, it is rightly described,

according to Jewish usage, as three days, or, rather, the resurrection was on the third day. *The Lord Jesus.* This is the first time in the New Testament that our Saviour is so termed. The Lord—Christ—Jesus—are names He frequently has had. Here, after His resurrection as a conqueror, Luke calls Him "the Lord Jesus." God sometimes tries those who seek Him, when they think to find Him, in the exercises of piety. By whose hands had the body of Christ been taken away? Not surely by the priests and Scribes and other enemies of our Lord! If they had had His body to show in disproof of His resurrection, they would gladly have shown it. Not the Apostles and other disciples of our Lord. They were far too much frightened and dispirited to attempt such an action, and the more so when they had nothing to gain by it. One explanation, and only one, can meet the circumstances of the case, and that explanation is the one supplied by the angels, in ver. 6, "He is risen."

4. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, 'behold, two men stood by them in shining garments :

• John xx. 12; Acts i. 10.

*Much perplexed thereabout.* They could not tell what to make of the facts before them—the stone being rolled away—the empty sepulchre—the linen clothes lying by themselves—the body gone. *Two men.* The angels are designated according to that form of manifestation which they had in the view of the women. *Stood by them.* We learn from Mark xvi. 9, that on their first entrance the women saw but one angel, and he sitting, at which they were terrified. Luke adds, that, a moment after, two angels stood before them, (the one being joined by a second, to confirm the truth by two witnesses,) so that the words, ver. 5, were uttered standing, the first angel, doubtless, having risen, and being speaker for both. Thus, all these Evangelists are reconciled in regard to the number and positions of the angels. It has been supposed by some, that, instead of only two angels being present at the sepulchre, there were very many, and that they appeared not always one and the same; not always the same two; sometimes this one appeared, sometimes that; sometimes on this place, sometimes that. *In shining garments,* i. e., in garments of dazzling brightness. In Matt. xxviii. 3, it is said, "raiment white as snow." Celestial beings are usually represented as clothed in white. Acts i. 10; Dan. vii. 9; Rev. iii. 4, 5; iv. 4; vii. 13, 14. *White,* among the Jews, was the symbol of *purity* or *innocence*. It is asked sometimes, Whence did Jesus obtain His resurrection clothes? We might, with the same wisdom, ask, Whence did these angels obtain their robes of white? Who manufactures the angels' harps, or Gabriel's trumpet? The absence of Jesus Christ ought always to give us some perplexity, and to make us fear lest this has happened through our own fault. God never leaves those souls in trouble long whom He exercises by withdrawing Himself from them.

5. And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

*As they were afraid.* The cause of their fear was, doubtless, the appearance of the angels; or the word *afraid* may be taken in a wider sense, and means *agitated* or *troubled*. *Bowed down their faces to the earth.* These words express a respectful and reverential *declining their heads*, and looking downward, that they might not appear to gaze, which is well known to have been forbidden to the Jews upon the sight of a celestial vision. Exod. xix. 21; Judges xiii. 20. *They said.* One of these was speaker, although the act is naturally and properly referred to both. *Why seek ye the living,* or *Him*

that liveth, *among the dead*? It appeared to them an act of folly to look for the Lord of *Life* in the abode of *Death*. They felt that His followers ought to have known that He was risen. We never seek Jesus Christ, without benefit and comfort, when we seek Him sincerely and with our whole heart.

6. He is not here, but is risen: 'remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

¶ Matt. xvi. 21 and xvii. 23; Mark viii. 31 and ix. 31; Luke ix. 22.

*He is not here, in the sepulchre, but is risen, and has come forth from the tomb.* While the angels must be astonished at the dulness and forgetfulness of human creatures, they do not exult over them with pride, or upbraid them with harshness. They instruct in a gentle and condescending manner. Let us try to teach like them when we meet with those who are more ignorant than ourselves. *Remember how he spake unto you.* Comp. ix. 22; xviii. 32; Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 22, 23. The angels referred them to Christ's own words. Had they duly observed and believed the prediction of the resurrection, they would easily have believed it when it came to pass, and therefore they would not have been so surprised and agitated as they seemed to be. The belief of mysteries is founded chiefly upon the word of Christ. *When he was yet in Galilee.* This expression shows, no less than many other similar ones, that the greater part of our Lord's discourses and sermons were delivered in Galilee. Inasmuch as these angels were executing a commission and delivering a message intrusted to them by God, there is no warrant for the assertion that angels know every thing spoken to God's people, and can afterwards repeat it.

7. Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

*Saying.* From this passage it would seem that our Lord had, even before leaving Galilee, assured these women that He was to be crucified and rise again. Perhaps they had assigned it a symbolic meaning and forgotten it; and now it is brought fresh by the angelic words to their memories, and they realize its fulfilment. The dulness of memory is a common spiritual disease among believers, and is one among many proofs of our fallen and corrupt condition. Even after men have been renewed by the Holy Ghost, their readiness to forget the promises and precepts of the gospel is continually bringing them into trouble. *Must be delivered.* The Greek words here mean, "It is necessary that He should be delivered," necessary for the fulfilment of prophecies and types, necessary for the redemption of sinners. Strange necessity of the humiliations and sufferings of Christ! How can sinners then pretend to be exempted from suffering! *Sinful men.* Unless reference is here made to the Gentiles, xviii. 32, it is probable that the angel added this epithet *sinful* as his own expression of the character of all who had any agency in the crucifixion of Jesus. See Acts ii. 23. *The third day rise again.* See Notes on verse 3.

8. 'And they remembered his words,

¶ John ii. 22.

See Notes on verse 7. They had heard Christ's words, but made no use of them. Now after many days they call them to mind. We need recollection much more than information. A reasonable remembrance of the words of Jesus will help us to a right understanding of His providence.

9. <sup>h</sup>And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

<sup>h</sup> Matt. xxviii. 8; Mark xvi. 10.

*Told all these things.* Obediently to the express command of the angel, which Matthew and Mark state. Matthew describes (xxviii. 8) the mood in which they returned from the grave: "with fear and great joy"—with fear, for in spite of the consoling words of the angel, the sense of an angel's presence filled them with tremor; with great joy—in spite of the tremor a joy at the thought that the Saviour had risen, thrilled their hearts and frames. *And to all the rest* of the disciples who were with the Apostles. These women were the first preachers of the resurrection of Christ.

10. It was Mary Magdalene, and 'Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women that were with them*, which told these things unto the apostles.

<sup>l</sup> Luke viii. 3.

Respecting the women here named, see Notes on chap. viii. 2, 3. Some think it was from *Joanna* Luke derived his information of those circumstances, which he alone records. She is not mentioned except by Luke here, and in chap. viii. 3, whence we may conjecture she was *known* to him. *Other women*: these were probably the same spoken of in a former place, who ministered to our Lord. Chap. viii. 3.

11. <sup>h</sup>And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

<sup>h</sup> Mark xvi. 11; ver. 25.

*Idle tales*, i. e., words of no value. Mark says, xvi. 11, that they "believed not." They had not forgotten, nor did they truly disbelieve their Lord's predictions. But in their dejection of mind they had lost the realizing power and could not grasp the fact. Besides, if our Lord is to rise again He ought to come in the glory of His kingdom, appearing perhaps in the skies. Mark ix. 10-31. Hence they afterwards ask Jesus, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Acts i. 6. It is quite unexpected, therefore, that His resurrection shall steal upon them, and be first announced to them by women. There must, they think, be some mistake, some hallucination of mind, some imposition practised upon these simple, confiding women, and it will not do to suffer our hopes to be prematurely raised, and then dashed to the ground, leaving us in deeper despondency than before. Their distrust in the report that Jesus had risen is to be attributed to its incredible nature, and not to any doubt on their part of the veracity of these women. How can we wonder at the unbelief of these disciples, when we see, after eighteen centuries of additional proof that Christ has risen from the dead, a general want of faith in that great event! Had the resurrection been a fable invented by those Apostles, would they have made themselves so little the heroes of the history?

12. <sup>h</sup>Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre, and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

<sup>l</sup> John xx. 3, 6.

*Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre.* This was in consequence of the strange tidings of Mary of Magdala, who was the first to bring the

report of the absence of the body from the sepulchre. John xx. 3. We can well understand that Peter would be in a peculiarly sensitive and anxious state of conscience. On the very chance of the report being true he goes to see for himself, running, thus showing his interest and earnestness. We learn from John xx. 3, 4, that John accompanied Peter, but Peter outran him and first reached the sepulchre. *And stooping down; so as to look in the sepulchre. Beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves.* That the clothes and napkin, see John xx. 7, were carefully folded and deposited, indicated that there had been no violence or pillage, in which case every thing would have been in confusion. The whole was as if a sleeper had risen from his couch, arranged the clothes, and departed. *Departed from the sepulchre. Wondering in himself, &c.* It is the opinion of those who are best judges, that these words would be better rendered, "departed to his own house wondering." See John xx. 10. The unbelief of the Apostles is one of the strongest evidences that Jesus rose from the dead. If the disciples and Apostles who were at first so backward to believe in Christ's resurrection, were at last so thoroughly persuaded of its truth that they preached it everywhere, and with every risk and loss, Christ must have risen indeed. The wonder of that great event infinitely surpasses the hopes and understandings of men.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of the histories of the resurrection given by the Evangelists?
2. Explain "the first day of the week."
3. What is said of "very early in the morning?"
4. What is said of "they came unto the sepulchre?"
5. What is said of the spices that had been prepared?
6. By whom was the stone rolled away from the door of the sepulchre?
7. When was Jesus deposited in the sepulchre?
8. Explain the words "the Lord Jesus."
9. By whom had the body of Christ been taken?
10. Explain "much perplexed thereabout."
11. What is said of "two men stood by them?"
12. Explain "in shining garments."
13. Why were the visitors to the sepulchre afraid?
14. What did they do?
15. What did this bowing down express?
16. What did the angels say to them?
17. What is observed concerning this saying of the angels?
18. Explain "remember how he spake unto you."
19. What does the expression "when he was yet in Galilee," show?
20. What would appear from verse 7?
21. Explain "must be delivered."
22. What is said of "they remembered his words?"
23. Explain "told all these things."
24. Who were the first preachers of Christ's resurrection?
25. What is said of the women named in verse 10?
26. What is meant by "idle tales?"
27. What did Peter do?
28. What did he see in the sepulchre?
29. Explain "wondering in himself," &c.

## LESSON CXXXVII.

vs. 13-35.

13. ¶<sup>m</sup> And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* three-score furlongs.

<sup>m</sup> Mark xvi. 12.

*Two of them.* Towards the close of the joyful day which saw the Lord arise, two of the disciples were walking together, oppressed with *sorrow*. *Cleopas* was one of them, ver. 18. He is not the same with Clopas, John xix. 25, but—Cleopatrus. The name of the other disciple is not given. Some have supposed he was Nathanael; others, Simon; others, Luke himself; others, Peter. Perfect certainty in the case is not only impossible, but unnecessary. That it could not have been one of the Apostles is evident from the fact that we are told that when these two disciples returned to Jerusalem, “they found the eleven gathered together.” He was one of the wider circle of disciples who were now together at Jerusalem. *Went that same day.* They had heard before they left some reports of what had taken place in the morning; that the tomb had been found open and empty, and that the woman had seen “a vision of angels,” who said that Jesus was alive; but they seem to have attached no importance to these reports, but, like the other disciples, regarded them as “idle tales.” They were sorrowful for their Lord’s death, and perplexed by the disappearance of His body, while they more than all deplored the frustration of their hopes that He would “have delivered Israel” from the Romans. *To a village called Emmaus, &c.* Luke makes the distance of this village from Jerusalem *about three-score furlongs*, or about seven and a half miles; and Josephus mentions “a village called Emmaus,” at the same distance. Dr. Thomson identifies Emmaus with the present Kuriet el’ Aineb, situated on the road to Jaffa, on the dividing ridge between plain and mountains. Its site is not now certainly known.

14. And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

Their great theme of conversation was the death of Jesus, and the circumstances which attended and followed that event. If the faith of these two disciples was somewhat weakened, yet they were at least filled with the remembrance of Christ’s mysteries; and for persons to love to talk of holy things, is one means to raise and revive their hope.

15. And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together*, and reasoned, “Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

<sup>m</sup> Matt. xviii. 20; ver. 36.

*Communed together* is the same word in the original translated in ver. 14, *talked together*. *Reasoned*—compared opposite views (as the Greek word implies) in regard to the late events. *Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.* As He appears to have been going the same way, He must have overtaken them, and proceeded in company with them. The way to have Christ’s presence and company with us, is to be conversing of Christ and the things of Christ. Conference on spiritual subjects is a most important means of grace. See Mal. iii. 16, 17; Heb. x. 24; 1 Thess. v. 11; Matt. xii. 34. We

see here the truth of the promise—"Where"—let it be where it will, in the temple, the private dwelling, the field, the road—"where two or three"—if there are no more, for as He is not confined to place, so neither to number—"are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." Let worldly minds pursue the things of the world, but let Christians abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness, and mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and then He will always be found of them.

16. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

• John xx. 14 and xxi. 4.

*Their eyes were holden, &c.* Mark says, xvi. 12, that Jesus appeared to them "in another form." By the power which He had of appearing at will under various forms to human senses, our Lord at first concealed Himself from their knowledge, but finally resumed His well-known appearance to their vision. From the statements of the two Evangelists, it becomes a nice question, whether the change was in the *form* of Jesus, or in the *eyes* of the disciples. If their eyes were influenced, of course, optically speaking, Jesus would appear *in another form*, or the change of *form* may have *holden* their eyes. See 2 Kings vi. 17-20. We are dependent upon God for the use and exercise of our faculties and members. He has His secret and wise designs when He sometimes hides Himself from those whom He loves most. We may have Jesus Christ with us, and not know Him. We may walk along with Him in His ways, and yet not see clearly into His conduct.

17. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

What Jesus already knew He wished to hear from their own mouth, and began, therefore, with a question of the kind with which shortly before He had introduced His revelation of Himself to Mary. In interrupting their conversation He wished to induce them to grant Him a participation in their sadness. When we are conversing together, if the Lord were to draw near and inquire about the topics of our conversation, should we be always willing to reply? Matt. xii. 34. Worldly people *never* take pleasure in conversing about their souls, or Christ, or heaven. They delight in talking of the trifling vanities of time. When Christians converse upon spiritual subjects, they receive a blessing from the Lord. In times of affliction, especially, they should avoid the society of the ungodly. Ps. xxxix. 1.

18. And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

• John xix. 25.

*Cleopas.* See Notes on ver. 13. *Art thou only a stranger, &c.* The Greek words so rendered are somewhat peculiar. They may be so translated as to mean, "There surely cannot be another, whether stranger or resident, who has not heard of these events." The whole verse is an important evidence of the publicity and notoriety of our Lord Jesus Christ's crucifixion. How many Christians are such strangers in the Church that Christ and His mysteries are almost unknown to them, after so many ages of predictions, miracles, and instructions!

19. And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, "which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

q Matt. xxi. 11; Luke vii. 16; John iii. 2, and iv. 19, and vi. 14; Acts ii. 22.

r Acts vii. 22.

20. "And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

s Luke xxiii. 1; Acts xiii. 27, 28.

*What things?* He who asks a question does not affirm that He does not know the answer. Our Lord here, as well as at a later part of His history, draws out from the disciples their opinions, feelings, and wishes. *Concerning Jesus of Nazareth.* The official name CHRIST they do not now take upon their lips, but respecting the name Jesus of Nazareth, they presuppose that it is sufficiently familiar to every one, in and out of Jerusalem. *Which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.* Grieved though the disciples were that they had lost their Lord, yet they had not renounced Him. They looked upon Him still, not as a deceiver, but a prophet mighty in deed and word. *Before God and all the people* must mean, "By the testimony both of God and the Jewish nation." See Acts ii. 22; John xii. 17. This was a brief confession of unbroken faith in the genuine character of the Crucified One. The negligence of these disciples was the principal occasion of their sadness. They had not been to see the sepulchre, by which they would have been convinced that the Lord was risen. Christians are often unhappy only because they are negligent. *And how the chief priests, &c.* The disciples were not afraid to declare that in respect to Jesus, an irreconcilable difference of opinion existed between them and the chiefs of the people.

21. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.

t Luke i. 68 and ii. 38; Acts i. 6.

*Trusted that it had been he, &c.* As if Cleopas, speaking also for his companion, had said, "We were full of hope, that this had been the Messiah so long expected by us, but this being the third day since He died, we fear we shall find ourselves mistaken." By the word *redeemed* is not meant merely spiritual deliverance, or redemption from all the moral evils, which mar the happiness of men, and turn away the soul from the true worship of God, but also deliverance from the Roman yoke. *The third day.* The Jewish idea about the third day may be traced in the saying of Cleopas, as well as a reference to our Lord's predictions. See Gen. xxii. 4; Hos. vi. 2; Gen. xliii. 18; Jos. ii. 16; Exod. xix. 16; Jonah i. 17; Ezra viii. 15. Alas! what is the spirit of man without the Spirit of God! It hopes for every thing when there is the least foundation imaginable; and it despairs of every thing in the time of the greatest hope. True faith waits for God's proper time, without any concern or anxiety. Christian hope is such only by patience and perseverance.

22. Yea, and "certain women also of our company, made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

u Matt. xxviii. 8; Mark xvi. 10; verses 9, 10; John xx. 18.

23. And when they found not his body, they came, saying,

that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found *it* even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

▼ Verse 12.

*Yea, and certain women*, literally and better, *but moreover certain women*. Thus they begin, in the same moment when they were complaining over lost hope, yet still to speak of that which that very day had somewhat fanned up again the already almost extinguished spark, in order finally to end with the acknowledgment of utter uncertainty and discouragement. *Made us astonished*. Something strange has taken place, but not such as to answer our expectations. These women found not His body, indeed, and a vision of angels said, "He is risen," and some of our men went to the sepulchre and found no body. It will be observed how the Emmaus disciples in an artless manner confirm the narrative of the visit to the grave, and the experience of the Galilean women. This incredulity of the disciples is mysterious; it makes a part of the economy of the Divine dispensations, and is instrumental in promoting the faith of all people. God frequently permits faults in others for our instruction, and the falls of the most perfect are useful in supporting the most weak. *Certain of them, &c.* Luke has only told us of Peter having gone to the grave. From John we learn that John accompanied him. *Even so as the women had said*, namely, that the body of Jesus was no longer to be found in the tomb. *But him they saw not*. This they regarded as a sufficient excuse for their believing themselves obliged to bid farewell to all hope. The report of Peter and John that they had obtained no sight of Him, was deemed of sufficient weight to render nugatory the assertion of the women that they had seen their Lord.

25. Then he said unto them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

✦ Mark vii. 18 and viii. 17, 18; Heb. v. 11, 12.

26. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

▼ Verse 46; Acts xvii. 3; 1 Pet. i. 11.

*Fools*. The Greek word so rendered is not the same word which is so translated in the Sermon on the Mount. Here it only means, "wanting in thought, understanding, and consideration," and does not imply any contempt. *And slow of heart to believe, &c.* Not hard of heart, but *slow*, i. e., sluggishly disposed. The disciples believed *many* things which the prophets had spoken, but they did not believe *all*. They believed the predictions of Messiah's glory, but not of Messiah's sufferings. *Ought not Christ to have suffered, &c.* "Do you not find that the person described by the prophets in the Old Testament to be the Messiah, was to pass to His glory through blood? Why, then, is your hope so feeble in the person who suffered three days ago, when his death so well agrees with the predictions of the prophets, who foretold that the Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself, and be smitten for the iniquities of his people?" *And to enter into his glory*—by ascension. Sometimes the great wisdom and grace of God make the diffidence of His people an occasion of farther clearing up of the choicest truths to them. Let it be noted, 1. That with respect to God's purpose, and with relation to man's guilt, the death of Christ was necessary and indispensable. 2. That His resurrection and exaltation were as necessary as His suffering. 3. That

there was a meritorious connection between Christ's sufferings and His glory; His exaltation was merited by His suffering. *He was to drink of the brook in the way, and then He was to lift up His head.* Christians must expect suffering in their way to heaven. This was the way of the Head, and it must be that of the members.

27. 'And beginning 'at Moses, and 'all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

<sup>a</sup> Verse 46.

<sup>b</sup> Gen. iii. 15, and xxii. 18, and xxvi. 4, and xlix. 10; Num. xxi. 9; Deut. xviii. 15.

<sup>c</sup> Ps. xvi. 10, and xxii., and cxxxii. 11; Is. vii. 14, and ix. 6, and xl. 10, 11, and l. 6, and liii.; Jer. xxxiii. 5 and xxxiii. 14, 15; Ezek. xxxiv. 23 and xxxvii. 26; Dan. ix. 24; Mich. vii. 20; Mal. iii. 1 and iv. 2; See John i. 45.

This verse gives testimony to the Divine authority and Christian interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures. The denial of reference to Christ's death and glory in the Old Testament is a denial of Christ's own teaching. How delightful it must have been to hear the Lord explain in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself! But has He not promised His Holy Spirit to enlighten us when we search His holy Word? There are things concerning Himself in *all* the Scriptures. In the beginning of the Bible we find Him revealed as the Seed of the woman, and in the last chapter of the Old Testament we behold Him as the Sun of Righteousness, and in every intervening page we may discover Him; as a suffering Lamb, or as a conquering Lion, as a tender shoot, or a strong branch, as a servant, or a king, as a child, or the Ancient of Days, now made low as a worm, and now declared to be the mighty God, the great Creator, the glorious Jehovah.

28. And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and 'he made as though he would have gone further

<sup>c</sup> Gen. xxxii. 26 and xiii. 7; Mark vi. 48.

*He made as though he would have gone further, literally, he was making as though.* There was no dissimulation here. He simply passed on as though He was intending to go farther. This He would have done if they had not detained Him with loving violence. In the nature of the thing it is proper and natural by an offer to give an occasion to another to do good actions, and in case it succeeds not, then to do what was intended not. And so the offer was conditional.

29. But 'they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

<sup>d</sup> Gen. xix. 3; Acts xvi. 15.

Entreating with the utmost urgency, they invited Him in, and pointed Him to the sun hurrying to its setting, in the living feeling that their spiritual light also would set if He should leave their company. They wished to remind Him that He could not possibly continue His journey in the night, comp. Gen. xix. 2, 3; Judges xix. 9; and desired that He should therefore turn in with them, since probably one of them possessed a dwelling at Emmaus, where a simple supper was awaiting them. The love of truth, and the influence of charitable instructions, cause charity to grow and increase in the heart. We must use holy violence toward Christ in prayer, that our imperfections may not constrain Him to forsake us. Gen. xxxii. 26. We have great reason to redouble our importunities, when we see the Sun of Right-

ousness begin to decline, and the light of faith to grow dim in ourselves, in our brethren, or in the Church, and more especially when the day of life is likewise far spent.

30. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, \*he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

• Matt. xiv. 19.

The Lord, on the ground of a tacitly acknowledged superiority, acted as master of the house at the table of His host. *Blessed it.* The words, *to bless*, mean only to give thanks, sometimes to pray for a blessing, that is, to pray for the Divine favor and friendship, to pray that what we do may meet God's approbation. In seeking a blessing on our food it means, to pray that it may be made nourishing to our bodies, that we may have proper gratitude to God, the Giver, for providing for our wants, and that we may remember the Creator, while we partake the bounties of His providence. Our Saviour *always* sought a blessing on His food. From *His* observing this practice, we may be sure that it is wise, and useful, and necessary. Sin has brought a curse upon all our enjoyments, and the blessing of God alone can take it off.

“How sweet our daily comforts prove,  
Whon they are season'd with His love!”

But how true—

“’Tis all in vain till God has bless'd.”

“Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Can he also abuse the bounties of Providence, who has implored the Divine benediction upon the use of them? Can he indulge in excess? Will he not add to his faith, temperance? It is lamentable, therefore, that such a duty should ever be omitted—or performed with haste or irreverence—as if the performer was ashamed of the performance. The custom of blessing the food among the Jews was universal. The form of prayer which they used in the time of Christ has been preserved by their writers, the Talmudists. It is this: “Blessed be thou, O Lord, our God, the King of the world, who hast produced this food and this drink, from the earth and the vine.” *And brake.* The loaves of bread among the Jews were made *thin* and *brittle*, and were therefore broken and not cut.

31. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

*Their eyes were opened.* Whether He had any thing peculiar in the manner of breaking the bread and uttering the blessing, that reminded them of their association with the Master in earlier days, or whether they now discovered in His opened hands the marks of the wounds, or whether He Himself referred them back to a word uttered before His death—enough: their eyes were now opened. Here we have the counterpart of what is affirmed, ver. 16. *And they knew him.* This recognition stands here as the result of the opening of their eyes. There He stood, this very Messiah, of whom all Scripture was the harbinger, the sufferer, the heir of glory, the judge of the earth. Before this moment He could not reveal Himself without disturbing their minds so as to unfit their understanding of the Scripture. And now He *could* reveal Himself, to show that His exposition was authoritative and Divine, *being His own.* *He vanished out of their sight.* There was a sudden vanishing of the Lord, a becoming invisible in an extraordinary way. This and other expressions concerning our Lord's risen body show plainly that it was a body in some wonderful way different from the common body of man. It was a real material body, and true flesh and blood. But it was a

body capable of moving, appearing, and disappearing after a manner that we cannot explain. We may fairly suppose that it was a pattern of what our own bodies will be after they are raised again. They will be true bodies, material and real, but bodies endowed with capacities of which now we know nothing. What must the mourners have felt when they discovered that the wonderful stranger was their own beloved Saviour! In the next world God can open our eyes, and enable us to know saints we have never seen, and to recognize friends we have long lost.

32. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?

They felt the power of His words. Christ not only put light into their heads, but heat also into their hearts, which burned all the while He communed with them. Oh, what an efficacious power is there in the words of Jesus, when set home upon the hearts of men by His Spirit! See Pa. xxxix. 8; Jer. xx. 9. We do not always perceive immediately the good effects produced in us by the word of God and by sermons, but we find them afterward. Jesus now converses with us by the way, and He opens to us the Scriptures. This He does in three ways: 1. By His dispensations. As the Word explains Providence, so Providence illustrates the Word. How many passages are there in the Bible, the beauty of which we should never have seen, the sweetness of which we should never have tasted, the force of which we should never have felt, had it not been for certain events, and those chiefly of an afflictive kind! 2. By the labors of His servants. He replenishes His ministers, that they may dispense to others; He gives them the tongue of the learned, that they should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. It was in the temple David wished to inquire. It was when he went into the sanctuary of God that he seized a clew which enabled him to unravel a mystery which had so confounded and distressed him before. 3. By the agency of His Holy Spirit. "He shall lead you into all truth." Means do not render His influence needless, revelation itself does not. David had the Word of God, but he kneeled and prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." The dial tells us the time, but the sun must shine upon it. The compass enables the mariner to steer, but not if it be placed in the dark. "In thy light we shall see light."

33. And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.

f John xx. 19, 26.

34. Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

g 1 Cor. xv. 5.

35. And they told what things *were done* in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

These two disciples could not remain at home after the joyful event that had happened. They longed to make their brethren, whom they had left weeping, partakers of their happiness. Convinced of the truth of Christ's resurrection, notwithstanding their fatigue, and the darkness of the night, and the roughness of the road, they started to Jerusalem, a distance of seven

or eight miles, leaving all their private affairs, in order to comfort their brethren with the glad tidings of a Saviour risen, thus teaching us that all secular affairs, all private and particular business, must give place to the glory of God, and the comfort and salvation of souls. *Found the eleven gathered together.* If Thomas was there, he must have gone out immediately after the two disciples came in. Only by supposing this, can we reconcile this account with that which John gives, of Christ's appearing when Thomas was not present. Probably Thomas was absent, hence only ten were present. As Paul calls the company of the Apostles *the twelve*, 1 Cor. xv. 5, though Judas, the twelfth person, was dead, so Luke here calls them *the eleven*, though Thomas, the eleventh person, was absent, as appears from John xx. 24. *Saying to the two disciples who had just returned from Emmaus. The Lord is risen indeed, in very deed, really, truly.* This was not the strong asseveration of all, for we learn from Mark xvi. 13, that the report of Cleopas and his fellow-disciple did not obtain credence with all. There were doubtless different degrees of faith in the declaration of Peter, according to the buoyant temperament, and naturally hopeful turn of the disciples, or the opposite tendency to distrust and despondency. *Told what things were done in the way, narrated at length all that Jesus said and did after He joined Himself to their company by the way. Was known of them in breaking of bread, i. e., as they were reclining at supper.*

How deeply interesting must that evening's conversation have been! About what do saints above converse? Is it not about their Lord, and how they first learned to know Him, and how He manifested Himself to them at various seasons of their pilgrimage? The dealings of the Lord with His people are still marked with different circumstances, but the end in every case will be the same. Though for a season they may lament, saying, "I sought him, but I found him not," and inquire mournfully, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" at length they will joyfully declare, "I found him whom my soul loveth." Cant. iii. 2-4.

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Who were the two disciples referred to?
2. What is said of Cleopas?
3. What is said of Emmaus?
4. What was the theme of the conversation of these two disciples?
5. Explain "communed together and reasoned."
6. Explain "Jesus himself drew near," &c.
7. What do we learn from this coming of Christ?
8. Explain "their eyes were holden," &c.
9. What did Jesus say to these disciples?
10. Why did He say this?
11. What did one of the disciples answer?
12. Explain this answer.
13. What is said of "what things?"
14. Explain "concerning Jesus of Nazareth."
15. What is said of "which was a prophet," &c.?
16. Explain "we trusted that it had been he," &c.
17. What is meant by the word "redeemed?"
18. What is said about "the third day?"
19. Explain "yea, and certain women," &c.
20. Explain "and certain of them," &c.
21. What is said of the word "fools?"
22. What is meant by "slow of heart to believe," &c.?
23. Explain "Ought not Christ to have suffered," &c.
24. What is said of verse 27?

25. Explain "he made as though he would have gone further."
26. Explain "they constrained him," &c.
27. What is said of "he blessed it?"
28. What do we learn from Christ's example in blessing His food?
29. Explain "their eyes were opened."
30. Explain "he vanished out of their sight."
31. What did the disciples say when Jesus thus vanished?
32. How does Jesus now converse with us by the way?
33. What did the two disciples do?
34. Explain "found the eleven together."
35. Explain "The Lord is risen indeed."
36. What is said in verse 35?

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LESSON CXXXVIII.

vs. 36-47.

36. ¶ And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

<sup>h</sup> Mark xvi. 14; John xx. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 6.

*As they thus spake*, literally, *thus speaking these things*, i. e., while Cleopas and his companions were rehearsing these events. *Jesus himself stood in the midst of them*. This, as appears from John xx. 19, "when the doors were shut . . . for fear of the Jews." Whether our Lord passed through the doors miraculously, without opening them, or whether He opened them miraculously, as the angel did when he brought Peter out of prison, we cannot tell. Acts xii. 10. In either case, there was a miracle. In any case, the appearance was sudden and instantaneous. *And saith unto them*. It is His voice—can they doubt their own hearing? *Peace be unto you*. Though this was the wonted salutation of peace, it had from those lips and in this moment an infinitely higher significance, which involuntarily reminded the disciples of the farewell benediction. John xiv. 27. The *fact* of Christ's resurrection was to be the basis of their peace. Jesus, as the good Shepherd, seeks His sheep in all places, to comfort them, to strengthen their faith, and to show them, by His visible presence, that He knows the means to render Himself present to them in their wants, and whenever they are assembled together in His name, and according to His word.

37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen 'a spirit.

<sup>i</sup> Mark vi. 49.

*Terrified and affrighted*. Even the manner of Christ's entrance must have contributed to this, and however much they had begun to be prepared by all the events of the day for this meeting, yet this surprise must have come upon them the more strongly as the message of the angels had directed them to Galilee, and they, therefore, could by no means reckon on an appearance of the Master in the midst of them this very evening, at Jerusalem. In their hearts now prevails a mixture of light and darkness. *And supposed that they had seen a spirit*. Having in some degree discredited most of the previous reports, so now they distrusted the evidence of their own sight, and supposed, to their alarm, that what they saw was a *ghost* or *spectra*. Terror at the

appearance of any supernatural being, or any inhabitant of another world, seems an instinct of human nature, and is a strong indirect proof of man's utter inability to meet God in peace without a Mediator.

38. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

Jesus hastened to dispel their illusion. *Why are ye troubled?* Here is the beginning of the rebuke of their unbelief. The question itself implies the groundlessness of their alarm and trepidation. *Why do thoughts arise*—spring up and grow *in your hearts*. Here, as elsewhere, our Lord shows His knowledge of the inward man. The mind of man is strangely fruitful in such thoughts as are contrary to faith. In all extraordinary visits from God, it is good to be somewhat fearful and diffident, but not to such a degree as to be troubled, and to suffer all sorts of thoughts to rise in our hearts.

39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

J John xx. 20, 27.

In order to convince them not only of the reality, but also of the identity of His appearance, as well as of His triumph over death, Jesus would have them feel His hands and feet; nay, Himself, His body, and, moreover, especially the exposed places which bore the traces of the wounds of the cross. There was a direct appeal to two senses, touch and sight. How touching it must have been to see the Lord showing His own wounded hands and feet to His disciples, and inviting them to touch His sacred person! God suffered these prints of love to remain after the wounds were forever healed. John alludes to the privileges he had enjoyed. 1 John i. 1. The Apostles enjoyed some privileges which we have never known. But the gracious Saviour, who condescended to eat with His disciples after He rose from the dead, has promised to admit *all* His people to intimate communion with Himself. Not one being who loved Him on *earth* will be refused admittance to His presence *in glory*. There they shall see Him as He is. There is a spiritual exhibition of Himself, in which Jesus says, "Behold my hands and my feet." They are to be seen: 1. In the Scripture of Truth, in its types, prophecies, history, doctrine. 2. In the ministry of the gospel, which is called "the preaching of the cross." 3. In the teachings of the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us, so that we see the Son, and believe on Him; and, 4. In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, where, by emblems and memorials the most simple and significant, before our eyes, Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us. And what should the sight remind us of? Beholding His hands and feet, we should think of the evil of sin, that required His suffering and death to put it away—and of the justice of God, that spared not His own Son when He became a surety for us—and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His kindness towards us.

*A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.* Our Lord here speaks of "a spirit," and the qualities of "a spirit," in such a manner that it is impossible to deny the existence of incorporeal beings. To believe every idle story about ghosts and apparitions is foolish and unreasonable. But we must take care that we do not go into the other extreme, and deny the existence of spirits altogether. Our Lord's words about them are clear and unmistakable. It is an interesting and by no means unprofitable question with what body our Lord came forth from the tomb, and appeared during the forty days He passed on earth, after the resurrection, whether with the glorified one with

which He ascended to heaven, or with the body unchanged from what it was previous to His death, the change to its glorified condition taking place at His ascension from Mount Olivet. We incline to the belief that the latter of these suppositions is the true one. But whilst we thus express a conviction that our Lord's body had not yet been changed to its full glorified condition, we will not deny that His general appearance must have been much altered from what it was before His passion. He was no longer the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. His work of toil and suffering had ended. His mien was now that of a king and conqueror. There was doubtless in His whole appearance and movements a calm dignity and majesty which awed His disciples, repressed undue familiarity, and checked vain curiosity, while, at the same time, His aspect of tenderness and love filled their hearts with peace, joy, and praise. Inasmuch, moreover, as our Lord's body, in its risen nature, possessed the power of invisibility at will, also a superiority to the control of gravitation, to the need of food, clothing, and other bodily necessities, as well as the power of resuming traces, constituent parts, or substantive properties of its former self, such as *wounds, limbs, flesh and bones*, must it not have been, that His body, though the same in substance, was endowed with some new properties and powers? A body raised from the dead is a real body, which is solid, and capable of being touched. We must settle and confirm ourselves in the belief of the resurrection of our bodies by the resurrection of that of our Head. It has been alleged by some, in view of John xx. 27, that the resurrection body of our Lord had not blood, which is the animal life. But may not the wound in Christ's side have been a scar, which Thomas could readily feel with his hand? It is puerile to object that a wound could not have healed up so as to be cicatrized in so short a time. The resurrection of Christ's body from the embrace of death includes, as the greater the less, the healing of the wounds made by the nails and the spear.

40. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them *his hands* and *his feet*.

Christ retains the scars of His wounds, 1. To encourage us to suffer for Him, by showing us how much He loves sufferings. 2. For the comfort and consolation of His people. 3. For the confusion of the lost. 4. To afford us a sanctuary or refuge in our temptations and troubles. 5. To show us fountains of grace continually open to us in our wants. As Jesus showed His wounds here to His disciples, to enforce His instructions to them, so He showed them to His Father to enforce His intercessions with Him. He appears in heaven as a *lamb that had been slain*, Rev. v. 6. His *blood speaks*, Heb. xii. 24; Zech. xiii. 6, 7.

41. And while they yet believed not <sup>for joy</sup>, and wondered, he said unto them, <sup>H</sup>Have ye here any meat?

<sup>†</sup> Gen. xlv. 26.

<sup>†</sup> John xxi. 5.

*Believed not for joy.* First they believed not from the strangeness of the matter, next they believed not because the fact in their eyes was too terrible for them to be willing to believe, and now they believe not, from joy. Perhaps Jacob was in a similar frame of mind, Gen. xlv. 26. *Have ye any meat?* The Greek word so rendered means, literally, "any thing eatable, any food." Now that matters have come so far, our Lord rests not until He has completely accomplished His work on His disciples. The slowness and backwardness of the disciples show that they did not believe lightly and rashly. Every thing here seems to oppose the belief of the resurrection—amazement, fear, a prepossessed imagination, joy, and admiration; the evidence alone of

the proofs here given bears down all before it, and establishes the belief of this truth.

42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.

43. "And he took *it*, and did eat before them.

= Acts x. 41.

*Broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.* Some think, a kind of cake, or bread, in use among them. Eating might consist with, though it were not needful to, that kind of life to which Christ was risen. It is evident from the appeal of our Lord to the *senses* of the Apostles, that no greater certainty can in this world be had of any thing than the testimony of our eyes, ears, and other senses, and that it is unreasonable in the highest degree to require men to believe in direct opposition to them. The honeycomb was a frequent food with the ancients, nearly akin to that of John the Baptist. The honey of bees is frequently found in Palestine, in clefts of the rock, and in hollow trees. The viands here named constituted, perhaps, the remains of the already ended supper of the disciples. Peter lays great stress on the fact that the disciples had eaten with Jesus. Acts x. 41.

44. And he said unto them, "These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, *in* which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.

= Matt. xvi. 21, and xvii. 22, and xx. 18; Mark viii. 31; Luke ix. 22 and xviii. 31; ver. 6.

*And he said unto them, These are the words, &c.* Our Lord holds here, before He parts from His disciples, a grand retrospective review of His now almost accomplished earthly career. He refers them to the words He had so often spoken to them, saying that the predictions about Him must be accomplished. *All things* must be fulfilled, whether concerning His sufferings, or His kingdom—the *hardest*, and the *heaviest*, even the *vinegar*—He could not die till He had that, because He could not till then say, *It is finished. Must be fulfilled.* God had *joined together* the things in the prediction, and they could not be *put asunder* in the event. The three chief portions of the Old Testament were named by Christ, to indicate that He pointed to the Scripture in its unity. *The law of Moses*, that is, the Pentateuch, or the *five* books written by Moses; the *prophets*, embracing not only the books which are purely prophetic, but those historical books that were written by prophetic men; the *Psalms*, embracing the other writings, which they called the *Hagiographa*. In these various ways did God, of old, reveal His will, but all proceeded from one and the self-same Spirit, who, by them, gave notice of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah, *for to Him bare all the prophets witness.* Let us be careful to seek Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, as well as in the New. He is in all parts thereof, and in all He frames the heart of a Christian. The Prophets exercise our faith, the Psalms nourish our hopes, and the Law tries and makes known our love.

45. Then °opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures,

Acts xvi. 14.

It is one thing to open the Scriptures themselves, and another to open the disciples' understandings to perceive them. Christ did the latter, imparting to them a direct, Divine illumination, by which they obtained a clear insight

of the spirituality of the Messianic kingdom, as revealed in the Old Testament; probably, also, by giving them now the first-fruits of the Spirit of prophecy, which fell more plentifully on them at the day of Pentecost. The understanding of the true sense of the Scriptures comes only from Jesus Christ. It is the fruit of humility, prayer, true spiritual poverty, and of fidelity in bringing the mind into subjection to the yoke of faith.

46. And said unto them, <sup>r</sup>Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day :

<sup>p</sup> Ver. 26; Ps. xxii.; Is. l. 6 and liii. 2, &c.; Acts xvii. 3.

47. And that repentance and <sup>r</sup>remission of sins should be preached in his name <sup>r</sup>among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

<sup>q</sup> Dan. ix. 24; Acts xiii. 38, 46; 1 John ii. 12.

<sup>r</sup> Gen. xii. 3; Ps. xxii. 27; Is. xlix. 6, 22; Jer. xxxi. 34; Hos. ii. 23; Micah iv. 2; Mal. i. 11.

*Thus*, refers to the death and resurrection of Christ. *It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.* This was done to fulfil the prophecies concerning Himself. Is. liii. 1-8; Ps. ii. 2; lxix. 21; Is. l. 5-7; lii. 14; Dan. ix. 26; Is. liii. 4-6, 10; Ps. xvi. 10, 11; Is. lii. 13; liii. 8, 10, 12; Matt. xii. 40. It behooved Him "to suffer and rise from the dead." 1. In the execution of His *Prophetic office*, as a Teacher come from God, that He might confirm and show the certain truth and the deep importance of His doctrine, and manifest Himself to be the "faithful and true witness." 2. In the execution of His *Sacerdotal office*, as the High Priest of our profession. He suffered, to learn to sympathize with us in our sufferings, Heb. v. 2; iv. 15, 16; ii. 17, 18; to atone for our sins by offering Himself a sacrifice, Heb. v. 1; comp. vi. 20; ii. 17; vii. 27, ix. 11, 12, 24, 27, 28; x. 5-14; Is. liii. 5, 6, 10; 2 Cor. v. 21; Rom. iii. 24; iv. 25. He rose, that He might be able to succor us in our temptations; that He might give us full proof that the sacrifice He had offered for our sins was accepted, and lay a foundation for our confidence in Him, that He might ascend, and "appear in the presence of God" as our Advocate and Intercessor. John xvi. 7; Heb. i. 3; iv. 14; ix. 12; Acts ii. 32, 33. 8. Of His *Regal office*, as the King and Governor of His people. Rom. xiv. 9; Phil. ii. 5-9; John x. 10-18; Acts xx. 28; 1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 25; x. 12, 18; John x. 27, 28. 4. Christ suffered and rose as our *Pattern and Forerunner*. Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12; 1 Pet. ii. 21; iii. 14-18; iv. 12-16; 1 Cor. xv. 20; John xiv. 1-3; Rom. vi. 8, 4; Col. ii. 13; iii. 1; Eph. ii. 1.

*That repentance and remission of sins should be preached.* Repentance which the disciples preached during Christ's life, Mark vi. 12, was preached by them in all their sermons after His death, resurrection, and ascension. Acts ii. 38; iii. 19; xvii. 30. The original word rendered *repentance* means *after-consideration or reflection*. Repentance begins in looking back, or reflecting, with attention and care upon our past conduct, as our actions, sins of omission and commission, our words, tempers, desires, motives, ends, thoughts; comparing them with the will of God as signified in His Word in general, and His law in particular; and considering the obligation laid on us to obey Him from duty, gratitude, and interest. A *change of mind*, arising from the former. This change takes place in the *understanding*, the eyes of which are opened to see ourselves as we are, Tit. iii. 2; in the *conscience*, Acts ii. 37; xvi. 30; Matt. xi. 28; Heb. ix. 14; in the *affections*, including shame and sorrow for past sin, hatred to and fear of sin, and desire for, and delight in, holiness, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11; in the *will*, as to its choice, leading us to prefer holiness to sin, God to the world, the soul to the body; as to its intention, inducing us now to propose God's glory as our end in every thing; as to its

determination, being resolved and fixed for God and eternal life; in the *life*, Luke iii. 8. *Remission of sins* was preached continually to all the penitent by Christ, Luke vii. 47, 48; xv.; xviii. 13, 14; xix. 9; and by the Apostles, Acts ii. 38; iii. 19; v. 31; x. 43; xiii. 38. It implies and is followed by acquittance from guilt, condemnation, and wrath, acceptance with God, His favor, adoption into His family, regeneration, sanctification, a title to, and fitness for, His kingdom. See 1 John i. 9; Prov. xxviii. 13; Is. i. 16-18. *His name*. In Christ's name as a *prophet*, Deut. xviii. 15; Acts iii. 22—Ezek. xviii. 21, 31, 32; Rom. i. 16; Acts x. 43; xiii. 38; Rom. iii. 24, 25. *On His authority*, and in imitation of His example—in His name as a *king*, John viii. 21—in His name as a *suffering man*, Is. liii. 5, 6; John xii. 32—in His name as the *incarnate God*, and as the *final judge*, Acts xvii. 31; 2 Thess. i. 7-10. *Among all nations*—all have sinned, need repentance, Rom. iii. 23; Acts xvii. 30; and all being guilty, need remission of sins. See 2 Cor. v. 15. *Beginning at Jerusalem*. The gospel was to be *begun* to be preached at Jerusalem, 1. Because Christ was first promised to the Jews, and therefore must first be offered to them. Rom. ix. 4, 5. 2. The foundation of the gospel must be laid at that place where it was first attacked. 3. Their day of grace was likely to be the shortest. 4. It was foretold that the gospel should go forth from thence. Is. ii. 3, 4; Mic. iv. 2; Ps. cx. 2; Is. xxviii. 16; xl. 5-9. The Apostles were to begin at Jerusalem, to furnish a striking example of the riches and freeness of the grace of Christ, in the offer of it to the vilest of sinners. "Let them that struck the rock drink first of its refreshing streams, and let them that drew my blood be first welcome to its healing virtue." If the murderers of Christ were not excepted from the offers of mercy, who need despair?

#### QUESTIONS.

1. Explain "As they thus spake."
2. What is said of "Jesus himself stood in their midst?"
3. What is said of "Peace be unto you?"
4. What effect had Christ's appearance on the disciples?
5. What did they suppose they had seen?
6. What did He say to them?
7. Explain "why are ye troubled?" &c.
8. What did Christ do to convince them of the reality and identity of His appearance?
9. What is said of a spiritual exhibition of Himself which Jesus makes?
10. What is said of "a spirit hath not flesh," &c.?
11. What is said about our Lord's body?
12. What is said about the resurrection of our bodies?
13. Why does Christ retain the scars of His wounds?
14. Explain "believed not for joy."
15. Explain "have ye any meat."
16. What is said of "a piece of a broiled fish," &c.?
17. What is said of "And he said unto them," &c.?
18. What are we to understand by "all things?"
19. Explain "must be fulfilled."
20. What is meant by "the law of Moses?"
21. What, by "the prophets?"
22. What, by "the Psalms?"
23. Explain "opened he their understanding," &c.
24. Explain "it behooved Christ to suffer," &c.
25. What does the original word rendered "repentance" mean?
26. What is repentance?
27. Explain "remission of sins."
28. What are we to understand by "in his name?"
29. Explain "among all nations."

LESSON CXXXIX.

vs. 48-53.

48. And 'ye are witnesses of these things.

• John xv. 27; Acts i. 8, 22, ii. 32 and iii. 15.

To be "witnesses chosen before of God" of the doings and sayings of Jesus was the very essence and object of the Apostolic office. Acts x. 41; i. 8, 22; xxvi. 16. Peter, at a later date, said: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, . . . but were *eye-witnesses*." To the same effect is the testimony of John, near the close of the first century. 1 John i. 1.

49. ¶ And, behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

• Is. xlii. 3; Joel ii. 28; John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7; Acts i. 4 and ii. 1, &c.

*And, behold.* A new point is here presented parallel with Acts i. 4, 5; John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26. *I send.* Christ represents Himself as acting conjointly with the Father in sending the Spirit. *The promise of my Father.* The Holy Spirit is here referred to, whom Christ had repeatedly before His death promised. He calls the Spirit *the promise of the Father*, not because the Spirit was promised to Him, nor merely inasmuch as God has promised the bestowment of the gifts of the Spirit by prophetic oracles, but with retrospective reference to utterances like John xiv. 16, &c., and to the symbolical act, John xx. 22. *Upon you.* The language implies effusion. *Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem.* This must have been uttered after the return to Jerusalem from the visit to Galilee. Matt. xxviii. 16-20; John xxi. 1-24. This command was repeated just before His ascension. Acts i. 4. *Ye be endued, clothed with power as with a garment; from on high, from heaven, from the abode of the Father, who had promised through His Son the gift of the Spirit.* Comfortable promise this, for who could believe that a God died and rose again, who could hope for the remission of his sins, who could love repentance and the cross, without the Holy Spirit! Retirement and repose were by Christ judged necessary for the Apostles and disciples, in order to their receiving the Holy Ghost, who is the strength of the weak; and can we judge otherwise of ourselves?

50. ¶ And he led them out 'as far as to Bethany: and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

• Acts i. 12.

*As far as to Bethany.* Either during or after this conversation, Jesus led them out—over the very ground He had traversed with them six weeks before, when He entered the city to suffer, as far as Bethany, or rather over the brow of the Mount of Olives, where it descends to Bethany, which village was about two miles from Jerusalem. When Jesus thus went forth at their head, as leader and chief, toward the village which was so much endeared to Him, it was for the *last* time, and all His troubles were over. The Psalms record His thanksgivings to His Father. Ps. xxx. 4, 5. *He lifted up his hands, and blessed them.* This circumstance is full of meaning. The blessing was significant. It showed the spirit in which our Lord parted from His

Church on earth, and was an earnest of what He would do for them in heaven. It typifies His full assumption of His priestly office, and gives assurance of what He will yet do when He comes again.

51. <sup>2</sup>And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 11; Mark xvi. 19; John xx. 17; Acts i. 9; Eph. iv. 8.

There are other accounts of the ascension of Jesus in Mark xvi. 19, 20; Acts i. 9-12.

*He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.* As He blessed them He began to ascend. And as He ascended, the cloud gathering beneath His feet at once bore Him upward, and closed Him from their sight. The Apostles beheld Him as He ascended, and continued to watch till they could see Him no more. Two angels, clothed in white apparel, remained below to comfort them. They did this with the promise: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so *come* in like manner as ye have seen him *go* into heaven." See Zech. xiv. 4; Rev. i. 7, in which we see that the words of the Prophet and Apostle agree with those of the angels. Whither did the person of Jesus ascend? Into heaven. But where is heaven? We know not its locality in the immensity of the universe. Astronomers, indeed, tell us that there is a centre of our solar system, and that is the sun. But the sun is a member of a larger system, which has its centre or sun. And this is a member of a still grander system revolving around its centre. At last there is a centre of the whole universe. At that centre resides the great MOVER of the whole. There, doubtless, is the central residence of GOD. To that centre, perhaps, Jesus departed. At any rate, heaven is *away* from this earth, and away from this earth is up. Wherever heaven is, therefore, it is *up*. The language of Scripture, the language of humanity, the language of our childhood, herein is true, and strictly in accordance with the highest science. Let us think of Jesus where He now is, and let us inquire what is our duty with regard to Him. "Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." We need not be afraid to own Him, for He is able to take care of us, however we may be exposed. We need not be ashamed to avow Him, for He has every thing to induce us to glory in Him. Let us follow Christ in our thoughts and affections. Why seek we the living among the dead? He is not *here*. He is in heaven; and where our treasure is, there should our hearts be also. Let us as Christians rejoice in the expectation of being forever with our Lord. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." The anchor that holds the ship is cast out of it, and our hope must go out of ourselves. The anchor lays hold of something invisible, and our hope enters heaven. Yet it would find nothing as the ground of its grasp *there* if *He* was not there—but He *is* there, and there for *us*, and *His* being there insures our arrival. He is the forerunner of the whole company.

52. <sup>7</sup>And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xxviii. 9, 17.

53. And were continually <sup>4</sup>in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

<sup>4</sup> Acts ii. 46 and v. 42.

How did the Apostles feel now that they had lost their Lord? *They wor-*

*shipped him.* Religious worship is here intended. It was not merely reverence to a present superior, but the adoration of an absent Supreme. See Acts i. 24; vii. 59, 60; ix. 10-17. They worshipped Him as God, the eternal Son of God, being so declared by the resurrection from the dead, and by His ascension into heaven before their eyes, from whence He will come to judge both the quick and the dead. *And returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* Though still in the midst of their enemies, they rejoiced; though deprived of the personal presence of their Lord, they rejoiced; though they knew that in the world they would have much tribulation, they rejoiced. And why? Because they believed the promises. They knew that Jesus was gone to the Father to make intercession for them, and that He would return again to make them blessed forever. See 1 Pet. iii. 22. The Apostle John, in the last page of the Bible, and almost the last verse, has recorded this prayer: "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Do we partake in the joy of these holy Apostles? Jesus loves all who love Him, whether they be the greatest of His Apostles, or the weakest of His lambs. "He ever liveth to make intercession (not for *Apostles* only, but) for *all* who come unto God by Him." When He comes again, He will say to all such, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." *And were continually in the temple, &c.* They repaired to the temple continually, (i. e., at all fit times,) in preference to any other place, since there the Jews were accustomed to pray and return thanks to God, especially on momentous occasions. Christ, who obliged His disciples to prepare themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost by the exercise of praise, thanksgiving and prayer, thus teaches us how we ought to prepare ourselves for the same. Churches are the house of God: there He loves to receive our homage, to shed forth His Spirit, and to communicate Himself to His creatures. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Ps. lxxxvii. 2. *Amen* is a Hebrew word which, when prefixed to an assertion, signifies *assuredly, certainly,* or, emphatically, *so it is;* but when it concludes a prayer, *so be it, or so let it be,* is its manifest import. In the former case, it is *assertive,* or assures of a truth or a fact, and is an asseveration, and is properly translated *indeed.* John iii. 3. In the latter case it is *petitionary,* and, as it were, epitomizes all the requests with which it stands connected. Num. v. 22; Rev. xxii. 20. The promises of God are *Amen,* because they are made sure and certain in Christ. 2 Cor. i. 20. *Amen* is one of the titles of our blessed Saviour, Rev. iii. 14, as He is the faithful and true witness.

### QUESTIONS.

1. What is said of "witnesses of these things?"
2. Explain "And behold."
3. What is said of "I send?"
4. Explain "the promise of my Father."
5. What is said of "tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem," &c. ?
6. Explain "as far as Bethany."
7. What do we learn from "He lifted up his hands, and blessed them?"
8. Explain "He was parted from them," &c.
9. Where are there other accounts of the Ascension?
10. Whither did the person of Jesus ascend?
11. Where is heaven?
12. Should we think of Jesus where He now is?
13. Should we rejoice in the expectation of being forever with Him?
14. How did the Apostles feel after having lost their Lord?
15. Explain "they worshipped him."
16. To what place did they return?
17. In what spirit did they return?
18. Why did they rejoice?

19. What is said of the prayer recorded by the Apostle John?
20. For whom does Jesus ever live to make intercession?
21. What will He say to such when He comes again?
22. What is meant by "were continually in the temple?"
23. Why did they repair there in preference to any other place?
24. What is said of churches?
25. What does "Amen" signify when prefixed to an assertion?
26. What, when it concludes a prayer?
27. What is it in the former case?
28. What, in the latter?
29. Why are the promises of God "Amen?"
30. Why is "Amen" a title of our blessed Saviour?

TABLE OF THE HARMONY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

N. B.—In the following table, where all the references under a given section are printed in thick type, as under "Two Genealogies," it is to be understood that some special difficulty besets the harmony. Where one or more references under a given section are in thin, and one or more in thick type, it is to be understood that the former are given as in their proper place, and that it is more or less doubtful whether the latter are to be considered as parallel narratives or not.

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**CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES.**

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**THE GOSPEL HISTORY:**

**GIVING THE**

**LEADING EVENTS ONLY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S LIFE.**

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(705)

THE GOSPEL HISTORY.  
GIVING THE LEADING EVENTS ONLY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S LIFE.

B. C.	PALESTINE AND THE CONNECTED LANDS.				EGYPT AND ARABIA.	SYRIA AND THE EAST.	ROME.	A. U. C.
	JUDÆA.	GALILEE.	OTHER PARTS.					
4	Date of the NATIVITY, as now generally received. Death of Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Herod Philip go to Rome. Varus visits Jerusalem, and leaves there a Roman legion. The Procurator SARPULVICIUS besieged in the Prætorium. Order restored by Varus. ARCHELAUS (not king) of Judæa, Samaria, and Idumæa. JOSIAZAR deposed, and ELEAZAR made H. P. Archelaus Subdues the revolt of Athronges. The <i>Nativity</i> , according to Cassiodorus and Clemens Alexandrinus.	Jesus at Nazareth. Insurrection of Judæa, put down by Varus.	Insurrections in Peræa and Idumæa, put down by Varus.	HEROD PHILIP, Tetrarch of Batanæa, Trachonitis, Ituræa, &c. Philip Builds Cesarea-Philippi. Philip . . . . . 3	Archelaus sends aid to Varus.	Varus advances to relieve Sabinus.  P. Sulpicius QUIRINUS (Cyrenus) probably succeeds Varus.	Caius Cæsar present at the first audience of Archelaus, about mid-summer. Embassy of 50 Jews arrives to ask for the annexation of Judæa to Syria. Augustus gives his decision about August.	750
3	Archelaus . . . . . 3	Antipas . . . . . 2	Antipas Builds Julins (Bethsaida). Antipas . . . . . 3	Philip . . . . . 2	Archelaus . . . . . 3	Archelaus . . . . . 3	GALBA born (Suet.), but rather in B. C. 5.	751
S 2	Archelaus . . . . . 3	Antipas . . . . . 3	Antipas . . . . . 3	Philip . . . . . 3	Archelaus . . . . . 3	Archelaus . . . . . 3	Lucius Cæsar assumes the <i> toga virilis</i> . Julia banished. Augustus saluted as Pater Patriæ.	752
1	The <i>Nativity</i> , according to Eusebius, &c. Archelaus . . . . . 4 The <i>Nativity</i> , according to Tertullian.	Antipas . . . . . 4	Philip . . . . . 4	Philip . . . . . 4	Archelaus . . . . . 4	Archelaus . . . . . 4		753

# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES.

1	Arabians . . . 6	Antipas . . . 6	Philip . . . 6	Censorinus, <i>ca.</i> No record while Calig. Caesar was in the East.	Peace with Parthia, between Calig. Caesar and Phraates.	754
2	The Sicelians; Dionysius Arcegius . . . 6	Antipas . . . 6	Philip . . . 6	. . . . .	Tiberius returns to Rome. War in Germany Calig. Caesar victorious in Armenia. Lucius Caesar dies at Marselles Aug. 30. Supreme power to Au- gustus for 10 years more.	755
3	Ampelides . . . 7	Antipas . . . 7	Philip . . . 7	. . . . .	Tiberius adopted by Augustus, June 27. He goes to Germany. Census of Italy. Famine, earthquake, and inundation of Tiber.	757
4	Ampelides . . . 8	Antipas . . . 8	Philip . . . 8	. . . . .	Died in Lycia. L. VOLGUSUS SATTURNI- NUS, <i>Legatus</i> .	758
5	Arabians . . . 9	Antipas . . . 9	Philip . . . 9	. . . . .	. . . . .	759
5 6	Arabians . . . 10	Antipas . . . 10	Philip . . . 10	. . . . .	CUTURIVS, <i>Legatus</i> (2d time.)	759
7	3. Censorius, M. Procu- rator (Sabinus is reek- oned as the first). Janus (H. P. after Ereazus) deposed by Caiurinus. ARABUS made H. P. Apr. 9. Janus (age 12) at Jeru- salem, according to Lewin's date.	Judaea, the Galonites, opposes the census and founds the party of the Galileans. (Comp. Acte v. 37.)	Philip . . . 11	. . . . .	Makes a census of Judaea.	760
8	Coptosis . . . 2	Antipas . . . 13	Philip . . . 13	. . . . .	. . . . .	761

## THE GOSPEL HISTORY—Continued.

A. D.	PALESTINE AND THE CONNECTED LANDS.				EGYPT AND ARABIA.	SYRIA AND THE EAST.	ROME.	A. U. C.
	JUDÆA.	GALILEE.	OTHER PARTS.					
9	Coponius . . . . 3 M. AMBIVIVUS ( <i>Proc.</i> ) 1 Birth of PAUL (Lewin). Jesus (age 12) at Jerusalem, according to the received date.	Antipas . . . . 13	Philip . . . . 13	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	Tiberius returns to Rome, and is sent to Dalmatia. Varus and his legions destroyed in Germany. Birth of VESPASIAN. Tiberius in Germany.	762
Mar. Pass-over. 10	Ambivivus . . . . 2 Salome (sister of Herod the Great) dies. Ambivivus . . . . 3	Antipas . . . . 14	Philip . . . . 14	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .		763
11	Ambivivus . . . . 3	Antipas . . . . 15	Philip . . . . 15	. . . .	. . . .	Apollonius of Tyana at Tarsus.	Successful campaign of Tiberius and Germanicus in Germany. War in Germany finished. Tiberius triumphs and is associated with Augustus in the command of the army and provinces (not Italy) of Rome and Italy.	764
12	Ambivivus RUFUS ( <i>Procurator</i> ) . . . . 1 The received chronology dates from this year to the ministry of John in the 16th of Tiberius, A. D. 26. This is the date used in the Tables.	Antipas . . . . 16	Philip . . . . 16	. . . .	Q. METELLUS CRETICUS SILANUS ( <i>Legatus</i> ).	. . . .	War in Germany finished. Tiberius triumphs and is associated with Augustus in the command of the army and provinces (not Italy) of Rome and Italy.	765
S 13	Annius Rufus . . . . 2	Antipas . . . . 17	Philip . . . . 17	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	Birth of CALIGULA. Empire renewed to Augustus for 10 years.	Aug. 31. 766
14	Annius Rufus . . . . 3 [Mr. Lewin dates from this year to the ministry of John in the 16th year of Tiberius, A. D. 25.]	Antipas . . . . 18	Philip . . . . 18	. . . .	. . . .	. . . .	Third census of the Empire under Augustus. Augustus dies at Nola. Tiberius, Imp. 1 Murder of Agrippa Postumus.	767 Aug. 19.

16	5. VALERIUS GRATUS ( <i>Procurator</i> ) Removes Ananus, and makes ISHMAEL H. P., and soon after makes ELEAZAR H. P. Valerius Gratus . 2 Removes Eleazar, and makes SIMON H. P.	Antipas . . . . . 19	Philip . . . . . 19	. . . . .	. . . . .	Tiberius Germanicus in Ger- many. Birth of VITELLIUS.	2 768
16	Valerius Gratus . 2 Removes Simon, and makes JOSEPH CALIA- PHAS H. P.	Antipas . . . . . 20	Philip . . . . . 20	. . . . .	Disturbances in Par- thia, Armenia, and Media. Revolt of the Jews Asinanus and An- tineus from the Par- thians at Babylon, composed by the king Artabanus. C. CALPURNIUS PISO, <i>Legatus</i> . XII. Cities of Asia de- stroyed by an earth- quake. Germanicus goes to Armenia, and Piso to Syr.a.	Tiberius . . . . . 3 Asinanus expelled from Italy. Third campaign of Germanicus in Ger- many.	3 769
17	Valerius Gratus . 3 Removes Simon, and makes JOSEPH CALIA- PHAS H. P.	Antipas . . . . . 21	Philip . . . . . 21	. . . . .	Death of Germanicus near Antioch. C. SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS <i>Prolegatus</i> .	Tiberius . . . . . 4 Triumph of Ger- manicus. He is sent to the East.	4 770 May 36
18	Valerius Gratus . 4	Antipas . . . . . 22	Philip . . . . . 22	. . . . .	Germanicus visits Egypt.	Tiberius . . . . . 5 Laws of treason en- forced at Rome.	5 771
19	Valerius Gratus . 5 [Skat's family perhaps quit Tarsus owing to the commotions in Cilicia after the death of Germanicus. — <i>Le- gend.</i> ]	Antipas . . . . . 23	Philip . . . . . 23	. . . . .	Death of Germanicus near Antioch. C. SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS <i>Prolegatus</i> .	Tiberius . . . . . 6 Druis in Germany. Jewish and Egyptian rites prohibited at Rome.	6 772
8 20	Valerius Gratus . 6	Antipas . . . . . 24	Philip . . . . . 24	. . . . .	. . . . .	Tiberius . . . . . 7 Agrippina brings the ashes of Germanicus to Rome. Suicide of Piso. Tiberius . . . . . 8 Withdraws to Cam- pania. Tiberius . . . . . 9 Returns to Rome. Feace in the provinces. Rapid Rise of Sullanus.	7 773
21	Valerius Gratus . 7	Antipas . . . . . 25	Philip . . . . . 25	. . . . .	Death of Quintinus.	Tiberius . . . . . 8 Withdraws to Cam- pania. Tiberius . . . . . 9 Returns to Rome. Feace in the provinces. Rapid Rise of Sullanus.	8 774
22	Valerius Gratus . 8	Antipas . . . . . 26	Philip . . . . . 26	. . . . .	. . . . .	L. POMPEIUS FLACUS, <i>Propraetor</i> .	9 775

## THE GOSPEL HISTORY—Continued.

A. D.	PALESTINE AND THE CONNECTED LANDS.			EGYPT AND ARABIA.	SYRIA AND THE EAST.	ROME.	A. U. C.
	JUDÆA.	GALILEE.	OTHER PARTS.				
23	Valerius Gratus . . . 9	Antipas . . . 27	Philip . . . 27	.	.	Tiberius . . . 10 Retires to Campania. Death of Drusus.	776
24	Valerius Gratus . . . 10	Antipas . . . 28	Philip . . . 28	.	.	Tiberius . . . 11	777
25	Valerius Gratus . . . 11	Antipas . . . 29	Philip . . . 29	.	.	Tiberius . . . 12	778
26	Valerius Gratus . . . 12	Antipas . . . 30	Philip . . . 30	.	.	Tiberius . . . 13	779
	POSTERIUS PILATUS ( <i>Procurator</i> ) BAPTISM OF JOHN (Mr. Lewis places it two years later). Pontius Pilatus . . . 2 <i>Baptism and temptation of Jesus Christ.</i> First Miracle at Cana. His <i>First Passover</i> . In <i>Galilee</i> .	Antipas . . . 31 Builds Tiberias. Imprisonment of John.	Philip . . . 31	.	.	(From his association with Augustus) 15 His final retirement to Campania. Tiberius . . . 14 Shuts himself up in Capree.	780
Apr. 9							
28	Pontius Pilatus . . . 3 <i>Beginning of the Gospel from Galilee.</i> Rejection at Nazareth. First <i>Galilean Circuit</i> . <i>Christ's Second Passover</i> , probably at Jerusalem. Ministry in Galilee resumed. <i>The Apostles chosen.</i> <i>Sermon on the Mount.</i> Second <i>Galilean circuit</i> .	Antipas . . . 32	Philip . . . 32	.	.	Tiberius . . . 15 Death of Julia. Marriage of Agrippina to Domitius Ahenobarbus (the parents of Nero).	781
Mar. 29							
		Death of John the Baptist.					

29	Pontius Pilatus . . . 4 <i>Third Galilean Circuit.</i> Christ's <i>Third Passover</i> : at the time of the feeding the 5000 on the lake of Galilee. Christ's retirement into the country of Herod Philip, and final departure from Galilee.	Antipas . . . 33	Phillip . . . 33 Jesus at Decapolis and Cæsarea Philippi. The Transfiguration.	• . . . •	• . . . •	Tiberius . . . 16 Death of Livia.	782
Oct. 11	<i>Feast of Tabernacles.</i> Jesus at Jerusalem.						
Dec.	<i>Feast of Dedication.</i> Jesus visits Jerusalem.						
30	Pontius Pilatus . . . 6	Antipas . . . 34	Phillip . . . 34	• . . . •	• . . . •	Tiberius . . . 17 Velleius Paterculus writes his <i>History</i> .	783
Mar.	30						
Apr. 1	F. Jesus arrives at Bethany. Jerusalem.						
6	Th. Enters Jerusalem.						
6	G. F. <i>The Passover.</i>						
8	FIXION. THE CRUCIFIXION. THE RESUR-						
MAY	EL. S. THE RESUR-						
17	RECTION. THE ASCENSION.						

## PRONUNCIATION OF PROPER NAMES USED BY LUKE.

Ab'i-lēne	Hē'ber	Na-ās'son
A'bra-ham	Hē'li	Nā'than
Ad'am	Hēr'od	Nā'um
Ad'di		Nē-ri
Al-phē'us	I'saac (i'zak)	Nin'e-veh
A-mīn'a-dāb	Is'ra-el	Nin'e-vites
A'mos	Is-cār'i-ot	Nō'ah
An'drew	It'u-rē'a	
Ān'na		Ō'bed
Ān'nas	Jā'cob	
Ā'ram	Ja-i'rus	Phā'lec
Ār'i-ma-thē'a	James	Pha-nū'el
Ar-phāx'ad	Jān'na	Phā'rēz
A'ser	Jā'red	Phār'i-see
	Jēr'i-chō	Pē'ter
Bar-thōl'o-mew	Je-ru'sa-lēm	Phil'ip
Be-ēl'ze-būb	Jēs'se	Pōn'ti ūs Pi'late
Bēth'a-ny	Jē'sus	(pōn'shī-ūs)
Bēth-lē'hem	Jew'ry	
Bēth'pha-gē	Jo-ān'na	Rā'gau
Bēth-sā'i-da	Jōhn	Rhē'sa
Bō'oz	Jō'nan	
	Jō'nas	Sād'du-ceed
Cā'ia-phas (-ya-fas)	Jō'rim	Sā'la
Ca-i'nan	Jō'se	Sa-lā'thi-el
Cal'va-ry	Jō'seph	Sāl-mon
Ca-pēr'na-ūm	Jū'dah	Sa-mā'ri-a
Ce'sar	Jū'das	Sa-mār'i-tan
Cho-rā'zin	Ju-dē'a	Sa'ruch
Chū'za		Sēm
Clē'o-pās	Lā'mech	Sēm'e-i
Cō'sam	Lāz'a-rūs	Sēth
Cy-rē'ni-ūs	Lōt	Sī'don
Cy-rē'ni-an	Ly-sā'ni-as	Si-lō'am, or; Si'l'o-ām
		Sīm'e-on
Dā'vid	Mā'ath	Sī'mon
	Māg'da-lē'ne	Sōd'om
E-lī'as	Ma-lē'le-el	Sōl-o-mon
E-lī'a-kīm	Mār'tha	Su-sān'na
E-lī-ē'zer	Mā'ry	Sŷ'r'i-a
E-lis'a-bēth	Māt'ta-tha	Sŷ'r'i-an
El'i-sē'us	Māt'ta-thī'as	
El-mō'dam	Māt'that	Thā'ra
Em'ma-ūs	Mat'thew (Māth'thu)	Theōph'i-lūs
Ē'noch	Ma-thū'sa-la	Thōm'as (tōm'as)
Ēr	Mē'le-a	Ti-bē'ri-ūs
E-sā'ias (e-zā'yas)	Mēl'chī	Trāch'o-nī'tis
Es'li	Mē'nan	Tŷ're
Es'rom	Mō'ses	
		Zāch'a-rī'as
Gā'bri-el	Nā'a-man	Zac-chē'us
Gād'a-rēnes	Nā'chōr	Zēb'e-dee
Gāl'i-lee	Nāg'gē	Ze-lō-tes
Gāl'i-le'an	Nāz'a-rēth	Zo-rōb'a-bel
Gēn'tile	Nā'in	

## APPENDIX.

**Alabaster Box.**—By the English word *Alabaster* is to be understood both that kind which is also known by the name of *gypsum*, as well as the *Oriental alabaster*, which is so much valued on account of its translucency, and for its variety of colored streakings, red, yellow, grey, &c., which it owes, for the most part, to the admixture of oxides of iron. Both these kinds of alabaster, but especially the latter, are and have been long used for various ornamental purposes, such as in the fabrication of vases, boxes, &c. The ancients considered alabaster (carbonate of lime) to be the best material in which to preserve their ointments. "Unguenta," says Pliny, "keep best in alabaster."

**Bottle.**—Ancient bottles were made of the skins of animals which were properly dressed for the purpose. When an animal was killed, its feet and head were cut off, then it was drawn out of the skin. Afterwards, the places where the legs and tail had been cut off were sewed up, and when the skin was filled it was tied about the neck. Wine-bottles of skin are mentioned as used by Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, by Homer, (*Od.* vi. 78, *Il.* iii. 247;) by Herodotus, as used in Egypt, (*ii.* 131;) and by Virgil, (*Georg.* ii. 384.) Skins for wine or other liquids are in use to this day in Spain, where they are called *borracas*. The effect of external heat upon a skin bottle is indicated in *Ps.* cxix. 83, "a bottle in the smoke," and of expansion produced by fermentation in *Matt.* ix. 17, *Luke* v. 37.

**Beelzebub.**—The title of a heathen deity, to whom the Jews ascribed the sovereignty of the evil spirits, *Matt.* x. 25, xii. 24; *Mark* iii. 22; *Luke* xi. 15. Some contend that the correct reading is *Beelzebub*. Some connect the term with *Zebul*, *habitation*, and understand it as meaning *the lord of the dwelling*, whether as the "prince of the power of the air," *Eph.* ii. 2, or as the prince of the lower world, or as inhabiting human bodies, or as occupying a mansion in the seventh heaven, like Saturn, in Oriental mythology. Others derive it from *Zebel*, *dung*, thus making *Beelzebub*, literally, *the lord of dung*, or *the dunghill*, and in a secondary sense as *Zebel*

was used by the Talmudical writers as = *idol*, or *idolatry*, *the lord of idols*, *prince of false gods*. The word *dung* was the contemptuous epithet of the Jews for idolatry, since they intended to give the filthiest possible name to what they considered the vilest possible sin.

**Bethany.**—This town was situated "at" the Mount of Olives, *Mark* xi. 1; *Luke* xix. 29, about two miles from Jerusalem, *John* xi. 18, on or near the usual road from Jericho to the city, *Luke* xix. 29, comp. 1; *Mark* xi. 1, comp. x. 46, and close by and west of another village called *Bethphage*, the two being several times mentioned together. *Bethany* is now known by a name derived from *Lazarus*, *el'-Azariyeh* or *Lazarieh*. It lies on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, fully a mile beyond the summit, and not very far from the point at which the road to Jericho begins its more sudden descent towards the Jordan valley. *El'-Azariyeh* is a ruinous and wretched village, a wild mountain hamlet of some twenty families. In the village are shown the traditional sites of the house and tomb of *Lazarus*. The house of *Simon the leper* is also exhibited. The name *Bethany* is usually explained to mean *House of Dates*, but some allege there are good reasons for believing that the word really signifies *House of the Poor*.

**Bethlehem.**—This place, which is one of the oldest towns in Palestine, is situated about six miles southwardly from Jerusalem. The earliest name was *Ephrath* or *Ephratah*. See *Gen.* xxxv. 16, xlviii. 7; *Josh.* xv. 59. After the conquest, *Bethlehem* appears under its own name, *Bethlehem-judah*, *Judges* xvii. 7; 1 *Sam.* xvii. 12; *Ruth* i. 1, 2, possibly to distinguish it from the small and remote place of the same name in *Zebulun*. *Bethlehem*, (*i. e.* house of bread,) although the birth-place of *David* and our Lord, remained in obscurity throughout the whole of the sacred history. The modern town of *Beitlahm* lies to the east of the main road from Jerusalem to Hebron, six miles from the former. It covers the east and the north-east parts of the ridge of a "long grey hill" of *Jura limestone*, which is

about a mile in length. The hill has a deep valley on the north, and another on the south. On the top lies the village, in a kind of irregular triangle, at about one hundred and fifty yards from the apex of which, and separated from it by a vacant space on the extreme eastern part of the ridge, spreads the noble Basilica of St. Helena, "half church, and half fort," now embraced by its three convents, Greek, Latin, and Armenian. One fact of great interest is associated with a portion of the crypt of this church, namely, that here, "beside what he believed to be the cradle of the Christian faith, St. Jerome lived for more than thirty years, leaving a lasting monument of his sojourn in the Vulgate translation of the Bible." The population of *Bell-lahm* is about 3000 souls, entirely Christians. An American missionary describes it as a pile of rocks, with here and there a patch of verdure, and says that many of its inhabitants employ themselves in making wooden rosaries and crucifixes ornamented with mother-of-pearl, for pilgrims who visit the village.

**Capernaum.**—This was the scene of many acts and incidents in the life of Christ. There is no mention of it in the Old Testament, or Apocrypha, but the passage, *Is. x. 1*, (in Hebrew viii. 23,) is applied to it by Matthew. The few notices of it in the New Testament are not sufficient to enable us to determine its exact position. It was on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, *Matt. iv. 13*, comp. *John vi. 24*. It was in the "land of Genesaret," *Matt. iv. 34*, comp. with *John vi. 17, 21, 24*, that is, the rich, busy plain on the west shore of the lake, which we know, from the descriptions of Josephus and from other sources, to have been at that time one of the most crowded and prosperous districts in all Palestine. It was of sufficient size to be always called "a city," *Matt. ix. 1*; *Mark i. 33*; and had its own synagogue, in which our Lord frequently taught, *John vi. 59*; *Mark i. 21*; *Luke iv. 38, 38*. The doom which our Lord pronounced against Capernaum and the other unbelieving cities of the plain of Genesaret, has been remarkably fulfilled. The spots which lay claim to its site are—1, *Khan Mînyeh*, a mound of ruins which takes its name from an old khan hard by. This mound is situated close upon the sea-shore at the north-western extremity of the plain, (now *El Ghawer*.) 2. Three miles north of the *Khan Mînyeh* is the other claimant, *Tell Hâm*—ruins of walls and foundations covering a space of "half a mile long by a quarter wide," on a point of the

shore projecting into the lake, and backed by a very gently rising ground. *Khan Mînyeh*, *El-Tabighah*, and *Tell Hâm* are all, without doubt, ancient sites, but it is impossible to say which of them represents Capernaum, which Chorazin, or which Bethsaida.

**Crucifixion.**—The Romans unanimously considered crucifixion the most horrible form of death, worse even than burning, since the "cross" precedes "burning" in the law-books. To a Jew it would acquire factitious horror from the curse in *Deut. xxi. 23*. Among the Romans, also, the degradation was a part of the infliction, since it was especially a *servile* punishment, so that even a freedman ceased to dread it, or if applied to freedmen, it was only in the case of the vilest criminals, thieves, &c. Indeed exemption from it was the privilege of every Roman citizen.

The cross was of various forms. Sometimes it was a mere stake of one single piece without transom, and the criminal was tied to the stake, from which he hung by his arms. Sometimes it was in the shape of an X, and sometimes in the shape of a T. The Latin cross differed from the former by the projection of the upright above the cross-bar, and was in the form of †. That this was the kind of cross on which our Lord died, is obvious from the mention of the "title" as placed above our Lord's head, and from the almost unanimous tradition, it is repeatedly found on the coins and columns of Constantine. There was a projection from the central stem, on which the body of the sufferer rested. This was to prevent the weight of the body from tearing away the hands. An inscription was generally placed above the criminal's head, briefly expressing his guilt, and carried before him. It was covered with gypsum, and the letters were black. It is a question whether tying or nailing to the cross was the more common method. That our Lord was *nailed*, according to prophecy, is certain, *John xx. 25, 27, &c.*; *Zech. xii. 10*; *Ps. xxii. 16*. It is, however, extremely probable that both methods were used at once.

The place of execution was outside the city, often in some public road or other conspicuous place like the Campus Martius, or some spot set apart for the purpose. Arrived at the place of execution, to which the sufferer bore the instrument of his own torture, he was stripped naked, the dress being the perquisite of the soldiers, *Matt. xxvii. 35*, the cross was then driven into the ground, so that the feet of the condemned were a foot or two above the earth, and he was lifted upon it, or else

stretched upon it on the ground, and then lifted with it. Before the nailing or binding took place, a medicated cup was given out of kindness, to confuse the senses and deaden the pangs of the sufferer. Our Lord refused it that His senses might be clear, Matt. xxvii. 34; Mark xv. 23. From the description given, it is evident that crucifixion was not only the most ignominious, but also the most painful punishment known.

**Denarius.**—The Roman denarius was first coined B. C. 269, four years after the close of the first Punic War. It became current coin in Judea after its subjection. It was the pay of a day's labor in Palestine; a soldier's pay was less. Like our word *déms*, it signifies *ten*, that is, ten asses, but it was nearer the value of our shilling, being about fifteen cents.

**Essenes.**—This sect is represented by Josephus as combining the ascetic virtues of the Pythagoreans and Stoics with a spiritual knowledge of the Divine Law. The origin of their name is quite uncertain, and the various derivations that have been proposed for it are all more or less open to objection. Their obscurity as a distinct body arises from the fact that they originally represented a tendency rather than an organization. As a sect, they were distinguished by an aspiration after ideal purity rather than by any special code of doctrines. To the Pharisees they stood nearly in the same relation as that in which the Pharisees themselves stood with regard to the mass of the people. The differences lay mainly in rigor of practice, and not in articles of belief. The Essenes lived in monastic seclusion, (very much like the Shakers of the present day,) renouncing meats, wine, marriage, and all secular life, and giving themselves up to visionary piety, and worshipping angels. Many of them, doubtless, became Christians, and brought in those heresies to the Church. Indeed, they were, perhaps, the original authors of the monkish and conventual system subsequently developed in popery.

**Gadara.**—This city was situated southeasterly from the Lake of Gennesaret, about eight miles distant, and the Jermuk river intervened, *in the country of the Gadarenes*. The miracle recorded by Luke, viii. 31-33, occurred in the region to which this city belonged. The name of Gergesa (in whose *country* Matthew locates the miracle) appears also as Gerasa, and is identified by Dr. Thomson with Kerza, situated on the eastern shore. Dr. Thomson remarks: "In studying the details of the miracle, I was obliged to modify one opinion or impression which

had grown up with me from childhood. *There is no bold cliff overhanging the lake on the eastern side, nor, indeed, on any other, except just north of Tiberias.* Everywhere along the northeastern and eastern shores, a smooth beach declines gently down to the water. Take your stand a little south of this Chersa. A great herd of swine, we will suppose, is feeding on this mountain, that towers above it. They are seized with a sudden panic, rush madly down the almost perpendicular declivity, those behind tumbling over and thrusting forward those before, and as there is neither time nor space to recover on the narrow shelf between the base and the lake, they are crowded headlong into the water, and perish."

**Gate.**—The entrances to walled cities in the East were, and still are, secured by gates, either of wood, iron, or brass. Acts xii. 10. Among the special purposes for which they were used, may be mentioned: 1. As places of public resort. Gen. xix. 1, 23; x. 24; xx. 24; 1 Sam. xiv. 18, &c. 2. Places for public deliberation, administration of justice, or of audience for kings and rulers, or ambassadors. Deut. xvi. 18; xxi. 19; xxv. 7; Josh. xx. 4; Judges ix. 35, &c. 3. Public markets. 2 Kings vii. 1. In heathen towns, the open spaces near the gates appear to have been sometimes used as places for sacrifice. Acts xiv. 13; comp. 2 Kings xxiii. 8. The gates of the city were carefully guarded, and closed at nightfall. Deut. iii. 5; Josh. ii. 5, 7; Judges ix. 40, 44.

**Gennesaret, Lake of.**—Its most ancient name appears to have been Cinneroth, of which Gennesaret is the modernized Greek form, and which appears to have been derived from a town of Cinneroth, on its western shore. It was afterwards called the Sea of Galilee, and finally, in honor of the Emperor Tiberius, it was called the Lake of Tiberias, and a town was called Tiberias, on its western coast.

The Lake of Gennesaret is about thirteen miles in length, and, in its broadest part, six miles in breadth. In the clearness of the Eastern atmosphere it looks much smaller than its real size. What gives it a remarkable aspect is the deep depression of its surface, not only far below the lofty summits of its banks, but far below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. As the traveller descends from the rocky walls by which it is encompassed, the temperature of its deep basin grows warm. In the summer or late spring it is filled with an atmosphere of oppressive heat, in great contrast with the

bracing breezes of the neighboring hills of Galilee. "All along the edge of this secluded basin," says Stanley, "runs the whole round, from north to south, a level beach, at the southern end roughly strewn with the black and white stones peculiar to this district, and also connected with its volcanic structure, but the central or northern part formed of smooth sand, or of a texture of shells and pebbles so minute as to resemble sand, like the substance of the beach on the Gulf of Akabah. Shrubs, too, of the tropical thorn, fringe the greater part of the line of the shore, mingled, here and there, with the bright pink colors of the oleander ;

"All thro' the summer night  
Those blossoms, red and bright,  
Spread their soft breasts,"

long before they are in flower in the valleys of the higher country. On this beach, which can be discerned running, like a white line, all round the lake, the hills plant their dark base, descending nowhere precipitously, but almost everywhere presenting an alternation of soft, grassy slopes and rocky cliffs, occasionally broken away, so as to exhibit the red and grey colors so familiar in the limestone of Greece."

**Gethsemane.** This sacred spot was situated a short distance from the walls of Jerusalem, between the brook Kedron and the foot of the Mount of Olives. There was a "garden," or rather the orchard attached to it, containing olive trees, from which the place obtained its name, (the *Oil Press*.) A modern garden, in which are eight venerable olive trees, and a grotto to the north, detached from it, and in closer connection with the Church of the Sepulchre of the Virgin, both securely enclosed, and under lock and key, are pointed out as making up the true Gethsemane. The largest of these trees is six yards round, and they are reckoned to be two thousand years old, so that they may have been contemporary with our Lord. But against this it has been urged that Titus cut down all the trees round about Jerusalem; and certainly this is no more than Josephus states in express terms, (B. J., vi. 1, § 1.) The probability, therefore, would seem to be, that they were planted by Christian hands to mark the spot, unless, like the sacred olive of the Acropolis, they may have re-produced themselves. There are at present only eight trees.

**Hell.**—Hell is represented by *Sheol* in the Old, and by *Hades* in the New Testament. But hell, as the place of final punishment for sinners, is more distinctly

indicated by the term *Gehenna*, which is the word translated "hell" in Matt. v. 22, 29, 30; x. 28; xviii. 9; xxiii. 15, 33; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47; Luke xii. 5; James iii. 6. It is also distinctly indicated by such phrases as "the place of torment," Luke xvi. 28; "everlasting fire," Matt. xxv. 41; "the hell of fire," "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," Mark ix. 44. The dreadful nature of the abode of the wicked is implied in various figurative expressions, such as "outer darkness," "I am tormented in this flame," "furnace of fire," "unquenchable fire," "where their worm dieth not," "the blackness of darkness," "torment in fire and brimstone," "the ascending smoke of their torment," "the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone." Matt. viii. 12; xiii. 42; xxii. 18; xxv. 30; Luke xvi. 24. Comp. Mat. xxv. 41; Mark ix. 43-48; Jude xiii. Comp. Rev. xiv. 10, 11; xix. 20; xx. 14; xxi. 8. "The figure by which hell is represented as burning with fire and brimstone," says Kitto, "is probably derived from the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as that which describes the smoke as ascending from it. Comp. Rev. xiv. 10, 11, with Gen. xix. 24, 28. To this coincidence of description Peter also most probably alludes in 2 Pet. ii. 6." Is it not more probably derived from the fire of Gehenna? See *Hannom*.

**Hermon.**—Called Great Hermon, north-east of Gennesaret, is considered by many as the most probable locality of the scene of the Transfiguration of our Lord. "It is impossible," says Stanley, "to look up from the plain to the towering peaks of Hermon, almost the only mountain which deserves the name in Palestine, and not be struck with its appropriateness to the scene. That magnificent height, mingling with all the views of Northern Palestine, from Shechem upwards, though often alluded to as the northern barrier of the Holy Land, is connected with no historical event in the Old or New Testament. Yet this fact of its rising high above all the other hills of Palestine, and of its setting the last limit to the wanderings of Him who was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, concurs with the supposition which the words of the Scripture narrative inevitably force upon us. High up on its southern slopes there must be many a point where the disciples could be taken 'apart by themselves.' Even the transient comparison of the celestial splendor with the snow, where alone it could be seen in Palestine, should not, perhaps, be wholly overlooked."

**Hinnom, Valley of.**—The valley of the Son of Hinnom, Josh. xv. 8, so called from some unknown person in very early times, running east and west, intersects the Kedron at the southeast corner of the city of Jerusalem. At this place the idolatrous Israelites "burnt their children in the fire," Jer. vii. 31, unto Moloch, a deity represented by a brass image, with the face of a bull. The drum (*toph*) which was used to drown the cry of the victim, gave the place the name of Tophet. Jer. xix. 6. The deep "gorge" of Gehenna (as its Greek name is written) is described by Prof. Hackett as "almost terrific." "A wall of frowning rocks and precipices hangs over us on the left, and the southern extremity of Zion rises so steeply on the right, that one must almost look up into the zenith in order to scale the top of it with the eye. . . . I found myself oppressed, at length, with a feeling so desolate and horror-stricken, that it was a relief to get through with my task, and come forth where I could see and hear again the sights and sounds of a living world." The name of this ancient, gloomy, yet fiery recess, was fitly used to designate hell. See *Hell*.

**House.**—Oriental houses are very unlike our own. They are commonly square in their form, and of a single story. On approaching them from the street, a single door is seen in the centre, and, usually, directly above it, a single latticed window. This destitution of doors and lights from the streets, though it gives their dwellings a sombre appearance, is yet adapted to the habits of retirement and secrecy among the people of the East, where they are desirous of keeping their *females* from observation. On entering the only door in front, the first room is a small square room, surrounded with benches, called the *porch*. In this room the master of the family commonly transacts business, and, on private occasions, receives visits. Passing through the porch, you enter a large square room directly in the centre of the building, called the *court*. This *court* is paved commonly with marble, and, if possible, a *fountain* of water is formed in the centre, to give it beauty, and to diffuse a grateful coolness. This room is surrounded by a gallery, or covered walk on every side. From *that* covered walk, doors open into the other apartments of the house.

This centre room, or court, is commonly uncovered or open above. In wet weather, however, and in times of great heat of the sun, it is covered with an awning or canvas, stretched on cords, and capable of being easily removed or rolled up. From

the court to the roof the ascent is by flights of stairs, either in the covered walk or gallery, or in the porch. The roof is nearly flat. It is made of earth, or in houses of the rich is a firmly constructed flooring, made of coals, chalk, gypsum, and ashes, made hard by repeated blows. On those roofs spears of grass, wheat, or barley, sometimes spring up, but these are soon withered by the sun. Ps. cxxix. 6-8. The roof is a favorite place for walking, for repose in the cool of the day, for conversation, and for devotion. It was surrounded with a *balustrade*, or railing, breast-high, on the sides, but where a house was contiguous to another, and of the same height, the railing was lower, so as to walk from one roof to another. In cities constructed in this manner, it was possible to walk through a considerable part of the city on the roofs of the houses. A breast-work or railing was, of course, built in the same manner around the *open space* in the centre, to prevent them from falling *into* the court below. This railing, or breast-work, is what Luke, v. 19, says they let the paralytic down through.

**Incense.**—This substance was composed of the perfumes stacte, ouycha, galbanum and pure frankincense. See Exod. xxx. 34-38. All incense which was not made of these ingredients was forbidden to be offered. Exod. xxx. 9. The Jews were forbidden to make this composition for private use. Incense was burned by the priest morning and evening. It was placed in a *cup* or *vase*, called the *censer*, upon the Golden Altar in the Holy Place, hence called the *altar of incense*, with burning coals beneath, producing by its smoke a powerful perfume, filling the temple with its fragrance. Incense would seem to be symbolical, not of prayer itself, but of that which makes prayer acceptable—the intercession of Christ. In Rev. viii. 3, 4, the incense is spoken of as something distinct from, though offered with, the prayers of all the saints, and in Rev. v. 8, it is the golden vials, and not the odors or incense, which are said to be the prayers of saints.

**Jerusalem.**—The capital of the kingdom of Judah. Many maintain the identity of the "Salem" of Melchizedek, Gen. xiv. 18, with Jerusalem—the "Salem" of a late Psalmist, Ps. lxxvi. 2. The earliest notice of Jerusalem is probably in Josh. xv. 8, and xviii. 16-23, describing the landmarks of the boundaries of Judah and Benjamin.

Jerusalem stands in latitude 31° 46' 35" north, and longitude 35° 18' 30" east of Greenwich. It is thirty-two miles dis-

tant from the sea, and eighteen from the Jordan, twenty from Hebron, and thirty-six from Samaria. The western ridge of the city, which forms its highest point, is about 2,600 feet above the level of the sea. The Mount of Olives rises slightly above this, 2,724 feet. The natural position of the city furnishes some of the beautiful illustrations of the Bible. Ps. xlviii. 2; 18; cxiv. 1, 2. The ancient Salem was probably built upon Acra and Moriah, the eastern and western hills. When the Jebusites became masters of it, they erected a fortress in the southern quarter of the city, which was afterwards called Mount Zion, but to which they gave the name of their ancestor, Jebus, and although the Israelites, under Joshua, took possession of the circumjacent territory, Josh. xviii. 28, the Jebusites steadily held this fortress, or upper town, until the time of David, who wrested it from them, 2 Sam. v. 7-9, and then removed his court from Hebron to Jerusalem, which was thenceforward known as *the city of David*. 2 Sam. vi. 10; 12; 1 Kings viii. 1. As the city was on the boundary lines between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, it is sometimes spoken of as the possession of each. Upon this eminence Solomon erected the temple, or place of worship, for the whole Jewish nation, and also a palace for himself called *the house of the forest of Lebanon*, on account of the multitude of cedars from that mountain employed in the construction of it, 1 Kings vii. 2; x. 17, and in his reign the city became renowned for its commercial enterprise, 1 Kings x. 22, its boundless wealth, 1 Kings x. 14-29, and especially for the enjoyment of the peculiar presence and favor of the Almighty, Ps. li. 6; xv. 1; lxxiv. 2—a pre-eminence which it maintained for nearly five hundred years, when it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

Seventeen times has Jerusalem been taken and pillaged; millions of men have been slaughtered within its walls. No other city has experienced such a fate. This protracted and almost supernatural punishment betokens unexampled guilt. The present political state of Jerusalem is perhaps as low as it has been at any time while under the dominion of the Turks. It has not even the honor of ranking as a provincial capital, and enjoys none of the immunities peculiar to the other cities of Islamism. It is included within the pashalic of Damascus, and is governed by a deputy appointed from thence. No difference is created by the peculiar sanctity of the place, (except in the minds of Christians,) as is done

by that of the Arabian cities of Mecca and Medina, for while a governor of these is honored by distinguished privileges, the governor of Jerusalem ranks only as a magistrate of a provincial town. The force usually kept in Jerusalem consists of about 1,000 soldiers, including horse and foot, armed and equipped in the common Turkish fashion, and composed of Turks, Arabs, and Albanians. Jerusalem was the scene of the most extraordinary events which have occurred in the annals of the human race; events in which men and angels have and must forever have the deepest interest. Many details concerning it will be found under their separate titles, as *Temple*, &c.

**Jordan, the.**—This river is, historically, the most interesting one in the world. It derives its sources from the snows of the Lebanon, whence it flows down to the Lake Gennesaret, through which it passes. Its current through the middle of that lake is distinctly visible. Thence it descends, through a distance of about sixty miles, to the Dead Sea. Its channel is very serpentine, but it trends, very directly, towards the south. The narrow plain upon its banks is usually very fertile. It is calculated to be, on the average, about thirty yards wide and nine feet deep, and its current is very rapid.

**Leaven.**—A lump of old dough in a high state of fermentation, which was inserted into the mass of dough prepared for baking, with the view of lightening it. The use of leaven was strictly forbidden in all offerings made to the Lord by fire. Exod. xii. 15-19. It is in reference to these prohibitions that Amos, iv. 5, ironically bids the Jews of his day to "offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving *with leaven*." In other instances, where the offering was to be consumed by the priests, and not on the altar, leaven might be used. Various ideas were associated with the prohibition of leaven in the instances above quoted, but the most prominent idea, and the one which applies equally to all the cases of prohibition, is connected with the *corruption* which leaven itself had undergone, and which it communicated to bread in the process of fermentation. Leaven figuratively denotes the influence of false and corrupt doctrines, Matt. xvi. 6, as well as the evil passions of the depraved and unregenerated heart. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. But whilst leaven is generally the symbol of something evil, it also is employed to denote what is good. Thus, in Luke xiii. 21, this substance, which makes a thorough change in the whole mass, represents and illustrates the silent influence of the

gospel on the heart of man, and its destined influence on the world. "The great features of the figurative language of Scripture," says Trench, "remain no doubt fixed and unalterable, but it is not thus stereotyped in its minor details, so that one figure needs always to stand for one and the same thing. The devil is 'a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,' 1 Pet. v. 8, yet this does not hinder the same title from being applied to Christ, 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah,' Rev. v. 5, only there the subtlety and fierceness of the animal formed the point of comparison, here the nobility and kingliness and conquering strength!"

**Locusts.**—The insects of this name are still used for food in the East. There are different ways of preparing them for food. Sometimes they are ground and pounded, and then mixed with flour and water and made into cakes; or they are salted and then eaten; sometimes smoked, boiled, or roasted, stewed, or fried in butter. Dr. Kitto, who tasted locusts, says they are more like shrimps than any thing else; and an English clergyman, some years ago, cooked some of the green grasshoppers, *Locusta viridissima*, boiling them in water half an hour, throwing away the head, wings, and legs, and then sprinkling them with pepper and salt, and adding butter, he found them excellent.

**Mill.**—Grinding in the East was performed, as it is now, chiefly by hand. The mill-stones were about two feet in diameter, and half a foot in thickness. The lower one was fixed, and the upper one was turned by a handle, or crank. This was done by two persons, who sat opposite to each other. One took hold of the mill-handle, and turned it half way round, the other then seized it, and completed the revolution. This was done by women, by servants of the lowest order, and was a laborious employment. See Exod. xi. 5; Job xxxi. 10; Is. xlvi. 2; Judges xvi. 21.

**"Mount of Beatitudes,"** the.—On what mountain it was, Christ delivered His "Sermon on the Mount," is not said by either Matthew or Luke. Tradition, however, has selected a mount, which has been called from the event, "The Mount of Beatitudes," which is thus beautifully described by Stanley, a writer not remarkable for ready credulity for tradition.

"The undulating table-land, which skirts the hills of Galilee on the east, is broken by a long low ridge, rising at its northern extremity into a square-shaped hill with two tops, which give it the modern name of 'the Horns of Hattin,' Hattin being the village on the ridge at its base. This mountain or hill, for it only

rises sixty feet above the plain, is that known to pilgrims as the Mount of the Beatitudes, the supposed scene of the 'Sermon on the Mount.' The tradition cannot lay claim to any early date; it was in all probability suggested first to the Crusaders, by its remarkable situation. But that situation so strikingly coincides with the intimations of the gospel narrative, as almost to force the inference, that, in this instance, the eye of those who selected the spot was for once rightly guided. It is the only height seen in this direction from the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret. The plain on which it stands is easily accessible from the lake, and from that plain to the summit is but a few minutes walk. The platform at the top is evidently suitable for the collection of a multitude, and corresponds precisely to the 'level place' to which He would 'come down' as from one of its higher horns to address the people. Its situation is central, both to the peasants of the Galilean hills and the fishermen of the Galilean lake, between which it stands, and would therefore be a natural resort, both to 'Jesus and his disciples,' when they retired for solitude from the shores of the sea, and also to the crowds who assembled 'from Galilee, from Decapolis, from Jerusalem, from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.' None of the other mountains in the neighborhood could answer equally well to this description; inasmuch as they merged into the uniform barrier of hills round the lake, whereas this stands separate, 'the mountain,' which alone could lay claim to a distinct name, with the exception of one height of Tabor, which is too distant to answer the requirements."

**Mustard Seed.**—Dr. Royle, in a paper read before the Royal Asiatic Society, 1844, concludes that the *Salvadora Persica* is the mustard tree of Scripture. He supposed the *Salvadora Persica* to be the same as the tree called *Khardal*, (the Arabic for mustard,) seeds of which are employed throughout Syria as a substitute for mustard, of which they have the taste and properties. It grows from a very small seed to a tree with a wooden fibre, and to such a size that it can be climbed by a man. It produces numerous branches and leaves, among which, birds may and do take shelter, and build their nests. Others maintain that some mustard plant (*Sinapis*) may be the mustard tree to which our Lord refers, Luke xiii. 19. Prof. Hackett, speaking of a little forest of mustard trees which he saw during his travels in the East, says: "As I stood and looked, one of the fowls of heaven

stopped in its flight through the air, alighted down on one of the branches, which hardly moved beneath the shock, and then began, perched before my eyes, to warble forth a strain of the richest music." Dr. Thomson also says he saw the wild mustard on the rich plain of Akkhar as tall as the horse and rider. The expression, "which is the least of all seeds," is in all probability hyperbolical, to denote a very small seed indeed, as there are many seeds which are smaller than mustard. "The Lord in his popular teaching," says Trench, "adhered to the popular language," and the mustard seed was used proverbially to denote any thing very minute.

**Nazareth**—Is situated among the hills which constitute the south ridges of Lebanon, just before they sink down into the plain of Esdraelon. Of the identification of the ancient site there can be no doubt. The name of the present village is *es Nāzirah*, the same, therefore, as of old; it is formed on a hill or mountain, Luke iv. 29; it is within the limits of the province of Galilee, Mark i. 9; it is near land, according to the implication in John ii. 1, 2, 11; a precipice exists in the neighborhood, Luke iv. 29; and, finally, a series of testimonies reach back to Eusebius, the father of church history, which represent the place as having occupied an invariable position. The modern Nazareth belongs to the better class of Eastern villages. It has a population of 3,000 or 4,000, a few are Mohammedans, the rest Latin and Greek Christians. Most of the houses are well built of stone, and have a neat and comfortable appearance. The streets or lanes are narrow and crooked, and after rain are so full of mud and mire as to be almost impassable. Stanley gives the following account of Nazareth: "It is one peculiarity of the Galilean hills, as distinct from those of Ephraim or Judah, that they contain or sustain green basins or tableland just below their topmost ridges. Such above all is *Nazareth*. Fifteen gently rounded hills 'seem as if they met to form an enclosure' for this peaceful basin; 'they rise round it like the edge of a shell to guard it from intrusion. It is a rich and beautiful field' in the midst of these green hills, abounding in gay flowers, in fig-trees, small gardens, hedges of the prickly pear, and the dense rich grass affords an abundant pasture. The village stands on the steep slope of the southeastern side of the valley. From the crest of the hills which thus screen it, especially from that called 'Nebi-said,' or 'Isaiah,' on the western side, is one of the most striking views in

Palestine. There are Tabor with its rounded dome on the northeast, Hermon's white top in the distant north, Carmel and the Mediterranean Sea to the west, a conjunction of those three famous mountains, probably unique in the views of Palestine. And in the nearer prospect, there are the uplands in which Nazareth itself stands, its own circular basin behind it; on the west, enclosed by similar hills overhanging the plain of Acre, lies the town of Sepphorieh, the Roman capital. On the south and southeast lies the broad plain of Esdraelon, overhung by the high pyramidal hill which, as the highest point of the Nazareth range, and thus the most conspicuous to travellers approaching from the plain, has received, though without any historical ground, the name of the 'Mount of Precipitation.' These are the natural features which, for nearly thirty years, met the almost daily view of Him who 'increased in wisdom and stature' within this beautiful seclusion. It is the seclusion which constitutes its peculiarity and its fitness for these scenes of the gospel history. Unknown and unnamed in the Old Testament, Nazareth first appears as the retired abode of the humble carpenter. Its separation from the busy world may be the ground, as it certainly is an illustration, of the Evangelist's play on the word, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.' Its wild character, high up in the Galilean hills, may account both for the roughness of its population, unable to appreciate their own Prophet, and for the evil reputation which it had acquired even in the neighboring villages, one of whose inhabitants, Nathaniel of Cana said, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' There, secured within the natural barrier of the hills, was passed that youth, of which the most remarkable characteristic is its absolute obscurity, and thence came the name of *Nazarene*, used of old by the Jews, and used still by Mussulmans, as the appellation of that despised sect which has now embraced the civilized world."

**Nineveh**.—The capital of the ancient kingdom and empire of Assyria, Jonah iii. 6; 2 Kings xix. 36. The name appears to be compounded from that of an Assyrian deity, "Nin," corresponding, it is conjectured, with the Greek Hercules, and occurring in the names of several Assyrian kings, as in "Ninus," the mythic founder, according to Greek tradition, of the city. Nineveh is first mentioned in the Old Testament in connection with the primitive dispersions and migrations of the human race. Gen. x. 11, &c. It was a city of nineteen miles

in length and eleven in breadth, and from forty-eight to sixty miles in circumference, and contained a population of about six hundred thousand. Jonah iv. 11. It was surrounded by a wall one hundred feet high, and wide enough for three carriages to go abreast, and was fortified by fifteen hundred towers of two hundred feet in height. For its luxury and wickedness the judgments of God fell upon it. Neh. iii. 1; Zeph. ii. 13-15.

**Pharisees.**—This famous sect, which arose among the Jews after their return from their long captivity in Babylon, were so called from *Perishim*, the Aramaic form of the Hebrew word *Perashim*, "separated." The name does not occur in the Old Testament or in the Apocrypha, but it is usually considered that the Pharisees were essentially the same with the Assideans (*i. e.* *Chasidim*—godly men—saints) mentioned in the Books of Maccabees. Christ's teaching was in some respects thoroughly antagonistic to theirs. He denounced them in the bitterest language. Matt. xv. 7, 8; xxiii. 5, 13, 14, 15, 23; Mark vii. 6; Luke xi. 53, 54. They affected uncommon sanctity, and abounded in rites of purification, which they received on the authority of tradition, Matt. ix. 11, but in many cases they made void the law of God by their superstitious observance of the commandments of men, and were the slaves of lusts, and avarice, and pride. They were the bitter enemies of Christ. They believed in the resurrection of the body, a future state of rewards and punishments, and the existence of angels and spirits. Their fundamental principle was, that by the side of the written law there was an oral law to complete and explain the written law, given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and transmitted by him by word of mouth. The spirit of proselytism prevailed among them to a very great extent at the time of Christ.

**Publicans.**—These were inferior officers, generally Jews, employed as collectors of the Roman revenue. The Roman Senate farmed the direct taxes, and the customs, to capitalists, who undertook to pay a given sum in the treasury, (*publicum*), and hence received the name of *publicani*. In the provinces were managing directors, and under them were the *portitores*, the actual custom-house officers. The system was essentially a vicious one. The publicans, through their agents, overcharged when they had an opportunity, Luke iii. 13. They brought false charges of smuggling in the hope of extorting hush-money. Luke xix. 8. The employment brought out all the besetting vices of the Jewish character. The strong feel-

ing of many Jews as to the absolute unlawfulness of paying tribute at all, made matters worse. Mr. Morier, at Persepolis, observes: "Here is a station of *rah-dars*, or tollgatherers, appointed to levy a toll upon *kafilers*, or caravans of merchants; and who, in general, exercise their office with so much brutality and extortion that they are execrated by all travellers. The collections of the tolls are farmed, consequently extortion ensues, and as most of the *rah-dars* receive no other emolument than what they can exact over and above the prescribed dues from the travellers, their insolence is accounted for, and a cause sufficiently powerful is given for their insolence on the one hand, and the detestation in which they are held on the other." How unpopular the publicans were is evident from the fact that they were classed with sinners, Matt. ix. 11; xi. 19, with harlots, Matt. xxi. 31, 32, with the heathen, Matt. xviii. 17.

**Purse.**—A sort of girdle which the Hebrews took with them when on a journey, and which is often found at the present day in Eastern countries. It was used by them for carrying their money, Gen. xlii. 35; Prov. i. 14; Is. xlvi. 6; and if they were merchants, also their weights, Deut. xxv. 13; Mic. vi. 11. Ladies wore ornamental purses, Is. iii. 23. A part of the girdle, sufficient to encompass the body, was sewed double, and fastened with a buckle. The residue was wound round above and below the first fold, and tucked under. The first fold had an opening closed with a leather cover or strap, through which the contents of the purse were passed.

**Quarantania.**—In Matt. iv. 1, it is said: "Then was Jesus led up . . . into the wilderness." As the preposition *up* indicates that the wilderness was *high ground*, and the circumstances of the temptation suggest the nearness of the temple, we may accept the tradition which assigns the wilderness of Judea and Mount Quarantania as the locality. This is in the mountainous region toward Jericho, within a brief distance of Jerusalem. Dr. Durbin thus describes the scene on his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho:

"After pursuing our way for an hour or two down the rugged ravine which forms the road, we turned to the left, and ascended into the desolate and blackened mountains of the 'Wilderness of Judea,' the scene of John the Baptist's ministration and of our Lord's temptation. Of all the places in the world, it is naturally fitted for the centre and kingdom of Satan the destroyer, for, as Maundrell says, 'it is a most miserable, dry, barren place,

consisting of high, rocky mountains, so torn and disordered as if the earth had suffered some great convulsion, in which its very bowels had been turned outward.' This fearful wilderness, not ten miles east of Jerusalem, has always been the abode of violence and misery. The very road on which we passed was the scene of our Lord's parable of the Good Samaritan.

"About half way between Jerusalem and Jericho, we passed the crumbling walls of a large khan, with immense cisterns. Following the rugged road often through avenues cut in the rock, we came, by two o'clock, to the eastern edge of the wilderness, which overlooks the plains of Jericho, clad in deep green verdure, caused by the fertilizing streams of the Fountain of Elisha. Beyond it, deep in the valley, and as yet invisible, flowed the Jordan, while the view beyond was closed by the dark masses of the mountains of Moab, inviting the eye of the pilgrim to select *Nabo* and *Pisgal*. I paused on the brow of the mountain, near the well-preserved remains of a Roman aqueduct, which once supplied water to the city of Jericho, and gazed upon this wide and gloomy panorama encircling the rich green plain which lay spread out far away below me. Immediately around was the dreary wilderness already described, to the right in their deep, sombre bed lay the still waters of the Dead Sea, far to the left the mountains of the wilderness projected into the Jordan, and closed the plain to the north. In that direction, just above the Fountain of Elisha, rose above the rest the dark, thunder-scathed head of Mount *Quarantania*, which tradition assigns as the 'exceeding high mountain' from which Satan showed our Lord 'all the kingdoms of this world.' Its summit seems inaccessible, yet a little chapel is perched upon it, and its side next the Jordan is cut into caverns and chambers in which we saw at night the fitting taper of the hermit, or of the pilgrim doing penance during Lent."

**Sadducees.**—The origin of the name of this sect is involved in great difficulties. The ordinary Jewish statement is, that they were named from a certain Zadoc, a disciple of that Antigonus of Socho who is mentioned in the Mishna as having received the oral law from Simon the Just, the last of the Great Synagogue. The leading tenet of the Sadducees was the negation of the leading tenet of their opponents. As the Pharisees asserted, so the Sadducees denied, that the Israelites were in possession of an oral law transmitted to them by Moses. In opposition to the

Pharisees, they maintained that the written law alone was obligatory on the nation, as of Divine authority. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They denied there was "angel or spirit." Josephus states that the Sadducees believed in the *freedom of the will*, which the Pharisees denied. Some of the early Christian writers attribute to the Sadducees the rejection of all the sacred Scriptures, except the Pentateuch. They, as well as the Pharisees, were bitterly opposed to Christ, and often contended with Him on the points which were peculiar to their sect; but they seem to have mustered their strength, and to have come forth with all their power against the Apostles, when they preached the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which single fact was a death-blow to their system. The sect derived, no doubt, much of its character from Grecian philosophy. They were generally aristocrats in government, philosophical in profession, and ambitious of rule. Many of the Jewish statesmen were Sadducees.

**Samaritans.**—The peculiar history of the Samaritans is mostly learned from the Old Testament. After the revolt of the ten tribes, Samaria became their capital, and from it the population generally received the name Samaritans. In the ninth year of Hoshea, king of Israel, the main body of the better population were taken captive and transported by Shalmanezzer to Assyria. 2 Kings xvii. To fill their place, a population of Assyrians was colonized by the same king in Northern Palestine. These idolaters were assailed by lions, and considering their depredations to be produced by the anger of Jehovah, the God of Israel, they sent for a priest of the tribe of Levi, who came by their wish and dwelt in Bethel, to teach them the religion of the true God. A mixed religion, as well as a mixed people, resulted. Idolatry and Judaism were combined in their doctrines, Assyrian and Israelite blood were blended in their race.

When the Jews returned from their captivity to Judea, feuds arose between the Samaritans and Jews, which last to the present hour. In the reign of Darius Nothus, king of Persia, Manasses, son of the high priest of the Jews, married the daughter of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, and being required by the Mosaic law to divorce her, he preferred to go over to the Samaritans. Under the patronage of his father-in-law he became Samaritan high priest, with a temple erected for him on Mount Gerizim. From that time Jew and Samaritan became hateful to each other. Of the Samaritans

only a few families now remain, namely, at *Nablaa*, the ancient Shechem, at which place, though in very mean plight, they have a settlement consisting of about two hundred persons. They observe the law, and celebrate the Passover on a sacred spot on Mount Gerizim, with an exactness of minute ceremonial which the Jews themselves have long intermitted.

**Sandals.**—The word translated *shoes*, Luke iii. 16, has a signification different from what it has in our language. At first, in order to keep the feet from the sharp stones, or the burning sand, small pieces of wood were fastened to the soles of the feet, called *sandals*. Leather, or skins of beasts dressed, afterwards was used. The foot was not covered at all; but the sandal, or piece of leather, or wood, was bound by thongs. The wooden sandal is much worn in Arabia, Judea, and Egypt. It has a raised heel and toe, and, though often expensive and neat, it was usually a cheap, coarse, and very clumsy article.

**Scribes.**—The Scribes were originally the secretaries of the king, writing his letters, drawing up his decrees, managing his finances. 2 Kings xii. 10; 2 Sam. xx. 25. Afterwards they became a learned class, students and interpreters of the law. The seventy years of the captivity gave a fresh glory to the name. The exiles would be anxious above all things to preserve the sacred books, the laws, the hymns, the prophecies of the past. To transcribe and preserve these was the office of the Scribe. See Ezra vii. 10. He was "to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." The boy who was destined by his parents to the calling of a Scribe, went to Jerusalem, and was admitted to the school of some famous Rabbi, at whose feet he sat. His education was chiefly catechetical. After sufficient training, probably at the age of thirty, the probationer was solemnly admitted to his office. After this he might become a doctor of the law, an arbitrator in family litigations, the head of a school, a member of the Sanhedrim, or he might content himself with the humble work of a transcriber, copying the law and the Prophets, for the use of synagogues, or a notary writing out contracts of sales, covenants of espousals, bills of repudiation.

**Scrip.**—This was a bag in which the shepherds of Palestine carried their food or other necessaries. The scrip of the Galilean, made of skin or coarse cloth, was used especially to carry their food on a journey, and slung over their shoulders.

**Showbread.**—Literally, "bread of the

face," or "faces." See Exod. xxv. 30; xxxv. 13; xxxix. 36, &c. Within the Ark it was directed that there should be a table of shittim wood, i. e., *acacia*, two cubits in length, a cubit in breadth, and a cubit and a half in height, overlaid with pure gold, and "having a golden crown to the border thereof round about," i. e., a border or list, in order, as we may suppose, to hinder that which was placed on it from, by any accident, falling off. The table stood in the sanctuary, together with the seven-branched candlestick and altar of incense. Every Sabbath twelve newly-baked loaves of unleavened bread were put on it in two rows, six in each, and sprinkled with incense, where they remained till the following Sabbath. Then they were replaced by twelve new ones, the incense was burned, and they were eaten by the priests in the Holy Place, out of which they might not be removed. The twelve loaves plainly answer to the twelve tribes. Compare Rev. xxii. 2. In regard to the meaning of this rite, than which none is left in Scripture more wholly unexplained, it may be that by "the bread of the face" we are to understand that bread through which God is seen, that is, with the participation of which the seeing of God is bound up, or through the participation of which man attains the sight of God. Whence it follows, that we have not to think of bread merely as such, as the means of nourishing the bodily life, but as spiritual food, as a means of appropriating and retaining that life which consists in seeing the face of God.

**Synagogue.**—Though the word means a "congregation," it is used in the New Testament to signify a recognized place of worship. Synagogues appear to have arisen during the exile, in the abeyance of the temple-worship, and to have received their full development on the return of the Jews from captivity. The size of a synagogue, like that of a church or chapel, varied with the population. There were no fixed laws of proportion for its dimensions, like those which are traced, in the Tabernacle and the Temple. Its position was, however, determinate. It stood, if possible, on the highest ground, in or near the city to which it belonged. Falling this, a tall pole rose from the roof to render it conspicuous. Its direction, too, was fixed. Jerusalem was the *Kibleh* of Jewish devotion, and the synagogue was so constructed, that the worshippers, as they entered, and as they prayed, looked toward it. The building was set apart by a special prayer of dedication. From that time it had a consecrated character. Eating, drinking, reckoning up

accounts were forbidden in it. Even if it ceased to be used, the building was not to be applied to any base purpose. In the internal arrangement of the synagogue we trace an obvious analogy to the type of the Tabernacle. At the upper or Jerusalem end stood the Ark, the chest which, like the older and more sacred Ark, contained the Book of the Law. This part was the place of honor. Matt. xxiii. 6; James ii. 2, 3. In front of the Ark, still reproducing the Type of the Tabernacle, was the eight-branched lamp, lighted only on the greater festivals. Besides this, there was one lamp kept burning perpetually. Others, brought by devout worshippers, were lighted at the beginning of the Sabbath, i. e., on Friday evening. A little further towards the middle of the building was a raised platform, on which several persons could stand at once, and in the middle of this rose a pulpit, in which the reader stood to read the lesson, or sat down to teach. The congregation were divided, men on one side, women on the other, a low partition, five or six feet high, running between them. Within the Ark, as above stated, were the rolls of the sacred books. The rollers round which they were wound were often elaborately decorated, the cases for them embroidered or enamelled, according to their material. As part of the fittings there were also, 1. Another chest for the *Haphtaroth*, or rolls of the Prophets. 2. Alms-boxes at or near the door, after the pattern of those at the Temple, one for the poor of Jerusalem, the other for local charities. 3. Notice-boards, on which were written the names of offenders who had been "put out of the synagogue." 4. A chest for trumpets and other musical instruments, used at the New Years, Sabbaths, and other festivals. The synagogue was commonly erected at the east of the district. Sometimes it was built by a rich Jew, or even a friendly proselyte. Luke vii. 5.

**Tares.**—"The tares," says Dr. Thomson, "abounds all over the East, and is a great nuisance to the farmer. It resembles the American *cheat*, but the *head* does not droop like cheat, nor does it branch out like oats. The grain, also, is smaller, and is arranged along the upper part of the stalk, which stands perfectly erect. The *tare* is bitter, and when eaten separately, or even when diffused in ordinary bread, it causes dizziness, and often acts as a violent emetic. Barn-door fowls also become dizzy from eating it. In short, it is a strong soporific poison, and must be carefully winnowed and picked out of the

wheat, grain by grain, before grinding, or the flour is not healthy."

**Temple.**—The sacred edifice erected at Jerusalem, as a permanent place of worship for the Jewish Church. Historically, there was a *First Temple* and a *Second*. The First, or Solomon's Temple, was the proper successor of the tabernacle built by Moses in the wilderness, being to it as a palace compared with a most humble cot, but upon the same model. It was, indeed, intended to be the house of God, the palace of Jehovah, God and King of the Jews. The temple or house proper was an oblong in form, and divided into two rooms, the interior one being the holy of holies, the exterior, or front one, the holy place. In the former was the Ark containing the Law, the lid of which was the mercy-seat, upon which rested the Shekinah, or cloud of the visible Divine presence. Over this mercy-seat, two cherubim bent face to face, whence God dwelt between the cherubim. As Jehovah here dwelt, so the forward room contained His furniture, namely, the golden candlestick, the table of presence-bread, (show-bread,) the altar of incense or perfumery. The priests and Levites were His royal servants. Before the door of the Temple stood the great brazen altar, upon which were sacrificed (as the royal food) the offered beasts.

Around the Temple building were the Temple courts or enclosures. The first was the court of the priests, into which none but the priestly order might enter. Enclosing this was the court of Israel, into which all male Jews might enter, and fronting these, the court of women. Gentiles were admitted only to the outermost court, enclosing the whole. Each inner court rose, as in terraces, higher than the outer, so that the temple building mounted conspicuous above the whole.

The Second Temple, built upon the same site and model, after the captivity, and rebuilt by Herod the Great, was that which existed in our Saviour's time. The entire Temple area was a square, with an eighth of a mile to each side. It was entered by nine magnificent gates. The inside of the outermost wall was lined with covered promenades, called porches or porticoes, with cedar roofs, supported by marble columns and with floors of smooth, solid, variegated marble. These *porches* were thirty cubits wide, and the south side one was thrice as wide. There was a synagogue-room in the south porch, which was the place where religious services were performed. In this synagogue it was

that the doctors discoursed, that Christ taught, and the disciples daily assembled with one accord. Acts ii. 6. Hither resorted for recreation or converse, Jew or Gentile. From the summit of the wall, the perpendicular descent was unbroken to the bottom of the Kedron. At the southwest corner was the lofty pinnacle where the Saviour was tempted of Satan to leap into the awful chasm below.

Near the northern wall stood the Tower of *Antonia*, overtopping the Temple, in which the Roman garrison was placed to maintain order. It was a square building, with a side of three hundred feet. A subterranean passage led from the tower to the court of the Gentiles, so that the Roman soldiery could enter at any time to suppress tumult. Besides this, the Jews had a small body of men, under a captain, to keep order about the Temple grounds.

The walls of the Temple were built of hard, white stone, of stupendous size. From Mount Olivet the spectacle was truly magnificent. But the Jews held that those five ancient endowments were wanting to the Second Temple, namely, the *Ark*, the *Urim and Thummim*, the *Fire from Heaven*, the *Shekinah*, and the spirit of *Prophecy*. Yet in glorious fulfilment of the prophecy of Haggai, ii. 9, by the presence of Jesus the glory of the latter house surpassed all the endowments of the Temple of Solomon. This Temple was razed to its foundation by the Romans; A. D. 70-71, and the site of it was made like a ploughed field. Jer. xxvi. 18; Matt. xxiv. 2. It is now occupied by a Turkish mosque, which neither Jew nor Christian was, until lately, permitted to enter.

The veneration with which the Temple was regarded by the Jews appears from the manner in which they treated any sup-

posed disrespectful allusion to it. Matt. xxvi. 61; John ii. 19, 20; Acts xxi. 28, 29, xxiv. 6, xxv. 8.

Twelve.—“In the Scriptures,” says Professor Stuart, “we might naturally expect to find the number *twelve* often introduced, on account of the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, in Exod. xv. 27, twelve fountains of water at Elin; Exod. xxiv. 4, twelve pillars around the altar; Lev. xxiv. 5, twelve cakes of show-bread; Exod. xxviii. 10, 12, twelve gems in the breast-plate of the high-priest; Num. vii. 8, 87, xxix. 17, offerings of different kinds by twelves; Num. vii. 84-87, various vessels to be made for the Temple by twelves; Num. xiii. 3, *seq.*, twelve spies to the land of Canaan; Josh. iv. 3, twelve stones from the Jordan, carried by twelve men, and thrown into a monumental heap; 1 Kings iv. 7, 26, twelve prefects of Solomon’s household, and twelve thousand horsemen; 1 Kings vii. 25, twelve brazen oxen, supporting the laver; 1 Kings x. 20, twelve brazen lions near the throne; Ezek. xlili. 16, the altar twelve cubits long and broad; not to mention many other twelves. In the New Testament, the twelve Apostles take the lead. In the Apocalypse, we have twelve thousand in each of the twelve tribes; who are sealed in the forehead as the servants of God. Rev. vii. 4, *seq.* In Rev. xxi. 12, *seq.*, we have an account of the New Jerusalem with twelve gates (comp. Ezek. xlviii. 31, *seq.*) and twelve angels to keep them, and the names of the twelve tribes are written on them. There are also twelve rows of stones in the foundation of the walls on which the names of the twelve Apostles are inscribed. Besides all this, the city measures twelve thousand furlongs, and its walls are twelve times twelve cubits high.”