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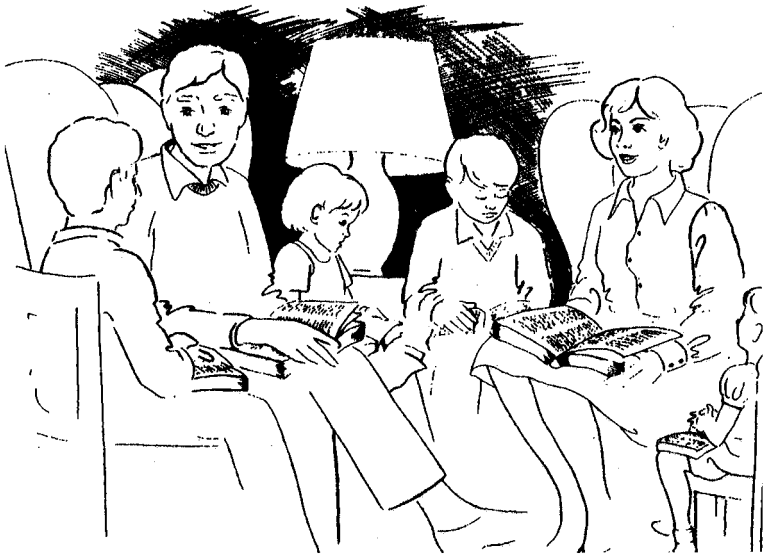
April 2005

The Story of the Bible

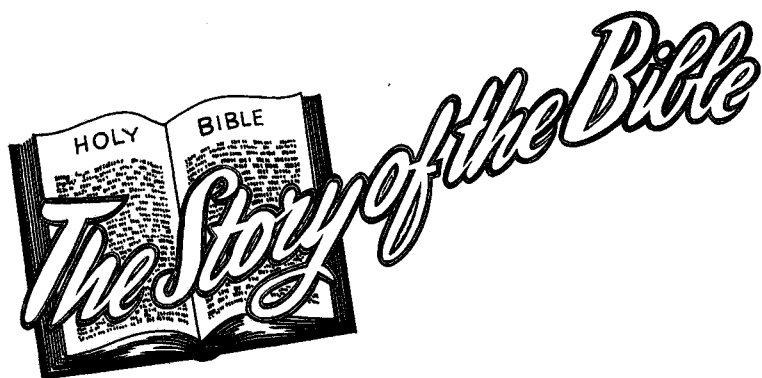


*A detailed exposition of the Bible
discussed within the family circle
by H. P. Mansfield*

Edited by Graeham E. Mansfield



The children of the Phillips family gather with their parents for a daily reading of the Bible — an important part of their lives. Then they discuss together the remarkable events recorded in the greatest Book in all the world.



The Last Hours of the Lord's Ministry to his Ascension to Heaven

This seventh volume of our *Story of the Bible* concludes the dramatic narrative of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes us into the most intimate moment in history: when the Redeemer is seen under extreme trial, rejected by his people, forsaken by his apostles, misunderstood by his family, but determined to complete the work for which he had been sent.

Previous volumes have traced his life from birth, through boyhood, manhood and public ministry, until he arrived at the city of Jericho on his last journey to Jerusalem. We now follow the Master during the last week of his earthly ministry, as he trod his lonely way to the stake, with both friends and foes misunderstanding him.

Only 20 miles (32 kilometres) separated him from the city to which he was heading, and only a week remained before the climax of his earthly ministry would be sealed with his blood in the tragedy and triumph of the stake.

More detail is given of those few remaining days, than all the other years of the Lord's life. For example, Matthew devotes twenty chapters to the first 33 years of Christ's life, and nearly eight chapters to the last seven days!

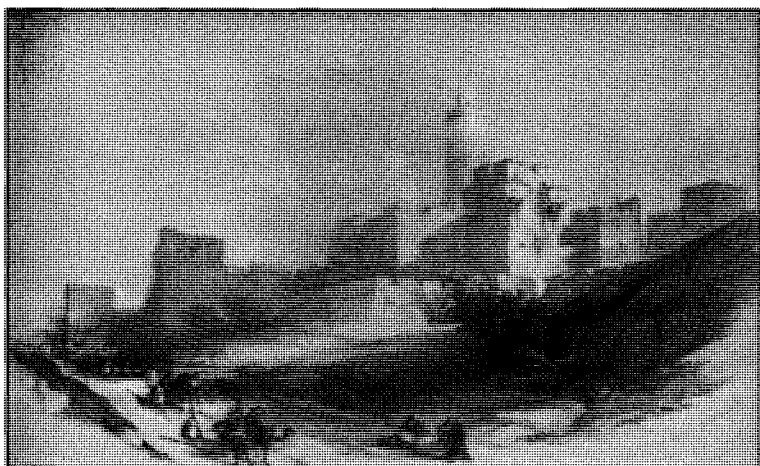
The other Gospel accounts are similar. Of the eighty-nine chapters into which the four records are divided, nearly thirty are given over to the last few days that the Lord spent in Jerusalem.

This is only fitting, of course, for the incidents therein recorded are the most important and significant in the history of humanity. As we have come to study these chapters in detail, we have been amazed at the drama-packed narrative that develops.

In some regards, we have been compelled to drastically revise and change our previous conception of these incidents. But we feel that in doing so, a more complete picture of the Lord and his associates has emerged. Certainly it has enabled us to perceive more clearly the incidents that led to the crucifixion; bewildering incidents that caused confusion and dismay to the apostles who were confidently looking forward to glory and kingship.

The study we have put into the Gospel records in order to prepare this volume of the *Story of the Bible* has been among the most rewarding of all the studies upon which we have engaged. It has enabled us to create a better mental image of the Lord, and therefore helped to bring him closer to us. We trust that the effort to place some of the results of our study on paper may assist others in the same direction, and encourage them to seek more deeply into the Gospel records, that they may consider with even greater perception that which has been fittingly described as "The Greatest Story in the World."

— *Graeham E. Mansfield*



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*Artist's impression
of Christ riding into
Jerusalem*

*Throughout this
volume illustrations
especially of the
Master are gleaned
from different
artists, who portray
their own
impressions.*



LIFE OF THE LORD IN PROPHECY

The life and mission of the Lord Jesus was predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures to a very detailed extent; and as he was steeped in the knowledge of these prophecies, the record of his own biography was laid out before him, from beginning to end, before it came to pass. As he studied the Psalms, the Prophets, and the writings of Moses, he would be able to discern his mission, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, his glorious destiny as the world's future king. Thus he was able by "beginning at Moses and all the prophets" to expound unto the disciples "in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Here are a few of the many references that can be found in the Old Testament predicting his life and ministry.

Subject.....Prophesied Fulfilled

Childhood

His birth of a virgin Isa. 7:14 Mat. 1:23
 The place of his birth.....Mic. 5:2 Mat. 2:6
 The early attack on his life Jer. 31:15 Mat. 2:18
 The flight into Egypt Hos. 11:1 Mat. 2:15
 His early upbringing Isa. 7:15 Luke 2:52

Ministry

John Baptist prepares the way Isa. 40:3 John 1:19-23
 Christ's teaching Isa. 61:1-2.....Luke 4:18-21
 The rejection of his teaching

 by Jews.....Isa. 8:14-15.....Luke 2:34

Appointment of disciples.....Isa. 8:16 Mat. 10:2

Main area of his preaching

 (Galilee) Isa. 9:1-2.....Mat. 4:12-16

His humility and gentleness Isa. 42:1-3.....Mat. 11:29

His miracles and cures.....Isa. 53:4 Mat. 8:17

His burning zeal.....Psa. 69:9 John 2:17

His relations disbelieve him Psa. 69:8 John 7:5

His appearance and suffering Isa. 52:14 Heb. 5:7-8

Saviour to Jew and Gentile Isa. 49:5-9.....Acts 5:31

Triumphal entry into Jerusalem.....Zech. 9:9.....Mat. 21:9

Sacrificial nature of his death Isa. 53 Rom. 3:25-26

Time and purpose of his death.....Dan. 9:24-27....Lk. 18:31-33

Betrayal

Betrayed by a familiar friend.....Psa. 109:2-6 John 6:70-71

Judas bargains for betrayal money ..Zech. 11:12.....Mat. 26:14-15

The price of betrayal Zech. 11:12.....Mat. 26:15

The use of the betrayal money Zech. 11:13.....Mat. 27:5-7
 Taken prisoner Isa. 53:7 Mat. 26:51-54

Crucifixion

Brought up for judgment Isa. 53:8 Mat. 26:57
 Buffeted and spat upon Isa. 50:6 Mat. 26:67
 Scourged Isa. 53:5 John 19:1
 Deserted by his friends Psa. 69:20 Mat. 26:56
 Crucified Psa. 22:16 Mat.27:35
 Clothes divided by the soldiers Psa. 22:18 Mat. 27:35
 The soldiers cast lots for his coat Psa. 22:18 John 19:23-24
 The onlookers mock him Psa. 22:7-8 Mat. 27:39-43
 Thieves crucified with him Isa. 53:12 Mat. 27:38

Death, Burial and Resurrection

His prayer on the stake Psa. 22:1 Mat. 27:46
 The cause of his death Psa. 69:20 John 19:33
 Not a bone broken Psa. 34:20 John 19:36
 Buried in a rich man's grave Isa. 53:9 Mat. 27:57-60
 Resurrection.....Psa. 16:9-10 Acts 2:31
 Ascension to heaven Psa. 68:18 Eph. 4:8
 Glorification as Priest Psa. 110:1-2,4..Heb. 6:20

Second Advent

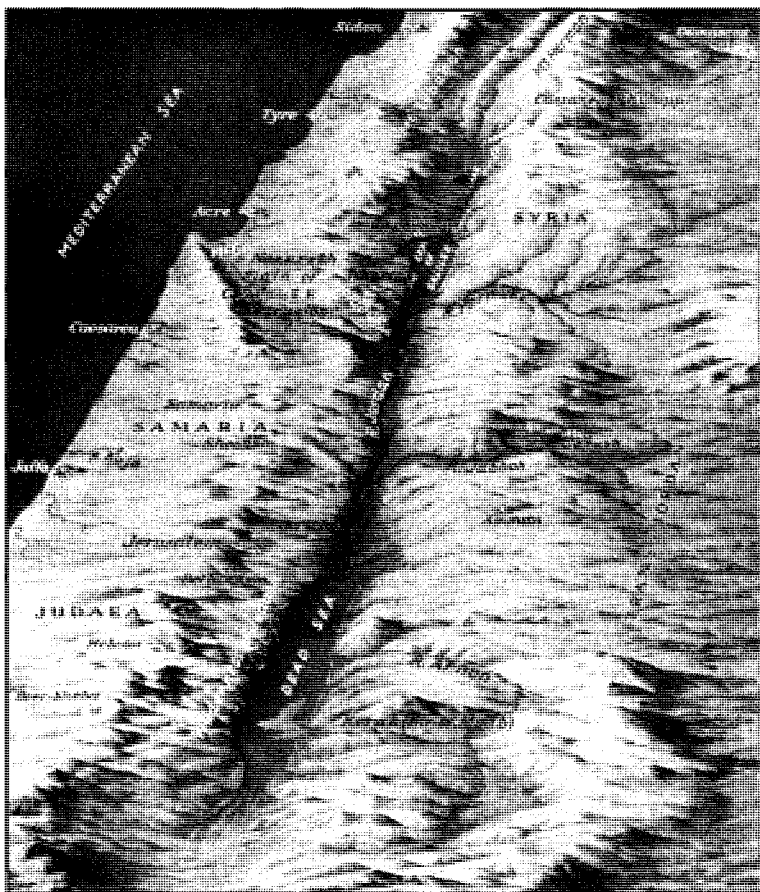
To return to earth Psa. 110:1 Acts 1:11
 To reign on earth Zech. 14:9.....Luke 1:33
 Jerusalem his coming Metropolis Jer. 3:17 Mat. 5:35
 To reign with his immortalised
 followers Dan. 7:27 Rev. 5:9-10
 Judah to be converted Zech. 12:10.....Rom. 11:26
 Israel disciplined and converted Eze. 36:24-28 ..John 11:52
 To be acknowledged King
 of Israel Eze. 37:22.....Mat. 19:28
 Gentiles to be disciplined Mic. 4:3-4.....2Thes. 1:8
 Gentiles to be converted Jer. 16:19 Rev. 11:15
 Universal peace to be established Isa. 2:2-4.....Luke 2:14
 Sin and death greatly to be
 modified Isa. 65:20-22....Rev. 20:2
 Sin and death to be destroyed Isa. 42:5-8.....1Cor. 15:26

Long before the birth of the Lord, faithful men of old understood that these prophecies related to Christ. Peter declared: "David... knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne; he seeing this before spake of his resurrection" (Acts 2:30-

31). David's understanding of his glorious Son was therefore more complete than many recognise.

Jesus had a better understanding of these prophecies than anybody else. Being the antitypical Joseph, he knew that his betrayer's name was Judas; being the Lamb of God he knew the very time he would expire on the stake; being familiar with Daniel's prophecies (see ch. 9:26), he would know the very year it would take place. From the Scriptures, therefore, he knew the very hour, the day, the month, and the year, he would die upon the stake! He was thus able to warn his disciples of these matters and speak of the "hour" when they would come to pass (see Mat. 26:18,45; John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23).

It is profitable to search the Old Testament Scriptures for further prophecies of the Lord's first advent, to learn how completely this had been set forth by Yahweh, his heavenly Father.



THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE LORD

(continued from volume 6, page 331)

The four accounts of the last week of the Master contained in the Gospel records, are the most difficult in all Scripture to harmonise and synchronise. That is doubtless due to the fact that the minds of the apostles were so confused and dismayed at the turn of events that their attention was centred upon their individual feelings and experiences to the exclusion of the main developments; and to an extent that has entered into their several narratives. There are no contradictions in their accounts, but they faithfully capture the general state of confusion and bewilderment at the events, and through that troubled skein of incidents and feelings, we must carefully pick our way.

In order to properly harmonise the events that took place in the life of the Lord during the last week of his ministry, extreme care must be taken of such little words as "then," such as in Matthew 26:14. These are time indications, for the Gospel records are not always set in their chronological sequence. However, when the four accounts are drawn together, a most stimulating picture emerges of this most remarkable and tragic week in the history of the world. The Lord stands out supremely, as victor over the flesh in every way, and we are drawn closer to him in understanding as we see him patiently bearing the load of suffering and responsibility that was his to carry. It is well worth a little extra effort to try and obtain a clear picture of this most dramatic week.

THE LAST WEEK

[1] From the Jordan to Jerusalem.

- a. Jesus warns of his impending death (Mat. 20:17-19; Mk. 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34).
- b. The thoughtless petition of James and John (Mat. 20:20-23; Mk. 10:35-40)
- c. The jealousy of the Twelve is rebuked (Mat. 20:24-28; Mark 10:41-45).
- d. Healing the blind man near Jericho (Luke 18:35-42).
- e. Zacchaeus: The Little Man up a Tree (Luke 19:1-10).
- f. The Parable of the Nobleman (Luke 19:11-28).
- g. Blind Bartimaeus Healed (Mat. 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52).
- h. The Passover crowds await Jesus' coming (John 11:55-57).

[2] Friday — 9th Abib.

- a. Jesus arrives at Bethany (John 12:1).

[3] Saturday — 10th Abib

- a. Mary anoints Jesus (Mat. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9; John 12:2-3).

- b. Judas rebuked seeks to betray Jesus (Mat. 26:14-16; Mk. 14:10-11; John 12:4-11).
- c. Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mat. 21:1-11; Mk. 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19).
- d. The Lord heals, the children sing, the priests threaten (Mat. 21:15-16).
- e. He returns to Olivet for the night (Mat. 21:17; Mark 11:11; Luke 21:37).

[4] Sunday — 11th Abib

- a. Jesus curses the fig tree (Mat. 21:18-19; Mark 11:12-14).
- b. Jesus cleanses the temple (Mat. 21:12-14; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46).
- c. The Priests reveal murderous hatred (Mark 11:18-19; Luke 19:47-48).

[5] Monday — 12th Abib

- a. The lesson of the withered Fig Tree (Mat. 21:20-22; Mark 11:20-26).
- b. Jesus' Authority Questioned by the Priests (Mat. 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8).
- c. Three Parables of Warning for Jews:
 - Parable of two rebellious sons (Mat. 21:28-32).
 - Parable of the Householder, Husbandmen and Heir (Mat. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-18).
 - Parable of the Marriage Feast (Mat. 22:1-14).
- d. Three Trick Questions:
 - Herodians Silenced — A question on politics (Mat. 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:19-26).
 - Infidel Sadducees Silenced — A question on doctrine (Mat. 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-38).
 - Self-righteous Pharisees silenced — A question on morals (Mat. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 20:39-40).
- e. Jesus' Unanswered Question: Whose Son is Christ? (Mat. 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44).
- f. Jesus' warning against the Scribes (Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:45-47).
- g. The Eight Great Woes and the Mourning Messiah (Mat. 23:1-39).
- h. The widow's liberality (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4).
- i. Some Greeks seek Jesus; His final public appeal (John 12:20-50).
- j. Jesus leaves the Temple and Predicts its destruction (Mat. 24:1-2; Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6).

Approaching Jerusalem for the Last Time



AS the Master faced the city of Jerusalem for the final time, knowing that the end of his labours amongst the people was quickly approaching, he would have detected the growing hostility of the leaders of Israel. They were watching his every action, desiring to trap him in his expressions or actions, and to remove his influence from amongst the people.

It was nearing Passover, and the crowds could be seen moving along the roadways of the country, merging into the entrances of Jerusalem itself.

Knowing his end was near, the Master took opportunity to strengthen his disciples for the trials ahead, and to prepare them for the terrible trauma they would soon experience. Interspersed with his actions, the Lord outlined a number of vital parables that provided an insight into the circumstances of those events occurring, as well as being prophetic of the future.



Chapter 1

THE PARABLE OF THE NOBLEMAN

This parable was delivered in the home of Zacchaeus, at the close of the day that the Lord entered the city of Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. Bearing in mind that a Jewish day commenced at 6 p.m. in the evening, and that the Lord entered Jerusalem the following afternoon, which was six days before the Passover (John 12:1), this evening commenced the ninth day of Abib.

The Lord stayed with Zacchaeus all that night. What a thrill it must have been for the one-time tax-gatherer to have the Scriptures expounded to him by Jesus himself, and to hearken to the reassuring words that flowed from the Master's lips. How his heart must have burned within him, as he determined to dedicate his future life unto Yahweh that he might attain unto the kingdom. And how the apostles must have enthusiastically entered into the general conversation, confidently believing that the setting up of the kingdom would be announced when they arrived at Jerusalem. To their minds it was an appropriate time for such a proclamation, for Passover commemorates the Deliverance from Egypt, and they believed that the setting up of the kingdom would deliver them from the Roman yoke that rested so heavily upon them.

For those two reasons: "because they were nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear" (Luke 19:11), Jesus delivered unto them the Parable of the Nobleman who went into a far country.

As we today live at the time of Christ's second advent, this parable has a very special meaning to us.

THE Master gathered his disciples around him, and commenced his parable: "A certain nobleman," he declared, "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. Before leaving, he called ten of his servants, and delivered unto them ten pounds: 'Trade with these while I go and return!' he instructed them. The nobleman then left on his mission, and his servants commenced carrying out his instructions. But his citizens detested him, and sent an embassy after him to say, 'We do not want this man to become ruler over us.' This embassy failed in its mission, however, and the nobleman received his appointment. He returned, having received the kingdom, and first ordered his servants to whom he had given the money to appear before him, that he might know how much each one had made by trading.

“The first one came before him, and said: ‘Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds!’ ‘Well done, thou good servant,’ replied the nobleman, ‘Because you have been faithful and trustworthy in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’ The second one also came, and said, ‘Lord, your pound has made five pounds!’ The nobleman said also to him, ‘And you will have charge over five cities.’ But another came and said, ‘Lord, here is your pound, which I have kept laid up in a handkerchief. For I was constantly afraid of you, because you are a severe man; you expect to pick up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow!’

“Sternly the nobleman looked at the presumptuous servant. ‘I will judge and condemn you out of your own mouth, you disobedient servant,’ he answered. ‘You knew, did you, that I was a severe man, picking up what I did not lay down, and reaping what I did not sow? Then why did you not put up my money in a bank, so that on my return I might have collected it with interest?’ Turning to other of his attendants looking on, he said: ‘Take the pound away from him, and give it to him who has the ten pounds!’ They were incredulous, and replied, ‘Lord, he has ten pounds already!’

“‘Never mind,’ replied the nobleman, ‘I tell you, that to every one who gets and has, will more be given; but from the man who does not get, and does not have, will be taken away even what he was given! As for those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence!’”

Why The Parable Was Given

The teaching of the parable is both significant and vital. Its primary meaning is clear.

Jesus represented himself as a nobleman who had to go into a far country (heaven) to receive his authority, and then return to take it up.

The parable thus clearly teaches the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to reign on earth.

The parable was prompted by the action of Zacchaeus, who had done very little, but that little, having been performed in faith, had received much, in that salvation had been promised him.

That is the point of Luke’s comment that Jesus “added and spake a parable.” The Lord “added” the parable to the promise of salvation, already given to Zacchaeus, to show when that salvation would come (Luke 19:11).

The second reason given for delivering the parable is that “he was nigh to Jerusalem.” This was a significant spot for such a parable to be given, because Jerusalem is “the city of the great king” (Mat. 5:35), the place from whence the Lord Jesus will reign when he returns to earth.

A third reason was because “they [the disciples] thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.” They were filled with thoughts of the kingly glory that they believed their beloved Lord would soon manifest, and ignoring the constant warnings that he had given them of his impending humiliation and death, they anticipated that he was about to proclaim himself as Messiah and King at that time, and to establish his rule throughout the land.

The parable was given to teach that some time must elapse before this would come to pass, and that in the meantime his citizens (the Jewish people) would hate him, and that his servants (his followers) would be left to themselves to be tested as to whether they would be worthy of the Kingdom or not.

A Contrast With The Parable Of The Talents

A few days later, the Lord delivered another parable to the disciples which is so similar to this one, that many confuse the two. But there are important differences as we shall see as we explain the significance of the parable.

This other parable is recorded in Mat. 25:14-30, and describes how a man, travelling into a far country, delivered certain money described as “talents” into the hands of his servants, and, instructing them as to what they should do, took his journey. Again, on his return, he rewarded his faithful servants, but rebuked and punished those who had not fulfilled his will.

In both cases, the reward and the punishment were similar. Despite the similarities, however, both parables are different, teaching two important lessons.

In the parable of the pounds, all the servants received the same amount; but in the parable of the talents, they received different amounts “according to their ability” (Mat. 25:15). In the parable of the pounds, the rewards differ according to the success of the trading; but in the parable of the talents, all the successful receive the same reward.

These differences provide the key to the understanding of the two parables. In the parable of the pounds, all receive the same amount, and are told to trade with it; in the parable of the talents, differing amounts are given according to individual ability.

What do the pounds represent as distinct from the talents?

The *pounds* represent the Gospel, which is given alike to all Christ’s servants, though some use it to better advantage than others, and, in consequence, will attain unto higher positions in the kingdom. The *talents* represent natural ability, the extent of which differs in each one, some having more ability than others. But, whether the ability be small or great, if it be used faithfully, it will bring a common reward.

What The Parable Taught

The Lord declared that the “nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.” However, the context clearly shows that the kingdom itself is not the “far country” but that the nobleman had to proceed there to receive the authority he exercised on his return, for it is not until then that he was able to appoint his servants to positions of authority.

The parable seems based upon the prophecy of Daniel 7, where the Son of Man is represented as being presented to the Father to receive “dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him... an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and a kingdom that shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:14).

In conformity with this, Peter wrote of Christ’s ascension into heaven: “*Jesus Christ is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him*” (1Pet. 3:22).

His servants, to whom had been entrusted the Gospel message, are the saints (Eph. 3:8-10), one of whom described himself as an “ambassador in bonds” for Christ (Eph. 6:20).

The parable clearly teaches that the judgment of the household will precede that of the nations, because the nobleman first called his servants before him that “he might know how much every man had gained by trading” (Lk. 19:15). At his return, Christ will want to know what his servants have done with the Gospel message that has been entrusted to their care.

Other passages of the Bible confirm this. Peter taught that “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1Pet. 4:17), and the Psalmist taught that it will be the honour and privilege of saints to pour out the divine judgments on the nations (Psa. 149), which clearly implies that their own judgment has already taken place (v. 4).

In regard to this judgment, Paul taught that “every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1Cor. 3:8); and the context shows that he is writing of the preaching of the Gospel. In this same chapter, he warns his readers to take heed as to how they preach (v. 10), for those who do so effectively “will receive a reward” (v. 14), whereas those who do not do so “will suffer loss” (v. 15).

That is the very principle stressed by the Lord in this parable. He taught the disciples that he must ascend into heaven, and that the responsibility would then rest upon them to proclaim the Gospel effectively, in faith that he will reward them for their services at the due time.

In the parable, Jesus described how that the citizens of the nobleman “hated him,” and declared, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Lk. 19:14).

Those were significant and ominous words, particularly so for the apostles, who a few days later, would hear the Jews angrily shout those words to the Roman Governor. When Pilate presented Jesus unto the multitude with the question, "Shall I crucify your king?" the people retorted, "We have no king but Caesar!" (John 19:15). In other words, they proclaimed, "We will not have this man reign over us!"

But in the parable, the nobleman returned to discipline and punish his enemies among whom were the citizens who repudiated him. So it will be at Christ's return. He will humble the Jewish people, and they will be severely punished for their wickedness and stubbornness (see Zech. 13:8-9), and if they remain obstinate, they will be destroyed.

It is important to consider both the attitude and the reward of the servants. Those who are approved are noted for their labour and humility. They are workers because they added to that which had been delivered into their care; they are humble as is shown by the way they addressed the nobleman. When the servant whose pound had gained ten pounds stands before his Lord, he does not say, "I have gained ten pounds," but "Lord, *thy* pound hath gained ten pounds." He does not claim that it has been his ability that has won something for his Lord, but the value of that which had been placed in his care.

So it is with the Gospel message.

Note carefully the nobleman's reply: "***Because you have been FAITHFUL IN A VERY LITTLE, have thou AUTHORITY OVER TEN CITIES.***" The servant's "little faith" had gained great reward. So it was with Zacchaeus; so it can be with us.

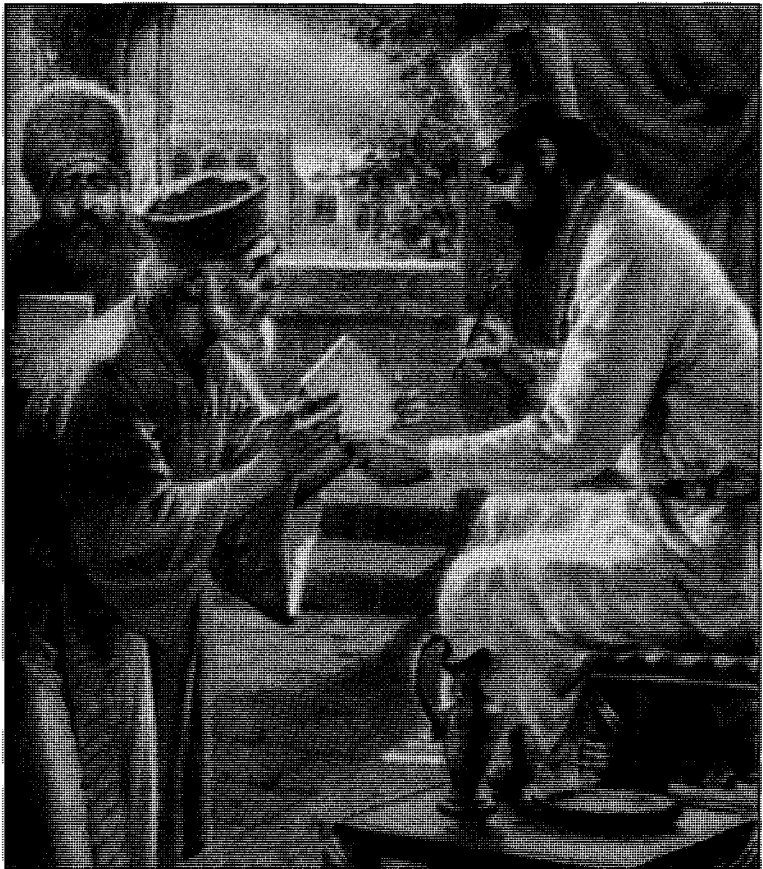
The third servant who was brought before the nobleman had nothing to offer, except the pound that he had carefully preserved in a handkerchief. He had not traded with that which had been left in his care, but merely kept it from pollution. Asked why he had not traded with it, he confessed to an entirely wrong conception of his lord. Out of his own mouth he was condemned; his pound was taken from him and given to the servant who had been most successful. This would imply that the opportunity of trading with the Gospel will not cease at Christ's return. There will still be the need to take it unto all people (Rev. 10:11), and the privilege of doing so will be given to those best qualified to perform it.

The unsuccessful servant was condemned because of his sin. But what was his sin? It was a sin of omission; he had not carried out the will of his lord. This teaches that there is a sin of omission, of not serving the Lord as he would desire us to do. It is not enough to have the Truth — this servant had the pound. It is not enough to keep it pure — this servant protected it by carefully wrapping it up. There is a need to be "occupied" with it; to trade with it.

Where do we stand in that direction? Only three of the ten servants are mentioned. What

of the other seven? There is an ominous silence regarding their fate, and only three are singled out as representatives of various classes. A great question mark remains as to what category in which we might find ourselves, for there are ten such to fill. Let us apply ourselves diligently to the work of the Lord.

The disobedient servant looked upon the nobleman as one to be feared, as a hard man, reaping where he had not sown. It is possible for us to feel like that toward Christ, believing that he has demanded impossible things of us; that he has called upon us to trade with the Gospel under circumstances where results are an impossibility. When we act or talk like that, we are like the foolish servant. He believed that success was dependent upon his own efforts, and did not realise the duty of performing the Lord's will, come what may. The successful servant said: "*Thy pound has gained...*" The unsuccessful



servant said: *"Thou reapest that thou didst not sow."*

If he really thought that, why did not he put the money into the bank? If he thought the Lord was harsh and unreasonable, should he not have laboured to pacify him at his return? Christ is not hard or unreasonable, but if we act as though he is, we will be treated thus at the judgment seat. Thus the Psalmist said of Yahweh:

*"With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful;
With an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright;
With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure;
And with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward.
For Thou wilt save the afflicted people;
But wilt bring down high looks."* (Psa. 18:25-27).

Upon What The Parable Was Based

Many of the parables of the Lord were based upon actual happenings which illustrated the spiritual truths he sought to convey. This parable probably hints at the action of Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great. On the death of his father, instead of entering immediately into the kingly inheritance that his father had bequeathed him, he shrewdly sought the permission of Rome to do so, in case the Government afterwards opposed him. This entailed a long journey to the capital of the Empire to present his case, a journey that proved very successful.

However, his petition was vigorously opposed by a deputation of fifty Jews who were sent to Rome to plead that he be not granted his request. It was embarrassing to Archelaus to have those who were really his citizens, publicly rebelling against his authority, and warning that they would not submit to his rule, but he conducted himself with humility before the Roman authorities, and presented his case to them so skilfully, that he was fully confirmed in his position, with the full weight of Roman power to back him up.

He returned determined to reward his supporters and avenge himself on his opponents. The former were given positions of eminence with him; the latter were severely punished with death.

The incident was well-known to all throughout Palestine, and fitly illustrated the greater status of the Lord Jesus, and the purpose of God in him. Though he is a king (Acts 17:7), he has not yet entered upon his full duties, and this delay provides scope for that part of the parable that relates to the nobleman's servants, and the work they were called upon to do in his absence.

We are today awaiting the return of the nobleman, who will suitably reward his faithful servants, and "judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31).

Chapter 2

TOWARD JERUSALEM

It was the ninth of Abib, "six days before the Passover" (John 12:1), when the Lord Jesus left Jericho for Jerusalem. This involved a 32 kilometre (20 miles) journey from Jericho, of about six hours duration, up through the hot, arid hills of Judea, along the steep, winding, robber-infested road to the city of David above. The Lord led the way, thoughtful and absorbed in the drama that would unfold when he arrived at that city of destiny. The disciples followed, confident that the time had arrived for the establishment of the kingdom, excited at the prospect of what they imagined awaited them in Jerusalem. They had completely failed to absorb the teaching of the Lord regarding his impending sacrifice.

Why was this? Why did they not understand him? He had expressed himself plainly enough! And why was it, that when he saw that they did not understand, he did not take the trouble to more definitely, clearly and simply explain to them the full extent of the terrible experiences that awaited him? We are not specifically told the reasons, but doubtless there were several. Firstly, there was a need for them to be personally tried, that they might be perfected. Secondly, their own blindness had to be impressed upon them so that they might learn by personal experience to deal more sympathetically with those who might similarly err (Heb. 5:2). Thirdly, there was a need for their suspense to serve as an example, that those who followed might clearly see the need to listen intently to every detail of God's Word, and believe it implicitly, even though it might seem to contain things they could not, at the time, fully appreciate.

The Lord had not neglected to explain to them what lay before them all, and the Old Testament Scriptures had certainly predicted it. But the disciples were figuratively deaf and blind, and therefore could not understand nor perceive what had been told them. Let us learn by their mistakes.

As the Lord left Jericho, he miraculously cured Bartimaeus of blindness. It was a miracle that should have deeply impressed the apostles. It was so similar to the miracle of healing that was performed on the blind man at the approach to Jericho, that many have confused the two accounts, and imagined that they are one and the same. But Luke is quite specific that a blind man was healed as Jesus entered Jericho (Luke 18:35-43), and Matthew and Mark are equally specific that two (one of them being Barti-

maeus) were healed as he left the city. Obviously two separate miracles are here recorded, and the fact that two, so similar, were performed, was surely intended to impress an important lesson upon the apostles. Christ was not interested in merely performing marvels nor in physically healing people; but most concerned with impressing valuable and lasting spiritual lessons upon those who came under the influence of his teaching. In this case he seemed to be impressing his disciples with the need to exercise persistence and faith in seeking the blessings of God; therefore he first ignored the appeals of these blind men, and only granted their petition for help after repeated requests on their part.

EARLY in the morning, the Lord Jesus, with his apostles, left the home of Zacchaeus, to make their way up the hot, winding road that climbs its way to Jerusalem.

The Passover was near at hand, and a great company thronged the roads travelling in the same direction.

Just outside the city of Jericho, as the road commences its ascent, the company of pilgrims passed two blind men begging by the wayside.



**Healing Blind
Bartimaeus
(Mat. 20:29-34;
Mark 10:46-52)**

One was a well-known beggar, Bartimaeus. His name means, *Son of the Unclean*, and his condition illustrated its meaning. He was a familiar figure by the wayside, having lived in a world of darkness for many years, subsisting on charity. But Bartimaeus had been excited by a ray of hope. He had heard that Jesus had given sight to another blind beggar who had taken up his position on the other side of the city. Surely the prophet of Galilee would grant the same benefit to him and his friend! With this in mind, they took up their usual position on the wayside, waiting for Jesus to pass by.

They could not see, of course, but they could hear the noise of the approaching crowd as it slowly wound its way along, and then, in their darkness, they discerned a sound of greater excitement.

They learned that it was Jesus of Nazareth who passed by.

This was the opportunity for which they were waiting. They had heard of Jesus, as the rabbi of Nazareth, whose powerful messages of mercy excited the admiration of the common people, but whose expositions of the Law aroused the anger of the acknowledged

leaders. So many were talking of him! His miracles had been described and retold time and time again.

Surely he would grant their petition as he had that of the blind man on the other side of the city!

So now, as they learned that he was passing by, they called out to him: "*Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon me.*" But, as on the previous afternoon (see vol. 6, p. 398), Jesus took no heed of the urgent appeal, but continued on his way. The people observed this, and ordered the blind beggars to be quiet. But with greater urgency they both cried: "*THOU SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!*"

The Lord stopped, and the crowd waited to see what would happen.

Then Jesus acted in a strange manner. Instead of walking over to the two men which would not have been difficult for him, he kept standing where he was, and ordered that they make their way to him!

Would most men act like that if they had the power to heal? It is doubtful that they would! What of those charlatans today who claim they have the power of the Holy Spirit! They go out of their way trying to perform a miracle; they seek to parade their imagined powers, and to impress their dupes. Flesh receives a feeling of self-satisfaction by conferring benefits on others, particularly if the benefits can be conferred without cost to themselves. It likes to play the part of God without manifesting His wisdom.

Jesus acted as he did toward the blind men because he desired to impress upon all a most important spiritual lesson. He was about to confer the greatest possible physical benefit upon the two blind men, and the power to do so came from God. It was very important that they should recognise that, and contribute, in some minor way, to obtaining the blessing for which they sought; to demonstrate that they might expend some effort to achieve what he might provide them. The Lord therefore commanded that they make their way to where he stood waiting.

When the people heard that he would receive the blind men they changed in attitude to them. "*Be of good comfort,*" they said, "*rise, for he calls for you.*"

The Lord then followed the same procedure as he had done the day before. He waited for the blind men to make their way to him, shuffling and struggling in their abject blindness. What an object lesson it was for the onlookers!

As for the two blind men, having heard the voice of the Saviour in the midst of their world of darkness, in their joy and excitement they threw off their outer garments, that they might not be hindered in hastening to him. Leaping up, they made their way as quickly as they could to where Jesus was standing.

In the midst of darkness, the light of the world had shone upon them.

Standing before Jesus, with the now silent crowd watching in a fever of expectancy, they heard his gracious words: "What do you want me to do for you?" he enquired.

"Master, that I may receive my sight!" they both replied.

What a request! Who can restore sight to the blind? The Scriptures predicted that the Messiah would do so, and these two men, after earnest discussion during the night, believed that the Messiah now stood before them though they could not see him.

"Go your way," came the gracious reply, ***"Your faith has healed you."***

Stretching forth his hand, the Lord touched their eyes, and immediately they could see. With wonderment the crowd saw that the scales of darkness had been removed. The two men stood blinking in the sudden light that now flooded them, obviously cured of their blindness. And what a sight for a blind man to see, for their eyes were opened to look into the countenance of the Lord and Saviour, to see his kindly, gracious gaze fixed upon them. With what joy and gratitude they must have greeted him, conscious of the great benefit they had received from his touch.

The two blind men realised that the power came from God. They now had a desire to worship Him in spirit and truth, and so they also joined the crowd of pilgrims that was making its way toward Jerusalem to keep the Passover feast that celebrated the deliverance of Israel from the darkness of Egypt.



The miracle was doubtless intended as an object lesson to the apostles, as well as the Lord's other disciples.* It was almost identical to the miracle they had witnessed the day before, but the apostles' very conversation subsequent to that time, demonstrated that they were still blind to the things of God, and needed to recognise that fact. They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear (Luke 19:11), and though the Lord spoke to them of impending rejection, suffering and death in Jerusalem, they refused to heed his words. They were still walking in spiritual darkness.

No doubt, when the Holy Spirit was later bestowed upon them, and helped to "bring to remembrance" all these things that had happened (John 14:26), they appreciated the lessons that they had failed to learn earlier.

"How blind we were!" they must have lamented to themselves. Let us learn the lesson, for the flesh tends to blind us to Truth.

Jesus Arrives At Bethany (John 12:1) The tiring, 20 mile (32 kilometre) journey over, the Lord arrived at the little village of Bethany by the Mount of Olives, and made his way to the house of Martha, where he had so frequently found refuge before.

It was six days before the Passover when Jesus arrived at that place (Jn. 12:1). We believe that it was a Friday, and that he arrived in the late afternoon. Pilgrims were flocking into the city of Jerusalem from all parts and on that occasion, the normal excitement incidental to the celebration of the Passover, was accentuated by the question that was on the lips of all.

It concerned Jesus, and was expressed in one simple enquiry: "Will he come to the feast?" (John 11:56).

They knew of the growing hostility of the leaders, and of the decree that had been issued that if anybody knew where he was, they were to report it to the authorities that they might arrest him, and the people wondered whether fear of man would keep him from worshipping God in the way appointed.

"What do you think?" they asked one another. "Do you think he will avoid the feast this time?"

It was into such an atmosphere, one of growing hostility, tension and curiosity, that the Lord moved on that 9th day of Abib as he made his way to Bethany.

* For an explanation of the apparent discrepancies in the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, see vol. 7, pp. 26-27, where the lessons of miracles and discrepancies are all outlined.

JERICHO, THE CITY OF PALM TREES

Jericho has been the scene of some of the events already considered in *The Story of the Bible*. In Christ's days Jericho was



King Herod's winter capital. Situated approximately 32 kilometres (20 miles) from Jerusalem, and only a short distance from both the Dead Sea and the river Jordan, it is described as a city of palm trees, and an oasis in a parched valley, 250 metres (800 feet) below sea level. Both Herod the Great and his successors maintained a winter

palace in this thriving town, and beautified it with magnificent Hellenistic structures. Unlike the older cramped Canaanite and Hebrew town of the same name, that had fallen into ruins, this new settlement was elegantly lined with trees such as the sycamore, which grows only in the Jordan valley and on the coast. The city's natural water supply was augmented by means of an aqueduct which brought water from the Wadi Qelt, and one can well imagine that in winter-time it would have been a much sought after residential area for those who could afford to leave the brisk cold mountain air of the Judean hills for the warmer, almost tropical climate, so characteristic of the city of Jericho and its environs.

Not far from the elevation upon which the New Testament Jericho was situated, and just about one kilometre to the north-east of the city, another plateau rises some 10 metres (30 feet) above the surrounding plain. Under the surface of this egg-shaped rising, which is 300 metres (1,000 feet) long and 150 metres (500 feet) across at its widest part, were buried the remains of the ancient city of Jericho, as recent excavations have proved.

By these excavations, undertaken in 1907, 1930 and even later, the occupational history of the ancient city has been determined. Archaeologists suggest, upon the evidence of their findings, that the city had been in existence since ancient times, and one of the archaeologists in charge of the excavations assigned alphabetical names to the various cities that occupied the site. The most ancient strategic fortress commanding the entrance to Canaan was built approximately BC3000. City B was founded BC2500, and was destroyed in BC1700. City C was larger than its predecessors. It was adorned by a splendid palace and was surrounded by a stout wall. But this city suffered the same fate as the earlier settlement, and City D was constructed in its place in BC1500. This is the city that was captured by Joshua and the Israelites through the mighty intervention of God. Jericho's strategic importance at that time

may be traced to its location near a ford of the river Jordan. Here the ancient trade routes from the east crossed the river, and then branched out in three directions. The northern route went in the direction of Samaria and Shechem; the westward road led toward Jerusalem, and the southern route went to Hebron. Thus Jericho controlled all of these access routes to the hill country of Palestine. This strategic position played an important part in the record of the Israelite conquest. By taking Jericho, Joshua drove a wedge into the land of Canaan and struck terror into the hearts of its inhabitants.

Archaeologists found that the city was protected by a double wall of brick. A formidable six-foot thick wall was built on the edge of the mound. The inner wall was separated from it by a space of from 4 to 5 metres (13-16 feet), and was itself 4 metres (13 feet) thick. The wall was originally about 10 metres (32 feet) high, and since the city became crowded, comprising only about 2.5 hectares (6 acres), the need arose to erect houses between the inner and outer wall, and thus we can see why Rahab could let the spies down by a rope through the window of her house "for she dwelt upon the wall" (Josh. 2:15). Such were the general features of Jericho before the destruction, that its walls were considered as impregnable to any engines of warfare known at that time. The excavators describe it as a mighty bastion and add that "modern wall building can boast no superiority over the walls of Jericho."



In those days Jericho was unconquerably strong, and its menacing outline was visible from afar in the level plain of the Jordan. Yet Yahweh, the God of Israel, overthrew its power as a token of His ultimate victory over all flesh that undertakes to defy Him.

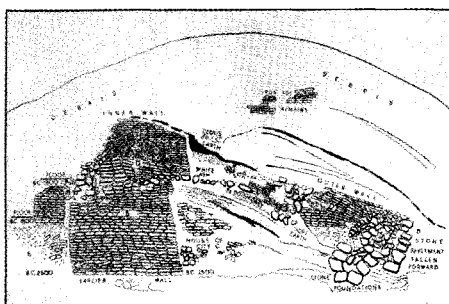
The excavated walls of the city display evidence of violent destruction, as described in Josh. ch. 6. The outer wall collapsed forward down the slope of the mound, and the ruins of the inner wall and the houses built upon it, had covered the intervening space. Ashes, charred timbers, reddened masses of stone and brick show that a fire accompanied the fall of the city.

Canaanite Jericho was completely destroyed, and for centuries no attempt was made to rebuild the town (Josh. 6:26), although the spring and the oasis located there were frequented. In the days of the Judges, Eglon the Moabite temporarily occupied the oasis (Jdg.

3:12-13), but it was not until BC860 that the city proper was built again (1Kgs. 16:34), only to be destroyed by the Babylonians. In the plains of Jericho king Zedekiah fell into the hands of the Chaldeans (2Kgs. 25:5; Jer. 39:5), whilst some seventy years later 345 of the "children of Jericho" returned under Zerubbabel from captivity (Ezra 2:34). They most probably settled there again, for "the men of Jericho" assisted Nehemiah in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 3:2). Apart from these allusions to the city which we can glean from the Word of God, not much is known regarding the fate of the city in Old Testament times. All that was left of the original fortifications of this bustling city was eventually covered by "the sands of time," and only an occasional excavation of the turf, with bits of foundation appearing through the grass, gave witness of the past existence of Jericho.

We can but anticipate the thoughts that would have gone through the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, as he beheld this forlorn site, some distance from the city of his days. Probably he would have gained encouragement from the fact that Joshua had conquered this stronghold in the strength of Yahweh, thus opening the way for his people to take possession of their inheritance in the land, if only they pursued the overcoming of the Canaanite nations. Likewise he, as the greater Joshua, would presently conquer the flesh — and later even the world — and lead his followers to a most glorious rest in the kingdom of God.

Today, both Canaanitish Jericho, and New Testament Jericho are in ruins. A later settlement which has been in the hands of the Arabs until the recent six-day war, now testifies to the fact that the hand of Yahweh has once again been manifested in this area. We have had the privilege to witness these events. Now let us set our face toward Jerusalem, and make Zion the goal of our journey.



THE FALLEN WALLS OF CITY IV (FROM A MEASURED DRAWING)
B. Brick wall of the Second City on the western scarp. DD. Walls of the Fourth City

Excavations of the fallen walls of ancient Jericho

PHILIP: THE FRIENDLY WARRIOR

Jesus found use for every type of disciple. As he carefully trained them for the work he had set them to accomplish, he brought out the best in them, making them into outstanding ambassadors for his kingdom. Some, like Peter, James and John, known as "Sons of Thunder," had to be restrained, and their native belligerency toned down; others had to be encouraged and developed for the work of witnessing even unto death, a service to which the apostles were to be dedicated.

Among those in the latter category was Philip the apostle (not the evangelist referred to in Acts 8). His name means *Warrior* or *A Lover of Horses*, but his natural characteristics belied his name, for Philip appears to have been of a timid, retiring disposition. Like others of the apostles, he was a citizen of Bethsaida, and had been a follower of John Baptist; but unlike Andrew and John, Philip did not approach Jesus, but waited until the Lord accosted him, and invited him to join his company (Jn. 1:43-48).

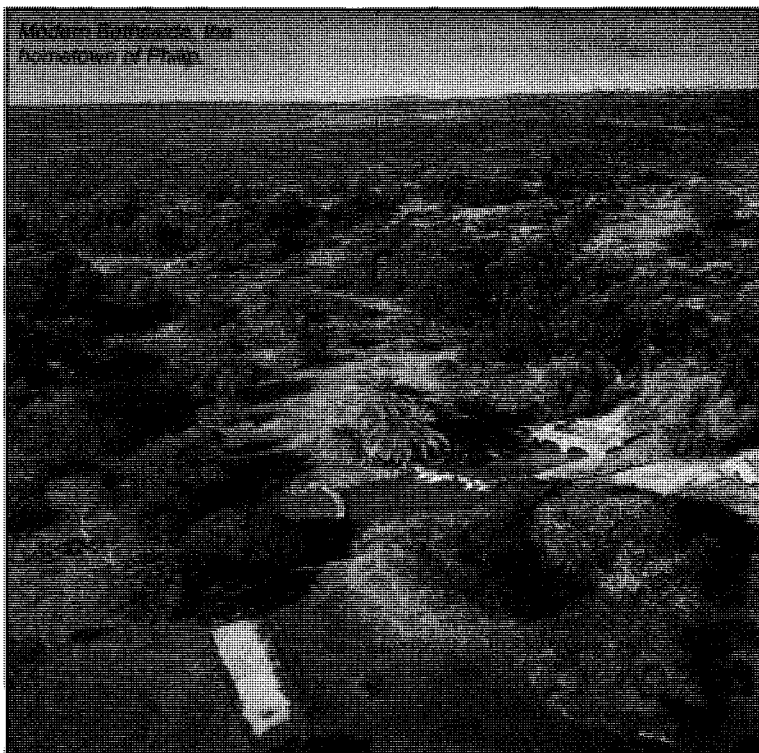
Once called, however, Philip instantly responded, and apparently remained with the Lord even when some of the others returned to their fishing. He has the distinction of being the first gospel proclamation worker in the cause of Christ, for he immediately converted his friend Nathanael, with whom he had been in the habit of studying the Scriptures and discussing the prophecies relating to the coming Messiah (Jn. 1:43-45). Philip's name is three times bracketed with Nathanael as companion and fellow-worker, indicating the lasting friendship that existed between them.

Philip's timidity is exhibited by his reaction to the test placed upon him by the Lord, when the hungry multitude surrounded Jesus, for instead of boldly measuring up to the trial of faith when he was asked, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (Jn. 6:5), Philip made a mental calculation of the money involved, and doubted the ability of the disciples to supply what was needed. His timidity was again revealed when Greeks came to him seeking Jesus (Jn. 12:21-22), and he passed off their request to Andrew. He lacked the boldness of Peter, and was less inclined to openly proclaim his convictions (contrast Jn. 6:69 with ch. 14:8-9). Nevertheless, Christ ever dealt kindly with Philip, trying to draw him out (cf. Jn. 6:5-6), seeking to conquer his timid, retiring disposition, and in this he was successful, for after the resurrection Philip took his place with the other apostles as a true soldier for Christ Jesus, openly testifying his conviction in the risen Lord.

Tradition declares that in the distribution made by the apostles of the several regions of the world in which the work of preaching would continue, that Upper Asia fell to Philip, that he laboured with untiring diligence and industry, and that he died as a martyr through opposing the worship of a pagan god in Hierapolis.

Though a Galilean, Philip is a Gentile (Greek) name, and he might have been connected with Gentiles in some way. Significantly, when the Greeks desired to meet Jesus, they sought to do so through Philip (Jn. 12:21-22). References to Philip are found in the following places: Jn. 1:43-48; 6:5-7; 12:21-22; 14:8-9; Mat. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:14; Acts 1:13.

He has the distinction of being the first of the apostles to follow Jesus (for though Andrew and John met Jesus before Philip, they did not then continue with him — See *Story of the Bible*, vol. 5, pp. 200-202), and the first to bring a convert to the Lord. Thus, despite his timid, retiring nature, he proved an outstanding warrior in the cause of Christ, and lived to justify the meaning of his name.



Chapter 3

SATURDAY, TENTH ABIB —ARRIVING AT BETHANY

John is very specific that the Lord arrived in Bethany "six days before the Passover" (John 12:1). This statement is most important, for it lays the foundation upon which can be established the rest of this most dramatic week in the history of the world.

Six days before Passover corresponds to the 9th of Abib in Jewish reckoning, for the Passover feast relates not to the day on which the lamb was slain (14th Abib), but when the feast was celebrated, namely at the "even," which, according to Jewish reckoning commenced the next day, the 15th Abib (Deu. 16:6).

On the day following his arrival at Bethany (John 12:12), Jesus entered Jerusalem, applauded by the people. This was five days before the Passover, and thus the tenth of Abib. From Exodus 12:3, we learn that the Passover Lamb was selected on that day, and penned up for four days in order that it might be subject to the closest scrutiny that no blemish be found in it. On the 14th Abib at even it was slain (Exo. 12:6). It was therefore most appropriate that the Lord, as the Lamb of God, should make his public entrance into the city of Jerusalem on the 10th Abib, the very day that the Passover lamb was selected. It commenced his last public ministry to the Jewish leaders and people, during which he indicted them for failing to do the will of Yahweh. He was the true Passover Lamb, and the people were required to "inspect the Lamb," but could find no fault in him, for he was without blemish.

*We believe that the Lord arrived at Bethany on a Friday, and that it was a Saturday when he visited Jerusalem. If that can be established, it exactly synchronises with the days on which the first Passover was celebrated. The evidence for establishing these days will be revealed as we proceed. It is generally taught, however, that Jesus entered Jerusalem on a Sunday, which is therefore called "Palm Sunday" by the Apostasy. We claim that it was a Saturday. If it was a Saturday, it would mean that the 14th day of the month, when the Passover and the Lord were both slain, would have been a Wednesday. Can this be established? We believe it can, and that is revealed in the records of Mark, Luke and John. Mark 16:1 states that "when the sabbath was past" certain women were purchasing (the present tense should be used) some spices. However, Luke 23:56 states that this was done **BEFORE** the sabbath, for after preparing the spices, it records that "they rested on the sabbath." Here are two sabbaths with a day in between, one*

of which must have been the weekly sabbath. John adds his evidence to say that one of the sabbaths was "an high day" (John 19:31), that is, not the normal weekly sabbath. That high day sabbath was the day when the Passover was celebrated by the people and which followed the slaying of the Lamb. Here, then, it is stated that the Passover Sabbath was divided from the weekly sabbath by one day (the Friday), which would mean that Jesus was slain on a Wednesday. Wednesday, therefore, being the 14th of the month, the fifth day before the Passover, would have been the previous Saturday, the 10th Abib.

But would a journey from Bethany to Jerusalem be permitted on a sabbath? The answer is supplied in the affirmative in Acts 1:12 (cp. Luke 24:50). A Jewish day is reckoned from sundown to sundown, from 6pm to 6pm (thus known as "the evening and the morning" as "the day," according to Gen. 1:5). The Lord arrived in Bethany in the afternoon, and about 6pm they served him supper. This commenced the night of the 10th of Abib, the day he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

BETHANY is a small village lying to the east of the Mount of Olives. It was well known to Jesus, for he had frequently made his way there, and into the house of Martha where Lazarus lived whom he had raised from the dead. In that household of love, he found hospitality and a peace of mind that strengthened him for the heavy duties that were impending, and the constant friction that awaited him outside.

On this occasion it was no different. Jesus knew of the hatred with which the leaders of Jewry viewed him. He knew that they were determined to put him to death, and had issued instructions that would lead to his arrest (John 11:51, 57). Indeed this antagonism was known to all the people, and they wondered at the reaction he would show to this environment of hate into which he now moved.

From his friends at Bethany, however, he received only love and kindness. Martha busied herself to attend to his physical needs; Lazarus was there to testify to the fact that he was the resurrection and the life; whilst Mary's thoughtful attention to his words, and the act of devotion that she performed a little later, proclaimed her belief that he was Messiah and King.



**The Anointing
Of Jesus
(Mat. 26:6-13;
Mk. 14:3-9;
Jn. 12:2-3)**

It was a very happy occasion in Martha's house at Bethany* as the friends of Jesus gathered together. Each felt that the time was momentous, that something tremendous was about to emerge from this Passover. The apostles knew of the growing enmity, and the determination of the leaders to apprehend Jesus, and they realised that this must bring matters to a climax. They doubtless considered that this was the very thing that would force Jesus to declare himself and proclaim himself king over the restored kingdom of God. They were convinced that it was near at hand, and nothing could prevent it (Luke 19:11).

For his part, the Lord must have felt relaxed in that home, after his long, tiring trek from Jericho, with crowds thronging around him, doubtless plying him with questions. His friends now cared for him, and sought to supply him with his needs. As afternoon merged into evening, Martha busied herself in preparing supper.

Thus this household followed its characteristic pattern. Whenever we read of Martha, we find her busying herself, working on the behalf of others; whenever we read of Mary, we learn of her revealing a thoughtful, spiritual attitude, pondering the teaching of the Master, the purpose of Yahweh, or the problems of life; whenever we read of Lazarus, it is only as of a man raised from the dead; his voice is not heard, and his actions and attitude are not described, but his presence must have encouraged the Lord.

All three followed this pattern of conduct on this momentous occasion when the Lord gathered at the house of Martha. Martha was busy serving, Lazarus sat at meat with Jesus, and Mary listened intently to the conversation, pondering matters in her heart.

Supper would have been concluded by about 6pm, so that, according to Jewish reckoning, the ninth day of Abib would have merged into the tenth.

It was a most important day in the Jewish calendar. On that day, the Passover lambs were selected, and penned up for inspection, awaiting the fourteenth day of the month, when they were slain.

In that house, at the supper table, was the Lamb of God who would be offered as the Passover offering for the sins of humanity, four days later.

A sense of expectancy dominated all present, and particularly Mary. She had been so urgently awaiting the return of the Lord! Like the apostles, she sensed that events were moving on to a climax, and

* The house belonged to Martha (Luke 10:38), but it is also called the "house of Simon the leper" (Mat. 26:6). Evidently Simon was the deceased husband of Martha, and his property had now passed to her, where her brother and sister also resided.

that something momentous would come out of his presence in Jerusalem at that time. Perhaps she, too, thought that he would then proclaim himself king.

She had made due preparations for the occasion. At great expense to herself,* she had purchased an alabaster box of very precious ointment which she determined, at the right moment, to pour over the head of her Lord, as appropriate to him whom she acknowledged as her Messiah and King.

Therefore, supper having ended, she arose from the table, and fetching the box of ointment, she broke it, and poured the ointment over his head and feet. And then, bowing low before him, she wiped his feet with her hair.

Her action took them all by surprise, and they looked upon her with amazement, as she knelt at the feet of Jesus. They all doubtless interpreted the meaning of her action differently.

Martha probably could make nothing of the action of this strange sister of hers, whose visionary, dreamy attitude so often irritated her.

Lazarus apparently said nothing. Mary's action was but one of the many things that were happening at that time, in the strange world into which he had been called back by his resurrection a few months earlier, that he did not understand!

Judas saw it as a shocking waste! He recognised the worth of the ointment, and made it quite obvious that he was far from impressed with such foolish extravagance. It is the first time his voice is heard in the Inspired Record, and it is a voice of criticism against the faithful action of this woman. His attitude influenced the other apostles, who were perhaps a little jealous that Mary should take the initiative before the Master. They openly showed their disapproval, taking their cue from Judas.

All in the room saw the ointment on the head and feet of the Lord; saw Mary bowing down before him and wiping his feet; smelt the beautiful odour of the ointment; but did not understand the action.

What did it signify?

Jesus acknowledged that she performed for him "a beautiful thing" (Mat. 26:10). She appears as the most thoughtful of them all, and by this action, it seems that she wanted to proclaim her conviction that he was king in spite of the opposition of the leaders of the nation. Carefully pondering the issues involved, and with the miracle of Lazarus clearly etched in her mind, she seemed to grasp what eluded all the others — the impending death of the Lord, perhaps seeing in him the "firstborn from the dead," the fulfilment of what had been

* Judas acknowledged that the sale of the jar of precious ointment would attract about 300 pence (John 12:5), which, according to the parable of Mat. 20:2, was equivalent to a labourer's pay for 300 days, so that this represented a significant sum, approximately equivalent to the annual basic wage of the time!

demonstrated in her brother Lazarus.

She well knew of the prevailing hostility, and Jesus had not hesitated to speak of his death. Thus she "broke the jar" containing the ointment (Mark 14:3), perhaps indicating his death by so doing. She anointed his head as a token of his kingly status which she acknowledged would be his, in spite of death. She anointed his feet as expressive of her humility and submissiveness as she bowed before him (Luke 10:39; John 13:5), and to refresh and encourage him along the difficult path he had to tread. By kneeling down to wipe his feet with her hair, she indicated her willingness to follow him wherever he might lead.

Both head and feet were anointed, figurative of the whole body (John 13:9-10), as in the case of the anointing of the high priest (Psa. 133).

It was "a beautiful thing" because it showed her complete belief in him as the King Messiah.

Her action sets a pattern for the true ecclesia. Let its members submit to Christ as Mary did when she bowed before him; let them sacrifice all in an extravagant act of homage to him as she had done; let them serve him in voluntary humility as she did; let their thoughtfulness find expression in a pleasing adoration, such as delighted him on that occasion, and the "whole house," the entire ecclesia, will be filled with the odour of the ointment!

Judas Iscariot Is Openly Rebuked

But the beautiful deed, the thoughtful gesture did not please the apostles. Led by Judas (cp. John 13:4 with Mark 14:4), they were filled with indignation at what they considered a useless waste of valuable money.

Judas voiced their feelings: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" he hypocritically commented.

Jesus turned to look at his apostle. He fixed upon him a steady gaze that would have spoken volumes. He knew the motives that moved Judas at the time, for he recognised him for what he was (John 2:24-25). Judas was not at all interested in the poor, but only in himself, for he had degenerated into a thief! He was treasurer for the little group, and willingly so, for he helped himself to the contents of the bag (see Jn. 12:6, where the word "bare" means to "bare away"). Though he professed to follow Jesus, he was dominated by covetousness and materialism, and desired to feather his own nest. Failing to give up everything to follow Jesus, he was, even then, building up resources for himself (Acts 1:18).

His attitude affected the other apostles too, as such an attitude can influence others. They murmured their agreement with Judas, for they



could see no sense in Mary's action. Why was not the money put to a more useful purpose? Why not give it to the poor where it could do some good?

It all sounded so reasonable, that they failed to see the dedicated devotion in Mary's action which indicated that nothing was too good for her Lord. But their murmuring ceased, as they observed the stern way in which the Lord turned on Judas, and the firm, forthright manner in which he replied to him and to them.

"Let her alone," he sternly warned them. "Why are you annoying her? She has done a beautiful thing to me! Let her keep what remains for my burial. The poor you have ever beside you, and you can be kind to them whenever you want; but you will not always have me. She has done all she could — she has anticipated the performing of my body for burial. I tell you truly, wherever the gospel is preached, all over the world, men will speak of what she has done, in memory of her!"*

This was the first recorded rebuke that Jesus had ever given to Judas. And Judas could not take it. As the Lord looked sternly and steadily at him, and addressed him in that ironical fashion, he realised that his secret was out, and that Jesus knew that he was a thief.

Dark, brooding thoughts of resentment filled his heart, as with downcast eyes, he remained silent in the face of this open rebuke. It became the turning point in his life. He felt that the time had come

* This is a combination of the records of Matthew, Mark and John, expressed according to a modern version of the New Testament.

when he must look after his own interests. He had sensed the growing hostility of the leaders in Jerusalem when the Lord and his disciples had entered Bethany, and even then serious doubts as to whether he should remain with Jesus had begun to fill the heart of Judas.

Later that evening he heard further reports that played a part in impelling him along a course of treachery that is without parallel in history.

Was Jesus Anointed Twice At Bethany? But before considering this further acts of perfidy by Judas, let us consider an apparent difficulty. Matthew 26:7 and Mark 14:3-9 both record that “a woman” came to Jesus whilst he was in the house, and anointed his head with oil; whereas John records that Mary anointed his feet. Again, Matthew and Mark apparently record that this took place “two days before the Passover” (Mat. 26:2; Mark 14:1), whereas John declares that it took place at the close of the sixth day before the Passover (John 12:1).

This had caused some to suggest that the Lord was anointed twice, and that the “woman” of Matthew and Mark was not the Mary of John.

However, the circumstances are so much alike, that there is little doubt that the three records relate to the one and same circumstance. It is hardly feasible that the apostles would murmur as they did on two occasions, to receive the same rebuke by the Lord! The fact that Matthew and Mark record that Mary anointed the Lord’s head, and that John records that she anointed his feet is hardly contradiction, for it is obvious that she anointed both his head and feet as representative of his whole body, and that each reported the circumstance that impressed them most.

The greatest difficulty is in regard to the time factor, but this also is cleared away, when the text is carefully examined. Neither Matthew nor Mark say that the anointing occurred on the day mentioned in the previous verses and, indeed, their description shows that it did not. Matthew, for example, says, “Now when Jesus was in Bethany,” and he is obviously pointing to the time indicated in John’s Gospel, not the time stated in the second verse of this chapter. Mark also introduces his record by “And being in Bethany...” without indicating the day.

But why do Matthew and Mark record it at this point, seeing it is out of sequence with the actual time when it occurred? Because it was the rebuke that Judas received at that time that set him on the course of treachery that led to the conspiracy that later took place on this second day before the Passover. Thus, as they are dealing with the betrayal of the Lord by Judas, these two writers point back to the time and circumstances when Judas’ evil plan was conceived.

The proper chronological order is given by John in chapter 12, as supplementary detail to that which the other writers had earlier recorded. Jesus arrived at Bethany six days before the Passover, late on the Friday afternoon, the ninth of Abib. Shortly after, about supper time, the day came to an end, according to Jewish reckoning, at 6pm Saturday, on the tenth of Abib then commenced. All this is omitted by Matthew and Mark. Having discontinued the history of Jesus after he left Jericho (Mat. 21:1), they delay referring to the incident of the anointing until they come to specifically treat with the treachery of Judas which stemmed from the incident. Indeed, they rather contrast Mary's warm devotion with the coldhearted hypocrisy of Judas.

To anoint the head of a guest, as Mary did the Lord's, was a common act of courtesy (Psa. 23:5; Ecc. 9:8), and was symbolic of love (Psa. 133), the unique character of the one concerned (Exo. 30:23-29), and ardent respect (Luke 7:46). To pour it on the feet was most uncommon, and was a mark of humility and respect, expressing Mary's acknowledgement of Jesus as Messiah (Psa. 2:2-6). This was the Gospel proclaimed by Mary's action (Mat. 26:13), and which has been taught thereby throughout the world. Wherever the Gospel has been preached, the loving devotion of Mary's action has found endorsement.

Judas' First Act Of Perfidy

Dark and evil were the thoughts of Judas, as he perceived that Jesus had read the secret of his heart, and knew that he was a thief. His concern was even greater when he learned of increasing hostility on the part of the leaders of the nation. The materialistically minded Judas, who wanted an instant increase for all that he put into the work and worship of God, felt the time had come to revise his own thoughts and attitude toward Jesus and make preparations to save his own skin even if the other apostles might die.

The rebuke that he had received from Jesus, in addition to other things he heard that night, provided the turning point of his life.

Matthew shows this by his use of the Greek word *τοτε*, *tote*, "then" (ch. 26:13-14). This is an indication of time, and shows that it was at that actual moment that Judas made up his mind to seek out the enemies of the Lord and make a deal with them.

What caused Judas to seek out the enemies of Jesus that very night, and to conspire with them against the Lord?

There was firstly the realisation that Jesus knew that he was a thief, and the resentment this caused in the heart of Judas. But now, in addition, there was the need for self-preservation.

After supper in the house of Bethany, people flocked to the village, not merely to see Jesus, but also to see Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead (John 12:9), and they brought with them

further ominous news of growing hostility. This not only involved Jesus, but his friends also. John records: *"the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus"* (John 12:10-11).

Judas could feel the grim hand of persecution and death stretching forth to claim him. He decided to seek out those responsible, and offer his services to them in a terrible act of betrayal that would save his own worthless skin, enrich his pocket, but encompass the destruction of his former Lord.

The chief priests who were conspiring against Jesus at this time, comprised the high priest, former high priests who had been deposed by the Romans, and members of their families. In the main they were Sadducees who rejected the doctrine of the resurrection. The presence of Lazarus was an embarrassment to them, for it showed how completely wrong was their doctrine, as well as giving support to the claims of Jesus. They knew that because of Lazarus many believed on Jesus, so they decided to do away with the evidence! In this they fulfilled the prophecy of Jesus, uttered only a short time before, when he had delivered the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. He had concluded the parable with words which now proved of the greatest significance: *"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead"* (Luke 16:31).

The Sadducean priests refused the testimony of Moses and the prophets relating to the resurrection, and certainly refused to believe Jesus, even though one had been brought from the dead, and they had the evidence of this power before their eyes.

Judas decided to seek out these enemies of Christ and conspired to betray him.

Judas Conspires To Betray Jesus

(Mat. 26:14-16;

Mark 14:10-11;

John 12:4-11).

With many people thronging the house at Bethany (John 12:9) to see Lazarus and Jesus, it was not difficult for Judas to slip away into the darkness of night without being particularly noticed, and to make his way to the palace of the high priest. Matthew records that he did this the same night as Mary anointed Jesus (Mat. 26:14), for, as we have indicated above (and this is a most important fact), the Greek word translated "then" signifies "at that very time."

Judas found the chief priests together discussing the crisis that was arising. News of the presence of Jesus at Bethany had been brought to them, and now they assembled that they might consult together as to the best way to encompass his death.

The sudden entrance of Judas was unexpected, but gladdening (Mark 14:11), for they found in him a ready tool to bring about the

death of the Lord. "What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" he asked.

They agreed to pay him the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver, the very amount that Zechariah had predicted they would pay (Zech. 11:12). Significantly, that was the very amount that the Law of Moses demanded should be paid when a slave was gored by a bull (Exo. 21:32). It was appropriate under those circumstances, therefore, because the Lord Jesus was Yahweh's servant (Isa. 49:3-6), and those who put him to death are described as "bulls of Bashan" (Psa. 22:11-13).

But the Law also instructed that the ox or bull that pushed the servant with its horns and injured him, should be put to death; and that was ultimately the fate of those who brought about the Lord's execution.

What a terrible moment in the history of the world, when Judas and the priests of Israel met together to work out their conspiracy. Artists have tried to depict it, but in vain. They have described a gathering of cunning men, and have depicted them with hard, evil faces, closeted together in secret, whispering one to another of their schemes of betrayal and murder. Judas is the centre figure, and on his face there is depicted every line of cunning, avarice and deceit.

But it was probably not like that at all. The priests perhaps deluded themselves into thinking that they were doing the best thing for the nation (see John 11:50), whilst Judas was probably driven to the course of action he adopted through fear: fear because he knew that Jesus realised he was a thief; and fear because of the growing hostility against the Lord and the disciples that he could feel on every side.

Be that as it may, the die was cast, and he had thrown in his lot with the enemies of the Lord. In that one action he stamped himself a murderer, a deceiver, a man of the flesh, a betrayer, the seed of the serpent, and he sealed his own condemnation.

His mind must have been uneasy as he made his lonely way back to the house at Bethany, through the blackness of the night. Dark as it might have been it was not as dark as the gloomy pondering of his heart. Above him the moon was shining brightly, "a faithful witness in the heavens" (Psa. 89:37), but as he hurried through the darkened streets, and onward up the winding road that led to the mount of Olives and beyond to Bethany, he little realised that he was also a witness to the truth of Yahweh's Word. This predicted the terrible deed he had now committed himself to do. The Psalms and prophets foretold his action thus: "*Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me*" (Psa. 41:9).

"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have

borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; But it was thou, a man mine equal [see margin: one of his own company], my guide [R.V., my friend], and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company" (Psa. 55:12-14).

"For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries; but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. Set thou a wicked man over him [Judas]; and let Satan stand at his right hand [RSV: let an accuser bring him to trial]." (Psa. 109:2-6).

"I said unto them: If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver" (Zech. 11:12).

The dark conspiracy having been entered into, the wicked agreement having been made, Judas made his furtive, evil way back to the house at Bethany, pondering the problem before him, to once more mix with the people and guests there assembled together.

From that moment onward, he closely listened to every word uttered by Jesus, and narrowly observed every thing he did, that he might discover some means to betray him: "From that time," records Matthew (ch. 26:16), "he sought opportunity to betray him."

Judas Becomes Jewry's Official Scrutineer The Passover Lamb was first selected, it was then penned up on the tenth day of the month Abib and subjected to close scrutiny and if satisfactory — if no blemish was detected in it — it was put to death on the fourteenth day. The Lamb pointed forward in type to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in an amazing way these enactments were fulfilled to the very letter.

In the case of the Lord, Judas became the official scrutineer for Israel, and significantly took up his duties in that regard on the tenth of Abib in the house at Bethany! From then onward, he carefully observed Jesus to see if there was any blemish in him. If he had discerned any, he would have hurried off to report it to the priests that they might condemn the Christ-Lamb, in accordance with the very action that would have been taken if blemish had been found in an ordinary Passover lamb.

At the conclusion of the period set down in the Law, on the fourteenth day of Abib, Judas was forced to confess to the priests that he found no iniquity or blemish: *"I am guilty in that I have betrayed innocent blood!"* In these words Judas proclaimed that the Passover

Lamb appointed of God was perfectly whole.

Everything thus fell into correct position in fulfilling the type; yet the people were blind to what their own Law should have taught them. Even the very name of the apostle that betrayed Jesus is significant, for Judas and Judah are the same, and he represented the nation. Furthermore, it was Judah who had been responsible for Joseph being sold into slavery (Gen. 37:26-28), so that it is also appropriate to the type that one called Judas should do the same in regard to the antitypical Joseph.

How marvellously exact are all the enactments of Yahweh!

What Caused Judas To Betray Jesus? One of the most puzzling enigmas of all time is that the Lord should have been betrayed by one of his own apostles.

Presumably Judas had earlier sacrificed something to follow Jesus; he had been among those who had gone forth two by two preaching the Gospel and healing the sick, to return to Jesus rejoicing at the successes of the campaign; he had continued with Jesus as one of the inner council of twelve apostles; had heard his doctrine, seen the power of his miracles, felt the influence of his presence. Yet, in spite of all that, he callously entered into agreement with the deadly enemies of the Lord to betray him.

It is true that ultimately all the apostles failed the Lord, but they did so in a different way. It is not difficult to see why the eleven did so. They had a wrong conception of what the visit to Jerusalem would bring forth, for they were confident that it would end in a blaze of glory for Jesus, and for them all. Never, for one moment, did they think that they would witness him hanging lifeless from a Gentile stake, cursed by God's own Law of righteousness (Deu. 21:23)!

But it was in premeditated cold blood that Judas betrayed Jesus, and for the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver!

Some have tried to justify his action, by suggesting that perhaps he betrayed Jesus believing that this would force the Lord to assert his power, drive asunder his enemies, proclaim the restoration of the kingdom, and reveal his full glory to the admiration of all the people. But there is no suggestion of such a motive as that in Judas the thief, who surreptitiously crept out of the home at Bethany to make his way in the darkness of night to Jerusalem for the purpose of conspiring with the priests, and who afterwards continued to ruthlessly spy on his Lord to win the blood-money that had been promised him. In fact, Jesus described him as the "son of perdition" (Jn. 17:12).

The bitterness of his remorse at the very end, the terrible death he suffered, showed that his motives were far from good. If it were otherwise, he would have responded to the appeals that Jesus constantly made to him, as we shall see.

It is, however important to trace the growth of treachery in this man, that we may avoid similar, if lesser, mistakes, for, unfortunately, throughout the ages, the family of Judas has been a large one!

The first thing we learn of Judas is his name. It is a caption to his character. *Judas Iscariot* signifies *Judas of Keriot*, or the Praiser of the City. If he were of Keriot, he was the only one of the apostles who was not of Galilee. He was a man of the city, and different in outlook and upbringing to the hardy, honest, fiery, forthright Galileans.

Besides being a man of the city he was also a man of business, and therefore appointed treasurer of the little group. As a man of business, he possessed practical and administrative talents that could have been used to advantage in the Truth. They proved both his opportunity and his temptation, however, and he fell prey to the latter.

There was no need for him to have done so. As a business man he should have seen the benefits of temporary sacrifice in order to obtain an ultimate advantage. Matthew was at least his equal in business acumen, and most likely his superior, for he did not allow temporary advantage to blind his eyes to the value of the Truth. He recognised that there was greater value in building up "treasure in heaven," than upon the earth, and willingly gave up the latter to gain the former.

On the other hand, Judas allowed temporary things to blind his eyes to the advantages in Christ. He did not even grace his position as treasurer, because he was not honest. The record says that "he had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:6). But the word "bare" does not mean merely to carry, but to carry away, or to purloin. The Revised Version renders it, "he took away" what was put therein.

So Judas was a thief. But even there he was not a success. He was not a thief on a grand scale, but rather a sneak-thief, engaged upon petty thieving from the bag, robbing God and Jesus Christ of what was rightly theirs. It is not revealed when he commenced this dishonest practice, but having once commenced it, and finding that he seemed to profit in a minor way by his cheating, he continued to maintain it with greater boldness, until, at last, it got beyond him, and the desire for possessions dominated him.

Meanwhile, his initial enthusiasm for Christ waned, his first love grew cold, and from trying to cheat God, he cheated himself out of an eternal inheritance.

There are four aspects of his character that probably led him to the evil act he committed.

First he was motivated by avarice. He could have used his talents of business to serve Christ; instead he used them to serve self. We can do likewise. He thus proved unfaithful to his Lord, and used the common purse of the Brotherhood to serve his own ends (John 12:6). The germs of avarice probably unfolded very gradually and in spite of the many hints and warnings that he received from the Lord (see Mat.

6:19-34; 13:2-23; Mark 10:25; Luke 16:11; John 6:70). He was constantly exhorted to store up treasure in heaven rather than upon earth, but he failed to heed the message. In this affluent age we are in danger of doing likewise.

Next, there was the disappointment of his hopes. He, in common with the others, sought an immediate kingdom of glory, and felt cheated when it did not materialise. Unlike the others, the more practical Judas probably understood the Lord's allusions to his approaching death (Mat. 16:21; Luke 18:31-32), and viewed them as the end of all his hopes. Future glory, a kingdom based on spiritual principles, had little appeal to him. He wanted power and position then, immediately, and did not want to have to wait until some indefinite period in the future to receive it. The doctrine of the second coming had little appeal; the parable of the nobleman who had to leave his servants for some time to go into a far country, left him cold. He sought glory then and there, for present influence and power; but with the waning popularity of the Lord, he feared that he would not receive it. We cannot blame Judas too much for this, because even the members of the Lord's own family disbelieved him (John 7:5).

Thirdly, there was his natural aversion to the things of Christ. It would be irritating to a practical man of business to be told not to worry about money, to go forth with nothing but faith. Many of the sayings of the Lord must have appeared to Judas as most unprofessional, as naive and childish in the extreme, so that what once attracted him, soon began to repel. He gradually came to feel out of character among the other apostles, who were equally unbusinesslike as their Lord. Even Matthew must have irritated Judas as he continued to cite Old Testament prophecies and how they were fulfilled in Christ, rather than attending to the practical issue of balancing the budget! In fact, they had no budget to balance, and that, too, would be disturbing to a practical man of business. The criticism of the Lord which at first he only suspected, was openly expressed after supper in the room at Bethany, and that made him furious. The fact that the Lord had touched upon his secret sin angered him instead of shaming him, and projected him along the road to complete the rejection, rather than causing him to seek the forgiveness that would have been freely granted him.

Finally, there was the desire of self-preservation. This was perhaps the strongest of all the emotions that worked with Judas at that time, particularly as he was so strongly materialistic in outlook. He knew that the friends of Jesus could become the objects of the hatred and opposition that the Lord himself was experiencing, and that this could erupt into violence that would encompass them all. From that he sought to escape. He had to save his own skin, he had to show that he was patriotic to the State, and at the same time justify the betrayal.

The pitiful sum he extracted from the priests would show that he was betraying Jesus as a service to the State, whilst the payment he received from them, put them to a certain extent in his power. So all were satisfied.

All of these motives probably prompted this man at that time to cause him to walk the terrible road of treachery to his own eternal condemnation. Better that a millstone be hung about a person's neck, and he be thrown into the midst of the ocean, than to play the part of a Judas.

The character of Judas, and the part he played in the crucifixion of the Lord is worthy of closest attention, particularly in these times, when in an affluent society, there is found so much to draw us from Christ, so that we may be led to deny him also. Judas doubtless justified his action on the grounds of expediency, and thus proceeded to the point of no return. Let us consider his character that we might learn to avoid his error.

A Dictionary Of Personalities Of The Gospel

JAIRUS: THE MAN WHOM GOD ENLIGHTENED

Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue whose daughter Jesus raised from the dead (Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41). His name signifies, "*Whom God enlightens,*" and circumstances caused him to meet the Lord of life, whom previously he had avoided.

Jairus had delayed as long as he dared before approaching Jesus, seeking his help to cure his daughter. There had been miracles performed at Capernaum, and controversy had raged regarding the Lord, but from it all Jairus remained aloof. He held a position of responsibility in the synagogue, and as such had stood apart from identification with Jesus, even though he had abundant evidence of his miracle-working power. Perhaps he feared the leaders of the people. But with his daughter nigh to death, however, he set aside his scruples and sought out the Lord Jesus.

His request was interrupted by the woman with the issue of blood, and during the ensuing delay, news came to the grief-stricken parent, that his daughter had died. He felt that it was too late for anything to be done. But what joy in that household when the little girl was restored to life once again. Certainly Jairus had been enlightened of God.

JAMES: THE LORD'S COUSIN

James is the Greek form of Jacob, and signifies "*Supplanter.*" There is a need to discriminate between James the son of Zebedee,

and James the Lord's brother.

James, the son of Zebedee, and the elder brother of John (Mat. 10:3) was one of the earliest disciples to follow Jesus (Mat. 4:21). He came from a family of some affluence, for his father was a fisherman with hired servants (Mark 1:19-20). He was called from his labour to work in the higher service of the Lord. Previously, with his father, he had been in partnership with Peter and Andrew (Luke 5:10), but with his two partners, he gave up the fishing business to become a fisher of men.

With Peter and John, James was given special privileges (Mat. 17:1; Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3), for with the other two disciples, he was invited to witness the resurrection of Jairus' daughter and the transfiguration on the mount. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he was selected with Peter and John to watch by the side of the Lord as the Master gave himself to prayer (Mat. 26:37; Luke 8:51; 9:28).

From Mat. 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1; and John 19:25 it seems that his mother's name was Salome, and that she was sister to Mary the mother of Jesus. James would therefore be cousin to Christ.

The family was evidently of some social standing, for the members were known to Caiaphas (John 18:16), and had property in or near Jerusalem (John 19:27).

James' name usually precedes John's from which it is assumed that he was the elder. They were named *Sons of Thunder* because of their fierce anger against the Samaritan village that rejected Christ (Mark 3:17; Luke 9:54-55). They became the objects of the indignation of the other apostles for the ambitious self-seeking they displayed when, urged on by their mother, they sought for higher positions of authority in the kingdom of God (Mark 10:35-41). The circumstances surrounding the death and resurrection of the Lord, however, humbled James, and made his conversion complete. He subsequently drank of the cup of sorrow which Christ warned would be his lot (Mat. 20:22) for he was the first apostle to die at the hands of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:2).

There are no writings of James recorded in Scripture, yet it is obvious that he was in the inner councils of Jesus, and that he played a great part in the development of the early ecclesia.

JAMES: THE FATHER OF JUDAS

The Authorised Version calls this James the "brother of Judas," but there is no corresponding word for "brother" in the Greek, and the Revised Version describes him as the father of the apostle Judas. He is referred to in Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13. There is no further record of this James apart from this fact.

THE DAY OF THE FIRST PASSOVER

The evidence suggests that in a most remarkable manner, the Passover in the year that Christ died, synchronised with the original Passover, as far as the day of the week is concerned on which it was celebrated.

The Passover lamb was always slain on the 14th day of Abib, and simple computation will reveal that on the first occasion in Egypt this fell on a Wednesday (using our conventional weekday names for convenience).

We have set out a calendar of the time-period in question, and suggest that the same should read as follows, using the Jewish system of a lunar month of thirty days:

Sun		4	11	18	25	2	9
Mon		5	12	19	26	3	10
Tues		6	13	20	27	4	11
Wed		7	14	21	28	5	12
Thurs	1	8	15	22	29	6	13
Fri	2	9	16	23	30	7	14
Sat	3	10	17	24	1	8	15

In order to determine the week-days of earlier events, we have to work back from a set time period that is supplied in Exodus 16:1. There we read that the children of Israel arrived at the wilderness of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month after departing out of Egypt. Arriving there, they "murmured against Moses and Aaron" because they lacked food. That evening (see v. 13) God sent them quails, and on the next morning (v. 13) they received the first shower of manna. This manna continued for six days (v. 5), at the end of which the first sabbath was celebrated.

It is obvious, therefore, that the children of Israel murmured on the seventh day of the week, which was dated the 15th day of the second month. As there were thirty days in the Jewish month, the calendar above shows us on which day of the week the 14th of the first month fell— it was a Wednesday. The Passover lamb was slain on that day. Then, on Thursday, the Israelites left Egypt for Succoth (Exo. 12:37). On Friday, they arrived at Etham (ch. 13:20). On Saturday, they came to Pi-hahiroth (ch. 14:2). On Sunday, at night, they crossed the Red Sea and sung the song of Deliverance in the morning (ch. 14:24).

These events foreshadowed events related to the death of the Lord, from the fear and anxiety which was manifested on the 14th day, to the rejoicing consequent upon his resurrection on the first day of the week; and these latter follow the same time sequence as the former.

Chapter 4

JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

The day following Jesus' arrival at Bethany, he entered Jerusalem in triumph. John is specific regarding that time sequence. He records that Jesus came to Bethany "six days before the Passover" (John 12:1), and that he entered Jerusalem the following day (v. 12). Six days before the Passover is the 9th of Abib, for the Passover was celebrated on the 15th of the month and continued in the days following the slaying of the Lamb on the 14th. In our last chapter, we gave reasons for claiming that the 9th Abib was a Friday when the Lord arrived at Bethany. Most commentators agree with that conclusion, for they claim that Jesus entered Jerusalem on what they call Palm-Sunday, and as he would have broken the Law if he had walked all the way from Jericho to Jerusalem on a sabbath, he must have travelled that distance on the Friday.

Accepting that Jesus arrived at Bethany on a Friday, John records that "on the next day" Jesus entered Jerusalem. That would have been five days before the Passover, and therefore the 10th of the month. It was a most appropriate date for Jesus to enter Jerusalem, and most significant that he should be ceremoniously conducted into the city in the manner he was, for the Passover lamb was selected on the 10th day of the month, and the Master was the antitypical Lamb of God.

The 10th of Abib, that year, fell on a Saturday and not a Sunday. This presents a difficulty to most commentators who are fixed to the traditional view that Jesus entered the city on a Sunday. This, however, would mean that he entered on the 11th of Abib, and that would destroy the prophetic type as suggested above. How can commentators so teach, if John is so specific concerning the day Jesus entered Jerusalem? Because they claim that Jesus rested at Bethany on the sabbath in order to keep the Law. However, there is no record in Scripture to justify that claim.

Instead, Jesus fulfilled the prophetic type. In accordance with the records he "came to Bethany" on the Friday which was "six days before the Passover." Shortly after his arrival, Martha made him supper, which implies that the day had almost come to its end, and the beginning of the next day, the 5th before Passover, had commenced — for a Jewish day commences at sundown (approximately 6pm). The anointing of the Lord by Mary, therefore, took place some time after 6pm at the beginning of the

10th of Abib, which was a sabbath. She anointed the true Passover Lamb, on the very day when the ceremonial passover lamb was selected for sacrifice! In the following morning of the same sabbath, Jesus made his way to the city of Jerusalem. But he did not break the sabbath law by so doing, for we are clearly told that the distance covered was considered "a sabbath's day journey" (Acts 1:12; Luke 24:50). It almost seems as though this fact is deliberately recorded to emphasise that the walk did not violate the Law.

UNDER cover of night, Judas had made his evil way to the leaders of the Jews, that he might initiate his dreadful act of treachery. The dark shadows hid the full extent of his treachery, though the silvery light of the moon above doubtless illuminated his person as he made his stealthy way into the enemy's camp. But what a contrast the following morning! The golden sun rose over the eastern horizon to drive away the gloom of the night, and to bathe the world in light as the Sun of righteousness, accompanied by his apostles, set forth from Bethany for Jerusalem.

News of his intention had travelled throughout the little village of Bethany, hid behind a rising on the Mount of Olives. And because the interest of people in Jesus had been excited by the miracles that he had performed, and particularly by the resurrection of Lazarus, many decided to travel down with him to Jerusalem.

They realised that one who could perform such miracles as this prophet of Nazareth had done must surely be a Man of God of outstanding importance. Perhaps he was the Messiah! Certainly the apostles believed he was, and undoubtedly had not hesitated to declare their conviction to others. All this had the effect of greatly stimulating interest in the Master throughout Bethany. Thus, as Jesus made ready to go to the Holy City, many others did likewise.

**Enthusiasm on the
Way to Jerusalem
(Mat. 21:1-11;
Mk. 11:1-11; Lk. 19:
28-44; Jn. 12:12-19)**

Not only so, but news of his presence had penetrated even to the city of Jerusalem itself. Many visitors had assembled there for the Feast. Some of them had already met the Lord on previous occasions, others had only recently heard of his amazing miracles, and now desired to meet him for the first time. The day was most appropriate for such an occasion. It was the 10th of Abib, a most important day in the Jewish calendar. On it passover lambs were selected and penned up awaiting sacrifice on the 14th day (Exo. 12:3) which pointed back to Yahweh's deliverance in times past, and foreshadows that which He will accomplish in the future.

Already keyed up because of the feast, the people now heard with growing excitement, that Jesus of Nazareth would indeed be visiting the city that day. Some of them decided that they would go forth to meet him. As they emerged from one of the gates of the city, to descend into the valley that divided it from the Mount of Olives, they took with them branches of palm trees as suited to such an occasion, and in an



excess of joy as they wound their way along, they chanted a most significant verse from one of the Passover Psalms that, unbeknown to them, has a direct prophetic reference to the Lord Jesus: "Hosanna," they sang: "Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of Yahweh!" (John 12:13).

Similarly, their actions were highly symbolic. The palm tree is used in Scripture as an emblem of victory and joyfulness, as well as a symbol of the righteous (Psa. 92:12-15). The boughs were used at the Feast of Tabernacles when the people commemorated the goodness of Yahweh in delivering them from Egypt, and saw in the harvest then recently gathered in, a token of that spiritual harvest that Yahweh will ultimately claim as His own. The words they chanted and the boughs they carried, blended the significance of the Passover with that of the Feast of Tabernacles. The former reminded them of the privilege of deliverance; the latter emphasised victory and joy; whilst both centered on the Messiah who should come to fulfil both.

We do not know exactly how the crowds who then emerged from



Jerusalem viewed Jesus, and whether they saw him at the time as the Messiah. Perhaps they rather viewed him as the one who would deliver them from the shackles of Rome, as Moses had from those of Egypt, and who would cause them to experience the joy and gladness associated with the fulness of Yahweh's harvest. In any case, they rejoiced, and sang words that honoured him whom they went forth to meet.

Jesus Sends for a Colt Meanwhile Jesus had set out from Bethany on foot. He doubtless took the main road to Jerusalem, one that sweeps around the southern shoulder of the central peak of the Olivet range, and winds its way down to the valley of the Kedron, then up the other side and on to the city itself.

Close to Bethany he came to Bethphage. The name means, *The House of Unripe Figs*. We do not know its exact location or features. However, the references to it in Scripture suggest that it was a district, and not a town. In any case, it was close to Bethany, and when the Lord reached the border of the district, he paused, and selecting two disciples, he gave them a strange commission to fulfil: "Go to the farm* opposite you," he commanded, "and you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; untie her and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall reply, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will let them go without delay."

The apostles wondered at the strange request, and could make nothing of it (John 12:16). Later, however, after Jesus had been glorified, they realised that this was but another detail fulfilling that predicted by the prophets, and as recorded by both Matthew and John. Matthew shows how that the incident fulfilled prophecies spoken by both Isaiah and Zechariah. He wrote: "*All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell you the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, even [see Diaglott] a colt the foal of an ass*" (Mat. 21:4-5; cp. Isa. 12:6).

The disciples made their way to the farm, and proceeded to untie the animals, as they had been instructed.

The owners came upon them as they were unloosing the colt.

"Why are you untethering the colt?" they asked.

"Because the Lord needs it," they replied.

As Jesus had predicted, they immediately permitted the disciples to take the animals. Evidently the owner of the farm was known to Jesus, and was possibly one of his followers. The terms of the apostles' reply by the use of the title, "the Lord," would suggest this.

The disciples led the animals to Jesus. The colt had never been broken in, and therefore was fit for the purpose to which it was about

* We have rendered this "farm" rather than "village" as in the A.V., because it better fits the language of the records, and is also warranted by the words used. Mark 11:4, for example, speaks of the colt being tied "by the door without," which would surely be a strange description of a village, but could well fit an enclosed farm. The difficulty is easily solved if it is recognised that the Greek word used, *kome*, is used in the Septuagint version as a translation of the Hebrew word *chazer*, and that "chazer" signifies "an enclosed place," and is used to describe an enclosed estate farm. It seems, therefore, that the Lord directed his apostles to a farm in the district of Bethphage, at the entrance of which, in the open way, were found the animals to which reference is made.

to be put (Num. 19:2; Deu. 21:3; 1Sam. 6:7). The disciples placed their garments upon the animal to do regal honour to the one about to ride it (cp. 2Kings 9:13), and then, lifting the Lord upon the colt, the triumphal procession set forth. It presented a picture of dignity and peace. On that significant day of Abib, the Passover crowds saw an amazing sight as they excitedly made their way toward the Holy City. They saw the Lord, seated upon the unbroken colt in regal splendour, surrounded by rejoicing people, presenting a prophetic picture of their Messiah in triumph and glory.

Yet there was solemn warning in what they saw, if they had but recognised it. Jesus could ride the unbroken colt, but not the Jewry of his day! The very people who then sang his praises and rejoiced before him, may well have been among the number that would turn their backs upon him a few days hence, and cry, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" That generation was like the one of Isaiah's day: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his mother's crib; but Israel doth not know, My people does not consider" (Isa. 1:3).

A large crowd had now assembled. The people realised that there was something unique about this amazing prophet who performed such remarkable miracles, and whose majestic appearance stimulated the expressions of praise and joy they heard on every hand. When they stopped in wonder to enquire the meaning of the sight, those about him spoke of his miracles, and particularly the amazing incident of the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17). The enthusiasm was contagious. Caught up in the general excitement some spread their garments in the way, others cut down the young tender shoots from the trees to do likewise, thus making a leafy carpet for him to ride upon. Multitudes now surrounded him. Those in front, heralded his coming, those behind acted as a vanguard. All rejoiced, and joined in chanting Passover Psalms, and particularly the verse: "***Hosanna* to the Son of David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Yahweh. Hosanna in the highest***" (Mat. 21:9).

The Rejoicing People and Mourning Messiah Leaving Bethany, the cavalcade came to a turn in the road where, for a moment, a glimpse of the whole city is seen, for the road from Bethany to Jerusalem winds in and out, giving several views of the capital. Luke implies that they had reached the point of this first view by stating: "When he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives..." (Luke 19:37).

*Hosanna is a Hebrew word, signifying "Oh save!" (Psa. 118:25). It is derived from the root *yasha* from whence also is derived the name "Jesus" (*Yahshua*), so that the people, unwittingly, gave acknowledgment to his status as Saviour. As "hosanna" is Hebrew, its use in this place indicates strongly that the people sang, or chanted, this section of the Psalm in Hebrew.

As the excited people rounded the shoulder of the peak from Bethany, and saw below them the city of Jerusalem, they raised their voices in praise to Yahweh, and the one whose miracles testified that he came in His name. They "praised God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen." The valleys below echoed with the chorus of sound that arose from their chanting: ***"Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of Yahweh; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!"***

The first portion of this hymn is taken from the Passover Psalm (118:26); the latter part gives expression to the source of peace — "in heaven" — and what it will produce — "glory in the highest." These latter words are similar to those of the song that the angels sang at the birth of Jesus, and though the people were in ignorance of the angelic song, they expressed that when Jerusalem — the City of Peace — will be occupied by its King, peace will stem from heaven, and glory in the highest will be reflected on the earth.

But all was not pure joy on the road that day, for there were Pharisees present who listened with strong disapproval to the expressions of the people. They believed that such ascriptions of praise directed to the man they hated was blasphemous, and they called upon Jesus to use his influence to stop them.

"Master, rebuke your disciples," they commanded.

The Lord refused to do so; he told the Pharisees: ***"I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out!"*** He probably used the expression as a symbol for the Gentiles, warning the Pharisees that if Israel refused the offer of heaven that was being made through his ministry, it would be offered unto Gentiles who would receive it (Acts 28:28).

The Lord's reply did not lessen the feelings of hatred that the Pharisees had toward him. But, for the moment, they could do nothing, and in the face of the rejoicing people, it was dangerous to attempt too much. They contented themselves with murmuring among themselves, saying: "See how you make no progress in opposing him? Look, how completely the people follow him!"

There was an ominous threat in those murmurings. They implied that appeals to Jesus were useless, and that something more drastic should be attempted. He would have to be forcibly restrained in some way!

It is terrible that men who claimed to worship God, who even then were engaged in preparations for the most solemn act of worship in the Jewish year, could think and act as they did, but doubtless they justified their attitude on the grounds of expediency. If Jesus was not stopped, the things that they held most dear, and which they believed constituted the Truth, would be in jeopardy. Better that he should die than the religion they revered so highly should be overthrown.

Thus they reasoned (John 11:49-51)!

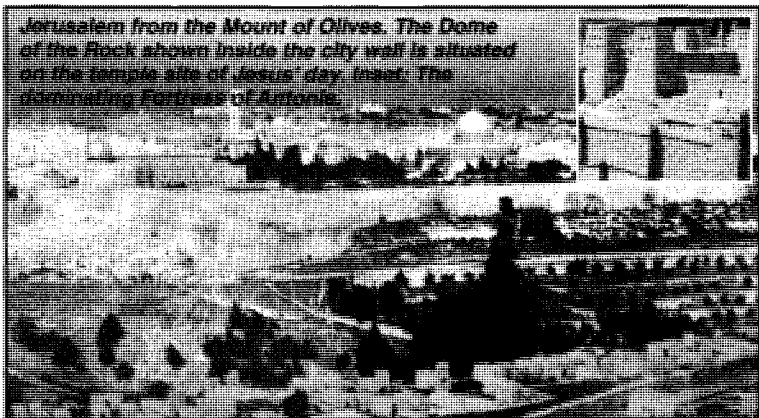
A few days later, the smoldering hatred in the hearts of those Pharisees burst into flames of open rebellion against God, and brought Jesus to a criminal's death upon the stake. Meanwhile, they too, moved on toward Jerusalem to make preparation for the Passover, the time of liberty from oppression and Egyptian death!

Surrounded by the rejoicing multitudes, the Lord moved down the slope of Olivet toward Jerusalem itself. Luke again records: "When he was come near, he beheld the city..." (Luke 19:41).

This was the second view that he and the people received of Jerusalem since leaving Bethany (cp. v. 37). After the first glimpse, when the people had paused and chanted their song, the procession had again advanced. At that point, the road descends a slight declivity, and the sight of the city is again hidden behind the intervening ridge of Olivet. A little further on, and the path rises again. It climbs a rugged ascent, reaching a ledge of rock where, suddenly, the whole city bursts into view. As the rejoicing people with the Lord in their midst reached this point, they looked down upon the City of the Great King (Mat. 5:35) in all its glory. Far below them was the Kedron Valley, whilst towering above it stood the proud, hard, magnificent temple glistening in the sunlight, revealing an external glory that, unfortunately, was but a cover for the gross wickedness revealed by the priests and people within. But as a grim warning to the people that all was not well in the "city of their solemnities," there could also be seen frowning down upon the temple, the dominant tower of Antonia, the Roman fortress, symbol of foreign oppression, a form of slavery from which the Jews desired deliverance.

For the moment, however, the eyes of the people were closed to that; they saw only the apparent glory of their city, and as they did so, their enthusiasm rose to a crescendo of excited acclamation.

But not so the Lord! Luke records, "*he beheld the city, and wept*



over it" (Luke 19:41). All around him was excitement and joy; but with his eyes centered on the city before him, the Messiah mourned. His mind was in the future. The crowd saw its glory and rejoiced; the Lord knew of its infamy, and mourned. With prophetic vision he beheld the judgment that would inevitably fall heavily upon Jerusalem. He looked into the future, and saw the final misery of the doomed city: besieged, starving, ringed with writhing figures dying in agony on Roman crosses that encircled it, and finally, the city destroyed in ignominy.

As he contemplated this terrible picture which was fulfilled only forty years later, he wept aloud!

He reflected the attitude of the Psalmist who declared: "Rivers of water ran down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law" (Psa. 119:136).

He fulfilled the type of Jeremiah, that prophet of mourning and woe who likewise wept because he foresaw the misery that would come upon a people he loved, when their city would be overthrown. Jeremiah had lamented: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" (Jer. 9:1)... "My soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears because Yahweh's flock is carried away captive" (Jer. 13:17).

The prophet's words are expressive of deep tenderness and feeling, such as Jesus also felt for the people and city he loved so much, as he rode triumphantly toward Jerusalem. Jesus was not indifferent to the sufferings of others, and knew the full measure of agony and horror that would overcome the people because they had turned from Yahweh. He realised that Jewry was deserving of punishment, and that Yahweh was just in leaving them to their folly, but he nevertheless wept because of the very blindness of heart and stubbornness of outlook that would bring this upon them. He saw the needlessness of the misery that would engulf them, and he suffered and sorrowed on their behalf.

He soliloquised over the doomed city, addressing it as though it could hear and understand: "***If you had known...***" he began.

He paused, and his mind reviewed the long history of wicked rebelliousness of which the city was guilty, in spite of the great privileges granted it. The glory then spread out for all to see was nothing but a facade of evil within, and whilst Yahweh's thoughts toward the city and people were "thoughts of peace, and not of evil" (Jer. 29:11), the moral depravity of Jewry's idolatry made punishment inevitable. But it was all so unnecessary, if the people would but turn to God; and so he continued: "***If you had known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the time will come upon you, that***

your enemies shall cast a trench about you, and compass you round, and keep you in on every side, and shall flatten you to the ground, and your children within you; and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another; because you did not know the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:42-44).

Ominous, terrible words! Words that were probably drowned out by the noisy excitement of the people, but which faithfully warned what would happen to the city that rejected Yahweh's counsel, and the help extended by His Son. The Lord saw to the time when the lovely city, perched on the hill before him, with its resplendent temple gleaming in the sun, would be breached by brutal Roman soldiers, and ringed with wooden stakes upon which would be impaled the bodies of tortured Jews. This terrible prophecy came to pass in the siege of Jerusalem in AD70, which resulted in the city being taken from Jewry until 1967 when, for the first time after 2,000 years of dispersion, they again obtained power over it.

Dire judgment would come upon the people, Christ warned, because they did not know "*the time of their visitation.*"

What did he mean by this expression? It is a term frequently used in Scripture, particularly by Jeremiah, that man of sorrows who so completely typified the Lord Jesus. It describes the work of a priest when called upon to inspect an object, or a house, to ascertain whether there is any impurity in it.

The Greek word means "inspection," and is particularly used to describe the official, priestly inspection of a house suspected of being afflicted with a fretting plague of leprosy. In such cases, the Law of Moses required that the priest should inspect the property, and if signs of leprosy be found therein, he should either scrape the affected stones, or remove and replace them (Lev. 14:44). After a time, it would be inspected again, and if the leprosy continued in the house in spite of this treatment, it would be pronounced unclean, and thus unfit for habitation. It would then be broken down, and the stones all removed and dumped into an unclean place.

The inspection of the house by the priest, was its "day of visitation."

These requirements of the Law of Moses, these "visitations," had their counterpart in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, the "priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:20). When the Lord had visited the temple at the beginning of his public ministry, he had virtually proclaimed the Jewish "house" to be unclean. He attempted corrective measures. He had appealed to the priests and people in the words: "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise" (John 2:16). This was equivalent to



scraping stones infected with leprosy. Again, at the close of his public ministry, he inspected the house a second time, and found that the spiritual leprosy had spread. There was no appeal on that occasion, but only stern accusation and indictment. He told them that though God's house would one day become "unto all nations the house of prayer," they had turned it into "a den of thieves." In consequence that house, that temple would be overthrown so completely, that not one stone would be left upon another, for all would be cast down (Mark 13:2), a ruin that would constitute a visible token of the state of the nation. It would be completely demolished and cast into an unclean place like the stones of a leprous house. The "stones" of a national house are its sons,* and because of their spiritually leprous state, having rejected the Voice of Yahweh and the ministry of His Son, their political entity would be broken up, and they would be driven into exile, into the unclean world of Gentilism.

During the course of his ministry, the Lord had appealed, warned and exhorted the people, in vain. He lamented over the city of Jerusalem but the people failed to understand the cause of his mourning, nor the significance of his reference to the day of visitation. To them Jerusalem was *The City of Peace*, and they did not appreciate that the wisdom that is from above is "first pure then peaceable" (James 3:17), nor that its king is "first King of righteousness, and then King of peace" (Heb. 7:2). These truths are only really learned through the hard school of personal experience.

The Excited City

Thus the Lord mourned, but he mourned alone. Neither his disciples, nor the rejoicing crowds surrounding him, seemed capable of entering into his feelings, or properly discerning the real spiritual depravity of the nation and the crisis facing it. They may have felt taken aback, and experienced a temporary discomfort, as they viewed the weeping Messiah; and perhaps his tears dampened their enthusiasm for a time, but as he regained his composure, so their excitement again mounted, and with rejoicing steps they led him to the city.

The joyful noise of their approach attracted widespread attention. People within the city flocked to see who was approaching. They looked out on a strange sight. They saw the majestic figure of the Lord on the colt surrounded by the rejoicing multitude, and recognised the regal dignity of his appearance. "*Who is this?*" they enquired.

"*This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee!*" was the excited answer.

*The Hebrew words for "son" (בן, *ben*), daughter (בת, *bath*) and "stones" (אבן, *eban*) are derived from a common root, because what a son is for a family, the stones are for a house (בית, *bay'th*).

Meanwhile the Lord made his dignified entrance through the city gate, and then, on foot, entered the precincts of the temple. The people still surrounded him, excited, expectant and happy. When the news was received by those of Jerusalem that the great miracle-working prophet of Galilee had arrived, the blind and the lame made their halting way to where he stood teaching in the temple courts, and besought his mercy in an act of healing. And he healed them there. This was a token to any who had a discerning heart, that their Messiah was in their midst, for this was some of the work that the prophets predicted that the Christ would do when he was manifested in the midst of Israel (Isa. 35:5-6).

It was a token, also, of the work that the priests in the temple should have performed in a figurative sense, for they should have given sight to the spiritually blind by expounding the Word of Truth; and they should have healed the spiritually lame by teaching them how to walk righteously before Yahweh.

These miracles increased the wonder and enthusiasm of the people, so that now, even little children were caught up in the general excitement, and re-echoed the words of their elders, who were doubtless speculating as to whether Jesus was the Messiah:

"Hosanna to the Son of David," sang the little children.

Their innocent, infant voices, together with the whole scene of enthusiasm and excitement, irritated the chief priests and scribes. They could not dispute the wonder of the miracles Christ performed, they dared not rebuke the children for echoing the sentiments of their elders, and so they turned upon the Lord with words of angry rebuke.



"Do you not hear what these are saying?" they chided him, as though that should convince him of the impropriety of such words.

"Yes," he instantly answered. "Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, Thou hast perfected praise'?"

This quotation from Psalm 8:2 silenced them for the moment. They knew the Psalm well. It was the one composed by David after he had triumphed over Goliath. And now the antitypical David was face to face with the antitypical Goliath (the Jewish leaders). The Psalm is Messianic as they well knew, for it is acknowledged as such by the Jews. The Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament provides it with a title: "A Psalm of David concerning the Secrets of the Son," and designates it with the phrase *eis to telos*, "toward the end." The Psalm speaks of the Messiah as the Son of Man, a title constantly used by Jesus. It was composed to commemorate David's victory, so that Jesus' use of it to rebuke his critics, constituted a warning that as Goliath had been overthrown so also would they!

It should have caused them to recall how that the leaders of Israel persecuted David subsequent to his great victory over Goliath. These leaders were following in their footsteps.

In any case, no answer by them is recorded. Surrounded by the rejoicing crowds, with the overwhelming evidence of miracles before them, and faced with exposition that they could not match, they were silenced for a time.

As the day drew on, however, the crowds went about their business, and gradually the Lord was left to himself. Quietly and thoughtfully he took in the busy scene about him, surveying all that was going on (Mark 11:11). He could see that the worship had lost its power; that the nation was spiritually in a leprous condition. But, for the moment, probably because it was a sabbath day, he did nothing to disturb the people, there gathered for worship. He merely looked around upon the site of what he knew would be the scene of his trials during the next few days. Then, when eventide was come (Mark 11:11; Mat. 21:17), he returned to the Mount of Olives toward* Bethany (cp. Luke 21:37; John 12:1-2). There he remained for the night.

* The Greek preposition "*eis*," rendered "unto" in Mark 11:11 can signify "toward." On this occasion Jesus went toward Bethany, to the Mount of Olives, but did not enter the village.

Chapter 5

SUNDAY, ELEVENTH OF ABIB

The division between the tenth and eleventh of Abib (the fifth and fourth days before the Passover respectively) is very clearly shown by Mark. He records: "On the morrow, when they were come from Bethany..." (Mark 11:12), thus showing that the events narrated took place on the next day, being the 11th of Abib, a fact not so clearly presented in Matthew as we shall see. If the tenth of Abib fell on a sabbath that year, as we suggest, this 11th of Abib would have been a first day of the week, or as it is now described, a Sunday.

On that day, the Lord again visited Jerusalem, and on his way, cursed the barren fig tree (Mat. 21:18-19; Mark 11:12-14). Inside the city, he entered the temple, and having noticed the way that the holy place was desecrated by the priests, traders and money-changers, he drove them from its precincts with fiery zeal (Mat. 21:12-14; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46). This aroused the bitter hostility of the priests who now manifested a murderous hatred toward Jesus, which, for the moment, they feared to put into action because the people looked upon the Lord as a prophet (Mark 11:18-19; Luke 19:47-48). Matthew, Mark and Luke all make reference to incidents that occurred on that day, but John passes it over in silence.

Matthew's account is out of chronological sequence, for he has inserted the incident of Christ's cleansing of the courts of the temple in the midst of his record of the more peaceful visit to Jerusalem the day before (see Mat. 21:12-19). Matthew's placing of this incident is evidently anticipatory, and is included where it is found, perhaps to connect the sight that met the eyes of the Lord when he entered the courts of the temple on the sabbath, with the action he took the following day. Matthew frequently records events in that fashion. Certainly, in this instance, his account of rejoicing children shouting Hosannas, and the comparative mildness of the priests' opposition then recorded (vv. 14-16), do not indicate that they had been called forth by such extreme action as he adopted when he cleansed the temple, even though they are recorded together. On the other hand, the demand of the chief priests and elders on the 12th Abib, when they required to know by what authority he "did these things" (Mat. 21:23), would imply that he had just previously manifested some vigorous, challenging action such as the cleansing of the temple.

It is obvious throughout his account of Christ's ministry, that Matthew is not so much concerned (except on certain occasions when he makes the time factor clear) with chronological sequences, as in recording and interpreting incidents as they took place. Mark's record, which records similar events as is found in Matthew's, does take heed to their time setting, and therefore should be studied in conjunction with that of Matthew. When that is done, the following sequence for Matthew 21 emerges: 10th Abib — vv. 1-11, 15-17; 11th Abib — vv. 18-19, 12-14. Mark clearly shows that Christ first cursed the fig tree (Mark 11:12-14), and afterwards cleansed the temple (vv. 15-17).

ON the first day of the week, which was the 11th Abib, the Lord again returned to Jerusalem with his disciples, travelling from the region of Bethany on the Mount of Olives, down the valley of Kedron, and ascending the western slope of the valley, to enter the city.

As he made his way along, he felt the pangs of hunger. He had probably been spending the evening in prayer and fasting, and now sought some food to fortify his strength for the day before him.

Christ Curses the Fig Tree (Mat. 21:18-19; Mark 11:12-14) Some distance off (Mark 11:13), he saw a solitary fig tree (Mat. 21:19 mg). It was of healthy appearance, well covered with leaves, and stood up prominently upon an eminence, attracting the attention of all who went by.

It was situated in Bethphage, *The House of Unripe or Winter Figs*, and comprised a variety that produced fruit which remains on the tree through the winter after the leaves have fallen. It is said that edible green figs should appear before the leaves, and that if they do not, no harvest will be obtained, even at the time of figs. As the tree was then in leaf, it should have produced some early pre-summer figs at least (Isa. 28:4).

The Lord therefore turned aside to the fig tree, and searched among its leaves for some of the fruit. But there was none, an indication that there would be no fruit even at the time of harvest. The fig tree, therefore, was a tree of disappointment: lovely in appearance, but entirely lacking in that which would give food and pleasure to others. It was all promise, but no performance. Its wide, green leaves covered its barrenness, as the leaves of the fig tree in the Garden of Eden



were used by Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness.

Thus, when the Lord came seeking fruit, he found none.

In the hearing of the disciples, he addressed it: "Let no man eat fruit of you from now on for ever!" he declared.

Later they learned the significance of his action and words.

**Jesus Cleanses the
Temple Courts
(Mat. 21:12-14;
Mk. 11:15-17)
Lk. 19:45-46)**

Leaving the fig tree, the Lord led the apostles down the valley of Kedron, and up toward the "city of the great King" that towered above it. Entering the gate of the city, he made his way to the courts of the temple. There, a terrible but familiar scene

met his gaze.

The courts were a hive of activity. Some Jews, with eyes hardened by greed, sat crouched over tables piled high with coins, ready and willing, for a handsome profit, to exchange the foreign currencies of those arriving at Jerusalem from afar. Others sat before large wicker baskets containing cooing doves or pigeons which they sold for sacrifice; others stood by animals which were displayed for the same purpose. Around these clustered the customers, noisily comparing the prices and merits of that offered for sale, whilst men bearing burdens rudely thrust their way through the motley crowd as though the court was but a common street.

The din was deafening. The lowing cattle, the bleating sheep, the bartering crowds, combined to destroy all atmosphere of reverence. The temple court was turned into the unholy activity of an eastern market, with all its noise, impatience, greed and gain. In such an environment, all thoughts of worship were driven from the minds of those gathered there, as they concentrated upon the business of buying and selling.

The priests looked upon the scene, not with indifference which would have been bad enough, but with eager anticipation, for they benefited from the lucrative trade. According to J. Politeyan in *New Testament Archaeology*, the money changers alone made a profit of approximately \$18,000, and the priests were paid a percentage of this. Josephus indicates how extensive was the trade, for he mentions that some 256,600 animals were offered at one Passover.

The Lord, however, looked on the scene with sadness and indignation. He keenly felt the insult that the nation was paying Yahweh by their treatment of His temple, and his feelings erupted in hot anger against those who so wantonly and thoughtlessly desecrated the holy place where they had set up their unholy trade. Probably using the same means as he had done when he visited the temple at the beginning of his ministry (John 2:13-17. *Story of the Bible*, vol. 5), he resolutely moved against them, driving out the animals,

overturning the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves, and ordering those who were carrying vessels through the court to stop using it as a common street. His righteous zeal, his uncompromising determination and courage made cowards of them all, and before his stern gaze they fled in consternation.

Thus he cleared the temple.

He did it with such authority that, although he was only 33 years of age, none dared challenge him. Then, having cleared the court, he turned on the observant, angry priests with words of rebuke constituting a question drawn from the prophecy of Isaiah, and a statement of fact derived from the experience and words of Jeremiah:

"Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?" he asked; and then continued: ***"But you have made it a den of thieves!"*** These are vividly descriptive words, carefully selected by Christ from the treasure-house of Scripture, to impress the people with the full measure of their iniquity.

The question is derived from Isaiah's prophecy: the statement of fact from that of Jeremiah. The use of Isaiah's prophecy (ch. 56:7) by the Lord Jesus, identified the temple of the future with the one that existed in Jerusalem in the past. Though the temple yet to be built will be larger and more resplendent than that existing in the days of the Lord, it will still be a continuation of it.

The quotation from Isaiah illustrated what the temple could have become if the people had worshipped Yahweh aright, as well as what it will become when the Lord Jesus rules as King-priest of the Age to come. It served to show the grand opportunity that was there if only they would take heed to the requirements of Yahweh. But the people saw nothing wrong with their worship, and did not realise that they were insulting God by so desecrating His holy place.

The statement of fact, the second portion of Jesus' rebuke to the people, is derived from Jeremiah 7:11, and formed part of the prophet's indictment levelled against the people of his day, in similar circumstances as those of the Lord. Significantly, not long after Jeremiah had upbraided the people, the temple was destroyed during the Babylonian invasion.

The words and setting were therefore ominous and suggestive. In the days of Jeremiah, Jewry had been guilty of the greatest irreverence. In spite of the threat of invasion, and of earlier attacks that had already resulted in some being taken into captivity, the Jewish people remaining in the land, believed that they were impervious to the judgments that Jeremiah had thundered against the nation. They were confident that Yahweh would never allow His city, His temple, nor His people to be completely destroyed. They identified themselves with the temple: "The temple, the temple, the temple of Yahweh are these!" was their constant refrain.

They claimed that Yahweh dwelt within the nation, as His glory was found in the Most Holy of the temple, and that this was the guarantee of perpetuity for both. Jeremiah, however, swept aside their ill-founded confidence, and repudiated the claim they made. He declared: "Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom you know not, and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by My name, **become a den of robbers** in your eyes?"

The answer was, that it had become a den of thieves, though the people were not prepared to acknowledge it as such. In this incident, as in others, Jeremiah the mourning prophet, very closely prefigured the experiences of Christ, as he, too, was caused to mourn because of the folly and hard-heartedness of the people (see *Story of the Bible*, vol. 6).

The Lord's words are even more telling when the Greek word rendered "den" is considered. It is the word *spelaiou*, and signifies "a place of refuge," so that the term "den of thieves" literally means "a cave of bandits." The term suggests a secret den where thieves meet to argue over ill-gotten gain!

The glory of the temple had sunk to that low state on the day over 2,000 years ago, when its Messiah and future high priest walked its courts.

Meanwhile, the Lord Jesus, having cleansed the temple and indicted the priests, proceeded to teach the people. They listened intently to his expositions, admiring the beauty of Scripture as he properly explained it (Mark 11:18). Luke records that they figuratively "hung upon his words" (Luke 19:48; mg). The crowds surged around him to hearken, recognising in him an outstanding prophet of power.

But the priests did not do so. They watched his actions, they listened to his words with growing hatred and antagonism, sensing that things were moving to a climax and a crisis. Only the day before they had called upon him to quieten the children who were praising him with shouts of hosannas, and he had refused to do so. And now, today, his actions in attempting to destroy the lucrative trade of the temple courts had gone beyond the bounds of what they were prepared to endure.

They angrily murmured among themselves, and as their indignation mounted, they spoke of imprisonment and death. But how to bring it about? That was the question! They feared both the Lord and the people (Mark 11:18). They realised that he was more than their match in Bible exposition, and they could see, from his popularity with the crowds, that they would be ill-treated should they

dare intercede at that moment.

They decided to delay any action for the moment, and went their way.

As for the Lord, he continued to preach to the people throughout the day, and then, as evening drew on, he made his way to the Mount of Olives with his disciples, there to spend the night once more.

There is a significance about the cleansing of the temple to which we have not made reference. It belongs to a series of acts by which Jesus let it be known that he claimed to be the Messiah. To cleanse the temple was a *royal* act. Hezekiah and Josiah both did it, and they both foreshadowed the Lord Messiah. Both as priest and as king, Jesus had a right to do what he did that day: so that with his ceremonial entrance to the city the day before, the chanting of Hosanna and other words of praise by the people, and now the cleansing of the temple, a testimony had gone forth proclaiming Jesus to be the promised Messiah.

It is claimed that the Jews had a tradition that one of the duties of Messiah when he appeared would be to purify the worship of Jerusalem. If so, this sign was prominently displayed before their eyes testifying that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah — but they had failed to heed it.



A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels

JAMES: THE LORD'S HALF-BROTHER

James is the New Testament form of the Hebrew word Jacob, and means *Supplanter*. There seems to have been four persons of that name referred to in the Gospel records: [1] The son of Zebedee (see p. 51); [2] The son of Alphaeus, apparently to be identified with James the less; [3] James the father of Judas (Luke 6:16); [4] James the brother, or rather, half-brother of the Lord.

This last James is generally believed to have been the writer of the *Epistle of James*, and to have been the full brother of Jude (Jude 1). Certainly, Mary's family included a James and a Jude, as Matthew records (ch. 13:55, 56. See also John 2:12; 7:3, 10).

Though Christ's half-brothers were with him in his early ministry (John 2:12), they became ashamed of him as it gathered momentum. His completely dedicated life, his burning zeal (cp. Psa. 69:9) was misunderstood by them. Their familiarity with him bred a contempt and a misunderstanding of his mission, so that at a time when public enthusiasm was greatest, they attempted an unwarranted interference (Mat. 12:46; Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19) with the objective of placing him under constraint (Mark 3:21), only to receive from him a well-merited rebuke. They had apparently prevailed upon his mother to join with them on those occasions. The reason for it is stated: "Neither did his brethren believe in him" (John 7:5). With all the family, as is implied in John 7:5, there seems to have been a certain strong opinionativeness, a Judaistic obstinacy about them which may have accounted for this opposition.

It is most likely that James was the eldest of Mary's family, after the Lord. He appears to have been an austere man, an attitude that probably stemmed from a legalistic concept of the Law, perhaps through the influence of his father, Joseph. Jesus made a special appearance to James following his resurrection (1Cor. 15:7), and this would suggest that it was probably he who moved the family against the Lord. The Lord's appearance to him subsequent to his resurrection seems to have converted the whole family, for they were afterwards found in association with the apostles (Acts 1:14). What a revelation that must have been to James as the risen Lord stood before him! No longer could he doubt his Messiahship. The surprise and wonder of that moment seems to be captured by the statement of Paul, who singles out the occurrence as of special significance: "After that, he was seen of James" (1Cor. 15:7).

James rose to prominence in the early ecclesia in Jerusalem, in which he was looked upon as a pillar (Gal. 1:19; 2:12), so that

even Peter reported to him on his release from prison (Acts 12:17). He presided at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15), and was the author of the tolerant letter to the Gentiles that emerged from the discussion. Thus, though he kept strictly to the law (Gal. 2:12), he recognised the liberty that should be extended to Gentiles (Acts 15:13-23).

Despite his prominence, his learning, his original legalistic concept of the Law, and his austerity, James was a modest man. This emerges from his epistle. He does not presume upon his close relationship to the Lord, but, instead, introduces himself as "a servant... of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1).

References to James the Lord's brother, are found in the following places: Mat. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; James 1:1; Jude 1.

His Tragic Death

According to Josephus and Hegesippus, a converted Jew, in AD160, whose story Eusebius accepts, Ananias, the high priest with the Scribes and Pharisees, taking advantage of the interim between the death of Festus and the arrival of the new Governor, assembled the Sanhedrin and commanded James to denounce Jesus. Instead, he loudly proclaimed that he was the Son of God and Judge of the world. He had been taken to one of the galleries of the temple for this purpose, but was then hurled down by his enraged enemies, and when discovered to be still alive, he was stoned until a charitable fuller ended his sufferings with a club. He died crying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." The date of his death is reputed to be AD62.

JAMES THE LESS

References to this James are to be found in Mat. 10:3; 27:56; Mark 3:18; 15:40; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13, but apart from his name, and his father's name, we know very little of his doings. In Mark 15:40, he is called "James the less," though the title really means "the little," and could apply to his shortness of stature. From Mat. 10:3, Mark 3:18, and Luke 6:15 we learn that his father's name was Alphaeus (the words "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus," in Mat. 10:3, should be eliminated as revealed in the R.V., and the statement read as it does in Mark 3:18 and Luke 6:15).

The mother of James the less was Mary, and a comparison of Mark 15:40 with John 19:25 reveals that the husband of this Mary was called Cleopas (see marg.), in which case, either his mother married twice, or his father had two names, which was then not uncommon.

Chapter 6

MONDAY, TWELFTH OF ABIB — A DAY OF DRAMA

Monday proved to be a day of constant activity and tension for the Lord Jesus, as he made his final public appeal to the people and their leaders. Matthew occupies three chapters in describing the events that took place (chs. 21:20 to 24:2) excluding the Olivet prophecy, which probably was given after 6pm on Monday evening, and which we have placed, therefore, within the compass of Tuesday.

To Matthew's account must be added those of Mark (chs. 11:20 to 13:2), Luke (chs. 20:1 to 21:6), and John (ch. 12:20-50). The combined records show that the events of Monday moved on to a dramatic climax from the early morning discussion when the disciples drew the attention of the Lord to the withered fig tree, to the moment in the temple court when he was angrily accosted by the priests, and asked by whose authority did he perform the things he was doing. From then on the excitement increased until the late afternoon, when he denounced the Pharisees in the strongest terms of rebuke he ever delivered. After doing so, the Lord made his way outside the temple courts, only to be halted by the action of the widow in making her comparatively wealthy offering of two mites. Commenting on this, his attention was drawn to the beauty of the temple by the apostles, and he delivered the prophecy that spoke of its impending destruction. He then left the temple for the last time.

Throughout this day of tension, as friends and enemies surged around him, and questions were constantly flung at him, he conducted himself with the greatest dignity, answering all queries with words that were both wise, skilfully employed and quite decisive.

It pays to linger over the events of days such as these, and by harmonising the various Gospel records, try to extract the greatest amount of understanding of all that took place, that we might comprehend how tremendously dramatic they were.

Only two days remained before the Passover and the death of the Lord.

EARLY on the day following the cleansing of the temple, the Lord again moved down the slope of the Mount of Olives to enter the city of Jerusalem. He was, of course, accompanied by his disciples, and as they neared the fig tree which he had cursed the

day before, the disciples saw that it was now completely withered up from the roots.

**Lesson of the
Withered Fig Tree
(Mat. 21:20-22;
Mark 11:20-26)**

No longer did its leaves put on the gay show of yesterday. They sadly drooped down from the branches of the doomed tree which was obviously quite dead and beyond all hope of redemption. The sight astonished the disciples. They “called to remembrance” (Mark 11:21) the words and ways of the Lord, and felt that the cursing of the fig tree was completely out of character with what they had previously experienced from him. They were used to words of sympathy, and acts of kindness and healing from him, but now, before them was also evidence of his power to rebuke and punish, and the terrible finality of his judgment when once administered. The nation had been treated with kindness but was about to experience divine anger.

“Master,” cried Peter, “Look at the fig tree which you cursed, for it is quite withered away!” His words provided the Lord with an opportunity of warning them to avoid the sin of the fig tree: the sin of ostentatious display without a manifestation of fruit.

Before considering the Lord’s exhortation on that occasion, however, let us do what Peter bid his Lord to do: “*Behold, the fig tree.*”

The Hebrew word for fig is *teenah*, meaning “to spread out,” and that is what true believers are called upon to do. It is a beautiful, elegant tree, with large leaves that provide a glorious cover and shade, and it produced delectable fruit known for its health-giving qualities.

It is used as a symbol for Israel in the Old Testament (Joel 1:7). Jesus in his parable of the barren fig tree, delivered on an earlier occasion (see *Story of the Bible*, vol. 6, pp. 273-274), had used it in a similar way in order to illustrate the purpose of Yahweh with the nation. He described how the barren fig tree had been well cared for, but had not yielded fruit. When it was decided that it should be cut down, a final appeal was made, that it be given added fertiliser for a period of three years in the hope that it might become productive, after which, if it failed to respond to the treatment, it would be removed as only “cumbering the ground” (Luke 13:6-9).

The ministry of the Lord Jesus fulfilled the time and requirements of the probationary period of the parable, and as the nation had remained impervious to the treatment, but one thing remained: to remove it as useless! The terrible finality of the judgment about to be administered to Jewry had been graphically brought home to the



disciples in the action of the Lord on the previous day in cursing the fig tree, and the results of the curse were now seen in the dead tree as they passed that way again. It was "withered up from the roots."

Such would be the fate of the nation, and any of its individual members, in the absence of fruit.

The Lord took the opportunity of stressing the lesson of the fig tree, that his followers might avoid the mistake the nation had made. "Have *the* faith of God!" he declared unto them (see margin) as they stood gazing at the dead tree before them that had been so flourishing the day before.

What did he mean?

He was calling upon them to view things from the standpoint of God; to seek to look at life as from His eyes. If they did that in regard to the withered fig tree before them, they would discern the lessons it provided, and would seek to apply them. They would ask themselves, "Why was the fig tree cursed?" The answer was evident: "Because it lacked fruit." Then: "What did the fig tree represent?" Again there was no doubt: Old Testament usage revealed that it is a symbol of Israel, now teaching that unless the nation produced fruit "in season and out of season" (2Tim. 4:1-2), it too would suffer the fate of the fig tree on the roadside.

After all, the Law imposed a curse on Israel should the nation fail to honour the terms of the covenant; and the Lord's action in regard to the fig tree illustrated how real and drastic the curse would be.

So the first lesson that the disciples learned in regard to the tree was the need of true Israelites to produce fruit.

Fruit, however, will not appear unless sin is restrained; and that was the next lesson that the Lord taught the disciples. He continued with his instruction. After having told the disciples that they need to develop the faith of God, or to learn to look at life through His eyes, he continued: "*For truly I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith!*"

The disciples must have looked about themselves with amazement. They were standing on the slope of the Mount of Olives, a mountainous ridge that extends north and south of the eastern side of Jerusalem for about a mile.

And now they were told that this vast ridge of mountain could be lifted up and thrust out of sight into the sea by a simple request uttered by them in prayer!

It was impossible!

Surely Jesus must be joking!

But no, they looked into the grave countenance



and penetrating eyes of one who was in deadly earnest.

What then did he mean?

This mountain! *This* mountain...!

That mountain was once notorious for idolatry (1Kings 11:6-7), so much so that it was known as the "Mount of Corruption" (2Kings 23:13). On it, Solomon had permitted a shrine to be built to the pagan gods of his wives, which thing became a snare and a sin to Israel. For years, the pagan shrine on the Mount of Olives had defiantly overshadowed the temple worship in Jerusalem below, a symbol of wickedness overshadowing righteousness.

Surely that mountain, significantly called the Mount of Corruption, could be used representatively for the sin of Israel, both individually and nationally. And with that thought, the saying of the Lord made sense, as the disciples could see, for the mountain upon which they were standing was used by him as a representation of sin-laden humanity.

How can we get rid of sins?

Firstly, by seeking God's help and strength through prayer!

And was not that what Jesus was teaching the disciples as they looked at the withered, fruitless fig tree, and heard him saying: "Truly, whosoever shall say..."

What then did he mean by saying that the mountain could be "cast into the sea?" The meaning of that is not difficult when once the Mount of Corruption is recognised as a symbol of sin, for all it signifies is that sins can be blotted out through baptism.

Did the disciples understand the expression the Lord used as teaching baptism? They would have done so if they remembered the words of Micah. He proclaimed of sinful Israel, which was like a Mount of Corruption before Yahweh: "*Who is a God like unto Thee? who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?... He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea*" (Mic. 7:18-19).

As the leafy tree before them on the roadway, so ostentatious in display, so barren in fruit, represented fruitless Israel, so the bold, dominant mountain above them, represented the Mountain of Sin that can only be conquered by prayer and faith manifested in the forgiveness of sins through baptism.

The Lord continued his discourse with words that seem largely disjointed and meaningless when read without due thought to their inner meaning. However, when that is considered they reveal a beautiful connection and development. He declared: "*Therefore, I say unto you, what things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them...*"

Are those words true?

Only if we place them in their proper spiritual context.

As a literal statement of fact, they are not necessarily true. God will not grant us everything we may desire for the mere asking. He will not grant us a motor car, a prosperous business, a lovely home, merely because we desire those things, no matter how much we might pray for them.

The Lord's statement, therefore, must be considered in its proper context.

Remember, the disciples were gazing at the withered, fruitless fig tree as Jesus addressed them. Under those circumstances, the greatest desire they would have, would be to avoid such a fate as the tree had suffered. To that end it was necessary to produce fruit to God's glory and pleasure.

The Lord's words, therefore, constituted an exhortation to the disciples to create a desire to produce fruit unto eternal life, and to seek the co-operation of God to that end, recognising that they could do nothing without His help.

Later, the Lord stated more plainly that which he was evidently trying to convey to them at that time. He told his disciples: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples" (John 15:7-8; see James 1:5). When Christ's words really abide in us, our greatest desire will be to please God.

Surely that was the lesson the Lord was conveying to the disciples, as he instructed them by the dead fig tree. He exhorted them to avoid the fate of the fruitless fig tree by taking the following steps:

- 1. Develop that faith of God in yourselves, and learn to look at life from His standpoint (Mk. 11:22).**
- 2. Conquer sin by the cleansing power of the Word and Prayer (v. 23);**
- 3. Seek the help of God in prayer in order to develop fruit such as will be pleasing to Him (v. 24).**

Then followed the final point, so essential to true spiritual success. If we desire to receive divine mercy, we must extend mercy to others; if we want Yahweh to cover our sins, we must cover those of others. So the Lord continued: "Whenever you stand up to pray, if you have anything against anybody, forgive him, so that your Father is heaven may forgive you your trespasses!"

The disciples had originally gazed at the withered fig tree in wonderment, but now their eyes had been opened to the tremendous issues involved, and they had been given four steps by which they could avoid a fate similar to that of the tree, by developing fruit to the glory of the Father.

Unfortunately, there was one among the twelve apostles that

utterly failed to manifest fruit to the glory of the Father, whilst all of them were so severely tried within a few hours of exhortation as to almost completely fail likewise. What a tremendous lesson is involved in that!

**Jesus' Authority
Challenged**
(Mat. 21:23-27;
Mark 11:27-33;
Luke 20:1-8)

Again the Lord moved on down the valley of Kedron, and up into the city of Jerusalem leading the group of disciples as a shepherd would his sheep. He led the way toward the court of the temple, and as people saw and recognised him, they flocked to him in ever increasing numbers. He thus entered the court with quite a large audience around him, whom he began to teach as he moved slowly along (Luke 20:1).

The Priests' Question
(Mat. 21:23-27;
Mark 11:27-33;
Luke 20:1-8).

Inside the court, however, there awaited him another group that did not view him with any degree of pleasure, and certainly had not gathered there to listen to his discourse.

They were the priests and elders of the people. Many of them had left the temple the night before, mouthing threats against the Lord. They were out to trap, to accuse, and to destroy him. They would kill him if they could. They were persistent and determined in that course of action, and nothing would deflect them from it (John 11:49-57; 12:10). Already Judas had conspired with them to that end (Mat. 26:14), and it was agreed that the charge had to be one of blasphemy based on the claim that he was the Son of Yahweh (Mat. 26:63). Jesus could have claimed to be the Son of God (i.e., Elohim) or of David, without such a charge being successfully pressed against him, for to claim such was not considered blasphemy by the Jews. Therefore, whilst Jesus did not forbid the crowds to address him in a way that seemed blasphemous to the priests (Mat. 21:15), he warned the disciples not to do so, for the nation was not then ready to receive him as the Son of Yahweh (Mat. 16:16, 20; 17:9). Peter had earlier confessed to the belief that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God (Yahweh), and perhaps some inkling of this had reached the priests. They believed that if they could extort such a confession from the lips of Jesus, they would have him in their power.

They had hastened away the night before, to confer with others of the priesthood to that end, and to enlist the support of the Sanhedrin itself.

And now, with murderous hatred in their hearts, they awaited the approach of the prophet of Galilee, that they might trap him with words. If they could get him to admit that he was divine in any way,

they could press home a charge of blasphemy against him, and he would be discredited in the eyes of the people.

Slowly the Lord made his way through the court gate, conversing with the people about him, busily answering the questions with which they plied him, for they were absorbed with the teaching he was giving them. He had no eyes for the group of indignant priests who stood in a little group with the elders, awaiting him.

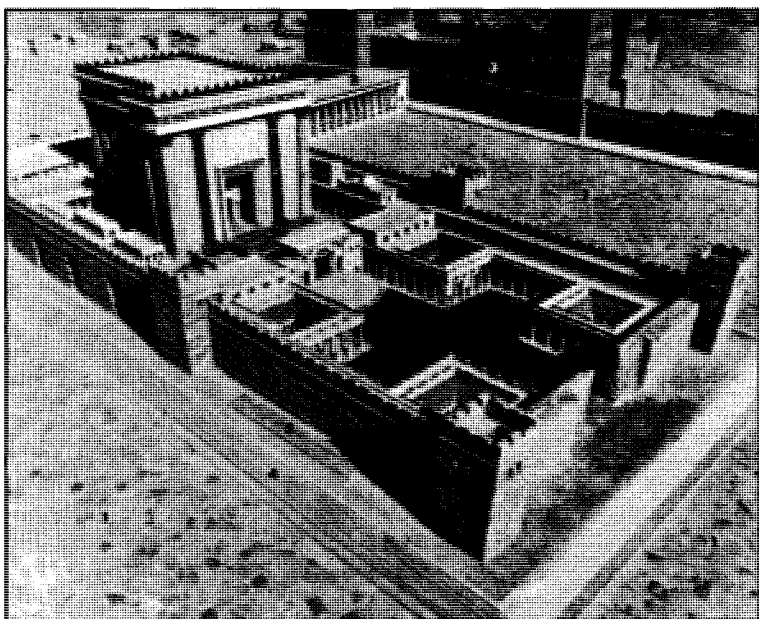
As he made his way toward them, they harshly and bluntly accosted him: ***“By what authority do you do these things? And who gave you that authority?”*** they demanded.

What questions to ask of one who had brought a dead man from the grave, and cured a man born blind!

However, they were not referring to his miracles; they had in mind his ceremonial entrance into Jerusalem as king, his cleansing of the temple as a priest, and teaching the people as a prophet!

Who gave him the authority to act as King, Priest and Prophet?

Their hatred of the Lord blinded them to the teaching of the Law upon which they professed to rest. Did not their leader, Moses, declare that Yahweh would send them a prophet like unto him (Deu. 18:18)? And how close was the resemblance of Jesus to Moses? Why, that very hate-filled question, uttered by the priests in the court of the temple, might have been an echo of the similar question put to Moses about 1500 years before: “Who made you a prince and a judge over us?” (Exo. 2:14).



Forgetting all that, the priests in the temple confidently awaited the Lord's reply. If he claimed that the authority he wielded came from Yahweh, and that he had been granted it inasmuch as he was His Son, they would have instantly charged him with uttering blasphemy.

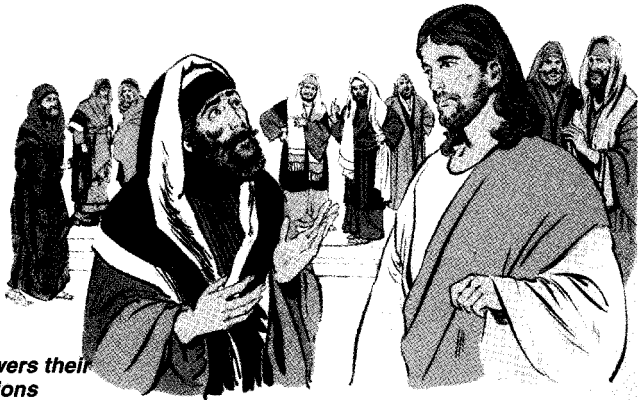
But with superb wisdom, the Lord blunted the shaft of their attack by a question that not only silenced them, but threw them into complete confusion: "Well," he replied, "I will ask you a question, and if you answer me, then I will tell you what authority I have for acting as I do. *Where did the baptism of John come from? From heaven or from men?*"

Attracted by this exchange between the priests and the prophet, the people had gathered around, so that now they were the centre of a large company of interested onlookers.

As they felt the implications of Jesus' comment, the priests were filled with anger and frustration. They realised that they were trapped by the question put to them. They considered the alternatives of it: "*If we say, From heaven,*" they reasoned, "*he will say to us, Then why did you not believe him? But if we say, From men, we will antagonise the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet!*"

To their bitter frustration they realised that they had been trapped by their own question. Their embarrassment before the people was acute. For a moment there was a pause, as the eyes of all the crowd turned upon them for their reply, and then came the sullen answer of bigotry and ignorance: "We do not know!" they reluctantly admitted.

They realised that if they had stated that John's authority came from heaven, Jesus could have immediately called their attention to the testimony that John had given concerning himself at his own baptism, accompanied by the voice from heaven (John 1:29, 34). There was no way out of their dilemma and they had to cover themselves with an evasive answer. Thus they well merited the rebuke of Jesus: "*No more will I tell you what authority I have for acting as I do!*"



**Jesus answers their
trick questions**

Chapter 7

THE PARALLELISM OF THE PARABLES

The challenging question of the priests as Jesus entered the court of the temple on that Monday, the 12th of Abib, introduced a series of parables, answers and teaching, that completed his public ministry. At the conclusion of it, the Lord left the temple, never to return there until he comes with power in the future Age as the Great High Priest and Prince (Eze. 43:1-2).

This section of the Lord's ministry is introduced by the question: "But what think you?" (Mat. 21:28), and concludes with the statement: "It came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings..." (Mat. 26:1).

His discourse between the question and the statement, between Matthew 21:28 and 26:1, is set out with amazing symmetry suggesting the rhythm and order of Hebrew poetry.

There are five distinct sections, each of which is divided into three parts, with a fourth that connects what has been said with the next section. Notice the beautiful and regular statements:

1st Series: Three parables of judgment at the first advent.

2nd Series: Three hostile questions answered.

3rd Series: Threefold indictment of the Lord's enemies.

4th Series: Three friendly questions answered.

5th Series: Three parables of judgment at the second advent.

Now observe that the first series has its counterpart in the fifth series; the second series has its counterpart in the fourth series; the third series, dividing the others, lays down principles of indictment and condemnation. Thus the whole of the day's proceedings, divided into five distinct divisions, form a remarkable parallel, beginning and ending with parables relating to judgments: the first being fulfilled at the first advent (in AD70 at the destruction of Jerusalem), and the last awaiting the second advent which shall bring to pass the consummation of judgment in the future.

CHRIST'S discourse sectionised — from Matthew 21:18 to 25:46. Observe the wonderful way in which the Master outlined the divine purpose in a parable form.

1st Series: Parables mainly connected with the First Advent.

[1] *Two Rebellious Sons* (Mat. 21:28-32) — dramatising the

rebellious character of Jewry toward Yahweh.

- [2] *The Householder, The Husbandmen and The Heir (Mat. 21:33-46)* — illustrating the inevitable result of such rebelliousness: rejection of their Messiah.
- [3] *The Marriage Feast (Mat. 22:1-10)* — showing how Jewry would be rejected by God.
- [4] *The Wedding Garment (Mat. 22:11-14)* — really part of the parable of the Marriage Feast, in which the despisers of the king are rendered speechless, and which is a fitting introduction, therefore, to the series of questions to which answers were given that rendered the accusers of the Lord speechless.

2nd Series: The Enemies of the Lord Rendered Speechless in Debate.

- [1] A question of *Politics* — the worldly-minded Herodians are silenced (Mat. 22:15-22).
- [2] A question of *Doctrine* — The infidel Sadducees are silenced (Mat. 22:23-33).
- [3] A question of *Morality* — The self-righteous Pharisees are silenced (Mat. 22:34-40).
- [4] *The Unanswered Question (Mat. 22:41-46)*. This was put by Christ to the Pharisees, but they were completely at a loss as to how to answer it, and this unanswered question, therefore, introduces the third series: the terrible public indictment of Matthew 23.

3rd Series: Discourse concerning the guilt, condemnation and impending Judgment of the Leaders of Jewry.

- [1] Their pride is indicted as Jesus pointed to their insatiable ambition (Mat. 23:1-12).
- [2] Their hypocrisy is revealed, as Jesus draws aside the veil that would hide it from men (Mat. 23:13-32).
- [3] Their condemnation and impending judgment is predicted as Jesus uncovers their terrible guilt (Mat. 23:33-39).
- [4] The sad fate of the temple (Mat. 24:1-3). This forms the connecting link which joins the prophecy that follows with the public indictment that has been already delivered.

4th Series: Prophecy in which the Lord answered the bewilderment of his disciples.

- [1] *The impending end of the age (Mat. 24:4-14)* — Answer to question No.1 (see Mat. 24:3).
- [2] *The Sign of the End (Mat. 24:15-28)* — Answer to Question No.2 (see Mat. 24:3).

- [3] *The End of Gentile Times and the final Parousia (Mat. 24:29-39)* — Answer to Question No. 3 (see Mat. 24:3).
- [4] *The Need for Watchfulness (Matt. 24:40-44)* — An exhortation based upon the prophecies just delivered, and which fittingly introduces the fifth series.

5th SERIES: Parables connected with the Second Advent.

- [1] *Faithful and Evil Servants* — or the folly of disciples forgetting the Lord's coming advent (Mat. 24:45-51).
- [2] *Wise and Foolish Virgins* — or the folly of unreadiness at his coming (Mat. 25:1-13).
- [3] *The Parable of the Talents* — or the folly of failing to make use of opportunities (Mat. 25:14-30).
- [4] *The Sheep and the Goats* — or what the judgment will reveal (Mat. 25:31-46).

SUMMARY —

- 1st Series** — By parable the Jews are charged with disobedience and warned of judgment that came to pass at the first Advent.
- 2nd Series** — Their quibbles are silenced.
- 3rd Series** — The criminality of the conduct of the Lord's enemies is described and sentence pronounced.
- 4th Series** — The manner in which the sentence will be carried out.
- 5th Series** — A series of parables relating to the judgment of the future.

The series bridges the work of the Lord from the first to the second advents.

- 1st Series** — Warning to Jewry of impending judgment, and the cause of it — fulfilled in the Lord's ministry 2,000 years ago.
- 2nd Series** — Christ's enemies silenced — as they were by his resurrection (Rom. 1:3-4).
- 3rd Series** — The national judgment of AD70.
- 4th Series** — The unfolding purpose of God throughout the succeeding centuries.
- 5th Series** — Christ's work of judgment at his return.

Chapter 8

PARABLE OF THE TWO REBELLIOUS SONS

This parable, like the one immediately following it (Mat. 21:33-46), is based upon "The Song of the Vineyard," contained in Isaiah 5:1-7, in which Yahweh is described as a Husbandman, planting a vineyard upon which He lavished every care, only to find that it does not produce true fruit. Israel, as a representative Vineyard, is a frequent figure in the Old Testament, so that those who listened to Jesus would not only have been familiar with Isaiah's age-old song, but would have quickly gathered the point of the Lord's parable. Matthew records that the leaders of the people recognised that Jesus "spake of them" (Mat. 21:45).

In the first of these two parables, Jesus condemned the way in which the religious leaders rejected his witness; and in the next one (that of the Householder, the Husbandman and the Heir), he condemned their motives. The Lord was quite pointed in the significance of the parable, clearly connecting it with the discussion he had just concluded with the priests and elders by inviting their attention to what he was about to say in the words: "But what think ye?" It was but a simple story that Jesus taught, but it contained a most powerful and telling lesson; yet one which was blended with mercy, for it included an appeal to repent! There was still time for some to repent, though it was quickly running out.

THE Master commenced his parable as the people gathered around him (Mat. 21:28-32). The leaders listened with anxiety, hoping to trap him in his teaching. But, ignoring his opponents, the Lord Jesus continued:

The owner of a vineyard had two sons. He came to the first and appealed to him for help: "Son," he said kindly, "Go work today in my vineyard."

But the son spurned the appeal of his father in language that was blatantly defiant and boldly rebellious. Like the publicans and harlots in the midst of Jewry which he represented, he was a disgrace to his parent. "I will not!" he roughly replied.

He turned on his heel and walked away.

But after a while he became a little ashamed of his attitude. His father had ever been helpful and kind to him, and as he thought over his conduct, he realised that he should not have acted as he did. Repentant in heart, but not knowing how to express it to his father in

words, he secretly returned to the vineyard and began to work it.

Meanwhile, his father approached his brother with a similar request. This son was of a different character. He had the smooth tongue of the hypocrite; a sharp contrast to the blunt but honest refusal of his brother. "I go sir," he replied politely.

But his agreement meant nothing but words, for he had no intention of soiling his hands with work. As soon as his father went on his way, he searched out an excuse to evade his responsibility to labour, and therefore did not go to work in the vineyard.

The Lesson of the Parable

The parable finished abruptly at that point, and now Jesus turned to his tormentors, who were still standing in the centre of the listening crowd. "*Which of those two did the will of his father?*" he enquired.

There was no doubt about the answer: "The first."

Swiftly came the retort: "*Truly I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you!*"

Since the days of John Baptist, and the commencement of the Lord's ministry, many of those despised classes had turned back to do the will of the Father. Matthew was one such!

But the priests and elders of the people were taken aback by such a forthright comment. Particularly as it was courageously given in the hearing of all the people.

Their hatred of Jesus increased. They realised that little would remain of their dignity, of the respect that the people normally paid them, if this man continued to insult them like that.

The parable was true to fact, however, and truth often hurts. The priests may have recalled how that the publicans flocked to John Baptist and were received by him for baptism, whilst the Pharisees were rejected and commanded to bring forth fruits meet for repentance before returning to be baptised (Luke 3:12; Mat. 3:7-10).

There was not only stern rebuke in the teaching and tone of the Master's words, however, but tender love and mercy also, for he was careful not to exclude the priests as though they had no hope. He said that the publicans (if repentant, of course) would go into the Kingdom *before* the priests, though not instead of them! The priests could enter in if they also repented, but that depended upon their attitude toward the things of Yahweh, and so their destiny remained an open question. Meanwhile, as he reminded his listeners, the publicans and harlots were repenting, and turning to God. He declared: "John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and you would not believe him; but the taxgatherers and harlots believed him, and even though you saw that, you would not change your mind afterwards and believe him!"

This ended the first parable.

Chapter 9

PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER, HUSBANDMEN AND HEIR

Hear "another" parable, said the Lord (Mat. 21:33). There seems almost a touch of irony in this, as though the priests and leaders had not heard enough. There is indictment, judgment and prophecy intermixed with this parable. The priests had challenged him enquiring by what authority he acted and taught as he did (Mat. 21:23). He had not given them an answer to their question, but now, in this parable, he clearly showed who he was, and from whence he derived the authority he wielded. He also predicted his death at the hands of his tormentors, and revealed the fate of the city and temple upon which they put such trust.

Mercilessly, he exposed a breach of sacred trust of which the nation of Israel had been guilty, as he presented in parabolic form, a panoramic view of Israel's past history. Then, in words that they thoroughly understood, he revealed that divine judgment would rest heavily upon the nation because of its guilt and sin. Great privileges had been given to Israel, and terrible judgments had already fallen upon the nation in the past because it failed to appreciate the benefits given it. But running through the whole of the parable are references to the tender mercy of Yahweh, who had done everything possible for His people.

As we read such parables, however, do not let us unduly condemn the people of Israel. Let us bear in mind the exhortation of Paul: "Boast not against the branches (Israel)... For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee" (Rom. 11:18-21).

THE Lord now addressed not only the leaders, but, as Luke records, the people as well (Luke 20:9), "Hear another parable," said the Lord. The priests and leaders were probably most uncomfortable as they heard these introductory words. Already they had been silenced in front of the people, and would doubtless wonder what further revelations might come from this outspoken prophet of Galilee.

The Parable
(Mat. 21:33-46;
Mark 12:1-12;

The Lord delivered to them the parable of the householder, the husbandmen and the heir: a parable that is so crystal-clear in its meaning

Luke 20:9-18) as to cause the opposition the Lord had already received, to blossom out into a fierce determination to arrest him and put him to death (see Mat. 21:46).

The Work of the Householder There was a householder who planted a vineyard, declared the Lord. He carefully protected it by building a hedge around it; he made provision for the fruit he expected from it by digging a winepress; and arranged for its care by building a tower.

So Jesus drew a word-picture of a prosperous vineyard, properly protected, with suitable buildings, and overshadowed by a tall tower.

There was no doubt as to what all this meant, it was completely obvious to his listeners.

In the Old Testament, Israel is constantly likened to a vineyard planted by Yahweh (see Isa. 5:1-7; Psa. 80:8; Eze. 15). Isaiah's "Song of the Vineyard" formed the basis of the parable. Moreover, the Householder hedged in his vineyard, in that Yahweh gave to Israel the Law which was designed to separate and protect it from the nations round about (Deu. 7:1-8).

He even "dug a winepress" for it, where the fruit it should produce might be turned into "wine" that "cheereth God" (Judges 9:13). He did this by arranging for the ordinances of worship: the provision of tabernacle and temple to "distil" the fruit of the Spirit.

Finally, he built a watchtower in the midst of it, so that any approach of danger might be instantly detected. So Yahweh appointed His watchmen over Israel, His vineyard (Eze. 3:17), and they figuratively took their stand upon the watchtower that they might overlook the people (Hab. 2:1).

Thus, in every way, Yahweh cared for the people whom He had taken to Himself as His own.

The Husbandmen In his parable, Jesus told how that the Householder, having planted the vineyard and provided every care for it, then let it out to husbandmen, and withdrew to await the fruit that they would obtain from the Israelitish vineyard.

In due time he sent one of his servants, that he might obtain what was due to him from the fruits of their labour. But the husbandmen took hold of him and beat him, driving him away!

Another servant was sent, and him they stoned, wounding him in the head, and driving him shamefully away (Mark 12:4).

A third one they killed.

Others were sent, only to be beaten or killed.

The husbandmen, of course, represented the leaders of Israel into whose care Yahweh had placed His people. They had a grave

responsibility conferred upon them, namely, to so educate the people in His Truth, that they would produce fruit to the glory of His name.

The history of Israel, however, reveals that they failed completely in the trust conferred on them. So Yahweh sent His messengers the prophets, that the people might be reminded of their responsibilities, and warned as to the result if they continued to evade them.

The prophets were treated in exactly the same fashion as the husbandmen in the parable treated the servants of the householder sent to obtain the fruit of the vineyard. The sad, sorry story is outlined in 2Chr. 36:14-16, *"Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people [the husbandmen to whom the vineyard was let out] transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of Yahweh which He had hallowed in Jerusalem. And Yahweh sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place; But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of Yahweh arose against His people, till there was no remedy."*

There was one feature about this section of the parable that should have taught the priests listening to Jesus, a most powerful lesson. He declared that the Householder had "let out" the vineyard to the husbandmen. In other words, they were only temporary tenants, and could be justly ejected at any time when they did not fulfil the terms of their occupancy.

They, of course, imagined that they were in the Land for good; but the parable indicated how tenuous was their leasehold of it.

The Son Is Sent

Ultimately, the Householder determined to send his "well-beloved son" (Mark 12:6) with the thought, "They will reverence my son!"

But, instead, when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." So they caught him, and casting him out of the vineyard, they slew him!

There is no disputing as to who is represented by "his well-beloved son." It actually supplied a complete answer to the question which the Lord had refused to answer: "By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave you that authority?"

More than that, it laid bare the innermost intents of their heart by revealing that he knew of their intention to slay him who claimed to be God's well-beloved Son!

So, at last, the priests had received the answer to their question, together with a prediction as to what would happen to the nation when it carried out the threat to kill him — yet the answer and prediction were given in such a way as to prevent the Jews making

any charge of blasphemy against him. He is justly called, the Word, or Wisdom, of God.

Punishment Upon The Husbandmen

The Lord concluded the parable with a question: "*When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?*" He paused for a reply and there could only be one reply to such a question: a reply that predicted the judgment that would inevitably fall upon themselves: "*He will miserably destroy those wicked men,*" some of them declared, "*and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons!*"

But when the realisation of what this meant came home to them, there burst forth from some a fervent, involuntary cry of: "*God forbid!*" (Luke 20:16).

A silence followed this pitiful cry, wrung out of hearts that were yet not prepared to glorify God by obedience. The people considered the terrible implications of what had been said; they could not deny the truth of Jesus' epitome of Jewish history outlined by the parable, nor the justice of the final punishment, but they shuddered to think of the terrible finality that it suggested for the nation.

The Lord realised the thoughts that troubled them, and fixing them with a steady gaze to more effectively bring home to them his words and the Scripture that supports them, he continued: "*Did you never read in the Scriptures?*" he asked them, "*And if so, what does this Scripture mean, 'The stone that the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes'?*"

What cutting irony there is in those words! Did they never read it in Scripture? Why, he had quoted from Psalm 118, one of the Passover Psalms that all Jewry would be chanting only about two days hence! It is one of the best known Psalms in Israel! Of course, they had read it in Scripture! But they had never read it with the significance that the Lord had now given to it. On that background, and in the light of what the Lord had advanced, the quotation represented a terrible indictment. If this interpretation was correct, it would mean that the Passover Psalm predicted that Israel would reject its Deliverer, its Messiah.

Such an interpretation could not possibly be true, surely!

So they must have thought, as an awkward silence fell upon the group in the temple court surrounding the Lord. They looked upon a young man of little over 33 years of age, whose mind was saturated with Scripture, and who now, with grave and serious countenance, testified against his own people who had turned so completely away from Yahweh. In this public witness, he brought clearly home to

them, that in the celebrated Passover Psalm they were about to sing, there was a clear indictment of their own state. *"Therefore,"* he continued, or, in view of what the Psalm teaches, *"the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whatsoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder!"*

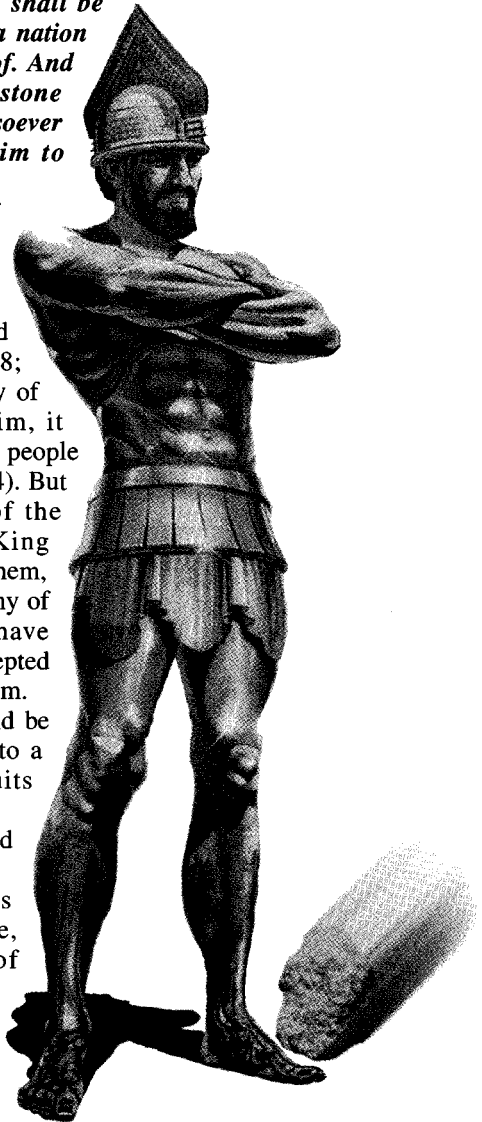
What terrible, final words of indictment and judgment! Let us comprehend their meaning.

The nation of Israel comprised the Kingdom of God (1Chr. 29:23; 28:5; 2Chr. 13:8; Psa. 114), and though the glory of the Kingdom had become dim, it could have been restored if the people turned to Yahweh (Psa. 81:13-14). But the attitude of the leaders of the nation to the Messiah and King whom Yahweh had sent unto them, showed that they were not worthy of the great honour that would have been paid them if they had accepted him: that of authority of his Realm.

Therefore, that honour would be taken from them, and "given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

To what nation did the Lord refer?

The word in the Greek is *ethnei*, in the nominative case, and signifies a multitude of people. When it occurs in the plural, it generally relates to Gentile nations, so that the word does not necessarily signify a specific or distinct nation, but a multitude of people from various nations, bringing forth such fruits of righteousness as the kingdom should produce (Mat. 6:33).



Perhaps two ideas are expressed in this word, for it is capable of this dual meaning. Firstly, that those who are to be saved are a "multitude of people," for they are to be taken "out of every people, language, nation and tongue" (Rev. 5:9) and made "one" in Christ (Jn. 17:23); Secondly, that they will actually constitute a specific nation, for they will form the true "Israel of God" as Paul used the term in Gal. 6:16.

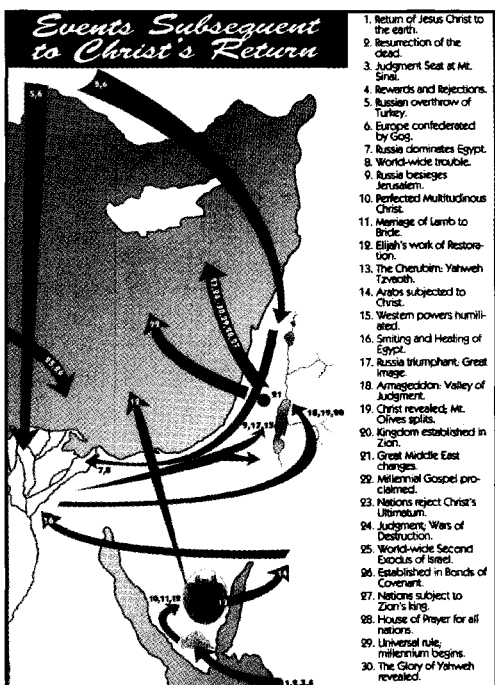
In line with this thought, the Lord Jesus had earlier told

his disciples: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

The ruling authority once vested in natural Jews will be bestowed upon those who manifest the true qualities of rulership by learning to rule themselves: those of spiritual Israel. Among those who will reign with Christ over the restored Kingdom of God in the future, will be the apostles themselves (with the exception of Judas), for Christ promised them: "Ye which have followed me [as a sheep would the shepherd, and that excluded Judas], in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Again, on the eve of his death, he reverted to the promise made: "I appoint unto you a kingdom," he told the disciples as they ate the last supper together, "as my Father hath appointed unto me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30).

It was their anticipation of that time that prompted the question asked by the disciples after the resurrection and glorification of the Lord when he was about to ascend into heaven: "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). He answered: "*It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father has placed in His own power.*"



Quotations From Isaiah and Daniel

In his prophecy concerning the Kingdom and the Stone, the Lord had quoted from two passages of Scripture: Isaiah 8:14 and Daniel 2:34, 38, 44. The first reference predicts that Messiah would appear to Jewry as “a stone of stumbling and rock of offence,” for they would reject him. In the second reference, the kingdom over which the Messiah shall rule, is likened to a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which will destroy the terrible, metallic image, representative of Gentile, military might, and grind the metals to powder, whilst it grows into a mountain filling the whole earth. The prophecy of Isaiah relates to the King, and that of Daniel to the Kingdom. In his treatment of the subject, the Lord placed them both together, and his words can be paraphrased as follows: “And whosoever shall fall, or stumble, on this stone, as you Jews are about to, shall be shattered in fragments, as your commonwealth will be ultimately; but on whosoever it shall fall, as it shall upon the Gentiles at my second advent, when I will form the nucleus of the restored Kingdom with my followers, it shall grind them [the Gentiles] to powder.”

Jewry stumbled upon the Stone 2,000 years ago when Rome, the representative of the fourth beast of Daniel’s prophecy, controlled the land; and the time is at hand when the Stone, having developed into the Kingdom of God, will crush the modern representatives of the fourth beast, or the iron metal of the image, and grind it to powder (Dan. 2:35; 7:11).

The Priests’ Plot to Kill Jesus

Jesus’ exposition of Scripture was clear and final. The priests and Pharisees facing him, and who could not escape from his presence because of the large crowd encircling them, recognised that he spoke of them, and they hated him for it. They may have been able to see on the faces of many of the people, that they, also, understood the implications of Christ’s teaching. They felt shamed, frustrated and bitter. They would have liked to have ordered the temple guards to arrest him, but they dared not do it then because of the presence of the multitude who considered that he was a prophet. A cold, calculating, deadly, blind hatred possessed them, causing them to close their eyes to truth or to sober reasoning, and driving them to the point where they could not turn back. Above all else they desired his death, but for the moment it was not opportune. Pushing their way through the crowd, they left him there (Mark 12:12), to plot against him (Luke 20:19).

PARABLE OF THE ROYAL SUMMONS

This is the third in a trio of parables, proclaimed by the Lord in the court of the temple, in which he indicted the Jews for their disobedience, and predicted what would be the results of their folly. He revealed that they, as a nation, would be dispersed, and their city and temple would be overthrown.

This parable is very similar to that of the Great Supper which the Lord delivered on an earlier occasion, and which is recorded by Luke (see Luke 14:16-24; Story of the Bible, vol. 7, p. 93), but there are also significant differences. In this parable, the summons to attend the feast is a command; in that recorded by Luke, it is an invitation. In this parable, those who reject the summons are treated as rebels; in that recorded by Luke, those who do not come are treated as merely discourteous. In this parable, the rebellious are destroyed; in that recorded by Luke, they are shut out. In this parable, the motives of those who reject the request are shown to be criminal; in that recorded by Luke, they are merely thoughtless, advancing excuses that are quite legitimate in themselves, but such as should have been set aside in view of the honoured position of the one issuing the invitation. This parable reveals the fate of those who treat the divine call lightly, and refuse to recognise it as a command; in that recorded by Luke it provides an answer to the question as to who shall enjoy the privileges of the kingdom, and a warning is issued against delay in performing the will of God.

The offence in the parable recorded by Matthew being greater, the punishment is shown to be more dreadful. The tragedy it unfolds is the strange refusal of men to accept the invitation of the Gospel, for, in the parable, invited guests refuse to attend royal celebrations. They are thus shown as despising the royal condescension and goodness, and then reaping the results of their insulting folly.

The parable was addressed to the chief priests and Pharisees who, at that time, "perceiving" that the Lord's parables were aimed at them, "sought to lay hands on him" (Mat. 21:45-46). The prophetic part of the parable revealed the ultimate result of such a suicidal policy, for "the king sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city" (Mat. 22:7).

This prophecy was fulfilled in AD70.

“THE kingdom of heaven,” declared the Lord in commencing the parable, “is like unto a certain king, who made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.”

It is clearly obvious that the “certain king” and his son refer to Yahweh and the Lord Jesus. The former is described in the Old Testament as a “great King” (Psa. 95:3; 47:7; Hos. 13:10; Mal. 1:14), and the Lord is His Son.

The Preliminary

Summons

(Mat. 22:1-3)

Among royalty, even to this day, marriages are arranged long before the actual event, and preparations are immediately commenced. On this occasion, the king decided to arrange for the marriage, and therefore sent forth a preliminary notice, so that those who were bidden could make ready at the appointed time.

The Gospel call is a summons to that end; for the time is coming, as the Book of Revelation shows, when the Lord Jesus shall return to figuratively marry “his bride,” the perfected ecclesia (Rev. 19:7). This will be a time of great rejoicing, when he and the believers will be united as one (John 17:21).

The “marriage” of this parable was really a “marriage feast” as it is rendered in the Diaglott. Such a feast was sometimes given by a king at the beginning of his reign, as a token of his union with his subjects (1Kings 1:5, 9; 1Chr. 29:22), but should not be confused with the “marriage supper” which will be celebrated after the marriage (Rev. 19:9).

The terms of the parable are quite appropriate to the circumstances of Christ’s first advent, for he came as the King of the Jews (Mat. 2:2), and the preaching of John Baptist was preliminary thereto. John called upon the Jewish people to make ready to receive their King who was about to appear in their midst.

It is said that it was the custom in the East, to give a preliminary invitation to a feast, somewhat indefinite as to day and hour, and then follow it up with more definite instructions at the time when the feast is actually ready.

This custom helps to explain the significance of the parable.

The Second Summons

(Mat. 22:4-7)

The second request was couched in language more definite and urgent than the first, because the time for action had come. The

Lord declared: *“Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his*

farm, another to his merchandise. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city” (Mat. 22:4-7).

The parable described how that the second invitation was rejected more contemptuously than the first. It was met with ridicule and mockery. The indifference of the people to whom it was directed had hardened into scorn.

When was this section of the prophecy fulfilled?

The death and resurrection of the Lord made the invitation of the Gospel more urgent, especially for the Jewish people. If they remained obstinate, they would be all involved in the punishment of heaven (Acts 2:40). The apostles were sent forth, therefore, with a final appeal, excusing the former refusal on the grounds of ignorance (see Acts 3:17), but now warning that delay would end in disaster (Acts 13:39-41, 46).

But in vain. As a nation, the Jewish people treated those servants as the subjects of the king did his in the parable.

They rejected Wisdom’s Feast. The wise man declared: “Wisdom... hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine! she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city... Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled...” (Pro. 9:1-5).

This was the message of the apostles in relation to the Lord Jesus. They proclaimed that the time was ripe for Jews to accept him, and partake of that “feast” which is the token of the complete union at Christ’s coming. He is the Word, or *Logos*, of God, and therefore the “Wisdom of God made flesh.” His appeal was heard through the ministrations of the apostles.

But it was rejected with the greatest contempt, and with harm to the messengers. The Jews treated them “spitefully,” mocking the message they proclaimed; and when they persisted in preaching it, imprisoned them, even killing them.

No king, deserving of the name, could possibly overlook such a mutinous and rebellious attitude. It constituted a gross insulting repudiation of his authority, a contemptuous rejection of his kindness and condescension. It aroused the king to such anger that he determined to ruthlessly punish them as an example to others. Sending forth his armies, he destroyed the murderers, and burnt up their city.

The meaning of this part of the parable is obvious.

Jesus was disclosing the very thoughts and motives that governed the hearts of his enemies before him, and the terrible consequences of such an attitude and action.

The parable thus predicted the overthrow of the Jewish state and

the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans which came to pass nearly forty years later in AD70.

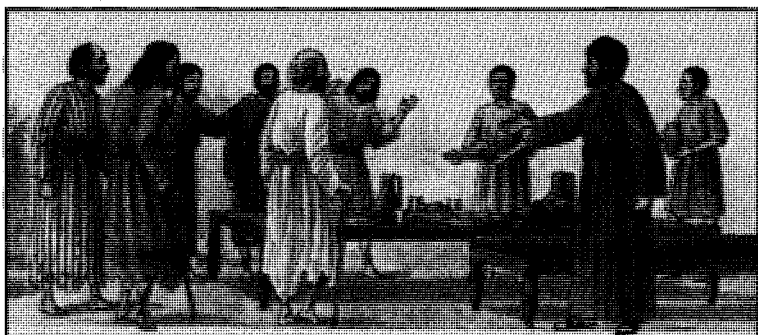
But can the Roman legions be described as the armies of the King, presuming that the King relates to Yahweh? They can, for Yahweh rules in the Kingdom of men (Dan. 4:17), and uses the schemes and policies of men and nations to accomplish His purpose. He therefore can properly describe the Assyrians as His rod to fulfil His will, even though they did not intend it that way (see Isa. 10:5-7, 24). He used Babylon to punish Judah, and described Nebuchadnezzar as “His servant” (Jer. 27:6). In similar manner, Moses predicted the overthrow of Jerusalem, declaring: “Yahweh shall bring a nation against thee from afar...” (Deu. 28:49).

Although the Roman legions marched against Jerusalem to fulfil the policy of their Government, they unwittingly fulfilled the purpose of God against guilty Judea by so doing. In that sense, the legions obeyed Yahweh’s will, being drawn against Jerusalem by circumstances that He controlled. It can therefore be said, that the “King [Yahweh] sent forth His armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city.”

The Third Summons The parable continued: “*Then saith the king to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.*

Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.” Yahweh’s mercy is inexhaustible, as this parable reveals.

The wedding feast was ready, or “prepared,” as the word can be rendered. Yahweh prepared it by raising His Son from the dead, and taking him into heaven. By the death and resurrection of the Lord, a feast was prepared which believers celebrate week by week, a memorial feast (1Cor. 11), which anticipates that glorious feast of



which they shall yet partake, if worthy, in the Age to come (Mat. 26:26-29).

The Jewish people having proved themselves “unworthy of eternal life” (Acts 13:46), Yahweh’s servants (the apostles and their co-labourers) were sent forth into the crossroads (as “highways” can be rendered) where many people of different nationalities would pass to and fro, there to proclaim the Gospel to “whosoever” would accept it (Rev. 22:17; 5:9-10).

People “both bad and good” accepted the summons presented to them (Mat. 22:10). This statement is significant. It signifies that the Gospel is designed for all, even the “bad.” The word is translated from the Greek *poneros*, a plural term signifying that which is actively evil! This means that the Gospel should be preached unto all. Who can limit the power of God’s Word to change the bad into good! How often has the appeal of the Gospel changed men’s lives! Paul was a foremost example of that, as he, himself, told Timothy (1Tim. 1:12-15). He also wrote to the Corinthians: *“Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”* (1Cor. 6:9-11).

Some of the members of the ecclesia in Corinth had been among the “bad” to whom the Gospel had been proclaimed, but the cleansing power of the Word (John 15:3) had converted them



both in doctrine and in ways. In the parable, all were invited, although, as we shall see, all will not attain unto honoured positions at the final wedding feast.

Meanwhile, by the means of preaching, the wedding feast was furnished with guests.

Chapter 11

PARABLE OF THE REJECTED WEDDING GARMENT

This parable is joined to that of the Royal Summons, and yet is distinct from it. It forms the connecting link between the three preceding parables and the three trick questions that follow it (see pp. 103-117).

The parable stresses the king's demand that all should be suitably attired before they partake of his feast. When his servants went to the crossroads seeking guests, they gathered in both bad and good. But whatever their character originally, special clothing was still necessary. Some, however, desired the privilege of attending the wedding feast whilst refusing the proffered garment, but these, like those who refused to come, incurred the wrath of the king and were ejected in disgrace.

JT was in accordance with the custom of the times, for an important host to await until his guests were all assembled, and then to ceremoniously make his entrance unto them.

Christ will do so at his second coming. The "guests" will be assembled, and will then be presented unto him.

Jesus illustrated this in the parable of the rejected wedding garment that he now outlined to the people.

The Rejected Garment He told the story of how the guests, having (Mat. 22:11-13) been gathered by the king's servants, were marshalled into the royal dining hall, and took their places awaiting the king.

At last he came, pleased to find the hall filled, but as his eyes roved over all the guests they fastened upon one man who stood out conspicuously; for he did not have on a wedding garment. This omission surprised and annoyed the king. It was discourteous in the extreme, and implied a contempt for his honour and authority.

There was no need for the omission. In ancient times outer garments were supplied to guests by the host, to complement the wedding. In the case of royalty, when such feasts were more frequent, suitable garments were stored up for state occasions (see 2Kings 10:22).

In like manner, Yahweh has garments of salvation to offer to His guests (Isa. 61:10; Rev. 3:4). They are styled "the new man" (Col. 3:10), and are "put on" at baptism (Gal. 3:26-28). They are garments that must be preserved clean and white, else they will be stripped off

at Christ's return, and the disgraced "guest" will be driven away "naked," without the covering of forgiveness of sins (Rev. 3:4; 16:15).

But there are some who, though they come to a knowledge of the Truth, obstinately refuse to put on the garment offered them. They do not see the need for baptism, and refuse to submit to it. The Bible shows that such will be accountable at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 2:8; Acts 24:22-25;



John 12:48). They will appear before Christ, but without the necessary wedding garment that is put on in baptism (2Cor. 5:10-11).

In the parable, the king is represented as severely reprimanding the man not suitably clothed: "Friend," he said to him, adopting a friendly approach but not using a term of endearment, "How did you get in here not having a wedding garment?"

The man was speechless; he searched for an excuse but could find none. In the face of royal displeasure, in the expressions used by the king, he could see that the full measure of his obstinate folly was known.

The full force of the king's rebuke is not apparent in the Authorised Version. Read the account for yourself, in Matthew 22:11-12. Notice that the little word "not" occurs in both verses and forms a most important and expressive feature of the king's comment. This is made even more apparent by the Greek text, for that reveals that two entirely different words are used.

In v.11, the Greek word is οὐκ, *ouk*, and means "not," as merely expressive of the fact, and so the fact is stated that the man "had **not** on a wedding garment."

In v. 12, however, which records the King's comment, the word is μὴ, *me*, and indicates a refusal, a determination not to wear it. Thus the words of the king, "How comest thou in here **not having** a wedding garment," comprise not merely a question, but express the

crime of which the man was guilty: his stubborn refusal to wear the garment offered him.

It was this proclamation of guilt that rendered the man speechless.

The Rejected Guest Swiftly, irrevocably, the king commanded his servants. "Bind him hand and foot; and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness." A solemn hush fell on the assembled guests, as they saw the fate of their foolish companion. As he had elected to walk his own way and do his own will, he was now bound hand and foot, unable to minister to his own will nor walk where he desired to go. As he had refused to follow the king, now he was hurried away from his presence. As he had rejected the light, he was given over to darkness.

The assembled guests saw the foolish man disgraced before all, ignominiously hurried from the dazzling brilliance of the rejoicing, imperial palace, brightly illuminated for a festal occasion, to be plunged into thick darkness, where the light of Truth does not penetrate, there to live out his life in bitter remorse, until the end.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," commented the Lord as he pointed the lesson of the parable.

How terrible will be the anguish, how vain the vexation at Christ's second coming, of those who are rejected because they failed to apply the simple rules of conduct set forth by the Word of God. How foolish it is to be stubborn and obstinate in the face of Yahweh's requirements. Why not consider how loving and kind He is, what measure of grace He has manifested toward humanity, and then respond in loving obedience to what He would have us to do! What can this life offer in comparison with that of the future?

True happiness, real abundant living even now, is found in serving God, for such "has promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come" (1Tim. 4:8).

But, unfortunately, many refuse to heed the call of Christ, and apply the principles that he would have us observe. Therefore, this parable ended upon a most solemn note: *"Many are called,"* concluded the Lord, *"but few are chosen."*

Let us so apply the principles of Christ, as to make our "calling and election sure."

Conflicts in the Temple



THE Master had entered Jerusalem for the final days in the city of David. It was a special moment, as he presented himself not only as the King of Israel, riding the colt into the royal city, to the acclaim of the Passover crowds, but also to reveal himself as the Passover Lamb. As the Law required the selected lamb to be penned for four days that a complete examination might be made to determine any defilement or injury that would prevent its use as the slain lamb (Exo. 12:3-5), so the Lord Jesus voluntarily appeared in the midst of the crowds daily. He set before the people the voice of God, and invited them to examine his life, his message, and to consider the prophecies that spoke of the slain Messiah, declaring: "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" (Jn. 8:46). The common people heard him gladly, but the leaders were set on his destruction. Every action, every word was carefully examined, and continually they tried to "tempt him," but without success. It was a very difficult time, as the Lord Jesus maintained his purity of heart under great provocation.

Chapter 1

THREE TRICK QUESTIONS

The bold, forthright teaching of the Lord filled the leaders of the Jews with fury. They realised that the parables were spoken against them, and that Christ was accusing them of rejecting the garment of salvation offered them, and they felt that they were being discredited in the face of the people. They determined to retaliate by trying to catch the Lord in his talk, and so humiliate him before others. As the Lord had indicted them in three parables; they now tried to trick him by three carefully chosen questions: one on Politics, one on Doctrine, and one on Morals. On each occasion, the Lord so answered as to effectively silence his tormentors, and then he finally retaliated with a question that they could not answer, and which effectively put an end to all such attacks.

After that, "no one dared ask him any more questions" (Mat. 22:46).

A QUESTION OF POLITICS: THE WORLDLY-MINDED HERODIANS SILENCED (Mat. 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:19-26)

THE teaching of the Lord was bitterly resented by the Pharisees. They clearly detected that the parables were spoken against them, but for the moment, they hesitated to openly move against him (Mat. 21:45-46).

But they were not prepared to allow him to proceed without a challenge. They were of the class, concerning whom, Jesus declared: "they neither go into the kingdom themselves, nor suffer others to do so" (Mat. 23:13). However, for the moment, they knew not what to do.

The Pharisees Take Control

Withdrawing from the group around Christ, some of them took counsel as to how they could discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people. They decided to seek the help of the sect called the Herodians, and involve Jesus in a question of politics. By that means, he would not only be discredited before the people, but might also run foul of the Government itself. This could well lead to his arrest and condemnation.

Cunningly they worked out their scheme. They decided to send

some of their disciples with the Herodians to spy upon the Lord. These spies would act as though they were sincere men seeking to follow Jesus, but when opportunity presented itself, they were to try and trap him in his talk, with the object of laying a charge of sedition against him.

Who were the Herodians?

They were a sect of politically-minded Jews who concurred in Herod's policy of conciliating Rome. Herod was noted for that policy, for he owed his power to the support of the Roman Emperor. In gratitude, he had permitted pagan temples to be built throughout the land, images to be set up for idolatrous worship, statues to be erected to the honour of men, and had encouraged Gentile sport in imitation of his masters. The Herodians supported this policy, and were prepared to make divine worship subservient to it. Their politics comprised a religion of expediency and political advantage.

Whilst, normally, the Pharisees were bitterly hostile to this policy, their hypocrisy was such, that in challenging the Lord whom they hated even more, they were prepared to stifle their qualms of conscience, and their opposition to the Herodians, and to join forces with them against Christ.

They also doubtless justified their action on the grounds of expediency. Perhaps they could not as yet bring themselves to openly use Pilate to suppress Jesus, and by so doing endorse the position and authority of the the Roman governor whom they despised, and therefore decided to use the Herodians as their tool. Be that as it may, these bitter enemies were united in their greater hostility against Jesus.

The Trap Is Set

Accordingly, as the Lord was teaching in the temple court, he found his audience suddenly augmented by a group of men who gave every appearance of being sincere in their desire for truth. They listened attentively to all that he had to say, and seemed to be in agreement with the principles he was setting forth.

Then, in the midst of his teaching, one of them asked a question. "*Teacher,*" commenced this silvery-tongued hypocrite with mock humility. "*We know that you are true and teach the way of God rightly, and that you care for no man, showing no partiality, nor regarding the position of men, but truly teaching the way of God. Tell us then, what do you think, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Shall we give or not?*"

A hush fell on the group around the Lord, as they awaited his answer. It was a difficult question, that divided Jewry into two mutually hostile groups whenever it was debated, and one, too, which was fraught with danger.

To teach that it was lawful to pay the Roman tax incurred the greatest hostility from the Pharisees and of many of the people; to declare, on the other hand, that it was not lawful to pay it, could result in a charge of sedition being laid against one by the Roman authorities.

With that keen mental insight that the Lord possessed, he discerned the intrigue and motive that lay behind the innocent question. He looked at his questioners sorrowfully but sternly. His penetrating eyes gazed into their very hearts, and saw revealed the measure of iniquity hidden there. He knew their malice (Mat. 22:18), he discerned their hypocrisy (Mk. 12:15), he perceived their craftiness (Luke 20:23), and he decided to teach them a lesson.

"Why do you tempt me, you hypocrites?" he bluntly demanded. *"Show me the tribute money!"*

His forthright expression swept aside their suave, hypocritical approach, their smooth, insincere parade of compliments. They, in turn, doubtless taken aback by his direct, rugged reply, in silence handed him one of the small coins used for the purpose of the tax.

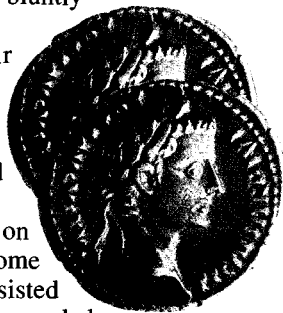
The capitation tax (a poll tax that was levied on every person) was a form of humiliation that Rome imposed on the Jewish people. The Romans insisted that the Jews pay it in the very coin that they demanded for the purpose. It was a small silver coin, a denarius, and though it did not represent much in money value, and thus did not impose any real burden on the people to pay it, they nevertheless hated to do so from political motives; for it constituted a token of subjection.

The payment of the tax was therefore a hot, political issue. The people would have preferred to have paid ten times the amount of money, if they had been permitted to do so in their own coinage, rather than handle the hated tax money with the image of the emperor embossed on it. To them, independence was a matter of religion, and they fiercely agitated for it, on the basis of Deu. 17:15.

Moreover, Jesus' enemies believed that this question could test the genuineness of his claim to be king. He had acknowledged his royal descent (Mat. 21:15-16; 22:2); was he prepared to repudiate the payment of the tax and thus make a blow for Jewish independence? To do otherwise would discredit his claim of kingship in the eyes of many of the people.

The Unanswerable Reply

The Lord took the coin in his hand, and examined it. He read the superscription contained thereon, which is said to have read: *"Tiberius Caesar,"* and on the other side, the imperial title: *"Pontifex Maximus."* He looked at the image of Caesar embossed on



the coin, and then, in the silence that now surrounded him, he turned to his opponents standing quietly and expectantly before him.

“Whose is this image and superscription?” he enquired.

“Caesar’s,” was the ready reply.

The comment that followed was devastating to both the Herodians and the Pharisees, and, at the same time, illustrated that superb wisdom in debate of which the Lord was master. Handing back the coin, he replied: ***“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.”***

“RENDER TO CAESAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CAESAR’S”

The Jewish leaders laid down the principle that ***“He is king whose coin passes current.”*** When the Jews handed the Lord the silver denarius with the head of Caesar Tiberius embossed on it, they had virtually conceded that Caesar was their lawful ruler, and therefore should render to him that which belonged unto him. The word “render” signifies “pay back as due.” Tiberius succeeded Augustus in AD14, and died in AD37, so that he was reigning during the upbringing and public ministry of the Lord.



Both groups of questioners were silenced by this answer. The first part of it condemned the Pharisees, for they refused to render unto Caesar his dues; and the latter part of it condemned the Herodians, for they gave slavish deference to Caesar at the expense of what was due to God! One robbed Caesar, and the other robbed God, and both stood discredited before the people.

It was most humiliating for them. They searched desperately for an answer, but could not find one. Their question had rebounded on themselves, and their suave, silvery-tongued compliments were now revealed as the expressions of hypocrisy. They had absolutely nothing to say. “They could not take hold of his words before the people” in order to wrest them, or to give a telling reply (Luke 20:26). Crestfallen and humiliated, they held their peace as the Lord turned to speak to others.

A QUESTION OF DOCTRINE: THE INFIDEL SADDUCEES SILENCED (Mat. 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-38)

The Sadducees

The Sadducees, being bitter enemies of the Pharisees, had probably witnessed the discomfiture of the Herodians (who had been urged by the Pharisees

to challenge Jesus) with ill-concealed pleasure.

Here was an opportunity to demonstrate their ability in debate, and to humiliate the Lord before the people. They decided to match their wits in opposing the Truth as expounded by him.

The Sadducees were comparatively few in number, but were noted for the wealth that they commanded. Their name is derived from the word "Zadok" meaning *The Just One*. Some claimed that the sect dated back to the times of Zadok the priest in the days of Solomon, but most Rabbins hold that it was founded by a Zadok who was prominent about BC260.

The Sadducees were like Eliashib, a high priest in the days of Nehemiah, in that they placed political expediency above religious probity. Because of this, they had been removed from office when the Maccabees came to power, and from thence, afterwards, turned more completely to politics in order to regain their influence. They were favoured by John Hyrcanus, Aristobulus and Alexander Jannaeus (BC135-75), and under these rulers, they again rose to power. Thus the period of the Romans and the Herods was also the period of the greatest influence of the Sadducean sect. By political intrigue, members of it secured the high priesthood at that time (Acts 5:17).

According to Josephus, the Pharisee (*Ant.* 13:10:6; 18:1:4), the Sadducees accepted the letter of the Law, but rejected the traditions of the elders, and maintained the right of private interpretation. Zadok (BC260) was a pupil of Antigonus Sachaeus, president of the Sanhedrin at that time. He taught the duty of serving God disinterestedly without hope of reward or fear of punishment. From this, Zadok, not properly understanding the doctrine of his master, drew the inference that there is no future state of rewards or punishment, and this became a basic teaching of the sect. In consequence, the Sadducees denied the resurrection (Mat. 22:23; Acts 23:8), and carried the ideas of human freedom to the extreme of asserting that men were absolute masters of their own actions, and at full liberty to do either good or evil. This led to gross profligacy and licentiousness. The Sadducees were known for their luxurious and dissolute living.

They rejected the authority of all Scripture except the Pentateuch (the first five books of Moses), and therefore they based their trick question to Jesus exclusively on the words of Moses. They believed in the coming of Messiah, but taught that he would be a temporal prince to set up universal rule, and free Jewry from the yoke of foreign bondage. They had thus been attracted to the teaching of John Baptist, hoping, with excitement, that it heralded the impending manifestation of the Messiah. They looked for the restoration of the kingdom in all its splendour, and were offended at the claim of the lowly Saviour to be the promised Christ. His teaching of submission to evil for the time

being, disappointed their hopes of immediate glory; his doctrine of future glory through a bodily resurrection to life eternal, offended their basic teaching that there is no such future.

The Sadducees believed in the absolute mortality of man without the hope of a resurrection. Confining all their hopes of reward to this age, they indulged themselves in every form of luxury. They were thus more infidel than religious, even though they ruled the religious exercises of the people through the important office of high priest.

The Question

The Sadducees were confident that they could entangle the Lord by their clever questioning. They decided to do so on the grounds of doctrine. They denied the teaching of the resurrection; and as it featured prominently in the Lord's teaching, they decided to make that the test-case of doctrine and logic.

In fact, there are frequent passages in the Old Testament that plainly teach the resurrection (Psa. 71:20; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2), but as the Sadducees rejected all Scripture except the books of Moses, they insisted that the discussion be limited to those five books.

They were confident that the Lord could not find any reference to the resurrection in the books of the Law!

With mock humility, they now took up the position vacated by the silenced Herodians, and addressed the Lord Jesus.

"Master," they said, "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."

They probably paused at this point to allow the fact of the Law to sink into the minds of the listeners. They were quoting the levirate law of marriage from Deu. 25:5. Yahweh decreed that if a married man die without offspring, his brother should marry his wife, and raise up children who would assume the dead man's name and family. The object of the law was to prevent any family from perishing out of Israel; the significance of it was to teach the people that Yahweh will never let His people be completely destroyed (Jer. 30:11).

The Lord, of course, knew the law, and recognised both its purpose, and, under the conditions then existing, its wisdom. So the Sadducees continued without interruption: "*There were therefore with us seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and he died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife!*"

The question was an impudent one, for the Sadducees denied the resurrection. And though the questioner may have kept a straight face, he was doubtless laughing inwardly, and waiting for the embarrassment he was confident would soon show up on the face of the Lord.

Yet, coming from a Sadducee, it was a pathetic question, for it illustrated how hopeless was their doctrine. The questioner doubtless based his problem upon an actual incident; his statement, "There were with us..." (Mat. 22:25), implies that. Therefore, according to the doctrine of the Sadducees, as the various husbands died, they died without hope, and the family ultimately came to an end, without any possibility of a future.

Probably the Sadducees reasoned that the existence of such a law relating to marriage actually endorsed their teaching that there is no future. Otherwise, why trouble about maintaining the family in this present life. They did not see that the Law taught the reality of a resurrection by producing a new life out of death through a redeemer (the man who married his dead brother's wife), and ignorant of such a teaching, convinced of the reality of death, they set forth the hopeless and terrible philosophy: "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

The Sadducees' question was an attempt to reason from logic in order to reveal the absurdity of the position adopted by the Lord Jesus; but they overlooked both the principle of faith, and the teaching of Scripture. They tried to refute Christ by ridicule and they failed.

The Irrefutable Answer

Their question was easily answered by the Lord. But first he warned them that they were drifting from God because they did not know His word, nor recognise His power. "***You do err,***" he declared, "***not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God!***"

It was a bold statement for a young man of 33 to make to members of the wealthiest sect in Jewry whose members controlled the position of high priest, and the most important religious offices in Jerusalem, but it was also a most significant one to make.

The word "err" is a translation of the word *planao* in the Greek, and signifies "to wander." It suggests that the Sadducees were not only wrong doctrinally, but had strayed from the pathway of right conduct. They were self-deceived by a false hypothesis, namely that if there be a future, it must be like the present. Being ignorant of the true meaning of Scripture and of the power of God, and deluded by their own peculiar brand of philosophy, they wandered away from God and His truth.

So the Lord continued: "*The children of this age marry, and are given in marriage; But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; 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.*"

The Sadducees erred in this teaching because they did not acknowledge the Scriptures as such, nor recognise the power of God as being able to raise people from the dead, and give them a new form of life. The Lord's statement in reply, clearly set forth the doctrine of the resurrection, which the Sadducees were at liberty to take against him if they desired. Elsewhere it is shown that both "just and unjust" shall be raised (Acts 24:15), and this is implied in the Lord's comment in that he made reference to those who will be "accounted *worthy* to obtain... the resurrection from the dead," and whom he described as "the sons of the resurrection." The unjust, though raised from the dead, will not be accounted worthy of the resurrection, and will be consigned to "the second death" (Rev. 2:11).

Jesus described the just as "sons of the resurrection" (plural Gr. *huioi*, "sons," as in the Diaglott, not "children" as in the A.V.), and the description is apt, for sonship implies growth from childhood to maturity. As far as the resurrection is concerned, this seems to imply the growth from mortality to immortality that shall take place at that time.

The just will then be made "equal unto the angels" (Luke 20:36), or "as the angels of God in heaven" (Mat. 22:30), in that they will possess spirit-bodies (1Cor. 15:44; 2Pet. 1:4). A spirit-body is just as tangible as the body we now possess, but unlike our present body it is one that is energised by God's spirit, and not sustained in life by blood (1Cor. 15:50). This is shown by the fact that the angels possess tangible bodies, and yet are described as "spirits" (Heb. 1:14).

The Sadducees overlooked that the books of Moses record examples of angels appearing unto men in tangible bodies, such as the three that appeared unto Abraham, the two that interviewed Lot, the one that wrestled with Jacob.

Where did they come from? Obviously, from God. If God could create the angels as spirit-beings, could He not change resurrected bodies to be similarly clothed with immortality?

The Sadducees, however, disputed this. As Jesus told them: "*They erred not knowing the Scripture nor God's power.*"

Perhaps they saw the point of the Lord's challenge; in any case, they kept silent, and allowed him to proceed: "*Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called Yahweh the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him. You, therefore, do greatly err!*"

This was a stunning reply, to which there was no answer. Is God the God of the dead? The Sadducees would be the first to repudiate the idea, because they viewed death as the end of everything, even hope. A man is dead, and that is the end of him; he moulders into

dust, and is finished. No, God is not the God of the dead, but only of the living! That is obvious.

If so, how could Moses, in whom you trust, call Him the *God of Abraham* when Abraham had been dead hundreds of years? And even more telling, how can you Sadducees worship the God of Abraham, believing as you do?

That was the point of the Lord's question, and to it there was no answer without the Sadducees capitulating their position. If God is the God of the living, then, in some way, all must live unto Him! reasoned the Lord.

Did Jesus endorse the doctrine of the immortality of the soul by so reasoning?

Most certainly not!

He clearly repudiated such an idea by prefacing his comment with the statement: "*Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed...*"

According to Jesus, Moses' words proved the fact of the resurrection, and it was only in that relationship that he used the statement, "for all live unto Him."

Abraham lives unto God, in that his resurrection is beyond all doubt, being endorsed by the divine promise to him. God's intentions are so certain, that He can see, as it were, the consummation of His purpose, with Abraham again living and dwelling in the land. Yahweh is known by His purpose (John 1:1), and is therefore the God of the living, even though, for a time, those living remain dead. He can thus speak of Himself as the "God of Abraham," because, as Paul later taught: "God quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17).

Meanwhile, the Sadducees were completely silenced by the logical way in which the Lord reasoned upon the very Scripture they had advanced. He demonstrated that Scripture is both true and logical.

The large company of people who now surrounded the Lord and his questioners were astonished at the ease in which he had answered the Sadducees (Mat. 22:33-35). It showed the latter up in their true colours, as completely ignorant of the divine purpose and power.

The silence that followed the Lord's last comment was eloquent. It demonstrated that Jesus had thoroughly mastered his opponents in discussion. But the silence was broken, as one scribe, contemplating the Lord's skill in debate, could not restrain the spontaneous explanation of praise that burst from his lips: "*Master, you have well said!*" he declared.

The Scribes, as a class, accepted all Scripture as inspired, and were therefore more closely linked in thought with the Pharisees rather than the Sadducees. This scribe was pleased to hear the most crucial doctrine of the resurrection so clearly explained, and the disbelieving Sadducees so completely silenced (cp. Acts 23:6-8).

A QUESTION OF MORALS: THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS PHARISEES SILENCED

(Mat. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 20:39-40)

The Pharisees

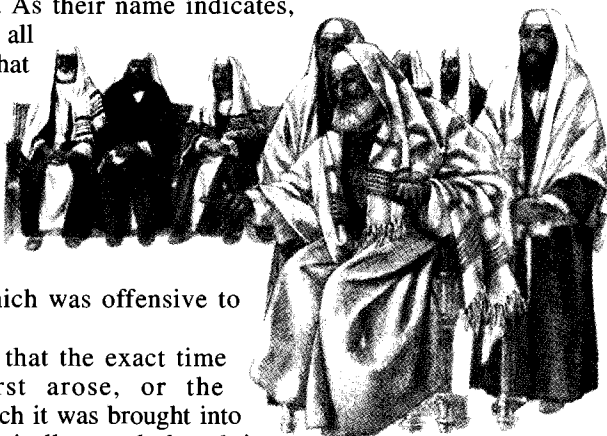
The Scribe had applauded the skill by which the Lord had answered the Sadducees, but, as a class, they had no love for Jesus. Moreover, as the Herodians and Sadducees had been successively silenced, it now was the turn of the Pharisees and Scribes to stand against the Lord as the champions of Judaism.

If they did not take up the challenge, it would seem as though they endorsed his teaching and his claims to Messiahship; particularly in view of the endorsement that had been wrung from the unwilling heart of the Scribe through sheer admiration of Jesus' skill in debate.

The Scribes and Pharisees, therefore, gathered together to consider the matter, and to formulate some method of attack that would embarrass Jesus, or discredit him in the opinion of the people (Mat. 22:34).

The Pharisees were the most numerous of the sects in Jewry, and like the Sadducees, they were very wealthy. The word, Pharisee, comes from the Greek, *Pharash*, to separate, or the Hebrew, *Perushim*, separated. As their name indicates, they stood aside from all others, and claimed that they, alone, were righteous. They assumed a superior attitude toward the common people, manifesting a pride that encased their own self-esteem, which was offensive to both God and man.

Authorities state that the exact time when the sect first arose, or the circumstances by which it was brought into being, cannot be historically stated, though it may be conjectured, or partly reasoned out. For example, its members were noted for an extreme respect of every "jot and tittle" of Holy Writ, which was probably made even more extreme by the tendency in the opposite direction on the part of the Sadducees. Conditions existed in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (BC175-164) which were conducive to the development of a sect among the Jews dedicated to preserving Scripture intact, and this could well have been the time and circumstances that produced the Pharisees as a sect.



Antiochus fiercely persecuted Jews who would not abandon Judaism and accept Grecian paganism as their worship. He determined to destroy both the Scriptures and those who kept them in their possession. In those circumstances, therefore, the rise of a sect whose distinction should be reverence for the word of God was inevitable. The *Book of Maccabees* makes mention of "the Assideans (from the Hebrew, *ahasidim*, meaning saints), who were mighty men of Israel, even all such as were voluntarily devoted unto the Law." It is considered by authorities, that these were probably the Pharisees in an early stage of development. Their party (perhaps not yet a separate sect) apparently included all those who were prepared to take up arms at the time, and who followed Judas Maccabeus as head.

In any case, the success of the Maccabee revolt must have gained the party that achieved it, high reputation. In the first mention that Josephus makes of the Pharisees, in a passage referring to the government of John Hyrcanus (BC135-106), they are said to have great power over the multitude.

They retained that power over the common people to the last.

The ancestors of the Pharisees may well be those referred to in Dan. 11:33-34 before they were corrupted with the false teaching, and hypocritical attitude, that they later embraced and adopted. It is to be noted that Christ commended their attitude toward the Word (Mat. 5:18), though he condemned their doctrines and general demeanor (Mat. 23:3, 15).

The leading doctrines of the Pharisees show how far they had drifted from the Truth. They set forth six main principles:

- 1. The world is governed by fate;**
- 2. The soul is immortal;**
- 3. There shall be a physical resurrection.**
- 4. The righteous are taken to "Abraham's Bosom."**
- 5. The Jews are the chosen race;**
- 6. Men were justified by the merits of Abraham.**

Whereas the Sadducees had retained the Truth concerning the mortality of man, the Pharisees had turned from it; whereas the Pharisees had retained the Truth concerning the resurrection, the Sadducees rejected it.

Pharisees believed in frequent washings and fastings, the careful avoidance of reputed sinners, a rigorous observance of the sabbath, long ostentatious public prayers. They had superimposed a traditional law upon the written law to which they gave more scrupulous adherence. This demanded the careful washing before meals, the observance of two fasts every week (on Thursday when Moses was supposed to have ascended the mount, and on Monday when he was supposed to have descended). They wore broad phylacteries, enlarged fringes on their garments, loved the uppermost rooms at feasts, the

chief seats in the synagogues, and to be revered by all.

Whereas the Sadducees were lovers of good living, the Pharisees were lovers of themselves. Their doctrine, and the application they gave to it, produced the typical Pharisaic character. They are shown as being proud, haughty, self-righteous, and as holding common people in contempt (John 7:49; Luke 18:10-12); they were formalists, giving strict adherence to unimportant externals (Luke 6:6-11; 11:39-44); they were hypocrites, laying upon others tasks they refused to do themselves (Luke 12:1; Mat. 23); they were covetous, loving the material things of life whilst claiming to seek for their reward in the future (Luke 16:14); they were pompous, despising the common people, and yet seeking their esteem (Mat. 23:1-7). Christ opposed them more than any other group of his day because they, knowing the Scriptures, should have learned to apply them.

This was the sect whose members now gathered around Christ to engage him in debate.

The Question

A scribe, representing the Pharisees as a whole, put the selected question to Jesus: "Master," he said, "which is the great commandment in the law? the first commandment of all?" (Mat. 22:36; Mark 12:28).

It does not seem a particularly difficult question to us, but it was one which had been debated among the Pharisees for years. Their most learned and skilled lawyers had long disputed over what is the greatest commandment of all, and in their arguing had completely lost sight of God.

"The great commandment," therefore, was a matter of great controversy. It involved discussion on the comparative importance of different precepts, some maintaining the pre-eminence of one, and others of another. Some claimed that sacrifice was of greatest importance, others argued that circumcision was even greater in importance. Some declared for the sabbath, some for the laws of meats, for washings, and so forth.

As these things were debated over the years, they became more and more involved. Finally the Pharisees divided their laws into 613 different precepts, giving the greatest stress to the ceremonials in which they delighted. They separated the commandments up into 248 affirmative ones (the number of the members of the body as they assessed them), and 365 negative ones (the number of the days of the year), the total of 613 being the number of the letters of the Decalogue. Some of the commandments were considered great, others small, and the constant question was, which is "the greatest commandment," as well as, which would be the first.

Christ had no difficulty supplying the correct answer. He swept aside all their man-made laws, and their man-made disputes, and

directed them back to the Word, and to Yahweh's statement.

He declared: *"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; Yahweh our God is one YAHWEH: And thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first and great commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets."*

"Yahweh is ONE," declared the Lord. Consider to whom he uttered those words! They were addressed to the Pharisees, the Separatists, the men who claimed to be more holy than their fellows, the sect that divided Yahweh's family into more than one!

The Hebrew word rendered "hear" in Deu. 6:4-5, from where the Lord quoted, signifies also to listen diligently; to obey. Israel was called upon both to hear and apply God's message. But the Pharisees stood condemned by it; they did neither.

"Thou shalt love with all thy heart." Yahweh revealed great love for Israel (Mal. 1:1-6), and Israel should have reflected back a measure of the same love. "If I be a Father," he asked through the prophet, "where is Mine honour?" (Mal. 1:6). Filial love should be expressed back by a people who enjoy the fruits of the Father's parental care. The Law commanded that heart, mind, soul, and strength should all be expended in it.

He loves God with all his mind who bends his intellect to understand the divine will and purpose. He loves God with all his soul, or life, who moulds his life by obedience thereto. He loves God with all his heart who renders back filial affection for the divine love he receives from heaven. He loves God with all his strength who exerts the powers of affection, life and intellect in His service.

All this love stems from knowledge, from hearing. And this knowledge will reveal Yahweh as a Father, and will develop in His sons and daughters a filial love for Him that will be manifested in the obedient discipline of heart, mind, soul and strength to His will; for "this is love, that we walk after His commandments" (2John 6).

Thus, in discussion with the Pharisees, the Lord divided the Law into "two commandments": love of God and love of one's neighbour. On these basic rules of life, he declared, "hang all the Law and the Prophets."

All the ceremonials and ordinances of the Law were epitomised in the ten



commandments, and they, in turn, can be reduced into two, answering to the two tables of stone on which the ten were inscribed. On the first table were the first five commandments, which epitomise the duty worshippers owe to God;* and on the second were the last five commands, which epitomise the duty the believers owe to one another. The second develops out of the first, as John, the apostle of love, taught (see 1John 4:20).

The Law, of course, expressed these commands negatively; whereas Christ, in such teaching as the Discourse on the Mount (Mat. 5-7), did so affirmatively.

But whether taught negatively or affirmatively, the "first and great commandment," is that which proclaims our duty to God.

The Scribe's Admiration of Jesus' Answer

The Scribe who questioned Jesus was no ordinary Pharisee. Throughout the narrative, he speaks with authority as one accustomed to deciding matters of the Law.

He did so on this occasion. Recognising the truth of what the Lord said, perceiving the clarity with which it was stated, discerning the depths of understanding that it revealed, he could not but utter words of commendation before the people: "Well Master, you have said the truth," he declared, "for there is one God, and there is none other but He, and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices!"

What a public confession for a Pharisee to make! It had been extorted from him by the Lord's skill in Scripture. It swept to one side all the arguing over minute points of the 613 laws that Jewish tradition had created, brought to an end all the contention as to whether the sabbath was the first commandment or whether it was circumcision, and revealed that at least one Pharisee had come to see the truth of those words so clearly taught in the Old Testament:

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1Sam. 15:22). "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to Yahweh than sacrifice" (Pro. 21:3). "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos. 6:6).

* The fifth commandment calls upon Israelites to "honour their father and mother," and this, at first sight, does not seem to relate to God. However, a father is to a family what Yahweh is to His family; whilst a mother is to her children what a nation is to its people, so that in this light, this fifth command was well placed with those that relate to God. See Pro. 1:8, and apply this double application to the verse. In Eph. 3:14-15, the apostle Paul outlines the principles of fatherhood as being derived from Yahweh.

Jesus' Commendation of the Scribe

The Scribe had come to trap Jesus (Mat. 22:35), but had stopped to praise him. His candor appealed to Jesus. It was obvious that he had answered with an intelligent understanding* of the matter, and was frank enough to admit that Jesus was right. The Lord commended such an attitude: "You are not far from the kingdom of God," he declared.

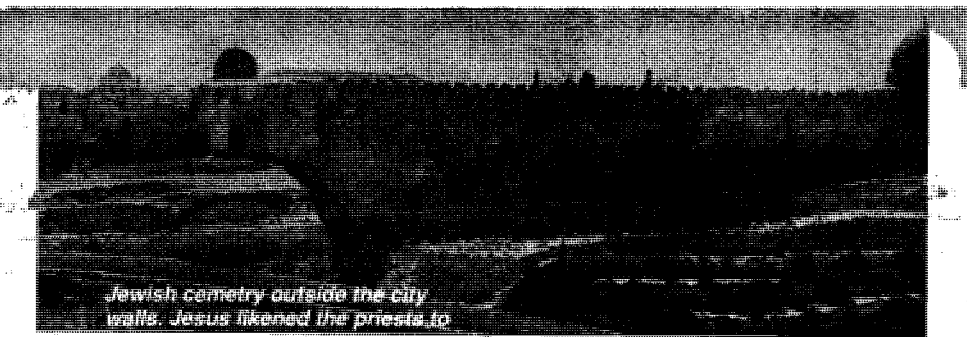
The Scribe had proceeded a certain distance toward the kingdom by frankly admitting the truth of what Jesus taught, but he had still further to travel! A little later, Jesus instructed his disciples regarding this matter. He declared: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

The Scribe had to learn to walk along that "way" before he could hope to attain to the kingdom in the Age to come.

Let us hope that the unnamed Scribe learned the lesson, and walked that "way." It will be most interesting meeting such an one in the kingdom who had so freely confessed before the multitude that Christ spoke the truth — presuming, of course, that we likewise walk that way, and attain to it!

Having answered the Scribe who was appointed spokesperson for the Pharisees in such a fashion that no man dared to ask him any further question to trap him, Jesus then proceeded to direct his audience to that "way," and the Word which could educate them in it, by putting a question that remained unanswered because they realised that if they did answer it, they would be discredited before the people, and Jesus vindicated in his claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God.

* The A.V. says that Jesus saw "that he answered discreetly." The word in the Greek is *nounechon*, from *nous*, "mind," "understanding" and *echo*, meaning "to have;" thus to have an understanding, or to intelligently comprehend a matter.



Jewish cemetery outside the city walls. Jesus likened the priests to

Chapter 2

JESUS' UNANSWERED QUESTION

The three trick questions answered, and his enemies silenced, the Lord now turned on them with a question which they found impossible to answer, for it cut across their conception of the Messiah. He then followed it up with a warning to the people to beware of the Scribes and Pharisees, pronouncing a series of eight woes against them. These terrible words of condemnation, recorded in Matthew 23, are also divisible into three parts, following the pattern of the parallelism which Matthew has preserved throughout his record of this section of the Lord's discourse. Jesus' unanswered question, therefore, is the connecting link between the three trick questions, and the threefold denunciation of his enemies in Matthew 23.

THE Pharisees were gathered together in a little group before the Lord. They had hoped to have seen him discredited by the clever Scribe whom they had selected as their representative for that purpose. Instead, to their annoyance, the Scribe had commended the Lord, and that before all the people. They pondered how they might, even yet, embarrass Jesus.

What Think Ye of Christ?

**(Mat. 22:41-46;
Mark 12:35-37;
Luke 20:41-44)**

The Lord, however, read their hearts. That is implied by the statement with which Mark prefaces the question Jesus put to them, for he states: "Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple..."

Jesus did not answer a spoken question, for none was put to him at that time, but he answered their thoughts as to his true identity by putting his question to them.

They saw his keen, penetrating eyes upon them, separating them from the rest of the people, and then, uneasy before his gaze, they heard him speak: "*What think you of Christ? Whose son is he?*"

They were relieved at such an easy question; instantly they replied: "The son of David!"

But then, quick as a flash, came the next question: "*How then does David in spirit call him Lord, saying, 'Yahweh said unto my Lord, Sit you on My right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.' If David called him Lord, how is he his son?*"

How, indeed! They had never thought of that! But as they

pondered it, they were confounded and disturbed by its implications. If Christ were the son of David, he should call David, Lord, not vice versa. The statement from Psalm 110 obviously taught that Christ was more than the son of David!

The force of the question thrust home, and an eloquent silence followed it. The Lord then turned to the common people, and repeated his question: *"How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit, 'Yahweh said unto my Lord'...?"* (Mark 12:35-36).

But, again, an uneasy silence followed his question. The common people dared not answer for themselves while scribes were present, even if they knew what to say. No one doubted that Messiah would be the son of David! What did this strange prophet mean? And yet, what did the Psalm mean?

Meanwhile, the Lord had turned to the scribes, and put the question directly to them (Luke 20:41-44), but again, silence was the only answer.

The Question Expounded

Their silence was eloquent, because the scribes saw the point. The leaders of Jewry were anxious to press a charge of blasphemy against Jesus on the ground of his claim to be the Son of Yahweh. He could claim to be the son of David, without any such charge being pressed, and, indeed, the people had praised him in those terms only the day before. But the scribes knew, by the terms the Lord used, that he claimed to be more than the descendant of David, and to that they took exception. To their understanding, such a claim was blasphemous.

Now, however, they were faced with a passage from the Psalms that certainly revealed that David recognised that the promised Messiah was greater than merely his son. He called him "Lord," acknowledging that he was greater than himself; he spoke of him being in heaven, at the right hand of Yahweh!

That obviously revealed that the Christ would be more than mere man; he would be the manifestation of Yahweh.

Though the scribes were familiar with Psalm 110, they had never thought of it in that light before, even though the same truth is clearly taught in the covenant made with David. There Yahweh, speaking of the Messiah, declared, "I will be his Father, and he shall be My Son" (2Sam. 7:14).

The leaders of Jewry had demanded of Jesus, "By what authority doest thou these things; and who gave thee this authority?" (Mat. 21:23). The Lord's introduction of Psalm 110 into the discussion, however, had revealed that the Messiah would be more than merely a son of David, and would therefore wield divine authority. If it were

conceded that Jesus were the Messiah, then divine authority was undoubtedly vested in him, and he could justly claim to be more than the son of David, even the Son of Yahweh.

No charge of blasphemy would succeed if Psalm 110:1 was advanced as evidence.

And Jewish law demanded that any claim of Messiahship such as Jesus had advanced should be thoroughly investigated before sentence of blasphemy be passed. When the time came, however, Caiaphas, the Sadducean high priest, took it upon himself to pass sentence, without any formal investigation of claims such as the Law required.

Meanwhile, the Lord's enemies kept silence. They were not able to answer him a word. Uneasy silence fell over the audience as each one, for himself, pondered the strange meaning of the Psalm and the significance of the question that Jesus had posed.

His enemies had had enough. Completely and embarrassingly worsened in debate before the people, they dared not ask him any further questions. On the other hand, the common people were delighted at the way in which he had silenced the politically-minded Herodians, the pompous Sadducees, and the supercilious Pharisees, and they hearkened to his teaching gladly (Mark 12:37), for he spoke with authority, clearly expounding for them the truth of the Scriptures.

Jesus Indicts the Scribes

Being specialists in the Law, the scribes should have readily seen the application of Psalm 110, and acknowledged its truth frankly before the Lord and the people. However, probably recognising that they would have to capitulate the position they adopted before Christ and the people if they did so, they preferred to remain silent.

The attitude of the scribes called forth the indignation of the Lord. Turning to his disciples (who were to become specialists in teaching the Gospel), and in the hearing of the people and the scribes, he warned them against imitating the behaviour of the latter.

Who were the scribes?

In the Old Testament, the term is general, denoting a public writer, a secretary or a clerk (2Kings 12:10), and particularly one who copied the Law or other parts of Scripture.

Ezra the priest, was a "ready scribe" in the Law of Moses, and set his heart to seek, do, and teach it in Israel (Ezra 7:6, 10). Thus, Ezra was a true scribe, in the full meaning of the word, for he was deeply moved by the things he studied; inscribing them on his heart and mind.

The priestly class of the scribes probably originated during the

Babylonian captivity, basing their institution on Ezra's work, and would have been members of the Sanhedrin, as judges, being regarded as authority on all matters of the Law in ecclesiastical tribunals.

In the New Testament, these teachers are called *grammateis* (scribes), *nomikoi* (lawyers), and *nomodidaskaloi* (teachers of the law). They devoted themselves to the study and interpretation of the Law, which governed both civil and religious life, to determine its application to daily life. The decisions of the more prominent scribes became, in due time, the *oral law of the Jews*, or the traditions of the elders, to which reference is made from time to time in the New Testament. The scribes were therefore "specialists of the Law," and were held in highest esteem by the people because of their reputed learning, and their skill in debate.

Because they accepted the Old Testament as the inspired Scriptures, they had more affinity with the Pharisees than with the Sadducees, and, therefore, were more often found joined with the former when debating with Jesus (Lk. 11:44). Thus, though the Pharisees plotted to embarrass Jesus by publicly calling upon him to give a decision as to which is the greatest commandment of all, it was actually a scribe who put the question, doubtless being appointed to do so as his reputation would enhance the value and point of the challenge.

Generally speaking, however, the scribes were not true students of the Word, as Christ made abundantly clear during his ministry. They made void the Truth by their traditions. They were mere copyists, retailing what had been much better said before them, lacking any true depth in their knowledge, or genuine fire and feeling in their expositions.

In this they were quite different from the Lord who had moved people with his zeal, and caused thousands to follow him through the drawing power of his words. The people had noted this difference between him and the scribes at the very beginning of his public ministry, for they had observed that "he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mat. 7:29).

Now, at the close of his ministry, having silenced one of the most prominent scribes, he warned them against such sterile, cold-hearted parade of book-learning without true power or depth: "***Beware of the scribes,***" he warned, "***which love to go in long clothing, and salutations in the market-place, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater condemnation.***"

It is true that some scribes had commended the Lord (Mark 12:32), but as a class they had not. Christ's warning, therefore, re-

echoed that of the prophets, who had likewise warned against such a cold-hearted approach to the Word by the leaders of their days (Isa. 29:13-14; 30:8-11). Much that the scribes set down as knowledge was childish in the extreme, as Isaiah implied as he spoke to the people (Isa. 3:12; 9:16). And now Christ warned his disciples against imitating this method of exposition. It was a warning that was justified, for the same frivolous attitude toward the Scriptures was later manifest among the ecclesias, as the apostles warned (Acts 20:29-30; 2Cor. 11:13). James warned that such teachers (as the word "masters" signifies in Jas. 3:1) will reap their condemnation at Christ's coming when his final controversy with the scribes will be resolved (John 12:48).

"WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?"

This was the preamble to the question that the Lord's enemies dared not answer, for they realised that if they did, they would have no case against him. It is a question that has challenged everybody since, and one which each one must answer for himself, particularly in this age when we are expecting his imminent return.

Though the majority did not recognise the Lord as the Christ, many questioned during the days of his earthly ministry as to who he really was, for his amazing miracles and his equally powerful teaching, caused the greatest excitement, or invoked the harshest criticism and opposition.

We have listed below the terms in which many answered that question, 2,000 years ago.

"He is the king of the Jews" — the wise men from the East (Mat. 2:2).

"He is mightier than I" — John Baptist (Mat. 3:11).

"He is the son of God" — the madmen (Mat. 8:29).

"He is a blasphemer" — certain scribes (Mat. 9:3).

"He is the son of David" — the blind men (Mat. 9:27);
the woman of Canaan (Mat. 15:22).

"He is the carpenter's son" — his fellow countrymen (Mat. 13:55).

"He is John Baptist" — Herod and others (Mat. 14:2; 16:14).

"He is the Son of God" — the disciples in the ship (Mat. 14:33).

"He is Elijah" — according to "some" (Mat. 16:14).

"He is Jeremiah or one of the prophets" — according to "some" (Mat. 16:14).

"He is Christ, the Son of the Living God" — Peter (Mat. 16:16).

"He is My beloved Son" — Yahweh (Mat. 17:5).
"He is Christ, the Son of God" — Martha (John 11:27).
"He is the good teacher" — a ruler of the people (Mat. 19:16).
"He is the prophet of Nazareth" — the multitude (Mat. 21:11).
"He is the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James... and his sisters" — the people of Nazareth (Mark 6:3).
"He is Thy salvation... a light... the glory" — Simeon (Luke 2:30, 32).
"He is Joseph's son" — the worshippers in the synagogue (Luke 4:22).
"He is a great prophet" — the people of Nain (Luke 7:16).
"He is a righteous man" — the centurion (Luke 23:47).
"He is a prophet mighty in deed and word" — the two disciples (Luke 24:19).
"He is the Lamb of God" — John Baptist (John 1:29).
"He is the Messiah" — Andrew (John 1:41).
"He is the Son of God, the King of Israel" — Nathanael (John 1:49).
"He is a teacher come from God" — Nicodemus (John 3:2).
"He is Jesus the son of Joseph" — the Jews (John 6:42).
"He is a Samaritan, with a devil" — the Pharisees (John 8:48).
"He is the King of Israel" — the common people (John 12:13).
"He is a blasphemer" — his accusers (Mat. 26:65).
"He is a deceiver" — the chief priests and Pharisees (Mat. 27:63).
"He is God with us" — Matthew (Mat. 1:23).
"He is the Word made flesh" — John (John 1:14).

Thus during the earthly ministry of the Lord, the utmost confusion reigned as to his status and mission. The same confusion exists in the minds of men to this present time, as some repudiate his claims, and others distort them. Let us be clear in our minds as to who was this great man. Paul declared that he was *"God manifest in the flesh"* (1Tim. 3:16), and taught that *"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"* (2Cor. 5:19). By God-given strength (see Psalm 80:17) Jesus was able to conquer the flesh, present himself as the perfect sacrifice, and open the way to salvation for all who would follow him. The flesh unaided would have been unable to accomplish this, as we, too, will utterly fail if we do not draw into our lives that divine strength that is available through the means that God has offered us. Jesus has led the way in leaning upon God, and thereby reaching a perfection of character that would have been impossible without Him. In so doing, he has taught his followers what they should do. He was

human as to the substance of which he was made; but divine as to the Source from which he came; the Spirit from which he derived his wisdom; and the pattern of the character which he possessed (Heb. 2:14; John 6:38; Luke 2:40; John 1:14).

To the statements concerning Christ listed above (and others could be added to the list), it would be interesting and profitable to add these statements that the Lord made concerning himself. He declared:

"I am the Messiah" — to the woman of Samaria (John 4:26).

"I am the bread of life" — to the Jews (John 6:48).

"I am the living bread from heaven" — to the Jews (John 6:51).

"I am from God" — at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:29).

"I am the light of the world" — at the festival of lights (John 8:12).

"I am from above, not of this world" — to unbelieving Jews (John 8:23).

"I am the manifestation of the Father" — to Jews (John 8:28).

"I am before Abraham" — to Jews (John 8:58).

"I am the door of the sheep" — to Pharisees (John 10:7).

"I am the good shepherd" — to Pharisees (John 10:11).

"I am the Son of God" — to the cured blind man (John 9:35).

"I am the son of Man" — to the disciples (Mat. 16:13).

"I am the resurrection, and the life" — to Martha (John 11:25).

"I am the Teacher" — to the apostles (John 13:13).

"I am the Comforter" — to the disciples (John 14:16).

"I am the true Vine" — to the apostles (John 15:1).

"I am a King" — to Pilate (John 18:37).

"I am the Christ the son of the living God" — to Caiaphas (Mat. 26:63-64).

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" — to all believers (Rev. 1:18).

These lists are by no means complete, and to seek for all the opinions and declarations of Scripture concerning Christ would be most interesting and profitable.

A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels

JOHN BAPTIST

John signifies, *The Grace of Yahweh*. He was the son of Zacharias (*The Memorial of Yahweh*) and of Elisabeth (*The Oath of My El*). All these names are significant. When the divine **Memorial** (Exo. 3:14) is combined with the divine **Oath** (see Luke 1:72-73), it produces divine **Grace**.

That is really the parable of John's life.

Of all the prophets, there was none greater than John (Mat. 11:11; Luke 7:28), for he was appointed forerunner to the Master. He suddenly appeared at the junction of the Old and the New dispensations, to proclaim his message in Judea as abruptly as did his prototype, Elijah, in the northern kingdom.

John came from the desert (Luke 1:80) where he had apparently been dwelling on his own for some time, his aged parents having probably died. The harsh austerity of his early environment helped to mould his character which was stern and unyielding. His isolated life of meditation and prayer, in the quietness of the desert, helped to discipline him for his task of reformer. Thus he proclaimed a message of kindness blended with uncompromising severity.

In him, the voice of prophecy that had been stilled since the days of Malachi, was again heard. His austere bearing, his rough, uncultured manner (Mat. 3:1-4), repelled the sophisticated leaders of the nation, whilst it drew many of the common people to him. The impression he left on his listeners was so great that they thought he was the Messiah (Luke 3:15). Even many of the leaders gained that impression, so that a deputation was sent to enquire of him if he made that claim. Modestly, John declared that he was nothing more than a Voice or a Herald (John 1:23), and the rejoicing friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29).

He recognised that he must decrease (John 3:30), but continued his work, trying to do what he could to repress current evils. Among other places, he frequented the court of Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, and exercised some influence over the king (Mark 6:20). However, when John reproved the king for a flagrant breach of morality, he was cast into prison.

From here he sent a message to Jesus, evidently having become impatient with Christ's seeming delay to manifest himself as king, and deliver his servants (Mat. 11:3; Luke 7:19).

Josephus refers to John in terms of the greatest respect (*Ant.* 18:5:2).

He was finally put to death by Herod at the instigation of the implacable Herodias (Mark 6:17-27).

John Baptist was plain of dress; plain of food; plain of speech.

His raiment consisted of a robe of camel's skin or cloth woven from camel's hair, a most humble habit compared with the luxurious robes worn by the Pharisees and the wealthy of his day.

He thrived on plain, rough food. Honey of the desert, locusts classed among the flying, creeping things that Israelites were allowed to eat (Lev. 11:22), formed his diet (Mat. 3:4).

In speech he was bold and forthright. In the isolation of the

desert, he brooded over the perils of the time, and came forth into the soft, luxurious conditions of the city, to speak in language made picturesque by the environment of his previous sojourn. He spoke of barren trees fit only for burning, of vipers fleeing from the flaming scrub, of a nation sterile of spiritual growth as the desert, with which he was familiar, was of natural growth.

Among the qualities he manifested, and which we do well to emulate was self-denial (Mat. 3:4); courage (Mat. 3:7); boldness of preaching (Mat. 14:4); humility (Mark 1:7); separateness (Mark 6:20); and burning zeal (John 5:35).

John suffered martyrdom in the cause of righteousness, but he will be raised to glorious immortal life at the return of his saviour and cousin, the Lord Jesus Christ.

JOHN: THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED

John was the younger brother of James, and son of Zebedee and Salome. His name signifies *Yahweh Has Been Gracious*, which is an appropriate name for that one of whom it is recorded that he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20).

He was a native of Bethsaida in Galilee, the son of godly parents. Zebedee (see vol. 5, pp. 278-279, 390) was a fisherman owning his own vessel, and prosperous enough to hire servants. The family seems to have been on a high social standing, for they were on terms of intimacy with the high priest (John 18:16), and owned property, not only in Galilee, but also, apparently, in Judea (John 19:27).

Zebedee did not restrain his sons from following the Lord (Mat. 4:21-22), although he, himself, was not called, and remained home, probably to manage the business in their absence. In thus encouraging his sons, he was doubtless influenced by the zeal of Salome his wife, who ministered to the Master of their substance, sometimes accompanying him in his travels (Luke 8:2-3; Mat. 20:20; 27:56). From Mat. 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1; John 19:25, it seems that Salome was sister to Mary, the mother of the Lord, in which case, John was first cousin to Jesus.

John was called to become a "fisher of men" whilst he was plying his trade at the nets (Mat. 4:19). He rose to eminence among the apostles, being one of the select triumvirate, Christ's inner council of three, who were given special privileges and were permitted to view special manifestations of power and glory. Thus with Peter and James, the other two, John was selected to view the resurrection of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37), the transfiguration (Mat. 17:1), to hear the Olivet prophecy (Mark 13:3), and to be with the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33).

John was treated with greater familiarity by Christ than were

the other apostles. He sat next to him at the Last Supper, reclining with his head lovingly resting against the Lord (John 13:25), and in that position whispered to him to reveal who it was who would betray him. He was later entrusted with the care of the Lord's mother (John 19:26), and took her unto his own home, probably somewhere adjacent to Jerusalem. At that moment of sadness, Mary received greater consideration from her nephew than she did from her own sons and daughters, apart from the Lord himself.

John wrote the Gospel of John, the three epistles bearing his name, and on being banished to Patmos, received the final vision of glory known as the Revelation.

His contact with Christ produced a great change of character.

He was evidently a man of tremendous natural energy, and because of this and his outspoken zeal, he received the title of Son of Boanerges, or of Thunder (Mark 3:17). His intolerance, and fierce, possessive jealousy for the Lord whom he loved so dearly, reached its apex when he found Jesus slighted by the Samaritans. He deeply resented this, and in his excess of zeal, he called upon the Lord to command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them (Luke 9:54). He also, at that stage, manifested overweening ambition, and with James, selfishly sought special privileges of personal glory greater than the other apostles, for which he was rebuked (Mark 10:35-37). But with all this, he was a man of deep affection, and he manifested an intense love for the Lord (John 13:23), and a natural sympathy for others.

Aspects of John's character were revealed at the trial of Jesus. He showed himself to be thoughtful, for he came to the aid of Peter, who, not having access to the high priest's court, remained outside until John used his influence to obtain entrance for him (John 18:15-16). He revealed strength of character, for whereas Peter, at that stage, was somewhat in doubt of the Lord, probably through shock, and remained among the soldiers so that he might pass unnoticed as a disciple, John "went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest" where he could see into the Audience Chamber, caring little as to the opinions of others. He was the first among the apostles to believe what Mary Magdalene was reporting concerning the empty tomb (John 20:2), though, at that stage, he did not understand its full significance (John 20:7-9).

His natural exuberance, and perhaps the greater physical energy of his more youthful years, enabled him to out-distance Peter as they ran together to the sepulchre of the Lord (John 20:3-5), and his loving thoughtfulness was shown by the deference he exhibited toward the older man in that he respectfully stood aside to allow him to enter the tomb first (John 20:6-8).

The failings and virtues of his character were tempered or

improved by his contact with Christ. This is reflected in his writings. The high spiritual style he manifests, the lofty theme to which he addresses himself, reflects his mental ability and his own spiritual viewpoint. He never forgot the example of gentle patience manifested by the Lord toward the disciples. For though Christ knew they would forsake him, he still addressed them as his "little children," an expression of tender affection and graciousness. Under similar, trying conditions, John later used the same expression himself repeatedly, in exhorting his brethren to live righteously (1John 2:1, 12; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). In his epistles, it is obvious that the Son of Thunder is more impressed with the need of quietly developing love in his brethren, than in vindicating self. The early ambition to succeed in spite of the other apostles, is replaced by a gentle desire to help others to share God and Christ with himself through that fellowship that exists in light, love and life.

Thus John's contact with Christ mellowed and perfected his character. He lost that ambitious vigour, and shortsighted vindictiveness that once characterised him. His writings exhibit him as a gentle, patient man of great strength of will, of tremendous energy, and of abounding humility. In his Gospel, he refers to "the disciple whom Jesus loved," but does not set forth his name. In his epistles, he does not mention his apostleship, as Paul was forced often to do. Yet there was no weakness in John. His early vigour remained, though now it was disciplined, and thus he warned Diotrephes who "loved to have the preeminence," that when they would meet he would have cause to regret his unrighteous deeds, and the prating, malicious words he was uttering (3John 9-10). But then, with great understanding and insight into what Jesus required, he reserved his strictures and actions for those deserving of the thunder he was still capable of uttering.

Tradition has it that after the ascension of the Lord, when the apostles made a division of the areas for preaching among themselves, Asia fell to the share of John, though he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jerusalem until the death of Mary.

He then proceeded to Asia and applied himself to the propagation of the Truth, preaching it where it had not yet been known, and confirming it where it was already planted. He was involved in the persecution instituted by Domitian, and tradition says that he was taken bound to Rome, and there condemned to be baptised into a cauldron of boiling oil. Tradition alleges that he was drawn out alive, but the Emperor, by no means impressed with the miracle, banished him to the island of Patmos. There he

preached to the inhabitants, and ultimately received the wonderful vision of the future contained in the Revelation, so that though Domitian may have thought that by banishing this notable Christian in the manner he did he would rid the world of his influence, in fact his influence became greater. In the Revelation, he describes himself as *"your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, being in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"* (Rev. 1:9).

It is said that upon the death of Domitian, and the succession of Nerva, John was released, and returned to Asia, establishing his headquarters at Ephesus, because the people of that city had recently martyred Timothy. John was the sole remaining apostle, and laboured to complete the work that had been set them by the Lord Jesus. According to Eusebius, he died at the beginning of Trajan's reign, being ninety-eight years of age, and was buried near Ephesus.

John's work is not yet completed. In the Revelation he was given the assurance that he must yet, in the future, *"prophecy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings"* (Rev. 10:11). He will thus yet rise from the dead to personally witness the fulfilment of the great prophecy that was given through him.

It is significant that the Bible closes with a prayer and a benediction from this man whom Jesus loved: *"Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."* To John's gracious words let us add our *"Amen"* — so be it!

LEGION: THE MADMAN WHO WAS CURED

Legion was the name assumed by one of the maniacs of Gerasa, a lonely part of Palestine on the east of the Jordan, midway between the Lake Galilee and the Dead Sea. When the Lord visited the area, he was confronted by this insane and frightening fellow, who had appeared from the heights above the Lake. When asked his name, he replied: *"My name is Legion."* The word *legion* was the name given to the companies of Roman soldiers, some of which were stationed throughout the land. They were fierce, demanding, unscrupulous men, who did not hesitate to oppress the peoples under their control. In the muddled, confused mind of the madman, he had assumed that he was possessed by similar diverse and fierce spirits!

The healing power of the Lord's commanding words, restored Legion to sanity, and provided a lesson for all time of the power of the Gospel to heal those whom Yahweh might call from the spiritual madness of the Apostasy — *Story of the Bible*, vol. 6, pp. 25-30.

Chapter 3

THREE-FOLD INDICTMENT OF THE LORD'S ENEMIES

Having warned his enemies by parable, and silenced them in debate, the Lord proceeded to publicly testify against them, in a most outspoken discourse recorded in Matthew 23. Mark (ch. 12:38-40) and Luke (ch. 20:45-47) record similar words that he delivered at this time to his disciples warning them against the scribes. He showed that the scribes were pompous and hypocritical in their attitude, and exhorted his disciples to avoid imitating their ways.

These words (recorded only in Mark and Luke) were either a preface to his general remarks (recorded only in Matthew), or else an epitome of his longer address. They were likely the former, and in our harmony of the Gospels, we have treated them as such. The Lord could well have given such brief comments for the benefit of his disciples and others who cared to listen, and then launch into the formal indictment of both scribes and Pharisees outlined by Matthew in his twenty-third chapter.

In accordance with the parallelism which Matthew finds in the Lord's discourse and teaching on this, the last day of his public testimony before the Jews in which he set out all that he said in a series of threes (see p. 185), the Lord's condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees, recorded in Matthew 23, can likewise be divided into three parts, followed by his prophecy of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, which acts as a link between this forthright warning and the Olivet prophecy.

The three sections of the chapter outline the main faults of the scribes and Pharisees, and the inevitable result of their folly. It reveals:

- 1. How pride caused them to seek public acclaim — vv. 1-12.*
- 2. How hypocrisy blinded them to their sin — vv. 13-32.*
- 3. How their ruthless persecution of righteous men would recoil on their heads — vv. 33-39.*

It required the greatest courage and faith for the Lord to stand up in the temple court as he did, and boldly proclaim the true character of the scribes and Pharisees, for all to hear and heed. We can admire him for the fearless way in which he performed this most difficult task. During the course of his discourse, he pronounced eight woes upon the Pharisees which are the antithesis of the eight blessings of the Beatitudes.

It was a sad chapter in the history of the chosen race, when the Messiah of Israel stood up and denounced the leaders for their sins; but it was also a most dramatic one. It constituted the final warning he was to issue to them, and the last time he stood in the temple courts. The time is coming, when the temple will be restored, and the Lord again will enter its precincts. But then it will be with praise upon his lips, to speak to a rejuvenated people who will welcome him with joy (Ezekiel 43).

THE long, busy day of teaching and debate was slowly drawing to its close. The time had come for the Lord to summarise all his efforts. It must have been with heavy heart that Jesus had observed the rebelliousness of the leaders to Yahweh's Word, their hardness of heart to every appeal of righteousness, and the gullibility of the people in following those men who could only lead them to perdition.

For three and a half years he had laboured to bring home to all a sense of responsibility to the Truth, and he knew what the ultimate result of their attitude would be: even the destruction of the nation.

He knew also that this was his final public testimony, and he was determined to put into it all the urgency and appeal which it demanded. Nobody could accuse him of "shunning to declare unto all the counsel of God" so that he was "pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26-27).

**Pharisaic Pride
Condemned
(Mat. 23:1-12)**

For the last time, therefore, he commenced to address the multitude before him, as well as his disciples, to warn them of the folly and peril of following leaders who could not help them, but would surely bring them and the whole nation to destruction. It proved to be the most outspoken public address that he ever gave.

He commenced: "*The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not you after their works: for they say, and do not...*"

What a scathing indictment! What a way to commence a public address! It was bound to secure the attention of every member of the large audience around him. He acknowledged the high positions of authority that the scribes and Pharisees held, and the respect that was due unto them because of this. He exhorted the people that they should carefully heed what they taught them in agreement with the Law of Moses, but then bluntly warned them not to follow their hypocritical ways, for they constituted a negation of the very expositions that they put before the people!

**The Pompous
Ambition of the
Scribes and
Pharisees**

To the shame and embarrassment of the leaders of the nation who mingled with the audience listening to Jesus, he illustrated what he meant by very plainly describing their hypocritical ways. *"They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. Anything they do is done that others might see and applaud. Notice their broad phylacteries, the enlarged ribbands of blue on the borders of their garments! Observe their great love of the upper couch at feasts, and how they seize the chief seats in the synagogues! Listen to their greetings in the markets: how they love for men to call them, Rabbi! Rabbi!"*

The characterisation was harsh but true! The Lord made those pompous leaders appear ridiculous and petty in the sight of the common people. Fearlessly he stripped them of their veneer of respectability, as he showed them for what they were. They in turn hated him for it, and would willingly have rushed on him then and slain him, but they feared the people. How completely was the prophecy of Zechariah fulfilled: "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred Me!" (Zech. 11:8).

By oppressing the people with unnecessary and crushing restrictions (see Luke 11:46), they broke the very Law that they were dedicated to teach (Isa. 58:6-9). They bound these restrictions on Israel, as a man might load heavy packs upon a beast of burden, and yet, contrary to the spirit of the Law, they refused to help those labouring under these things, nor relieved the oppressions that they felt so keenly.

They loved ostentatious display. They delighted to hear men applaud them for their piety and learning, and what is more, they firmly believed that their attitude and knowledge fully justified such encomiums of praise. Jesus had warned his followers to avoid such a display of self-righteousness. He did so in regard to almsdeeds (Mat. 6:1-4), the selection of a place of prayer (vv.5-6), the manner of prayer (vv.7-15), fasting (vv.16-18), and so forth; the very things, in fact, which the Pharisees paraded before men that they might see them.

They made broad phylacteries, which they wore on arms or foreheads, that all might see and praise them for their scrupulous observance of the Law. What were these phylacteries? The word means "to keep," or "preserve." They comprised small pieces of parchment or vellum upon which were inscribed passages of the Law such as Exo. 13:1-10; Deu. 6:4-9, etc. These were then placed in cases of dressed skin, fastened with leather straps to either forehead, or left arm, or close to the heart, and were worn as little text-boxes, with all

the superstitious regard that Roman Catholics today place upon the wearing of the image of the cross! The custom of wearing the phylacteries was based upon such passages as Exo. 13:9, in which the Jews were instructed: *"It shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that Yahweh's law may be in thy mouth."*

The Jews claimed that the wearing of these little text-boxes fulfilled the requirements of Deu. 28:10, *"All the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of Yahweh; and they shall be afraid of thee!"*

The Lord also pointed out how they enlarged the borders of their garments. The Law required that true Israelites should wear a ribband of blue on the borders of their garments, that they might constantly recall that they had been called out of Egypt to reflect heavenly characteristics (Num. 15:38-40). Its purpose was to remind the wearer of his duty to walk within the circumference of God's commandments — not to parade it as a symbol of self-righteousness! The scribes and Pharisees however, reversed the principle. They enlarged the ribband to draw attention to their position of privilege, omitting to do the deeds that the blue hem should have reminded them to perform.

At feasts they diligently sought the upper, more prominent seats. In fact, there was often a most undignified struggle on their part to obtain the best places, where many a Pharisee had been ignominiously directed to a lower seat, having forced his way into a higher one. Likewise in the synagogues, there they were seated in the chief seats where men might see them, and reflect upon their greatness and their glory! God was completely left out of their account.

Their appearance in the public market places was like a triumphal



procession. The Pharisee in his rich, distinctive garb, with wide blue ribband, and large phylactery, or the scribe with his flowing gown worn as the badge of learning, walked as a class apart from the common herd. Nevertheless, they sought and loved the applause of the very men whom they despised, and were delighted when their status was acknowledged by greetings of "Rabbi! Rabbi!"

And what dignity and pompousness was to be observed when two met in the public way! How each acknowledged the status of the other by a greeting and a bow! What a sight for ordinary, common folk, as they stood in the shadow of such greatness, and had the privilege of viewing the magnificence, the piety, the dignity, the learning of flesh encased in the garb of hypocrisy!

Those scribes and Pharisees believed that they were the very salt of the earth!

How Christ's Followers

Should Act (vv. 8-12)

Solemnly, seriously, urgently, Christ warned his followers to avoid such an example. He told them that they must recognise that One is their Master, and that they are all brethren, and therefore they must not call one another, "*rabbi*." They must avoid using the title of "*father*" for those in authority. They must not seek to be called "*master*," because there is one appointed to that position over all, and he is Christ. Indeed, the greatest among them must be as a servant, slaving for the benefit of the others, recognising that the pompous are sure to be abased, whereas those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God will be exalted in due time (1Pet. 5:6).

It is wise to give close consideration to these instructions of the Lord.

The word "rabbi" is derived from a root, *rab*, meaning "great." Primarily it denoted a master in contrast to a slave. It was an official title conferred by the Sanhedrin, and it elevated those who were given the title above all others. It was the class distinction connected with the title that Jesus condemned.

Some were so foolish as to claim that the words of a rabbi were as the words of God. Man-made statements, and even expositions of the Scripture by sincere teachers, must never be elevated in that way. The Scriptures alone are inspired, and all teaching must be tested by God's Word.

The word "master" in Mat. 23:8 is *didaskalos* in the Greek, and

• A document known as "3rd Epistle of Peter" aptly describes the reflection of this attitude in the clergy of Christendom. It is a parody on the pride of church leaders who continue to manifest the same kind of self-aggrandisement shown by the Jewish rabbis. Copies of this document can be obtained from Logos Office, Box 220, Findon, South Australia 5023.

signifies “teacher.” It is used frequently in the epistles, and is there applied to the brethren (Acts 13:1; Eph. 4:11; Heb. 5:12; 1Tim. 2:7; 2Tim 1:11). Is that use of the word a violation of the command of Christ? Apparently not. Christ obviously referred to the use of the word as an empty, official title, that some see as a measure of distinction among their community, whereas in the epistles it is used as a statement of fact. A true teacher must lead the “sheep” to “the door,” that is, to Christ (John 10:1), and when he does so, he becomes what the word suggests: a teacher of righteousness. A heavy responsibility rests upon those who set out to teach others, for if they do not do so in accordance with the Word of God, they shall fall into condemnation (James 3:1, where “master” should be rendered “teacher”).

In like manner, Christ’s prohibition of the use of the word “father,” must be given limited application in view of its very use throughout the New Testament. Obviously, the Lord meant that the word should not be used as a pompous, religious official title. The Greek word *pater* is from a root signifying “nourisher,” “protector,” “upholder.” The one next to the President of the Sanhedrin was called the *Ab*, the Hebrew word for Father.

But whilst the official title is to be avoided, experienced brethren are to be acknowledged as fathers in the ecclesia when they reveal the attributes of the heavenly Father by nourishing, protecting and upholding those under them, caring for Yahweh’s spiritual children, and treating them as their own (1Cor. 4:15; Philemon v. 10; 1Thes. 2:11). In fact, Paul explains that the family associations we enjoy on earth are to be a reflection of that which is seen in heaven (Eph. 3:14-15).

There is no violation of Christ’s teaching by using the expression under such circumstances, as the apostles’ use of it shows. They acknowledged such brethren as “fathers” without endorsing the use of the term as an official title (1John 2:13).

Again Jesus said: “Neither be ye called masters...” (v. 10). In this place, the word in the Greek is different from that of v. 8, even though translated “master” in both places. The word, in this verse, is *kathegetai*, and signifies “guides.” A guide is one that points the way, or leads to it. The root word is rendered “have the rule over” in Heb. 13:7,17,24, and there applied to elders in the ecclesia. As with the title “father,” the principle is to know faithful brethren, avoiding empty, official titles. “Ye are all brethren,” is the fundamental truth to be acknowledged.

At the same time, the greatest among the followers of the Lord are to act as servants to the rest. They are expected to give their lives for the benefit of others, as the Lord did for the benefit of humanity. Jesus, himself, gave his apostles an example of what is required,

when he, their Lord and Master, washed their feet, and ministered unto them as would a common slave.

Are we prepared to become slaves for Christ? If so, let us manifest this characteristic by serving one another, as "unto the Lord."

Paul exhibits this principle, in a most powerful and beautiful exhortation contained in Phil. 2:3-11. He appeals to the brethren to manifest the mind of Christ, writing: "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God... made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant... and became obedient unto death... Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name...*"

Let us apply the principles that Christ set forth on that day of debate and decision, that we may likewise be elevated by the Father in due time.

A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels

LEVI: THE APOSTLE AND GOSPEL WRITER

Luke records of Levi that when the Lord demanded it, "he left all, rose up, and followed him" (Lk. 5:28). Levi was the original name of Matthew the Business Man who left all, and further details will be found under this heading in Vol. 5, pp. 347-348.

LUKE: THE ILLUMINATOR

Luke's name signifies *Light-giver* or *Illuminative*. He figures largely in the life of Paul, who describes him as "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14), but he is not mentioned by name in connection with the life of the Lord. However, Luke informed Theophilus that he proposed to set in order the things relating to Jesus from the "very first," which he did by outlining the circumstances that led to the birth of the Lord. These facts he had carefully gathered together from those who "from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the Word" (Lk. 1:2).

This would suggest that Luke had close connection with the Truth even before he linked up with the apostle Paul in his travels, and it could be that he was among the disciples of the Lord. Granted that premise, Luke could have been the companion of Cleopas to whom the Lord revealed himself as they walked to Emmaus. The incident is only recorded by Luke (though referred to by Mark), and is given with all the vividness of personal experience. It is characteristic of Luke to record events in which he participated without disclosing his personal association therewith.

Granted this premise, then each of the Gospel records provides some personal incident illustrative of its author. In Matthew, there is the circumstance of the converted tax-gatherer; in Mark, that of the young man who fled naked from his captors on the night of the betrayal; in Luke, the revelation on the road to Emmaus; in John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

As a physician, Luke was a man of education and science, and as such, trained to close observation of detail. His writings reveal this characteristic. Additional material found in his Gospel over that contained in the others, amounts to more than fifty per cent of its content. He presents Jesus from the standpoint of his humanity: as the perfect man as symbolised in the faces of the cherubim.

As a Gentile, Luke wrote for Gentiles. In his Gospel, the principles of pardon and redemption are emphasised (Lk. 1:28; 2:40). There is a joyous note about it, for he records five great outbursts of song: Elizabeth's song of blessing; Mary's song of praise; Zachariah's song of exposition; the Angels' song of glory; and Simeon's song of salvation.

A suggested outline of Luke's Gospel is as follows: —

- [1] The Son of Man in his human relationships
(Lk. 1:5 to 2:52).
- [2] The Son of Man in his baptism, ancestry and testing
(Lk. 3:1 to 4:13).
- [3] The Son of Man in his ministry as Prophet-King in Galilee
(Lk. 4:14 to 9:50).
- [4] The Son of Man in his Judean/Perean ministry (Lk. 9:51 to 19:28).
- [5] The Son of Man rejected as Israel's king (Lk. 19:29 to 23:46).
- [6] The Son of Man in resurrection, ministry and ascension
(Lk. 24:1-53).

MALCHUS: THE HEALED

His name means *King* or *Counsellor*. He was the high priest's servant whose ear Peter cut off with the sword in the Garden of Gethsemane. With Judas, he evidently led the soldiers in their attack on Jesus, and thus, in turn, was attacked by Peter. The Lord rebuked Peter for his belligerent and foolish action (Jn. 18:10), and healed Malchus (Lk. 22:51). Luke, the physician, is the only one who mentions the healing of the ear.

MARY: THE MOTHER OF THE LORD

See article: *Mary: The Blessed Who Believed — Story of the Bible*, vol. 5, pp. 210-212.

Chapter 4

EIGHT TERRIBLE WOES

“THOU BLIND PHARISEE!”

In this section of his public address (Mat. 23:13-32), the Lord pronounced eight terrible woes against the Scribes and Pharisees which set forth the eight blessings of the beatitudes (Mat. 5) in reverse. It is most significant to see the order of these woes, and compare them with that of the beatitudes, and for that reason we have set them out as they were expressed, in parallel columns.

When Christ delivered his “Discourse on the Mount” (Mat. 5-7), he delivered what might be styled his policy speech for the benefit of his followers, revealing unto them what citizenship of the Kingdom entailed. This was at the beginning of his public ministry. Now, at the end of it, he reverted back to the same theme, warning the leaders of the nation that divine judgment would fall upon them in the form of eight woes, because they had neglected the eight principles of true morality. As teachers and leaders of the nation their responsibilities were greater than those of the common people and, in consequence, the punishment would be heavier. The Lord had previously warned: “The kingdom shall be taken from you and given unto a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” The true followers of Christ, taken out of every nation, will constitute the new rulers of the Kingdom of God (Rev. 5:9-10).

TO the sincere and upright, Jesus was kind and sympathetic. To the make-believers, he spoke in language that was terrible. What is the lesson? Christ lives; his authority and power are unaltered. Ere long, his friends and his foes will again confront him. Loving words and crushing words will once more be heard from his lips. Let us pause. We have to appear before Christ! He will speak to us. Are we his friends or his foes? Let us search our hearts. If hypocrisy is lurking there, let us root it out. We have the power to do this. Let us be open-minded with Christ, seeking to hide nothing. Christ will show no mercy to shams. A penitent Publican is more endurable in his eyes than a self-righteous Pharisee. Those who please Christ — who need not fear the outcome of an interview with him — are those who look upon God as a reality, and commune with Him as such, who recognise and confess their much unworthiness, and whose constant aim is to grow better.

The Eight Blessings

1. Kingdom Opened

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

2. Mourners Comforted

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall BE COMFORTED."

3. Meek Inherit the Earth

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall INHERIT THE EARTH."

4. True Righteousness Through Sincerity

"Blessed are they which do HUNGER AND THIRST after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

5. Merciful Obtain Mercy

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall OBTAIN MERCY."

6. Purity Within

"Blessed are the PURE IN HEART: for they shall see God."

The Eight Woes

1. Kingdom Closed

"Woe unto you, hypocrites! for you SHUT UP THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN against men: you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in."

2. Mourners Distressed

"Woe unto you hypocrites! for you DEVOUR WIDOW'S HOUSES, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore you shall receive greater condemnation."

3. Hypocrites Inherit Hell

"Woe unto you hypocrites! for you compass sea and land (the earth!) to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more THE CHILD OF HELL than yourselves."

4. False Righteousness Through Materialism

"Woe unto you blind guides which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the GOLD OF THE TEMPLE, he is a debtor! You fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold... whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein."

5. Mercy Left Undone

"Woe unto you hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, MERCY, and faith: these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone. You blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."

6. Purity Without, Uncleaness Within

"Woe unto you hypocrites! for you make clean the OUTSIDE of

the cup and platter, but **WITHIN** they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is **WITHIN** the cup and platter, that the **OUTSIDE** of them may be clean also."

7. Peacemakers — Living Sons of God

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the **SONS OF GOD.**"

8. Persecuted Receive the Kingdom

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the **KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**"

7. Lawless Hypocrites Reduced to Dead Bones

"Woe unto you hypocrites! for you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of **DEAD MEN'S BONES**, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

8. Persecutors Receive Hell

"Woe unto you hypocrites! because you build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore you be witnesses unto yourselves, that you are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the **DAMNATION OF HELL?**"



Chapter 5

CHRIST'S TEACHING EXPLAINED

In the court of the temple, the Master publicly indicted the Scribes and Pharisees. He delivered a terrible message of condemnation as he described their hypocrisy and false teaching, and sternly warned them of the fatal consequences of such actions and words. The eight terrible woes that he pronounced against them (see pp. 138-140), provided the foundation for the doom of the nation which he subsequently proclaimed. His public testimony on this occasion justifies the closest examination in order that we might avoid the errors manifested by the Jewish people, and escape a similar fate that awaits those who do likewise.

THE language Christ used to express the woes he pronounced against the Scribes and Pharisees was not only forthright and scathing, but also expressed principles of tremendous importance.

Consider firstly, the character of the Pharisees as revealed in this address, that we may avoid the evils they manifested. Christ showed:

- *That they did not live according to their preaching (v. 3);*
- *That they were severe in their restrictions on others, but indulgent to themselves (v. 4);*
- *That their religion was governed by externals, and trimmed by what men might think, and not dictated by Yahweh's Word or will (v. 5);*
- *That they put far too much store upon worldly respect and reputation (v. 6);*
- *That they delighted in the applause of men more than the commendation of God (v. 7).*

How well they earned the epithet: "Thou blind Pharisee!"

Consider, secondly, how much of what Christ condemned is manifested in conventional religion today! He condemned:

- *Vain external display and the parade of empty religious titles (vv. 4-12).*
- *Lack of true Scriptural knowledge (v. 13).*
- *A commercialised piety (v. 14).*
- *A zeal for proselytising to mere personal opinion (v. 15).*
- *The superstitious reverence for consecrated buildings or things (vv. 16-22).*
- *The scrupulous observance of unimportant religious duties to*

- the neglect of real principles of morality (vv. 23-24).*
- *An external formalism which hides an inward wickedness (vv. 25-26).*
 - *A hypocritical whitewashing of iniquity in a vain attempt to hide the deadness and decay of the system (vv. 27-28).*
 - *A professed veneration of good men who are dead whilst manifesting opposition to the living who stand for the principles of God (vv. 29-31).*

Christendom today manifests many of the characteristics that were so vigorously condemned by Christ. Let us make sure that we do not follow its example!

On The Word "Hypocrite"

The invective: "Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" became the theme of Christ's indictment. The word signifies "play-actor."

A play-actor is one who make-believes. He plays a character-part that neither relates to reality, nor expresses the state of his heart and life. In ancient times, play-actors wore large masks, and used mechanical devices to augment the voice. In the case of the Scribes and Pharisees the people saw the mask that they figuratively wore, and heard the cultured tones by which they expressed their platitudes, and were deluded by these things as are the onlookers of a play.

The Scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites, because they assumed a pose that hid the iniquity of their heart. They robbed the Truth of its value by so doing. As Jesus told them, they had "shut up the kingdom of heaven," so that their followers could not enter therein. They had taken away the key, as Christ had earlier told them (Luke 11:52), and therefore the door remained closed. But he had promised to give the keys of the kingdom to his disciples (Mat. 16:19), and later they used them effectively, opening the Christ-door (John 10:7) to those who were prepared to walk "the way" that leads to the kingdom (John 14:6).

Straining at Gnats, Swallowing Camels

What expressive language the Lord used, as he revealed the religious chicanery of the Jewish leaders. He described how they were

so careful to pay tithes of such unimportant things of comparatively little value as mint, dill, and cummin, but neglected the weightier, important matters of judgment, mercy and faith.

It was right that the Pharisees should tithe what they did, but it was wrong that they should neglect the moral precepts of the Law. However, in his condemnation of them the Lord was careful to place each requirement of the Law in its proper position. He did not teach that a person was justified in avoiding tithes because he was merciful or vice versa; on the contrary, he showed that both were necessary. He

declared: "*These [judgment, mercy and faith] you ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*" There is wisdom in such careful treatment of Yahweh's requirements.

But, instead, the Pharisees "strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel" (v. 24). This is a strange saying, the true significance of which is not apparent on the surface. The Diaglott renders it as: "strain out a gnat," and suggests that it is an allusion to the ancient custom of passing wine through a strainer. Both Jews and Gentiles did this. The former did it so as to exclude the tiniest insect, because of religious scruples; the Gentiles did it from a sense of hygiene. The Pharisees used the greatest care in the scrupulous observance of religious formalism, whilst they flagrantly violated the most important spiritual requirement. Figuratively, they strained "out" a gnat, but swallowed a camel!

Cleansing the Cup and Platter

Jesus warned the Scribes and Pharisees that they were hypocrites, for they cleansed the outside of the cup and platter, whilst that which was within remained full of extortion and excess.

What did he mean by this?

The Pharisees observed scrupulous man-made laws regarding the necessity of washing both themselves and the utensils they used before they would partake of a meal, in order that they might not be ceremoniously defiled, but at the same time, they did not consider that the very food they ate was obtained by extortion, and consumed in greed.

The cup and platter, therefore, was figuratively "full of extortion and excess," because of the way the food was obtained, and the manner in which it was eaten. What use was their ceremonial washing under such circumstances! It was rank hypocrisy.

Whited Sepulchres

Every year, at Passover time, sepulchres were white-washed in order to garnish them, but also to indicate the nature of the building, and make them prominent, so that people might clearly see them and avoid inadvertently touching them, and so become defiled according to the Law. Thus the sepulchres looked very clean and bright on the outside, but inside were full of bones and decaying flesh, therefore to touch them was to become defiled.

The Lord likened the Pharisees to such sepulchres. Externally they gave the appearance of being cleansed, but this hid wicked hearts where hatred lurked, and the desire to murder was fed. Contact with such could only defile.

It was normally for the rich that sepulchres were built, whilst the graves of the poor were often permitted to fall into such neglect that,

after a time, they “appeared not,” so that men walked over them unknowingly, and were thus defiled.

On one occasion, the Lord likened the Pharisees to such graves: for people were spiritually defiled by their presence without being properly aware of it.

There was peace within the white walls of the sepulchres, but it was the peace of death; the quietness of the grave. Christ, too, offered peace (John 14:27), but it was the peace that comes from communion with the living God and His Son, the Christ.

The Condemnation of Gehenna

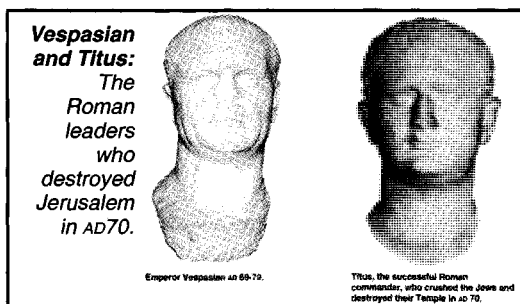
The Lord remarked how that the Pharisees often claimed that if they had been “in the days of their fathers, they would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.” Shrewdly, the Lord observed that their very use of the title “fathers” in relation to the persecutors of the prophets, acknowledged that they were the “sons” of such, and as the term implied, they were inheritors of their characteristics.

As such they were a generation of vipers, of serpents who would strike to kill. In describing them as such, Jesus identified them with the “seed of the serpent” in its enmity against the seed of the woman as predicted in the promise of Genesis 3:15. It was impossible for them to escape the “condemnation of hell.”

The word “hell” as used in this place, is the Greek “Gehenna,” and describes a valley outside of Jerusalem where all the refuse of the city was burned, and even the bodies of criminals were flung. The “condemnation of Gehenna,” therefore, speaks of complete disgrace and destruction; and that is to be the fate of all the seed of the serpent. Gehenna is also styled “Tophet” in the Old Testament, and Jeremiah had predicted that guilty Judah would be destroyed in Tophet, Gehenna, or Hell (Jer. 19:11; 13:12-14).

Now the time had almost come for his prophecy to be fulfilled, and the guilt of the people was such that the Lord was constrained to ask the question: “*How can you escape the condemnation of hell?*” There was only one way: By heeding the counsel of the Lord.

But they refused to do that, so that the fiery judgment of destruction awaited them such as came to pass in the Roman invasion of AD70.



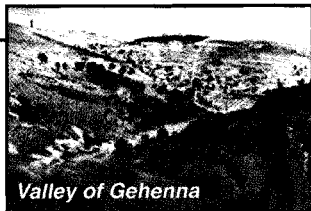
Chapter 6

DOOM PRONOUNCED ON GUILTY JUDEA

In the final woe that the Lord pronounced upon the leaders of Jewry, he identified them with the "seed of the serpent" (cp. Mat. 23:33 with Gen. 3:15), and warned them that their ungodly conduct would inevitably result in them receiving the "damnation of hell." The word translated "hell" is "Gehenna," the name of a valley to the south of Jerusalem in which the refuse of the city and the bodies of criminals were consigned to be destroyed by burning. Anything to be rejected and completely destroyed was flung into this valley which therefore became synonymous with the idea of complete rejection and destruction. The expression, "condemnation of hell" thus spoke of utter repudiation and annihilation. The Lord warned that this was the fate awaiting the nation in view of its rejection of its Messiah. He taught by a parable based upon the experience of Cain and Abel, that the punishment of Cain would be administered to the nation, for it was walking in "the way of Cain," and would slay him, as Cain killed Abel. He finally drew their attention to the real significance of the Passover Psalms that they would be singing a few hours later, and showed how they had application to his future mission to the nation. Thus warning, exhortation and prophecy were blended together.

HAVING proclaimed eight woes against the Scribes and Pharisees, the Lord summed up his discourse by graphically revealing the outcome of such conduct as they manifested. "Behold," he declared, "I will send you prophets, wise men, and scribes, and some of them you will kill and crucify, some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city; That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you truly, it will all come upon this generation!"

This is a blend of prophecy and parable, in which the Lord revealed the full iniquity of the Jewish people. He promised to send teachers to the nation capable of helping those who would hearken. Those teachers comprised his followers, among whom were found prophets (1Cor. 14:3); wise men, or those skilled in the wisdom of the



Valley of Gehenna

Word (Acts 6:10; 11:19); and scribes, or those competent to record the depths of divine Truth (Mat. 13:52).

**The Fate Of
Disobedient Jewry
(Mat. 23:34-36)**

But though these teachers would be sent to the nation to give it one last opportunity to repent, the Lord sorrowfully told the Pharisees that the message would be contemptuously rejected, and its bearers of it cruelly ill-treated. Some of them they would kill (Acts 26:10) and crucify (John 21:18-19), and some of them they would scourge in the synagogues (Acts 26:10-11; 2Cor. 11:24), whilst others would be persecuted from city to city (Acts 13:50; 14:5-6, 19, 20).

How true this prophecy proved, the Acts of the Apostles shows in the events that later occurred. The apostles were sent specifically to the Jewish people (Acts 13:46-47) in an attempt to bring home to them the full measure of their iniquity, and to cause them to repent, but in vain. Though many accepted the Gospel message as individuals, the nation as a whole rejected it. *"I know that through ignorance you did it, as also did your rulers,"* declared Peter, speaking of how they crucified the Lord... *"therefore repent..."* (Acts 3:17).

They refused to do so, and Paul concluded: *"Seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles"* (Acts 13:46). Yahweh's patience with His people was at an end. The time limit He imposed on their last opportunity to repent had lapsed, and nothing remained but to give the city and nation over to destruction and scattering, concerning which it had been warned. Thus, in AD70, judgments were poured out upon both people and nation which the Lord, in predicting, likened to the judgments Cain experienced when he killed Abel, and those which fell upon guilty Judah after Zacharias, the son of Barachias, had been cruelly and brutally put to death by an ungrateful people.

What did the Lord mean by the expressions he used? In what way did Jewry experience a repetition of judgment that avenged the murders of Abel and Zacharias?

**The Avenging Of
Righteous Abel**

The account of Cain and Abel, contained in Genesis 4, illustrates the truth of God's words to the serpent: *"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed..."* (Gen. 3:15), and therefore provides a fitting type of the Lord Jesus whose death and resurrection illustrated and confirmed the covenant made in Eden.

The jealousy and hatred that Cain manifested toward Abel justified the "enmity" which God declared would be revealed between



the two seeds, for although the two men were brothers in the flesh, they were spiritually the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman respectively. Cain was dominated by the flesh; Abel by the teaching of God.

Yet they were both very religious, for both sought to worship God.

Cain, however, took the attitude that he could serve God according to his own

concept of worship dictated by his unenlightened conscience and according to his own convenience. Abel was humble, and recognised that God can only be acceptably worshipped on terms laid down by Him alone. He was prepared to submit his will to that of Almighty God.

The Curse of Cain When Cain's offering was rejected and Abel's accepted, Cain became jealous of his brother, and slew him. So the first murder was committed on a religious basis, and because of jealousy against his brother.

Four thousand years later in the court of the temple, as the antitypical Abel, Jesus faced his jealous brethren, the antitype of Cain, knowing that their hatred of him was such that they would shortly slay him as Cain had slain Abel.

Meanwhile, he warned them of the consequences of their attitude and hidden intent. He told them that the punishment Cain experienced as an individual, would fall on the nation as a whole because of its murderous intent toward him.

What was the punishment of Cain?

Firstly, he was driven from the "presence of Yahweh," no longer to remain in fellowship with Him (Gen. 4:14). Secondly, he became the object of abhorrence and antagonism to all who learned of his crime. Thirdly, he was driven from his former abode, close by the established centre of divine worship, to thenceforth dwell in "the land of Nod" or *Exile*, as the word signifies.

Thus banished from divine fellowship and worship unless he sought the forgiveness of God through the sin-offering to which God

directed him (Gen. 4:7), and too obstinate to submit, Cain nevertheless pleaded for some divine protection from those who would harm him. And in mercy, God granted him his request. He "set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him" (Gen. 4:15).

It is not difficult to see the significance of the Lord's words concerning the judgment then about to fall upon Jewry. Like Cain, they were about to slay their brother, the antitypical Abel. Like Cain, they were religious, but would not conform to what Yahweh required. Like Cain, they were ultimately driven from the fellowship that they once enjoyed with Yahweh. Like Cain, they became the object of abhorrence and hatred on the part of those who heard of their crime. Like Cain, they were driven from their settled abode where the temple was located, to wander homeless in the Land of Exile. Like Cain, they possessed a distinguishing mark, for all can tell a Jew from his appearance, and in view of his privileged status as the seed of Abraham, "beloved for the fathers' sakes" (not his own; cp. Rom. 11:28), should hesitate to molest him, lest they suffer the vengeance of God.

The Jews listening to Jesus, had only to consider the fate of Cain to appreciate what would happen to them as individuals if they persisted in rejecting the Messiah, and the sacrifice for sin that Yahweh would provide for them in him. After all, they were following in the way of Cain (Jude 11) and could justly expect the curse that rested on him.

But Jesus also warned the Jewish leaders that the nation could expect a repetition of the judgment which fell upon it when the blood of righteous Zacharias, son of Barachias, was ruthlessly shed between the temple and the altar.

Who was the Zechariah thus referred to?

Jehoiada had a son Zechariah, who was murdered in the way described, by an ungrateful people who had forgotten the great benefit they had derived from the services of his father. This Zechariah had straightly warned the people that their national policy was suicidal and was bound to bring upon them the punishment of Yahweh. He asked: "Why transgress you the commandments of Yahweh, so that you cannot prosper? because you have forsaken Yahweh, He has also forsaken you!" (2Chr. 24:20-21).

They hated him for those words, and were jealous of his righteous character. His action in publicly indicting them, foreshadowed that of the Lord Jesus, whom they also hated, for the same reason.

So the Lord warned the leaders of his day: "I say unto you truly, All these things shall come upon this generation."

The things foreshadowed by the examples advanced were:

1. *The invasion of the land and overthrow of the Jewish forces by an invading army (Zechariah).*
2. *The disfellowship of the Jewish people by Yahweh (Cain).*

3. *Their banishment to exile (Cain).*
4. *The characteristic mark separates and distinguishes them from all other people (Cain).*
5. *The universal hatred that is shown toward them by all the world (Cain).*

The Blood Of Zechariah

The people refused to hearken to Zechariah. Angered by his rebuke, they “conspired against him” and then murdered him “in the court of the house of Yahweh.”

In return, Yahweh punished the people by permitting a national disaster to overcome them. The land was invaded by a foreign army (2Chr. 24:23), and was temporarily brought under its yoke. This foreshadowed the fate of the nation that rejected the greater than Zechariah.

There is but one feature of the Lord’s warning that does not agree with all the circumstances. The Zechariah of 2Chr. 24 was the Son of Jehoiada, not of Barachias!

Can this be satisfactorily accounted for?

We believe it can.

It was not uncommon for people to have two names in ancient times, and Jehoiada could also have been known as Barachias. Jehoiada signifies “*Yah hath known*,” whereas Barachias means “*Blessed of Yah*.” It could have been that Barachias was an additional name, or an alternative name, borne by the father of Zechariah to indicate his status. Certainly Jehoiada was one of the great men in Israel at that time, and of all time.

In any case, this parable of the Lord remarkably predicted the future; all was fulfilled as he had anticipated.

The Mourning Messiah With this final parable and prophecy, the (Mat. 23:37-39)

Lord’s public ministry came to a close. His last words of rebuke had been spoken, and were apparently received in silence, for no answer from his detractors is recorded. Having finished with them, he turned and addressed the city: “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and you would not allow it! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, You shall not see me henceforth, until you shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Yahweh*” (Mat. 23:37-39).

This public lamentation repeated what he had said on an earlier occasion, as he had made his way toward the city of Jerusalem (Luke 13:34-35); but now it was said with even greater emphasis and

finality, and in the most public place, before all the people gathered to the city for the impending Passover.

They are words of mourning wrung from the heart of one who loved both people and city dearly, and who was prepared to sacrifice his own interests, and life itself, to help them.

The word, Jerusalem, signifies *Vision of Peace*, but the city shall never find the peace its name commemorates until its people seek true peace (John 14:27), through him who is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6-7).

The Lord's lamentation mourned the tragedy of a people and city that, denying the status and privilege granted them, would reap the sorrow of their history of rebellion and persecution. The obstinate folly of the people constituted a virtual repudiation of the protection they could have received from Yahweh if they had but accepted His Son, but now they would be left defenceless as imminent danger threatened them and their city from the swooping eagles of Rome. The Lord foresaw the danger, and would have gathered the children of the city together, under the protection he was competent to afford them, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her protective wings in times of such danger, but they would have none of it.

"Behold," the Lord exclaimed, **"*your house is left unto you desolate!*"**

Only the day before, he had described the temple as **"Yahweh's house"** (Mat. 21:13), but now, as he was about to withdraw from both city and temple for the last time, leaving it to those who claimed those places as their own, he described it as **"*your house.*"** The "glory" which made it the dwelling-place of Yahweh was represented there, in himself (John 1:14), but as Ezekiel (that other great Son of Man; Eze. 13:2) saw, in vision, the glory of Yahweh withdrawing from the Temple and City in his day, until it disappeared "by way of the east" (Eze. 10:18; 11:23), so the Yahweh-glory, in the person of the Lord Jesus, was likewise about to withdraw, leaving the temple as an empty shell to the enemy.

The "Jews' house," however, comprised not merely the temple, but the whole disobedient nation, of which the temple was but a symbol (Mat. 10:6; 15:24; Luke 1:69). All were to be given over to destruction. That house had been pronounced leprous, and like such houses under the law, it was about to be destroyed. The stones of a leprous house were broken down and taken into an unclean place; and in fulfilment of the law, the people, figuratively the "stones" of the leprous house of Jewry, were about to be taken apart and dispersed among the Gentiles.

Meanwhile, the Lord Jesus, the glory of Yahweh in the midst of Israel, was about to withdraw, and the people would see him no more in that place until they will be forced by difficult circumstances to

proclaim: *"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Yahweh."*

The Lord, in uttering those words, quoted from Psalm 118:26. Under the circumstances he could not use more significant words, for they form part of the Passover Hymns that are sung by Jews at that Feast, which was then about to be celebrated!

Thus Jesus taught them how they should interpret both the feast and the songs attached to it. Whilst the Passover commemorated the deliverance from Egypt, the Psalms sung at such times are prophetic of a greater deliverance in the future when the Jewish people will be forced to acknowledge: *"The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner"* (Psalm 118:22). They shall then, at last, proclaim: *"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Yahweh"* (v. 26).

Therefore, when the Lord drew attention to those words in the court of the temple, 2,000 years ago, he proclaimed the fact of his second coming. We live at a time when his words will be fulfilled, and when events will soon take place that will humble the Jewish people, and force them to seek Him upon whom they have turned their backs for so long.

A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels

MARY: MOTHER OF JAMES AND JOSES

She was afforded the great privilege of going first to the tomb and seeing the risen Lord (Mat. 28:1), and yet we know very little concerning her, or why this honour was paid her.

She was the mother of two children, one of whom was chosen as an apostle, and became known as James the Less, or James the Little (Mat. 27:56; 10:3). She was one of the women who followed Jesus and, having sufficient wealth, ministered unto him and his disciples in material things thereby assisting them in their work (Lk. 8:2-3). She witnessed his death on the stake (Mat. 27:56), saw the Lord buried (Mk. 15:47), visited the tomb with Mary Magdalene (Mat. 28:1), saw the risen Christ (Mat. 28:9), but doubting the evidence of her senses, returned to the tomb after daybreak, to see the stone rolled back, but the sepulchre empty (Mk. 16:1). As with the others, her doubts were ultimately swept away, and with joy she was able to proclaim that her beloved Lord was alive for evermore.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR CHRIST

Such forthright language as Jesus had used in indicting the leaders of Jewry in the court of the temple invoked a final and hopeless rupture between them. There was nothing more that he could say or do to save the nation, and they, completely impervious to the warning given them, were now determined that he must die. After language such as he had used there could be no reconciliation, no truce, and it must have startled and dismayed the disciples as much, as it set the Lord at complete variance with the leaders. It marked the end of his public ministry; it was the last opportunity for Jewry to repent and seek Yahweh, and His hands were still outstretched to help, though it was largely in vain. On this most distressing and depressing note, the Lord's public ministry came to an end. Two incidents, however, relieved the gloom, and showed that all was not lost: the faithful liberality of an extremely poor widow woman (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4), and the anxious desire of some Gentile proselytes to seek Jesus (John 12:20-36).

THE Lord's last message to the nation had been given, the forthright, vigorous indictment of the leaders of the people was over, and with nothing more to be said or seen, the crowd slowly dispersed and went about its business.

The activity of the day, the tiring, strenuous debating that had taken place, had drained Jesus of energy. He realised that it was but a matter of a few hours before he would hang lifeless from the stake, and his ministry would be at an end.

The Downcast

**Messiah (Mk. 12:41;
Luke 21:1)**

In sad reverie he sat down to rest for a while, before taking his final leave of the city. With eyes downcast (Luke 21:1) he meditated upon its fate, whilst the disciples stood silently about him, completely confused at the trend of events, and wondering how it would end.

When would he publicly proclaim that he was the Messiah, and take the position of dignity and authority that they believed was justly his? So they must have reasoned among themselves. He had spoken many parables of his coming kingdom, and surely this was the time! Perhaps there was to be some challenges; had he not spoken in a parable about his "death" — which they might have mistakenly

interpreted as some objection by the people.

It was a silent, dispirited little group, therefore, occupied with its own thoughts and cogitations, that made preparations to leave the temple.

**The Liberality of a
Poverty Stricken
Widow**

In the comparative silence, with the noise of debate with the Jews over, the attention of the Lord was drawn to the action of some of the worshippers. He was in the public Court of the Women where were placed the large receptacles for receiving the offerings of the people. There were thirteen of these in all, called the *Shopheroth*, or Treasury, each containing a large opening shaped like a trumpet, so constructed, that if money was carefully flung into them, it made a sound, described by the Lord on an earlier occasion, as "the sound of a trumpet" (Mat. 6:2).

As the Lord sat with bowed head, his attention was drawn to the noise occasioned by many rich men as they ostentatiously flung their handfuls of coins into these offering boxes in such a way that they would make a loud, resounding noise, calling forth the admiration of onlookers!

Jesus looked up and watched the hypocritical performance.

As he did so, his attention was drawn to a woman whose garb proclaimed that she was both a widow and desperately poor.* Timid and self-conscious, with bowed head, she braved the contemptuous looks of the ostentatiously wealthy, to make her way to the collection boxes, and quietly place therein "two mites, which make a farthing." In her poverty she might have reasoned that one mite would have done, but she was willing to give as much as she could.

Yet it was a miserable offering, and of little material use to either the priests or temple. It was so different from the loud-sounding donations of the rich.

But in the sight of the wise and understanding Lord, she made a tremendous contribution, far greater than the procession of wealthy men who were competing with each other to make the greatest noise with their fistfuls of large, heavy coins!

The Lord was deeply impressed, moved, and encouraged by the courageous action of the woman. He saw in her a representative of the many humble ones within the nation who had not been influenced by the pompous blasphemy and hurtful hypocrisy of its leaders. He drew the attention of the disciples to her, presenting her as an object lesson of his teaching. He had earlier denounced the Pharisees for reducing

* "A certain widow" (Mark 12:42). The word "poor" is *ptochē* (feminine), and signifies "miserably poor." Bullinger renders: "crouching and cringing in the manner of beggars." She stood out from all others (a "certain" widow) by the very poverty of her dress, and humility of her manner.

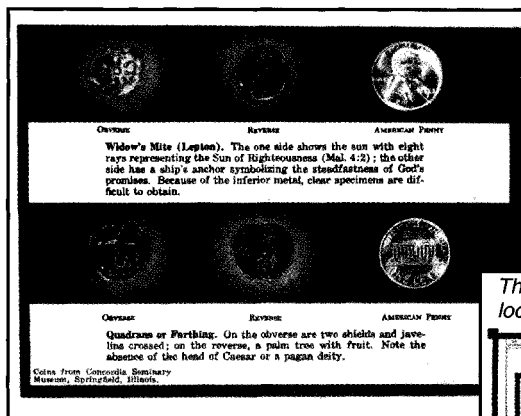
such as this woman to abject penury, declaring: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore you shall receive the greater condemnation" (Mat. 23:14).

Now, to his startled disciples, he highly commended the faithful action of the widow who in her abject poverty did what she could: *"I say to you of a truth, that this poor widow has cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury; for they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even her living."*

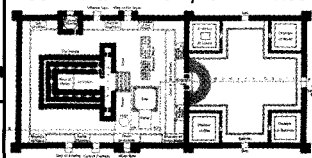
With these words, Jesus taught that we cannot benefit God in the material things that we give to His service, no matter how much we might offer. It is not the amount that counts, but the motive which dictates the giving. The wealthy in the temple court gave that others might observe their liberality and piety; the woman gave to God alone. The Lord observed that she had given "more" than they, because what she had given was at the expense of the very necessities of life. She gave of her need; they only gave of their surplus; she gave to God, they gave to man.

The name of the widow woman is unknown, and she only appears

briefly in the narrative of Mark and Luke, yet she is among the best-known widow women of all history, because Jesus took heed to her act of humility, courage, and generosity toward God.



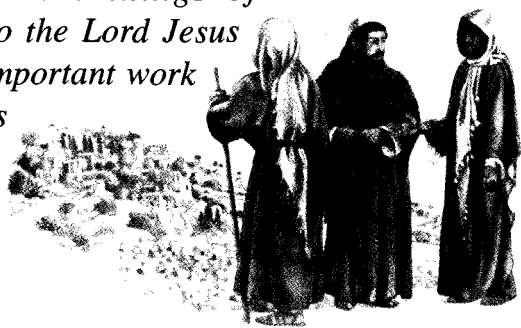
The collection "trumpets" were located at the temple entrance



Final Instruction to the Apostles



THE Lord Jesus knew the anguish and dismay that would be experienced by his disciples and close friends, as the final days drew near, and the time of the great Passover approached. He, more than they all, was aware of the drama of the moment, and took every opportunity to prepare and educate his own. But they were unable to understand many of the things taught; and it was not until after the death and resurrection of their beloved Lord that they finally perceived what he taught them. But the Master did not neglect the responsibility to prepare them with sound and faithful teaching. He spoke of many things, and gave a vital prophecy of the future of Jerusalem, the city of the Great King, because of the infidelity of the people toward him. He gave them words of advice, of encouragement, of prophecy, of warning. It was his final time with these disciples, and as the true Shepherd, he guarded and guided them as best he could. But he knew that, whatever the pain and anguish they would experience, it would mature them in the things of eternal Truth. So the Lord Jesus set himself the important work of teaching his own.



Chapter 1

IN THE COURT OF THE GENTILES

Moving out into the Court of the Gentiles as he made to leave the temple for the last time, the Lord was accosted by a company of Greeks who desired to meet him. This illustrated the great harvest that would ultimately be reaped from both Jews and Gentiles as a result of his ministrations, and it leads to a conversation of the greatest significance, in which the Lord, for the last time, summarised his mission for the sake of the general public.

THE Lord's public ministry was now at an end. Having proclaimed that the nation would see him no more until it would be compelled to declare, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Yahweh*, he sorrowfully turned his back upon the temple, and moved out through the court of the women to the outer Court of the Gentiles beyond.

This was a large court to the south of the temple which gave access to the exit at the Valley of Kedron.

His progress through this court, however, was halted by a most significant interruption.

Greeks Seek Jesus (John 12:20-50)

There was a group of Gentile proselytes who had come up to Jerusalem for the feast, and learning that Jesus was present, desired to meet him. They approached Philip seeking his help to that end. Perhaps they had been attracted by the fact that Philip is a Gentile name, and possibly felt that one bearing such a name, would not be so exclusive as one bearing a Jewish name.

Their approach was genuine, as is indicated by the very courteous manner in which they solicited his help. "*Sir,*" they said respectfully, "*we would see Jesus!*"

But Philip was of a timid, retiring disposition, and hesitated to take the initiative. Probably recalling the stern way in which Jesus had spoken to the Jews, he doubted whether he would be prepared to be interviewed by these Gentile proselytes. He called Andrew aside, and sought his advice in the matter.

Both names of "Philip" and "Andrew" are of Gentile origin, the only ones of the twelve who bore such names, and this could well have attracted the Greeks. Perhaps they felt that men possessing Gentile names would not be so exclusive in their outlook as the ultra-

orthodox Jews, and therefore would more readily help them in their attempt to meet Jesus.

Andrew and Philip both approached Jesus, and received a most significant response on his part. The Lord found the request of those Gentiles greatly encouraging, as providing a token of the large harvest that would ultimately be reaped to the glory of Yahweh out of all nations (Acts 15:14). The words that the Lord uttered on this occasion are so significant that it is important to consider them carefully:

“The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. My soul is disquieted! What am I to say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ No! because for this cause came I unto this hour! I will say, ‘Father, glorify Thy name!’”

These words are expressive both of the Lord’s sacrificial ministry, and the form of service such as these Greek enquirers were called upon to manifest if they would acceptably serve Christ. Therefore, they justify the closest attention on the part of all who would worship God in truth.

The Grain And The Harvest

What tremendous significance is in the words the Lord here used! In selecting the corn of the wheat to illustrate his work, the Lord singled out from among so many thousands of seeds, almost the only one that really dies in the earth. But from such a death there ultimately springs up a great harvest of golden grain.

In like manner, through the sacrificial offering of the Lord, there will ultimately be developed a great harvest of faithful ones to the glory of the Father. This harvest will come, not from out of the tribes of Israel only, but also from out of the Gentiles.

The enquiring Greeks were a token of that harvest.

But what if the Lord did not submit to death?

Then, he declared, there would be no harvest, for “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone!”

Does that mean that if Jesus had refused to die on the stake he could have entered into life alone?

Most certainly, it does not!

The apostle Paul declared: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners” (1Tim. 1:15). Thus, Jesus came into the world to die; that is the obvious teaching of the apostle who emphasised its importance by

stating: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance."

Jesus taught the same truth. He declared: ***"Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again"*** (John 10:17). Would the Father's love have been manifested toward the Lord Jesus if he had refused to lay down his life? If not, would He have granted him life eternal? Again Jesus shows that this would not be possible, by saying: ***"The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified."*** He would be glorified in his death and resurrection to life. But if he had refused to die as a sacrifice for sin, he would continue to abide (until natural death claimed him), but unglorified! And then, as if to emphasise that he personally had to die to gain life, he continued: ***"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal"*** (Jn. 12:25).

On what grounds could he refuse to die?

Only if he so loved his life that he refused to give it up! But on those terms he would ultimately lose it, as he declared.

On the other hand, the Lord taught that he who hates his life in the sense of completely disregarding it, to do God's will, will keep it unto life eternal.

It is in the context of those explanatory words that the Lord's comment regarding a grain of corn remaining alone if it did not die, should be interpreted. It must be compared in the light of the verses that immediately precede and follow it, and they show conclusively that the Lord was not claiming that he could enter into life eternal alone. In them, Jesus called upon those who would serve God acceptably, to follow the example that he himself would set, and so despise their lives that they would render willing obedience to all that God might ask of them, in anticipation of the honour that they would ultimately receive from Him.

That is the lesson and example taught and set by the Lord in his life, which made his sacrificial death efficacious, whilst the glory he now possesses illustrates that such dedication will not go unnoticed and unrewarded by God. Thus Jesus continued: ***"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."***

Let us take our stand alongside Jesus in our service unto God!

Comfort And Assurance From Heaven

In all his trials, the Father was with Jesus (John 16:32), supporting and strengthening him for the task ahead of him (2Cor. 5:19-20). Some find this fact a difficulty, for they feel that this minimises the personal effort that Christ made in developing the wonderful character, and the perfection of his life in sacrifice that he revealed. But though the Scriptures clearly reveal that

the Son of God derived greater strength from God to overcome than that granted unto others because of his tremendous responsibilities (Psa. 80:17; Isa. 11:2-3; John 6:62-63), this by no means minimises the personal effort that he had to make. It is a Scriptural principle that "to whom much is given of him shall much be required" (Luke 12:48), and whilst Jesus was granted greater means to overcome, complete and sinless obedience was required of him.

Everyone can receive added divine strength who is prepared to use the means that God will freely make available to them. So Paul taught: "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

If it is thought that Jesus was given an unfair advantage because God helped him, the same could be reasoned regarding Paul, and of all who seek the same strength. It was certainly no "unfair" advantage, as some might ignorantly reason, for the work of redemption and salvation is a work of God, and flesh will never accomplish it in its own strength (John 6:63). To that end, God calls those whom He knows are capable of manifesting the qualities that He desires to see revealed in them; but it is up to them to personally develop a character pleasing to Him through the means that He will provide (see Isa. 60:21).

That is the example the Lord set.

Though God was with him in the task set him, he had to give himself to the work in hand, and that involved tremendous personal effort and striving, with much prayer and many tears.

He spoke of those strivings on this occasion: "My soul is troubled," he declared as he gave expression to the great agitation of his mind, "and what shall I say?"

Why should his soul be agitated? Because of his humanity. He keenly felt the heavy load of responsibility that he carried; he realised that salvation of the human race depended upon his complete and sinless obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; whilst the immediate care and concern of the apostles also then rested upon him.

"What shall I say?" he continued. "Shall I say 'Father save me from this hour?' How can I? It was for this very purpose that I have been preserved to this moment!" (v. 27).

This expresses the sense of the Lord's utterance as rendered in such translations as the *Diaglott*. The A.V. renders the words as a request, as though the Lord was praying that God would deliver him from the hour of suffering. But in view of Christ's earlier words, such a request would be impossible. The word "but" in John 12:27 is *alla* in the Greek text, and denotes an interruption in the general statement. It suggests that the Lord paused when he asked the question: *"And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?"* And then, having permitted his disciples and any onlookers to grasp the significance of

such a momentous question, he continued: "*but for this cause came I unto this hour...!*"

The Lord did not consider, for a moment, avoiding that which he knew lay before him, and which he recognised as inevitable. Instead, after considering all the implications of his impending offering on the stake, he firmly declared: **"FATHER: GLORIFY THY NAME!"**

If only we, in measure, could re-echo that statement in regard to the sacrifices we are called upon to bear!

As the Lord firmly uttered that wonderful prayer, the people were startled by a noise from heaven. To some it sounded as though it was the sound of thunder rolling across the sky. Yet, in some way, the thunder seemed to utter words. Faces were turned to the sky. Some declared that it was nothing but the noise of thunder; others believed that it was the voice of an angel. But the Lord heard the encouraging Voice of God* clearly and distinctly: **"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again!"** (v. 28). The Father's name already had been glorified in the words and deeds of the Lord Jesus, which provided such a witness as to already produce fruit to His glory (John 17:4); and it would continue to be glorified in that through the offering of the Lord, and the preaching of the apostles, an even greater harvest of fruit would be gathered in (John 15:8).

Jesus Foretells His Death

The people were confused, both by the Voice from heaven, as well as by the Lord himself.

He tried to clarify matters for them: "That voice came not because of me," he explained, "but for your sakes. Now is the time of judgment on this world: now shall the Ruler of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me!"

These are not easy words to understand, and few, if any, of those who heard them, comprehended their meaning at that time.

What did he mean by the "judgment of this world?" He was talking of the Jewish world. It repudiated both the voice of God and the voice of His Son, and its rulers did not comprehend the real significance of his presence in their midst. They did not know the "time of their visitation," as he had already publicly warned them. The Jewish world was self-condemned, because it "loved darkness rather than light, because its deeds were evil," and, therefore, refused to believe "in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:17-19). The impending crucifixion would be the crowning act of its

* It is most significant, that at the beginning and close of the Lord's public ministry, the Voice of God was heard. It sounded forth at his baptism, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat. 3:17). It was heard again at the transfiguration (Mat. 17:5), and will again be heard at the great inauguration of the Lord Jesus in the future House of Prayer for all Nations (Psa. 2:7).

perfidy; and the opportunity for the nation to resume its status as the kingdom of God, would be deferred. Already it had rejected its Messiah and its God, and would shortly experience the divine rejection that was inevitable under such circumstances.

As a result, its “prince” or “rulers” would be cast out.

Here, again, we have an expression of the Lord’s that has been grossly misunderstood. Many teach that “the ruler of this world” is the Devil as a fallen immortal angel. But this is an obvious impossibility. If such a being existed, was it “cast out” at that time? Was the world freed of its dominance and influence? Does it no longer exist?

By no means, for sin continued to be in evidence!

What was cast out then?

The answer is: the Jewish authority!

It was this that constituted the “prince of this world,” and which God would “cast out” from its position of authority following the Jewish rejection of His Son. The apostle Paul used the term in exactly that way. He wrote: “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1Cor. 2:7-8).

The chief of the rulers in the day of Christ was the high priest, who would not only be “cast out,” but whose very function would be rendered unnecessary, in that the temple would be overthrown, and Christ in heaven would assume his high-priestly position (Heb. 6:20; 7:11-17). This Jesus had indicated when he declared: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me” (John 12:32).

Once again Jesus drew attention to the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, which foreshadowed his own sacrifice. He had done so also when speaking with Nicodemus (John 3:14), but now he made the astounding statement (to Jews, anyway) that “all” would be redeemed thereby. By that he did not mean every person, but “all” in the sense of both Jews and Gentiles. Its significance was illustrated by the Greeks who had sought to meet him. If they really did want the Lord, they must seek him through the sacrifice he would offer.

The onlookers, however, did not, at that stage, understand what he meant. It was only later that the apostles did so. Writing from the vantage point of later events, John declared: “This he spoke, signifying what death he would die.” But, at the time, they did not understand what he meant, and he did not give any further explanation.

It could have been that Nicodemus was among those then listening to the Lord, and if so, he would have possibly recalled the mysterious expression that he had hearkened to in the conversation he had earlier

had with this man of God, as he recognised him to be. He had suffered a lot regarding the Lord. He had seen how unjust his fellow Pharisees were, and had, time and again, stood up in defence of Jesus. As an outstanding Jewish scholar, he had pondered long the words of the Master, searching vainly for their true meaning. If he were there, standing, listening to Jesus, it would be most likely that he would have turned away in a quandary as to what it all meant, weighing all the facts in his mind, praying and striving to penetrate the fog that clouded his understanding, and prevented him from comprehending the real person and mission of the one before him.

We suggest this because of the remarkable events that took place shortly afterwards, and which were responsible for at last drawing Nicodemus from out of the darkness of night into the full light of divine Truth, and caused him to openly declare himself for Christ, before all the Jews.

Who Is This Son Of Man?

The Lord's teaching left the people greatly disturbed in mind, and puzzled as to his meaning. They asked: "*We have heard out of the Law that Christ abideth for ever* [e.g. Psa. 89:4, 29, 36, 37; Isa. 9:7; Eze. 37:25], *but why do you say, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?*"

If Jesus were the Messiah, he should live for ever, not talk about dying on a stake, by being "lifted up." What sort of a person is this who would die such a disgraceful death, that would bring upon him the curse of the Law (Deu. 21:23)?

That is the significance of the question they put to him.

Jesus did not descend to their level to give them an answer. He knew that it was useless to do so, for they would not accept his words. He had previously told them that he was the light of the world, and that it was essential to walk in that light. He had publicly taught them, and had performed many miracles before their eyes. They should have recognised that one with such power was from God, and accepted his teaching.

Therefore, all the Lord did on this occasion, was to warn them that the time was short.

"Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. Whilst you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light."

These constituted his final words to the people about him. The Lord now looked upon a circle of faces that were hardening against him, even though they belonged to the people and not the leaders. He sensed the bitter antagonism which he knew would flare up into hatred and murder before many hours had gone by. There was nothing

more to say.

Although one final incident yet remained in the temple, it concerned only the apostles, so that his contact with the leaders and people of the nation was now at an end. He knew that the leaders were determined to put him to death, and he also realised that it was necessary to stave off the end until the right moment, so that he should die when the Passover Lamb was being offered.

Therefore, he departed, to hide himself from the people on the slopes of Olivet (John 12:36). He led his disciples along the Court of the Gentiles, out through the gate that led to the Kedron Valley. They were a silent little group for events had not developed as they anticipated they would.

A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels

MARY MAGDALENE: POSSESSED OF DEMONS

Mary Magdalene is one of the most beautiful characters presented in the Word. She was a woman who deeply appreciated the great benefits she received from her Lord, and set herself the task of repaying him, by lavishing upon him all her love and loyalty. References to her are found in Mat. 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mk. 15:40, 47; 16:1-11; Lk. 8:2; 24:10; Jn. 19:25; 20:1-18.

She is distinguished from others bearing the same name by having "Magdalene" attached to it. This shows that she was a native of the town of Magdala on the coast of Galilee, whose people showed such coldness to Jesus when he visited it (Mat. 15:39-16:4). But the indifference of her fellow citizens was more than compensated for by the ardent, tender love that this woman manifested toward him.

It is often represented that Mary Magdalene was a bad woman, whom Jesus saved from a life of sin, so that frequently, institutions designed to help fallen women are described as "Magdalene Homes." But there is absolutely no evidence in Scripture that this ever was her condition. It is true that it is recorded of her that "out of her went seven devils" (Lk. 8:2), however, the term "demons" as the word should be translated, is never used of sin, but to describe mental sickness. Most likely, Mary was an extreme case of mental aberration, a lunatic, whom the Lord, by his healing power, cured. "Seven" is frequently used in Scripture for "completeness," suggesting in this instance, that she was completely gone in her malady, and beyond all hope.

But with Jesus there is always hope. Probably when the Lord first met Mary, she would have been a revolting object to look at,

with untidy hair draped over despondent shoulders; wild, glaring eyes that lacked any light of intelligence; sunken cheeks that spoke of terrible tension; filthy, dishevelled dress that indicated neglect; and drooping mouth that uttered gibberish. Yet his kindly eye, understanding heart, and healing hands transformed the wild, mad woman into a warm, loving, devoted disciple.

Mary was deeply grateful for the change effected in her, and with selfless disregard for her own comfort, gave herself completely to his service.

We have no record of her parentage, marital status, or age, but the fact that she was free to follow Jesus in his journeyings, suggests that she had no home obligations, and the implication that she ministered unto him of her substance suggests that she had material resources to draw upon.

She is mentioned fourteen times in the Gospels. In eight of them, she is referred to in conjunction with other women, and, significantly, she heads the list, implying that she occupied the first place in the work and service of the Lord. In five other places she is mentioned alone, in relation to the death and resurrection of Christ (Mk. 16:9; Jn. 20:1, 11, 16, 18). In one instance, her name comes after that of the mother and aunt of the Lord, as she stood close by the stake in their company; and in this case she is mentioned in that order because she naturally took a subordinate position in such circumstances to the Lord's closer relations (Jn. 19:25).

She was among the women who followed the Lord from Galilee to Jerusalem, ministering unto his needs (Lk. 8:2). Quietly and effectively, she would do what she knew needed to be done, attempting to repay by such actions the debt of gratitude she owed to him. She followed him to the stake, and it must have seemed as though her heart would break as she witnessed the agony of the awful scene, and observed the indignities that were heaped upon this one whom she loved with all her heart (Lk. 23:49). Later, she saw the two Pharisees bear the dead body of the Lord to the sepulchre where he was buried, and over against which the guard of soldiers were later placed.

Among the last at the stake, where Jesus was put to death, she was with the first at the garden tomb, to witness the most important event in all history (Mat. 28:1-8). Matthew is specific that this was approximately 6pm on the evening of the seventh day (v. 1). The two Marys saw the Lord, and were quickly despatched to tell the disciples that he had risen from the dead (v. 8). Their report was not believed. Earlier Mary Magdalene had been noted for her emotional instability, and perhaps the disciples attributed

the story to hallucinations on her part, such as also had affected her companion. They reasoned, that if the Lord had risen from the dead, he would first have appeared to them. Their rejection of her message evidently affected Mary. She felt that she might have made a mistake. It had been growing dark when she had met Jesus, and she could have mistaken somebody else for him. Moreover, on reflection, it did seem incredible that he should rise from the dead. She became completely confused in mind, and on the rising of the sun, again made her way to the sepulchre. She did so on this occasion by arrangement with the other women who desired to anoint the body of the Lord, but she made her way there a little earlier than did they (Jn. 20:1), evidently because she was still confused in mind.

She saw the tomb was empty (Jn. 20:2), and ran to tell Peter and John of it. Though they discounted her story of the night before, they did make their way to the tomb to find it empty. If the Lord had risen, where was he? If, as Peter declared, he had not risen, where had they taken his body, for the tomb was empty? This was the matter that the weeping Mary enquired of the angels whom she saw in the sepulchre. Her question was interrupted by the appearance of the Lord himself, and Mary came to the joyous realisation that what she had seen the night before was indeed true. With love in her heart, she sought to embrace him, acknowledging him as her beloved Lord, guide and teacher (Jn. 20:16). She was again despatched to the disciples with the thrilling message that the Lord had risen indeed.

That Jesus should "appear unto Mary Magdalene" (Mk. 16:9) testifies to the deep affection that he had for her. This stemmed from her loving gratitude to him for all that he had done for her. She tried to show her love by her service to him in acts that would give him pleasure, and assist him in his ministry. In that, she set a wonderful example for all who follow her. Like Mary, we have all benefited from the love of the Lord, for he has done "great things for us, whereof we are glad." Let us imitate the example of that humble, loving woman, and sacrifice our own convenience to serve him. Then, when he appears unto us, it will be with words of love and commendation, such as Mary herself received on that joyous first day of the week when she was re-united with the one she had learned to love with a pure, boundless devotion.

Chapter 2

IMPENDING DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE PREDICTED

The temple in Jerusalem had an external glory that excited the admiration of all who saw it. Almost fifty years (a Jubilee) had been expended in its reconstruction at the time the Lord visited it for the last time (John 2:20). Herod the Great had commenced this



work about the year BC20. It is said that he employed some 18,000 men for that purpose, taking down and restoring whole sections of it at a time. He finished the initial work in about nine years, but additions were constantly made to it, and continued to be so until just before AD70, when it was all destroyed by the Romans. The sight of the golden-coated temple from the Mount of Olives was dazzling. Situated on a plateau which drops sharply to the east above the brook Kedron, Jerusalem provided a perfect stage-setting for such a sight. The gleaming white walls of the temple were formed of huge blocks of stone, the facade shone with gold, and the enormous mass of the sanctuary, with its courtyards, porticoes and towers dominated the skyline, whilst clustered close around it were the elegant homes and palaces of the priests and wealthy nobles of Jerusalem. But despite all this pomp and show there was not true glory in that temple, and it was soon to be swept away by the judgments of Yahweh.

HAVING finished his discourse with the people, the misunderstood, mourning Messiah, made his sad way from the precincts of the temple. The nation had finally rejected its Redeemer and true High Priest, and nothing more was to be said.

He was followed by his puzzled apostles. They could not understand him at all. They were anticipating that he would soon proclaim himself as the King of Israel, and take steps to lead the nation out of the trough of depression and despair into which it had sunk.

Instead, they had heard words of indictment against the leaders, and mysterious expressions to the people which seemed to speak of death in some way, the significance of which they did not understand.

**The Disciples
Admire the Temple**

The little company came to the outside gate of the temple court which opened on to the

**(Mat. 24:1-2;
Mark 13:1-2;
Luke 21:5-6)**

Valley of Kedron. The temple lay behind them, bathed in the light of the evening sun, the gold upon it gleaming brightly. The sight excited the admiration of the apostles. They began to speak to one another of its glory, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts. They were proud of the appearance of this building which to them was the symbol of Yahweh in their midst (Luke 21:5).

But the Lord failed to respond to their enthusiasm.

They could not understand it. Was not this the temple of Yahweh? And should not they rejoice in the glory that they saw on every hand?

The Lord continued to ignore their expressions of praise. He had plainly described the national guilt that had built up over the years (Mat. 23), and had proclaimed that Jerusalem was to be given over to judgment, and the temple itself to be left desolate. They should heed his words, not this external appearance of glory.

As he slowly withdrew from the temple, he, as the glory of Yahweh in the midst of the nation (John 1:14) was expressing in action that which he had proclaimed in word, and which Ezekiel (also styled Son of Man — Eze. 38:2, etc.) had seen in vision. For he, too, had seen the glory of Yahweh leave the temple in the days of the Babylonian captivity, proceed to the east of the city (Eze. 9:3; 10:3-5, 19), and finally leaving the sanctuary desolate.

The apostles, however, were reluctant to understand the words Jesus had uttered concerning the temple in a literal sense (Mat. 23:38). They possibly spiritualised them, or else felt that the Lord meant that he would abandon the temple until after Passover. They continued to glory in the external beauty about them, pointing out the tremendous strength of the building as a symbol of its permanency, and the offerings of the people as indication of their spiritual fervour (Luke 21:5).

But he remained silent.

As they came to the external walls of the temple, doubtless disturbed at his coldness to their enthusiasm, they drew attention to the massive blocks of stone with which it was built. Josephus states that these stones were between 37 and 45 feet long (11-14 mtrs), 12 feet high (3.6 mtrs), and 18 feet broad (5.5 mtrs). Surely such a building had been erected for eternity. "Master," they said, "see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

But Jesus answered: "You see these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down!"

They were astounding, terrible, almost blasphemous words in the ears of a Jew! What did the Lord mean? The apostles could not believe that he literally meant what he said, but made no further comment at that time. Perhaps this was just another way of expressing

himself parabolically? They merely followed him in puzzled silence.

Forty years later, it became apparent what he meant, when his words came to an awful fulfilment. The brutal Roman hordes destroyed the temple and razed it to the ground. This action was taken by the soldiers in defiance of the orders of their commander. Titus, the Roman general, desired to preserve such a magnificent building as a token of his own victory, and gave strict instructions that it had to be preserved. But a greater Ruler had decreed its destruction forty years earlier. And in spite of the Roman orders, the savagery of the soldiers was such, that once they had breached the city, they could not be restrained from the work of destruction. By accident the temple was set on fire, and as the gold melted, the soldiers literally tore stone from stone to get at the precious metal.

When Titus at last was shown the massive structure of the ruined temple, and the strength of its huge stones, he was amazed, and in his triumph traced the hand of God in taking such a city, as the historian Josephus declares.

The destruction having begun, Titus completed it. At his departure, having captured the city, he left the Tenth Legion, under the command of Terentius Rufus, to carry out the remaining work of demolition. The whole enclosing walls and precincts of the temple were so "thoroughly levelled and dug up that no one visiting the city would believe it had ever been inhabited" (Josephus).

However, a portion of the Western Wall remained, and exists to this day. It used to be styled the Wailing Wall, but since the Jewish people recovered Jerusalem during the Six Days War of June, 1967, they prefer to describe it as the Western Wall, and they await the time when the temple will be restored. There is, in fact, a mural on the wall of the Knesset (Parliament) building portraying in abstract design, this hope of the Jewish people for the temple restoration by Messiah.

Jesus declared that "there shall not be left one stone upon another," and his words had literal fulfilment. If the Western Wall is, indeed, part of the ancient temple wall, the time will come when it, too, will be completely broken down. This will be in the days of his return, when the tremendous earthquake of Zechariah 14 will change the contour of the Land of Promise, and doubtless shake out of position those remaining stones, to clear the site for the erection of the greatest temple of all time.

*Jews at the Western
Wall in Jerusalem*



Chapter 3

THE OLIVET PROPHECY

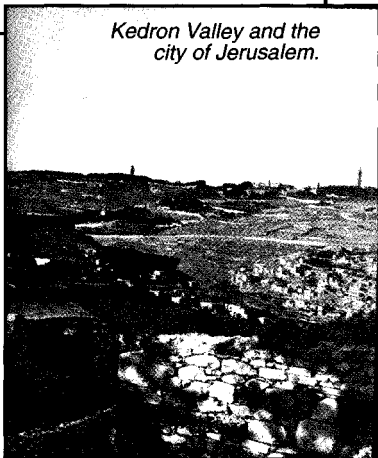
The Lord had made certain statements to the Pharisees and to his own apostles that had puzzled the latter exceedingly. To the former he had declared: "Your house is left unto you desolate, for you shall not see me until you shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Yahweh" (Mat. 23:38-39), and to the latter he had predicted, "There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down" (Mat. 24:2). The apostles found this very difficult to fit into their understanding of future events, for they were convinced that "the kingdom of God should immediately appear" (Luke 19:11). All this formed the background upon which they asked three questions of the Lord, which resulted in him outlining to them the course of future events relating to Jerusalem, in what is known as the Olivet Prophecy. It is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and in order to grasp it properly, it is necessary to synchronise all three accounts. When that is done, a remarkable prophecy emerges.

Unfortunately, in attempting to interpret this prophecy, many take verses out of their context, or do not synchronise them with the other accounts, and, in consequence, fail to properly comprehend the scope of the prophecy and its true significance. In our outline of it, we have harmonised the three accounts, indicating in brackets, where the various words and phrases occur. It will be seen that each account supplements the others and the true interpretation of the prophecy depends upon viewing it in complete form. It will be found profitable to link the three accounts together as one in your Bible, by indicating any missing words in the margin.

IN puzzled silence the apostles followed the Lord down the steep valley of Kedron, and up its other side to where, in the evening dusk, the dark mass of the Mount of Olives stood above Jerusalem.

It was nearing evening time when the Lord left the temple, probably close to six o'clock. According to Jewish reckoning, Monday, 12th Abib, merged in to Tuesday, 13th Abib,

Kedron Valley and the city of Jerusalem.



about that time, for they count the evening as the beginning of the day (Gen. 1).

As the Lord was crucified on 14th Abib, only a few hours remained before this tragic event would take place.

The apostles, however, were in complete ignorance of that.

They confidently believed that Jesus would soon proclaim himself as king. Their minds were absorbed with prospects of glory, and they refused to heed his constant warnings of impending trial, mocking, disgrace, death and shame.

Therefore, some things he said puzzled them greatly.

The Apostles'

**Concerns (Mat. 24;
Mark 13; Luke 21)**

For example, what did he mean when he declared to the Pharisees: "*Your house is left unto you desolate, for you shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*" (Mat. 23:38-39)? They knew that all Jewry would be repeating those very words when they celebrated the Passover a few hours thence. Did the Lord mean he would proclaim himself king in the next few hours, and proceed to restore the kingdom of Israel?

It was a most exciting thought; their hearts leaped at the idea.

But then, what did he mean when he declared of the stones on the temple: "*There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*" (Mat. 24:2)?

It was all very puzzling; they could make nothing of it! For the moment, however, they pondered the problem in silence as the shadows of evening lengthened, and they followed the Lord up the slope that led to Olivet.

At last they reached the peak of the mount, and at a convenient spot they sat down to look back over the city.

It being Passover time, multitudes had flocked into the city, occupying all available accommodation, and many camped out on the slopes of Olivet and elsewhere where there was room.

The Lord and his apostles were but one small group in hundreds thus gathered together.

The moon rose high in the sky, and shone down upon guilty Jerusalem. It bathed the city in a soft, silvery light that hid from view its wickedness, and served to emphasise its beauty, glory and dignity.

It was a city in which the people could take pleasure.

The apostles sat there for a time in silence, taking the scene in before them, and meditating upon the dramatic events and discourses of the day. Their minds ranged over all that the Lord had said, and particularly that which he had proclaimed in relation to the people, temple and city of Jerusalem.

The Three Questions* At last Peter, James, John and Andrew determined to satisfy their curiosity by enquiring directly of the Lord as to what he meant.

They approached him on their own, and asked three questions:

“Tell us, When shall these things be?”

“What shall be the sign of thy coming?”

“What shall be sign of the end of the world?”

Let us first consider what they meant by these questions, before examining the Lord’s answer.

To properly understand the significance of their questions, and the Olivet Prophecy generally, it is necessary to recognise that when the apostles spoke of the Lord’s coming, they did not have in mind his second advent and return from heaven.

In fact, at that stage of their spiritual development and understanding, they knew nothing of the second coming of the Lord after a long period of absence! They did not realise that the Lord must first ascend into heaven before he would return to set up the Kingdom on earth. They thought that “the kingdom of God should immediately appear” (see Luke 19:11), and all their thoughts and words were coloured by that firm conviction. Nothing that the Lord had said had changed their belief in that regard, so that when he spoke of his impending death they refused to believe it, or interpreted it as a figurative death.

Even after he had been raised from the dead, they still believed he would then, at that time, restore the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6).

What then did they mean by the use of the word “coming”?

The word in the Greek is *parousia*, and literally signifies “presence,” and not the act of moving from one place to another. The word for “coming” in the sense of moving from one point to another is *erchomai*, which, in its future tense (*elephsetai*) is used in Acts 1:11 when the angels declared that “This same Jesus shall so *come* as ye have seen him go.”

However, it is obvious that the disciples did not have “presence” in their mind when they approached Jesus with their question, for he was then present with them, and they needed no sign of the fact.

What then did they mean?

We learn from Greek scholars, that the word *parousia* has a far greater significance than mere “presence,” and one which illustrates

* See pp. 130, 185, where we have set out the remarkable manner in which Matthew records all the discourses of the Lord at this time in a series of three, with a fourth connecting paragraph. The indictment of Matthew 23 can also be divided into three sections; the connecting paragraph is the comment regarding the destruction of the temple, and the next series of three are the questions the apostles asked on the slope of Olivet, which were answered in the Olivet prophecy.

why this word was used, and what was meant by it. Commenting upon the word, Moulton and Milligan's *Vocabulary Of The New Testament* declares: "What more especially concerns us in connection with the NT usage of *parousia* is the quasi-technical force of the word from Ptolemaic times onward to denote the 'visit' of a king, emperor, or other person in authority, the official character of the 'visit' being further emphasised by the taxes or payments that were exacted to make preparations for it... Wilcken in *Archive* p. 284 notes a late papyrus which shows that Christians of AD6 were conscious of the technical meaning of the word..."

That the apostles understood this word in this way is suggested by Peter's use of it in 2Peter 1:16, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming (*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty."

Here Peter links the *parousia* (presence) of the Lord with his royal majesty, suggesting that he used the word in the sense indicated above. Peter was referring to the transformation of the Lord, when he appeared unto the specially selected apostles in glory. This, according to Peter, was the Lord's "*parousia*," indicating that he used the word not merely in the sense of "presence," but in the sense of the Lord's "presence" in authority and power.

Therefore, when on the Mount of Olives, in their question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming [*parousia*]?" they meant: "***What shall be the sign when you will reveal your presence as Messiah and King?***"

Again, it should be noted that when the apostles spoke of the "end of the world" (as their question is recorded in the Authorised Version), they had in mind the end of the "age" (as the word *aion* should be rendered), and to them the end of the age would be the cessation of the Mosaic order of things, and the introduction of the Messianic.

The subsequent words of Christ have been misunderstood because these facts have not been appreciated and applied in regard to the questions of the apostles.

In answer to the three questions submitted to him by the four apostles, the Lord delivered to them what is known as the Olivet Prophecy. This can be divided into three sections, providing answers to the three questions.

First Question

Answered:

The End of the Age

(Mat. 24:4-14;

Mark 13:5-13;

Luke 21:8-19)

The first section deals with the question relating to the sign of the end of the age. The age, in question, was the Mosaic Age, which came to an end in AD70 with the final destruction of the temple. It will be seen that all of the Olivet Prophecy in this section was

fulfilled in the Apostolic Age ending in AD70. It is important to note this, for so often these words are applied to contemporary events. They can only be so typically, for the literal fulfilment of these words took place prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD70.

First Jesus pointed out that **FALSE CHRIST'S ARE NOT THE SIGN**. He explained: *"Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ [Mt., Mk., Lk.], and the time draweth near [Lk.], and shall deceive many [Mt., Mk.]. Go you not therefore after them [Lk.]."* Notice that we have harmonised the three Gospel records to show the complete explanation given.

The fulfilment of this first section of the prophecy is a matter of Ecclesial and Jewish history. False doctrine was proclaimed in the name of Christ (2Cor. 11:4), whilst the general expectancy of Messiah which was widespread throughout Jewry at the time, led to many false claims of national saviours (Acts 5:37-38; Acts 8:9-10; 2John 7).

The rise of both false doctrine and false claims of Messiahship became a notable sign of the end of the Mosaic Age (Luke 21:8; 1John 2:18).

Then he told them that **NATIONAL UPHEAVALS ARE NOT THE SIGN**, explaining: *"And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass first; but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom shall rise against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places [Mt., Mk., Lk.], and fearful sights and great signs from heaven [Lk.]. All these are the beginnings of sorrows [Mt., Mk.]."*

The prophecy was delivered in the time of the Roman Emperor Tiberius. His reign was followed by those of Caligula, Claudius and Nero, and they were noted for growing crises in Jewry. The two former threatened to punish Judea; the latter initiated the war which finally overwhelmed the nation.

It was also a period of unsettled conditions and civil war in Jewry itself, and among the surrounding nations (Acts 12:20), and of widespread pestilence and famine, as mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 11:28; 1Cor. 16:1-3).

Thirdly, the Lord explained that **PERSECUTIONS ARE NOT THE SIGN**. He said: *"But take heed to yourselves [Mk.], for before all these, they shall lay their hands on you and persecute you [Lk.], delivering you up [Mk., Lk.] to councils [Mk.], and in the synagogues [Mk., Lk.] you shall be beaten [Mk.], and you shall be delivered up into prisons [Lk.], being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake [Mk., Lk.] for a testimony against them [Mk., Lk.]; for the gospel must first be published among all nations [Mk.]."*

“But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up [Mk.], take no thought beforehand what you shall speak, neither do you premeditate what you shall answer [Mk., Lk.], but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak you, for it is not you that speak, but the Holy Spirit [Mk.], for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist [Lk.].”

“Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents [Mk.], and you shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends [Lk.], and they shall deliver you up to be afflicted [Mt.], and shall kill you; and you shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake [Mt., Mk., Lk.]. But there shall not a hair of your head perish [Lk.].”

The Acts of the Apostles describes the fulfilment of these words of the Lord Jesus, for it records the terrible persecution experienced by the early ecclesias. The “end” in question, was the end of the Mosaic Age, which brought a measure of relief to the persecution endured by believers at the hands of the Jews, who were the worst offenders in that regard (1Thes. 2:14-16). This was the period of time referred to in Heb. 9:26 by the apostle Paul: “Now once in the end of the world [aion, age] hath he [Jesus] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

In Heb. 1:2, the apostle describes the same period of time as “these last days.” They finally came to their end in AD70 when the Romans destroyed the Jewish State, and one of the chief signs heralding it, and which made it inevitable, was the severe persecution that Christians received at the hands of their Jewish tormentors.

Christ’s words, therefore, had application to those days, and not to today. The conditions existing then were different from those of today. The apostles had the power of the Holy Spirit, and when they were haled before the authorities they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance (e.g., Acts 7). We do not have that power today. Notice how Luke very carefully establishes the time sequence: “*Before those things* [the national upheavals previously referred to] *they shall lay hands on you...*” (Luke 21:12).

Having set those things before his apostles on the mount, the Master then gave an **EXHORTATION: THE NEED FOR FAITH, FORTITUDE, FEARLESSNESS**. He stated: “*And then shall many be offended and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many, and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold [Mt.]. In your patience possess you your souls [Lk.]. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved [Mt., Mk.].”*

In view of these words of the Lord Jesus, the warning of John is of

great significance: "Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1John 2:18). "Many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1John 4:1). John's words show that the time of the end referred to by the Lord Jesus related to the end of the Mosaic Age, and not to present times.

When would come the end that the Lord spoke about? He explained: **AFTER THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED THE END WILL COME.** "*And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*" (Mat. 24:14).

The context in which this verse is placed shows beyond all doubt that the Lord Jesus was referring to the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles and their immediate associates, and not to these present times. The apostle Paul seems to be making reference to this prophecy when he stated: "The gospel... was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister" (Col. 1:23).

The word in the Greek New Testament, which is often translated "world" is *oikoumene*, and signifies "the habitable," and not the world at large. It is the same word used in Luke 2:1 to describe those provinces brought under the decree of Augustus to be taxed. This did not incorporate the whole world as we know it today, or even then, but only the "habitable" areas governed by the Roman Emperor.

This concluded the Lord's answer to the first question as to "When shall the end come?" He warned the apostles that they would suffer terrible affliction, and many Christians would be put to death, but not until the Truth had been preached to the Gentiles in the Roman habitable, would the end come.

**Second Question
Answered: The Sign
of the Parousia
(Mat. 24:15-28;
Mark 13:14-23;
Luke 21:20-23)**

Next the Lord Jesus prophesied of **THE ROMAN SIEGE OF JERUSALEM**. He told them: "*When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing [Mt., Mk.] where it ought not [Mk.] in the holy place [Mt.] whoso reads, let him understand [Mt., Mk.].*

"When you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is near [Lk.].

"Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains [Mt., Mk., Lk.]; let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes [Mt., Mk.]; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled [Lk.].

“But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! [Mt., Mk., Lk.]. And pray that your flight be not in winter [Mt., Mk.], neither on the sabbath day [Mt.]. For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since [Mt., Mk.] the beginning of the world [Mt.], from the beginning of the creation which God created [Mk.], to this time, no, nor ever shall be [Mt., Mk.]. For there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people [Lk.]. And except those days should be shortened there should be no flesh saved; but for the elect’s sake [Mt., Mk.] whom he hath chosen [Mk.] those days shall be shortened [Mt., Mk.].”

When the three accounts are placed together as they are above, it is obvious that all those things referred to by Jesus in the verses quoted, were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. He urged his disciples to “understand the words of Daniel the prophet,” so that they might be forearmed against the troubles that would come upon that generation.

The “abomination of desolation standing in the holy place” (Dan. 9:27), obviously refers to the Romans occupying the holy land, invading it with the objective of besieging Jerusalem. In fact, the words recorded by Luke: “Ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies” was evidently in explanation of the words previously used. The following might well be a reconstruction of the conversation of the Lord with his disciples at that time:

“When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place (when you read this see that you understand it)...”

“We do not understand it, Master! What does Daniel refer to?”

“When you shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.”

It is obvious, by the setting in which it is found, that the comment recorded by Luke was in explanation of Jesus’ reference to the prophecy of Daniel. And that we have correctly placed the comment is established because the very next words of the Lord: ***“Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains”*** is recorded by all three Gospel writers. Matthew and Mark give that comment as contingent upon the ***“abomination of desolation standing in the holy place where it ought not,”*** and Luke gives it as contingent upon ***“Jerusalem being compassed with armies,”*** showing that the latter is explanatory of the former.

Some wonder why Jesus urged his disciples to pray that their flight be “not on the sabbath day.” Seventh Day Adventists maintain that it was because the Lord endorsed the Law of the Sabbath. But that is not so. He did not endorse that Law. As Paul taught, believers are freed from the curse of the Law, and should not now be judged in such matters as sabbath observance (Rom. 14:5; Col. 2:16-17).

To what, then, was the Lord referring?

The answer is found in Neh. 13:19. When Nehemiah learned that the sabbath was being desecrated, he ordered that the gates of Jerusalem be closed until the day was over. This became a law of the city, and continued until the time of Jesus. It would be both difficult and dangerous for Christians to try to flee from the city with the gates closed against them, for to do so would be to defy the established law of the city and that would excite the hostility of the people to a dangerous extent.

Jesus instructed that when his followers should see the Roman army arrayed against Jerusalem, they should flee into the mountains. His words imply that there would be opportunity for them to do so, and this proved to be the case.

The initial attack and siege of the Romans took place at the commencement of October AD66, when the weather was yet mild and favourable for travel. The final siege, if any Christians lingered on until then, took place in the still more favourable months of April and May.

Jerusalem was first besieged by Cestius Gallus, the Roman president of Syria, in AD66, but he withdrew amid successful assaults by pursuing Jews, who were thus hardened in their resolve to stand firm against Rome. But this initial attack and withdrawal provided a salutary warning to believing Christians. They recalled the words of the Master, and took the opportunity to flee the doomed city, finding refuge in Pella on the eastern side of the River Jordan.

Meanwhile, Vespasian was deputed in the room of Cestius. He subdued the country, and prepared to besiege the city. But the death of Nero, then Galba, who had succeeded Nero, as well as the disturbance that followed, which included civil war between Otho and Vitellius, held Vespasian and his son Titus in suspense. Thus the city was not actually besieged until Vespasian was made emperor and the command of the invading army placed in the hands of Titus, who brought the city to ruin. This delay again provided the Christians with the opportunity to escape, which they seized.

Jesus declared that the resultant tribulation on the city of Jerusalem would exceed anything before or after: *"from the beginning of the world, to this time, no, nor ever shall be"* (Mat. 24:21).

But did the tribulation of AD70 exceed that of the Flood, for example?

The answer is: It did not.

Was Jesus wrong in his statement?

By no means. The word here translated "world" is *kosmos*, and it signifies the established order of things. Jesus was referring to the Jewish *kosmos* or order established by the Law of Moses, and, certainly, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 was the greatest

disaster ever to befall the nation and city, exceeding anything before or since. For whilst Jerusalem will suffer greatly when taken by Gog (Zech. 14:1), it will be delivered to rise to a greatness never before experienced.

In Mark's account, however, Jesus is represented as saying that the affliction will be greater than that *"from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be"* (Mark 13:19). Here, again, the word should not be interpreted to represent the literal creation of the earth in Genesis chapter 1. The Greek word *ktisis* was used by the Greeks to define the founding of a city or state as well as to natural creation, and obviously refers to the creation of the Jewish State, which was an act of God in the days of Moses. The same word, here translated "creation," is rendered "building" in Heb. 9:11, where it refers to the Mosaic order of things.

Thus the interpretation of these Greek words reconciles what might be otherwise thought a contradiction, and illustrates the true significance of Christ's teaching.

An Initial Parousia
(Mat. 24:23-28;
Mark 13:21-23;
Luke 21:24)

The Lord continued his explanation to his disciples: *"Then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not for there shall arise false Christ's, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have foretold you all things [Mt., Mk.]."*

"Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west; so also shall the coming [parousia] of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is there will the eagles be gathered together [Mt.]."*

"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 [Lk. 21:24]."

What was the "coming" or *parousia* of the Son of Man recorded

* Significantly, the Lord speaks of the "desert" and "secret chambers." There were two major areas of Jewish resistance against the Roman onslaught in the years AD70 and AD135. One was in the desert area of Masada, a mount alongside the Dead Sea; the other was a man-made mountain south of Bethlehem known as Herodium, built under the directions of Herod to provide a shelter from enemy attack. This citadel had many "secret chambers," comprising tunnels built into the hill, and in which the Jewish rebels sought protection from the Roman attack. But, as the Lord forecast, neither of these "saviours" would provide any answer to the Jews. The Roman invasion was completed as he declared.

by Matthew in his account of the Lord's discourse?

It was his manifestation in power and authority through the outpouring of divine judgment upon guilty Judea in the Roman invasion and siege of Jerusalem in AD70.

Earlier, Jesus had told the Jewish leaders that "*the king would send forth his armies, and destroy those murderers, and burn up their city*" (Mat. 22:7). As "all power in heaven and in earth" had been given into the hands of the Lord Jesus when he ascended into heaven (Mat. 28:18), the Roman armies were performing his bidding when they marched against Jerusalem (see Deu. 28:49). Later on, in anticipation of the fulfilment of these words of Christ, James, his brother, wrote: "*Be patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming [parousia] of the Lord draweth nigh*" (James 5:8). That would not have been true if James was referring to the return of the Lord in our day, but it was true of the then impending outpouring of divine punishment on guilty Jewry in AD70, which would prevent the Jewish authorities from persecuting the Christians any further. And that was what James was writing about.

In an earlier verse, writing to those Jewish leaders (James 5:6) who had persecuted the believers, he declared: "*Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming [parousia] of the Lord...*" James therefore expected that those to whom he was writing would remain until the *parousia* of Christ was manifested in the divine judgment that would be poured out upon persecuting Jewry!

Did James make a mistake? By no means, for he wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He made no mistake, and nor did Jesus when he declared that the gathering of the Roman eagles (the symbol of the Roman army was a flying eagle) against the dead carcass of Jewry would be a manifestation of his *parousia*, his presence in authority. The Lord's presence was in the judgments poured out upon Jerusalem in AD70, and they comprised a token of the authority and power then vested in him.

It is significant that Luke, who wrote for Gentile believers, omitted in his account much that would be of interest mainly to Jewish believers, and set down in more easily-understood language the portions of the Lord's discourse as would be appropriate for those to whom he was writing.

Third Answer: The Sign When all Things Will be Fulfilled
(Mat. 24:29-36;
Mark 13:24-33;
Luke 21:25-33)

Now the Master explained the final question of his apostles, showing what would happen many years after the Roman invasion against Jerusalem: "*Immediately after the tribulation of those days [Mt., Mk.], there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in*

the stars [Lk.]. The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven [Mt., Mk.]. Upon the earth there shall be distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth [Lk.], for the powers of heaven shall be shaken [Mt., Mk., Lk.], and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn [Mt.]. And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory [Mt., Mk., Lk.].

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh [Lk.21:28]."

Once again, the harmonising of these three accounts together, helps to correctly interpret them as far as the time sequence is concerned. For example, the words of Mat. 24:29: *"Immediately [or 'suddenly' as the word can be rendered] after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened..."* etc., must be placed between the words of Luke, *"Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"* (Luke 21:24), and *"there shall be signs in the sun..."* (v. 25). Luke's account, therefore, provides a bridge between the events of the first advent (Mat. 24:28), and those of the second advent (v. 29).

But why should we say that they *"must"* be placed in the order in which we have set them? Because of the connecting link contained in the accounts of both Matthew and Luke: *"There shall be signs in the sun..."* etc. The great sign of the end, therefore becomes the deliverance of Jerusalem, and it is of the greatest significance and excitement, that we are living in times that have seen the gradual release of that city from the power of the oppressor, and the occupation by Jewry in the notable events of 1967.

What is meant by *"the sign of the Son of Man in heaven"*? The context provides the answer. Sun, moon and stars are all heavenly bodies,* used symbolically in those verses for the ruling powers of the nations. The sign of the Son of Man in heaven is the elevation of the Lord Jesus to the place of authority and power among the nations, from whence these have been ejected (Rev. 4:1). When the Lord returns, and is associated with his saints in glory, the world will

* In Scripture the "sun" depicts the ruling power; the "moon" indicates the ecclesiastical organisations that derive their "light," or authority, from the political sun; the "stars" indicate outstanding personalities that seek to rule and influence their communities as did the notables in the days of Noah (cp. Gen. 6:4). In all these three areas of symbolic sun, moon and stars, are to be seen present-day "signs" indicating that the angels are manipulating world events to conform to Bible prophecy, and to prepare the world for the advent of the Great King. The present-day turmoil amongst the nations and communities is consistent with the Olivet Prophecy.

witness the Kingdom of God again, set up in its little stone phase (Dan. 2), destined to become a mountain filling the whole earth. That initial manifestation of the Kingdom of God is the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, the ruling authority of the future. It will be a warning to the entire world that all Gentile powers must submit to that of the rule of God; and as it will occur at a time when the nations are involved in war, and Armageddon is in process of development, "the tribes of the earth shall mourn."

The Lord will be seen "coming" (in Luke 21:27 and Rev. 1:7, the word is *erchomenon*, which has the idea of physically arriving, as distinct from another word *parousia*, often translated "coming" and which literally means, the presence of an authority) in the clouds of heaven, comprising his glorified saints (Heb. 12:1), with power and great glory, to take up his position as king in the rescued and restored city of Jerusalem. It was for that time and event that the apostles were waiting, but even though the Lord clearly revealed to them in this prophecy that a long epoch of time must elapse before it would come to pass, they did not understand.

However, the exhortation of the Lord has vital significance to us who are living at these times. He declared: "*When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.*" The things to



which he was referring relate to the "signs of the sun, moon, and stars," the portents among the nations, clearly discernible today, by which it is apparent that the world is facing the greatest crisis of all time.

Ultimate Restoration "*And he shall send his angels [Mt., Mk.], Of Israel (Mat. 24:31; continued the Master, "with a great sound of a trumpet [Mt.], and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other [Mt., Mk.]."* These words do not

relate to the judgment of the household, as some believe, but to the ultimate restoration of all the tribes of Israel, after the Lord has returned in glory. He will first manifest himself to his own people, his temple (Mal. 3:1), and their judgment will precede that of the nations (1Pet. 4:17). Afterwards he will manifest himself at Armageddon, and then gather Israel as the elect nation from all parts of the earth, to

inherit the Land promised to Abraham.

In this section of the Olivet Prophecy, the Lord is quoting from Deu. 30:4, *"If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will Yahweh gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee..."*

**Concluding Parable
And Exhortation**
(Mat. 24:32-36;
Mark 13:28-33;
Luke 21:29-33)

So the Master concluded this important explanation: *"Now learn a parable of the fig tree [Mt., Mk.]; behold the fig tree and all the trees [Lk.]. When his branch is yet tender [Mt., Mk.], and they shoot forth [Lk.], ye see and know [Mt., Mk., Lk.] of your own selves [Lk. 21:30] that summer is nigh. So likewise when ye see all these things [Mt., Mk., Lk.] come to pass [Mk., Lk.], know that [Mt., Mk., Lk.] the kingdom of God [Lk.] is nigh [Mt., Mk., Lk.] even at the doors [Mt., Mk.].*

"I say unto you truly, that this generation shall not pass, until all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away [Mt., Mk., Lk.]. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven [Mt., Mk.] neither the Son [Mk.], but my Father only [Mt., Mk.].

"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is [Mk.]."

This completed the Olivet Prophecy. In these last words, the Lord explained that the great sign of the culmination of the divine purpose would be the budding of the fig tree. The fig tree symbolised Israel (see Joel 1:7). But, in addition to the fig tree, the Lord declared that "all the trees" would shoot forth, to indicate the approach of the harvest time. In Bible symbology, trees are often used to describe nations (e.g., 2Kgs. 14:9; Zech. 11:2), and the "forest of the nations" today is represented in the various governments of mankind. Such signs are manifest in the earth today, testifying that the world exists in the very shadow of Christ's second coming.

He declared that the divine purpose would be completed within the period of a generation from the manifestation of the sign of the fig tree. A generation, in point of time, is forty years, and there seems some link between the Lord's words, and those spoken by Micah: *"According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things..."* (Mic. 7:15).

Forty years were occupied in drawing Israel out of Egypt, and it seems that forty years will be occupied by the Lord Jesus in re-establishing Israel and in reforming the world politically, after he has manifested himself at Armageddon.

It is significant that almost forty years were occupied from the time he was crucified at the age of 33 years until the overthrow of the

Jewish State in AD70; and that a further forty years will be occupied at his return, in the restoration of Israel and the subjugation of the nations. His words, therefore, seem to have a double application.

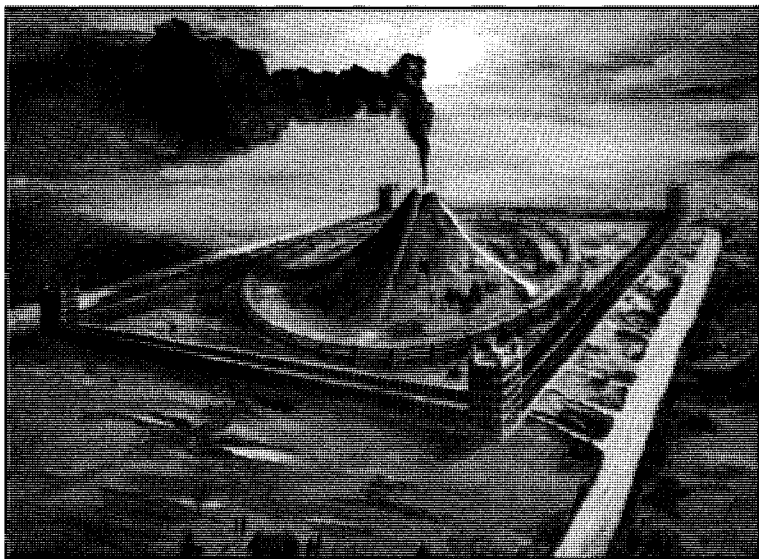
Forty is the number of probation, and in the first century Jewry was on probation for that period of time; whilst at his second advent, the world at large will be on probation.

He declared that "heaven and earth shall pass away," but his words would be fulfilled. What did he mean?

Certainly he did not teach that the literal heaven and earth would be destroyed, for Scripture declares that the earth "abides for ever" (Ecc. 1:4). The terms "heaven and earth," however, are used symbolically in Scripture for the nation of Israel, both as regards its political organisation (its "heaven") and the people who were ruled (the "earth"). This is revealed in Deu. 32:1-2; Isa. 1:2,10; 65:17-18. So Jesus warned the disciples that the nation of Israel would be completely overthrown, but his words would not fail. The Jewish heavens and earth were brought to an end in AD70, but he will return to restore them again (Isa. 65:17-18) and then "shall be seen the sign of the Son of Man in heaven."

Meanwhile, believers in every age must observe, and put into practice, the vital and urgent warning exhortation of the Lord: ***"Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."***

The plural word *agrupneite*, translated "watch," signifies to keep awake. The Lord would have us awake and watchful in regard to the signs of the times, in order that full preparation might be made for his return. The signs, today, show that it is near at hand.



THE SETTING OF THE OLIVET PROPHECY

Matthew has set the discourse of the Lord Jesus delivered in the court of the temple, and immediately afterwards, in a series of parallelisms of three, linked by a connecting comment. This is Hebraistic in character, and, of course, Matthew wrote particularly for Jewish readers. The Olivet Prophecy finds its setting in this parallelism. See page 130.

1st Section — Three parables charging the Jews with disobedience (Mat. 21:28 to 22:10).

Connecting Link — The fate of the man without the marriage garment (Mat. 22:11-14).

2nd Section — Three questions submitted by the Jews and answered (Mat. 22:15-40).

Connecting Link — Christ's unanswered question to the Jews (Mat. 22:41-46).

3rd Section — The threefold indictment of the Jewish leaders (Mat. 23).

Connecting Link — Comment on the fate of the temple (Mat. 24:1-2).

4th Section — The three questions asked by the apostles and answered in the Olivet Prophecy (Mat. 24:3-39).

Connecting Link — Exhortation on the need for watchfulness (Mat. 24:40-44).

5th Section — Three parables on the need for watchfulness (Mat. 24:45 to 25:30).

Final Summary — Parable of the Judgment Seat (Mat. 25:31-46).

Matthew introduces these sections by the question: "But what think ye?" (Mat. 21:28), and concludes them by the comment: "Jesus finished all these sayings..." (Mat. 26:1).

CHRIST EXPECTED

There are many indications that we are on the eve of Christ's return. Discontent and unrest are rife among the masses. Israel is a nation again in the earth. War preparations are on the increase. Unbelief in the Scriptures is spreading. Disregard of God's will is everywhere apparent. These are some of the signs which the Scriptures give to indicate the time of the Lord's appearing. Through false teaching, love of pleasure, and other causes, the world is asleep to the great fact of his promised advent, and terrible will be the awakening. Let us recognise these facts, and awake to our own responsibilities concerning them. "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments..." declared the Lord.

Chapter 4

THE NEED FOR PERSONAL WATCHFULNESS

At the conclusion of the Olivet prophecy, the Lord added further words of exhortation impressing the apostles with the need to watch both the signs of the times, and their own conduct in view of the ungodly environment that would be in evidence at the time of the end. He emphasised their personal responsibility toward these matters, and urged the need of individual watchfulness. Luke alone records these words which should be included after the accounts given by Matthew and Mark.

THE Lord realised that in spite of his careful outline of future events contained in the Olivet Prophecy, the apostles did not really grasp the significance of what he had said.

It seems incredible that they should fail to do so, for his words appear so clear and obvious to us. But, of course, we view them from the standpoint of explanation that the apostles' own experiences provide. They heard these words with minds that were completely biased in one direction: that when the Messiah appeared he would immediately restore the Kingdom to Israel, reign in Jerusalem and overcome the enemies of the nation. We read of their expectations, knowing that such was not to be. Their understanding of God's purpose provided no room for a Messiah who would come under the curse of the Law by being crucified, or one who would be rejected by his own nation.

It was only later that they came to comprehend fully the significance of all the words spoken by the Lord.

How To Meet The Problems Of The Last Days (Lk. 21:34-36) Jesus sensed this, and gently warned them; and his warning is recorded for our benefit as well. *"Take heed to yourselves,"* he told the four men as they rested with him on the Mount of Olives, *"lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with the pleasures and cares of life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a falling trap will it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Keep awake at all times, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

The conditions, ecclesiastically and nationally, that existed just prior to the destruction of the Jewish State in AD70 were very similar to those of today. It was a time of affluence, when men were governed by

selfish ambition for worldly success at the expense of all else, and opportunity existed for them to gratify it. Ecclesiastically, it was a period when doubts were being raised regarding matters which, until then, were accepted without question, and a state of apathy and apostasy was developing (see 2Peter, Jude).

In such circumstances, which similarly exist today, Christ stressed there is need to look inward; there is a personal responsibility resting upon everyone to seek the things of God, and therefore he warned the apostles: "Take heed to *yourselves*!"

He declared that the world would be "*overcharged with surfeiting, drunkenness, and the cares of this life.*" The word "surfeiting" is from a Greek word, *bareo*, signifying "to be heavy, weighed down," and hence drowsy through over-eating and the effect of gluttony. When a person "over-eats" of the pleasures and cares of this life, he becomes spiritually heavy with sleep as far as responsibility toward the things of God is concerned, and unfit for the vigilant watchfulness that Christ would have him exhibit.

Christ warned his disciples that as the world would be in that state, his disciples would be in danger of being influenced by it.

Is not that the condition of society today? Is it not apathetic to its true need? Does it not, with heavy, drowsy aspect, turn from the things of God to satisfy self?

What is to be its destiny? Every true student of the Bible realises that the world is facing a climax from which it will not be able to extricate itself. It will be caught as a bird, or an animal, in a falling trap, that will destroy its way of life, and those who rejoice in it.

In view of this, Jesus exhorted his disciples to "watch and pray." The word "watch" signifies to be sleepless, and in the Greek is derived from a word that means to chase away sleep. That needs some effort on our part. We are called to be awake to the conditions around us, to the signs that speak of Christ's return, and to the true state of our characters in the sight of God. By so doing, and by seeking divine help through prayer and the study of the Word, we will derive the strength to rise above the evil environment in which we find ourselves, and will develop those attributes that will please the Father and His Son, and find for us approval when we stand before Christ in judgment.



Chapter 5

PARABLE OF NOAH OF AN UNHEEDING WORLD

Following immediately upon the Olivet Prophecy, the Lord uttered a series of parables that have particular bearing upon believers, emphasising the need for watchfulness, of preparation for his return, of using one's talents in the work of the Truth, and finally, the inevitability of Judgment.

Matthew records these (see Mat. 24:37 to 25:46) in such a way as to make them exactly parallel with a series that Jesus had delivered at the beginning of this portion of his ministry (Mat. 21:28 to 22:10), and which provided a series of warnings to the Jews of the awful judgment that would come upon them nationally, because of their rejection of his ministry.

These two series of parables (the first directed to natural Israel, and the second to spiritual Israel) were given in conjunction with the Olivet prophecy — because they were based upon the judgments it pronounced. It predicted two such: the crisis of AD70 on the Jewish world; and that which is today impending upon the Gentile world. The parables before the prophecy had relation to the former; those given after it concerned the latter.

The first of the latter, as recorded by Matthew was the Parable of Noah being that of An Unheeding World.

BY now darkness had encompassed the city of Jerusalem, and the slopes of Olivet above it on the east. On part of the latter, the Lord rested with his apostles, instructing them concerning their attitude in view of the crisis then impending in his life. Around the little group of apostles were many people, for it was customary for visitors to the city to camp on the open spaces around Jerusalem during the period of the Passover.

A hum of conversation ascended on all sides as family groups began to settle down for the night.

The Need For Vigilance

But the Lord continued his instruction. He emphasised the need for watchfulness and wakefulness, by delivering unto the apostles a parable based upon the life of Noah — one that warned them that the judgment of Yahweh would overtake both the Jewish world in AD70, and the Gentile world of today, as suddenly and completely as did the flood in the days of Noah.

He urged his disciples that they must be on their guard against

becoming too engrossed with the world about them: *“As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be...”* he declared. The days of Noah were noted for the widespread indifference of people to the requirements of God. Men were heedless of their individual responsibility, and regardless of the signs of the times.

It was a time when “every imagination of the thoughts of men’s hearts were evil” (Gen. 6:5), when God’s way was universally corrupted (v. 12), when tyrants* dominated in the earth (v. 4), and it was filled with violence (v. 13).

Saddest of all, it was a time when believers were so involved in the world’s affairs that they, too, joined the mocking voices of scorners in ridiculing the warning counsel of Noah, and pleased themselves in what they did (v. 2).

So evil had mankind become, that God decided to blot that civilisation out of existence (v. 7); only Noah and his family found grace in His sight.

Now, on the side of the mount, overlooking the darkened city, Jesus warned his disciples again** that the crisis of the last days was prefigured by that of the flood. That means that people would be completely unheeding of the significant times, devoting themselves to the every day affairs of life, without thought that God is about to intervene: *“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”* (Mat. 24:38-39).

The Presence Of The Judge

There are significant suggestions in this statement of the Lord. Firstly, Noah was called into the ark before the storm broke out

upon an unheeding world.

In like manner, believers will be taken out of the world into the Christ-Ark before the storm of Armageddon will break over it (Isa. 26:20). Indeed, Peter taught that “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1Pet. 4:17). He was writing to believers years later, putting them on their guard against conditions that were then developing in the world. His teaching shows that Christ will first come to raise the

* The word “giants” in Gen. 6 has been rendered by some as “tyrants” (e.g. Luther). The original Hebrew word is *nethilim*, signifying “fallen ones,” because they had fallen from righteousness, from their first estate when God created man in His image. So they represent the dictatorial character of fleshly minds, which seeks to dominate their fellow men.

** He had on an earlier occasion spoken in similar terms (see Luke 17:26).

dead and judge his household, before dealing with the world. The type of Noah, who was shut in the ark before the flood came and destroyed the world, requires this sequence.

But does not the word “coming” signify the “returning” of the Lord, and was not the Lord speaking of his actual coming in the reference above? The word “coming” in that verse does not refer to the Lord’s arriving, but to his presence in the earth. The word, in the Greek, is *parousia*, and signifies “presence,” and not the act of coming. As we have already seen it represents the presence of the great majesty of Authority, then vested in the Lord Jesus.

The world will be ignorant of the presence of the Lord, even though he will be with his household in the isolated fastnesses of Sinai. The first the world will know of his actual presence will be when it feels the weight of his judgments, as he moves against it in company with his saints (Psa. 149).

It is therefore significant that he referred to himself as “Son of man” in the above context (Mat. 24:39), for that is the title of Jesus as Judge. He declared: “*The Father hath given the Son authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man*” (John 5:27). It will be when his judgments are in the earth, that its inhabitants will learn righteousness (Isa. 26:9).

Judgment Of The Household

The Lord’s warning, however, was for his disciples, and not for the world at large. They must be on their guard that they do not manifest the same attitude of indifference toward his coming, as is the case with the world.

It is a fact of vital import, that in the days of Noah, believers had become so involved in the affairs of society, that they could not extricate themselves therefrom when the judgment of God was poured upon it. They perished with the world that they loved so much!

Christ warned that it would be so at his second coming.

He solemnly told his disciples of this on the dark slopes of Olivet’s hill, in order that they might be alerted to the tremendous responsibility that rests upon individuals at such times. He declared: “*Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left*” (Mat. 24:40-41).

What did he mean? He was warning that the crisis would come so suddenly and unexpectedly, as to not provide any time for special preparation, so that unless disciples had earlier prepared for it, they would be completely taken off guard.

In stating that two shall be together in a field, or that two shall be grinding meal together, and that one shall be taken and the other left, the Lord did not mean that one would be taken to the judgment seat

and the other left behind, but rather, there would be close acquaintances whose friendship would be severed at the judgment seat, in that one would be accepted but the other rejected.

Those working in the field, or grinding at the mill, are associates and friends, working in conjunction with each other in the things of the Truth. But the judgment will reveal that they had no real fellowship together. It will be like the crisis in Noah's day, when only he and his family found the refuge of the ark, and the rest of the sons of God perished with the world (Gen. 6:2).

Prior to the discrimination revealed by the flood, the sons of Cain would have classed all the sons of Seth as associates and co-workers together; but some of them were taken into the ark, and the others were driven away. This will be repeated at the Judgment Seat of Christ. To people generally, all believers are equally members of the ecclesia, associating together in a common labour. But Christ perceives a difference; and he will reveal this at the Judgment Seat, for "one shall be taken and the other left."

The Greek word for "taken" is *paralambano*,* and signifies to take to oneself, as God took Noah into the ark, or as a man takes a wife (see its use in Mat. 1:20, 24).

On the other hand, the Greek word for "left" is the plural *aphentes*, which is compounded of two words: *apo* meaning "from," and *heimi*, meaning "to send," and therefore signifying "to send from, forth, or away." This word, therefore, does not mean to leave behind, but to drive away.

Thus, both parties are called together for judgment, but one is accepted as part of the Bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7), and the other one is driven back into the world which is given over to destruction. In this, they repeat the experiences of Lot's wife, who desired the pleasures of Sodom, and was changed into a memorial pillar of salt, remaining in the area of the place she so much wanted. There must have been many such scenes of sadness at the ark when the sons of God realised their foolishness in rejecting the warning sent from God, and were driven away, whilst Noah and his family were taken into its shelter.

* This Greek word signifies 'to take to oneself,' as God took Noah into the ark, or as a man takes a wife (see its use in Mat. 1:20, where the word is *paralabein*, and in v. 24, *parelabon* — both words a derivation of *paralambano*). While in this place *paralambano* is in the present tense (to take unto oneself), in Mat. 1:20, 24, the word is in each of those verses in a different Greek tense and time altogether.

Chapter 6

THE PARABLE OF THE MAN ON A FAR JOURNEY

The Lord continued his discussion based upon the Olivet prophecy by exhorting the apostles to watchfulness, and in order to give point to his words, he delivered unto them the parable of a man who left on a far journey, leaving his affairs in the care of his servants. Though Matthew introduces the subject of watchfulness, he does not record the parable of the Lord, and we must turn to Mark's record to obtain it.

THE Lord continued his urgent exhortation to his apostles: ***"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord will come!"*** The word in the Greek is significant. It is the singular, plural, *gregoreite*, and it means not merely to keep a lookout, but rather to keep awake and thus remain alert. It is used in relation to the signs of the times (Mat. 25:13; Mark 13:34; Luke 12:37), to the need for sound doctrine (Acts 20:31), to the need for personal vigilance (1Cor. 16:13) in regard to prayer (Col. 4:2), in the matter of conduct (1Thes. 5:6), in relation to the world's influence (1Pet. 5:8), and concerning ecclesial trends (Rev. 3:2,3).

**The Need for
Watchfulness
(Mat. 24:42;
Mark 13:34-37)**

It is so easy to figuratively fall asleep, so that we are not really "awake" to what is going on about us. Such influences as the pursuit of riches, the engrossments of the world, the seeking of pleasure, can cause us to become drowsy and insensitive to the requirements of God. Christ warned that his disciples must keep awake, because, as in the days of Noah, they do not know the hour when the crisis will come. Once it breaks forth, there will be no time for additional preparation.

Mark records (ch. 13:34-37) that the Lord added a parable at this moment. He told how that a man went on a far journey, leaving his house to the care of his servants. Each man was given his particular duty, even as each disciple has his particular sphere of labour in Christ's service (see 1Cor. 12:15-31; Eph. 4:11-12), and the porter was placed in charge of it all, with the command to supervise the work done.

Addressing the apostles with him, the Lord gave them specific instructions: ***"Watch ye therefore: for you do not know when the master of the house will come: at even [6pm], or at midnight [12pm], or at the cock-crowing [3am], or in the morning [6am]; Lest***

coming suddenly he find you sleeping.”

It seems as though the Lord was making reference to the practice of an official called the *Captain of the Temple*, whose duty it was to make the rounds of the temple to ensure that the temple guard were awake. On his approach, the guards had to rise and address him in a particular manner. Any guard found asleep was beaten, or his garments set on fire.

The Lord Jesus was about to ascend to the Father, and deliver the charge of the ecclesia into the care of the apostles. Two outstanding crises faced believers: the destruction of the Jewish State in AD70 which is called a “coming” or *parousia* (authoritative presence) of the Lord, and the overthrow of the Gentile system of things today impending. In both cases, the Lord would supervise the judgment and overthrow of his enemies.

In his Olivet prophecy, Christ indicated signs that would herald the approach of both judgments, but whilst we can interpret these relating to our days, and see in their fulfilment an indication of his coming, we do not know the exact time of his imminent return, any more than the apostles knew the exact time of the destruction of the Jewish State in AD70 until it occurred (cp. Mat. 24:6). They had to be on their guard and warn the ecclesia, as similarly we must be on our guard today, and heed the message that they left on record for these times.

In that sense, the apostles constitute the porter of this parable. They performed their work faithfully, and left on record teaching and exhortation for our guidance, which, if we heed will keep us awake concerning the signs of Christ’s return.

After the apostles died, the responsibility to heed this instruction rested upon the disciples of the Lord as a community, and therefore does so on believers today. Those exhortations can be summed up in the words of Paul: “Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch [*keep awake*] and be sober” (1Thes. 5:6).

Therefore the Lord concluded with the exhortation: “*And what I say unto you* [apostles], *I say unto all* [disciples]. *Watch!*”

Let us “keep awake” as the Lord exhorted, particularly as we see signs that clearly testify that his coming is near at hand.



Chapter 7

PARABLE OF THE THIEF

The Lord continued to stress the need for vigilance, alertness and wakefulness by basing an exhortation upon the unexpectedness of his return.

THERE was a need for the Lord to emphasise the exhortation delivered on the need for watchfulness. He knew that his disciples would face many trials when he was to be taken from them, and took further opportunity to prepare them for the future.

**The Householder
and the Thief**
(Mat. 24:43-44)

“If the owner of a house knew in what watch the thief would come,” Jesus continued, *“he would have watched [kept awake], and would not have allowed his house to be broken up.”* The statement is a very obvious one, and needs no comment. On this basis, the Lord continued: *“Therefore be you also ready; for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh”* (v. 44). The “Son of man” is the title of Christ as judge (John 5:27), so that the warning of Jesus is that he can come as Judge at a moment when we least expect him.

How could these words apply to the apostles who died so long ago?

In fact, they apply to all disciples of every age for, in a sense, death can be likened to a “coming of the Lord,” in that the next moment of consciousness will be at his Judgment Seat. This is what the apostle Paul meant when he said that he had “a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil. 1:23), for he anticipated that the next moment after his death he would see his Master at the resurrection.

Death can come just as suddenly and unexpectedly as the literal return of the Lord will be; and once it does, our account is closed for good or ill.

Wise is the person who, recognising this, remains awake to his responsibilities, and by guarding over his life and actions, builds a character pleasing to Christ at his coming.



Chapter 8

PARABLE OF THE FAITHFUL AND EVIL SERVANTS

The Lord now repeated a parable that he had given on an earlier occasion (see Luke 12:42-48), in which he contrasted two servants: one faithful and wise, and the other evil and slothful. The first is represented as being elevated into a position of authority: made ruler over his master's goods after the example of Joseph whose wise and faithful service was similarly rewarded by Pharaoh.

This parable, recorded only by Matthew in this place, is the first of four parables relating to the second advent, and which parallel the four that he recorded the Lord as giving at the beginning of his discourse in the temple, relating to the first advent (see Mat. 21:28 to 22:14). See the analysis of this section of Matthew's Gospel on page 185.

HAVING completed his solemn warning on the need for wakefulness, the Lord delivered a parable unto the apostles, illustrating the most profitable way in which they could occupy their time. It was a call to service, and he drew from the Old Testament record to illustrate his exhortation to them.

The Joseph-like Servant (Mat. 24:45-51)

The Master explained that they should emulate the example of faithful and wise Joseph, who so conducted himself as a servant of the king, that he was elevated to rulership with him. The Lord declared: ***"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he comes, shall find so doing. Truly I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods."***

The servant is described as being both faithful and wise. He is therefore one who lives according to the principles he believes, and who also manifests discretion in his relationships toward others.

In being appointed ruler of his Lord's household in his absence, the servant in the parable occupied a position of privilege and responsibility, which he graced by providing "meat in due season."

Elders of ecclesias occupy a similar position in the absence of their Lord. If they grace the position they hold by providing "meat in due season," he will find pleasure in their conduct at his return.

Jesus described the pleasure of a lord who returns suddenly and

unexpectedly, to find his trusted servant faithfully carrying out his instructions. Realising that he can place confidence in him, his lord will most certainly bless and reward him.

The Lord Jesus will do likewise in regard to those who have faithfully, conscientiously, and wisely carried out his instructions in his absence. His disciples are his servants, and the use of the term indicates the measure of service that should be rendered. The word “servant,” is a translation of the Greek word *doulos*, which signifies a bondservant, or a slave: one whose will is absorbed in that of another. As Christ performed the will of his Father in heaven, and therefore became His suffering servant, so his disciples should seek to subordinate their desires to doing his will.

The Fate Of The Evil Servant

But all servants are not like Joseph. The Lord contrasted the wise and faithful servant with one who was evil and slothful, who said to himself that his lord delayed his coming, and proceeded to act upon that belief. Having been placed in a position of authority, this servant exercised it in a domineering way. He began to smite his fellow-servants who feared to retaliate, and to give himself over to pleasure-seeking and debauchery.

He was quite unprepared for his lord’s sudden return, and was caught in the very act of indulging his folly: eating and drinking with the drunken. He was not only guilty of wasting his lord’s goods and time, but also of giving a bad example to those placed under his charge, which could well lead to them doing likewise.

In indignation, his lord ordered that he be punished. The slothful servant now realised the extent of his folly in neglecting the opportunities opened to him, which, if wisely used, could have secured for him further advancements. Filled with regret, he could not restrain his bitter, though useless, tears of anguish and lamentations of sorrow.

Let us act wisely, so as to avoid similar tears of sorrow and unavailing grief at the Judgment Seat. We must remember, that Christ has placed the riches of the Gospel into our care, and if we act as did the evil servant, we virtually rob him of what is his due.

The evil servant was found “eating and drinking with the drunken” (Mat. 24:49). Christ’s servants do that when they mix freely with the world which has been made drunk with the “wine” of Babylon the Great (Rev. 17:1-2). He was found smiting the fellow servants. Christ’s servants can be guilty of the same fault if they unduly exercise lordship over their brethren. He was found saying, “My lord delayeth his coming.” Christ’s servants can also act upon that presumption.

In short, a servant of Christ does not have to give himself over to

what would normally be considered as debauchery in order to fit into the category of “eating and drinking with the drunken,” for that could be his state if he is found unduly associating with the world about him in a way that Christ would not approve.

The Awful Punishment Of The Wicked At The Judgment When the evil servant was brought before his lord to receive punishment for so wantonly wasting his lord’s time and goods he heard the stern punishment: **“Cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites!”** Thus was proclaimed death by execution: the fate of all hypocrites and traitors! It was a punishment often decreed against slaves who wasted their master’s goods, or acted dishonestly, and consequently suitably illustrated the fate of those who are described as “crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:6).

Christ’s followers do this when by very thoughtlessness they treat Christ’s sacrifice lightly, or show contempt toward the instructions he has left them. In this they put him to an open shame, because unbelievers judge the value of his offering by its impact upon believers. Paul wrote: “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith Yahweh. And again, Yahweh shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:28-31).

Let it be clearly understood that God does not drive by fear, but leads by love. However, those who remain indifferent to His requirements by refusing to submit to baptism, or by ignoring His will when baptised, face a fearful awakening at the Judgment Seat, as the Lord warned in this parable. God will not remain indifferent to slighting contempt toward His Son on the part of those who should know better. They will be consigned to “the second death” (Rev. 2:11).

In the parable, this is described as being “cut asunder.”* Primarily,

* The word in the Greek rendered “cut him asunder” is *dichotomesei* (future tense), to cut into two parts. In the Septuagint version, the verb is used of dividing the sacrifice as in Exo. 29:17, whilst the noun (rendered “pieces,” “carcase,” etc.) is found in such places as Gen. 15:11, 17; Exo. 29:17; Lev. 1:8; Eze. 24:4. Judicially, those brought before the Judgment Seat of Christ will be “cut asunder” in that their character will be revealed for what they are (Heb. 4:13), after which they will be condemned, or appointed with the hypocrites, to share their fate.

this indicates being executed; but when considered in relationship to the work of redemption, it has far greater significance. It then implies that the one about to be executed has “broken the everlasting covenant” (Isa. 24:5), and deserves to be “cut off” (Mat. 24:51; mg.).

In ancient times, a covenant was ratified by a solemn ceremony of sacrifice. An animal was selected for this purpose; then slain and divided into two. Between the parts, the two contracting parties met to make a solemn vow to remain true to the agreement into which they mutually entered. Afterwards they partook of the victim in the sacrificial feast, thus signifying that they were joined together in solemn covenant.

Such agreements were absolutely binding, and the penalty for breaking such a covenant was death. In fact, in ratifying it with the covenant victim “cut asunder” in the manner prescribed, the contracting parties indicated that the fate of the victim should be theirs if they broke it. This ceremony and its penalty is described in Jer. 34:18-19, “I will give the men that have transgressed My covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before Me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof... I will give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life; and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of heaven.”

In the parable, the servant was found guilty of breaking a solemn vow he had made with his lord, and was therefore “cut asunder” in punishment, or executed as one who had broken his bond. It illustrates the fate of those who act in similar manner toward the covenant that they have made with God through Christ. For he is the covenant victim provided by God for that purpose.

He impressed that fact upon the apostles a few hours after delivering this parable, when, at the last supper, he took bread, and breaking it (or dividing it in two), he passed it to them saying, “This is my body...;” and then passing the wine, “This is my blood of the new covenant...” (as the word “testament” should be rendered).

How solemn and binding is the covenant we make with God through Christ! How awful the punishment of those who break it! How significant the words that Paul used in describing it: “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord... eating and drinking condemnation to himself” (1Cor. 11:27-29).*

Figuratively, the rejected will be “cut asunder,” or given their portion with the “hypocrites” (Mat. 24:51). In fact, they will be banished from the presence of Christ and sent into the world of

* We will discuss what is meant by “eating unworthily” and “drinking condemnation to himself” when we come to consider the last supper in detail.

unbelievers which they loved, and there they will live out their hopeless existence in lamentation and regret until death claims them. They will illustrate the fate of those who break the covenant of God to all with whom they come into contact, and will constitute a solemn warning to any who might be disposed to despise the birthright which will be found in Christ by mortals during the millennium as now.

A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels

MARY THE STUDIOUS

References to Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha, are found in Lk. 10:38-42; Jn. 11; 12:1-3. An index to the character of both Mary and her sister is contained in the statement: "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus" (Jn. 11:5). Jesus loved people for what they really were in character, not because of their appearance or social condition.

Mary was an extremely thoughtful, meditative disciple. Her voice is rarely heard; in fact, the only time she is recorded as speaking, is when she repeated the complaint of Martha at the delay in Jesus coming to their help (Jn. 11:32). At the feet of Jesus, Mary listened, and was silent; at the grave of her brother, she wept and observed, but was silent; in the house at Bethany, she ministered to the Lord by anointing him, and was silent.

She was impractical from worldly standards, preferring to hearken to the teaching of the Lord, rather than engaging in the mundane things of life, thus she took hold of her spiritual opportunities (Lk. 10:38-42). In doing so, she showed that she was able to discriminate between the relative value of things, and recognise the better ones. It is sometimes thought that Mary neglected the material needs of others, but that is not so. When the Lord arrived at Bethany tired and dusty, Mary anointed his head (Mat. 26:7) and feet (Jn. 12:3), and wiped his feet with her hair. John records that "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

Faithful, loving service will have this effect at any time. Let a sister figuratively perform similar service in Christ's name, and the odour of the action will fill the ecclesial house. It is a terrible thing that Mary's action was adversely criticised by Judas, but the Lord commended it, and this fact should stimulate others to imitate Mary, who might otherwise be deterred by such criticism for performing similar seemingly extravagant service. The action of Mary in the house at Bethany shows that she was thoughtful as well as considerate, for she undoubtedly did this to indicate her

belief in him as the Messiah. She was one who carefully pondered the meaning of things (Jn. 11:20), and acted accordingly. This was a contrast to her more active, but less thoughtful sister. It is significant that we read of her weeping at the death of her brother, though nothing of that kind is recorded concerning Martha. It would appear, therefore, that Mary was more demonstrative in both love and sorrow (Jn. 11:32).

MARTHA: THE INDUSTRIOUS

Her name means *Lady* or *Mistress*. She owned the house in which she entertained Jesus (Lk. 10:38), though elsewhere it is called Simon the leper's (Mk. 14:3). From this it is assumed that Simon was dead, and Martha had inherited the house. Certainly, she is shown dominating it (Jn. 12:2), being always busy on somebody else's behalf (Lk. 10:38-41).

Martha's name is placed before that of Mary in the statement which records Jesus' love for them both, and usually, in Scripture, such an order is significant. It implies that he was more drawn toward Martha than toward Mary, though he loved them both dearly. This love did not blind him to her faults, nor prevent him from rebuking her when she upbraided her sister (Lk. 10:38-41).

The Lord, however, could see behind the facade of activity to the inner love of Martha. She had not the spiritual nor mental ability of her sister; but she did the utmost with those qualities she possessed. There is great encouragement in this for all who find themselves in her category.

Martha had a tender affection for the Lord and sought to make him comfortable and show him respect in her house, but Christ revealed to her that he regarded the inward cravings of his followers for the spiritual things he could provide for them, to be of greater importance than the material comforts they might offer him.

In a typical scene (Lk. 10:40), Martha was cumbered about with many things, trying to provide a meal for the Lord of greater proportions than he needed, whilst ignoring the food that he was ready to dispense. Complaining of the inactivity of her sister, she earned his open rebuke. Let all Marthas consider that scene and those words. Is the elegant meal that they provide of equal importance to the manna obtained from the Word? There was a place for both, as Jesus taught, but both must be in their proper place!

Martha was impetuous and active, as is indicated by her open rebuke of her sister on the occasion when she entertained the Lord,

and by the practical way in which she rushed to meet him with words of reproach because of his delay in assisting Lazarus (Jn. 11:20-21). Yet, though so blunt, she was not wanting in tact, and when the Lord called for Mary, she lovingly approached her secretly to advise that Jesus wanted her presence (Jn. 11:28). In the last glimpse that the Scriptures afford us of these two women, Martha is preparing the meal and Mary, forgetful of material things, is paying tribute to the spiritual (Jn. 12:1-3). The world which loves bodily comfort pays its tribute to Martha; it is left to Christ to do so to Mary.

Yet it is obvious that Martha was not always bustling about with the meals and the house, but in her own impetuous way made time to take in the Word, and for this Jesus loved her. She was the feminine counterpart of Peter the apostle.

MATTHEW: THE BUSINESS MAN WHO LEFT ALL

See *Story of the Bible*, vol. 5, pp. 347-348.

NATHANAEL: THE GULELESS ONE

His name means, *The Gift of God*, and reference to him appears only in the Gospel of John (Jn. 1:45-49; 21:2). He was from Cana in Galilee (Jn. 21:2), where Jesus turned water into wine. He is identified with Bartholomew, which is said to be not really a name but a patronymic, signifying, *Son of Tolmai*. Bartholomew is referred to only in the lists of the apostles (Mat. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:14; Acts 1:13), and as Nathanael was an apostle, the identification seems complete.

Jesus described Nathanael as a true Israelite without guile (Jn. 1:47); a wonderful description. He was the fruit of Gospel proclamation labour, for he owed his introduction to Jesus to the action of a friend. He was guileless, but not gullible, and therefore demanded proof that Jesus was the Messiah.

Nathanael was a careful student of the Word, and because of this waited for the advent of the Messiah. He had his hope realised in a most unexpected manner, and found that the Christ was identified with despised Nazareth, a place which he believed could not possibly reveal him (Jn. 1:45-46). These circumstances created a bias in him against Jesus, but he was forced to submit to the evidence provided him (Jn. 1:48-49). His general attitude so pleased the Master, that it secured for him the promise of an increasing blessing that will find its consummation in the Age to come (Jn. 1:50-51).

Chapter 9

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

The first parable in this series that depicts events at the second advent of the Lord, illustrated the fate of those who fail to conform to the instructions of Christ. This second one emphasises the need for personal preparation on the part of all. In the first parable, the "evil servant" openly gave himself over to debauchery, but there will be others who will not do this, and yet fail to measure up to the requirements of Christ. This second parable illustrates that fact, and shows the cause of failure on the part of others; they did not provide sufficient oil in their lamps!

The parable was based upon the custom of the times. According to the historian Edersheim, it was usual in the East for bridal processions to be conducted as described in the parable, and usually with ten such lamps. In the case of the parable, the virgins were selected for the purpose of bearing these lights, and had a responsibility to see that they each had sufficient oil, in order to provide adequate illumination to grace the wedding celebrations.

The parable commences with the statement, "then... shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins." The Greek word for "then" indicates a point of time: "at that time," the time being the future when the parable will apply. Further, in the Greek the word "heaven" is in the plural: "heavens." Matthew frequently uses this term for the Kingdom of God, doubtless aligning it with the statement of Dan. 4:26, "the heavens do rule." As such it becomes a very expressive description of the Kingdom of God on earth.

TEN virgins were selected to grace a marriage procession. Their duties were very important. They were each given a lamp, and instructed to keep it filled with oil and burning brightly in anticipation of the arrival of the bridegroom. When he appeared, it would be their duty to accompany him to the bridal home, where the marriage supper would take place.



The Parable (Mat. 25:1-13)

On this occasion, however, the bridegroom was delayed longer than had been anticipated, and in consequence, the virgins became drowsy, and the oil of five of them began to fail in their

lamps. Unfortunately for them, their attention was only drawn to this at the crucial moment when the cry was raised that he was approaching.

Immediately all was a scene of urgent activity. The virgins started to their feet, looking at their lamps that they had by their side. They were burning low, and had to be trimmed; and it was at this moment that the five foolish among them found that their lamps were going out.

Now their activity turned to desperate panic.

They had vessels by their sides by which to replenish the oil in the lamps, but to their consternation, the five foolish ones found that they had not sufficient oil for the purpose.

Now they became panic-stricken!

The failure of oil could not have occurred at a worse moment. It was late at night, the bridegroom was fast approaching, and yet if they did not obtain oil they would be shamed before all the guests and onlookers at the marriage. In alarm and confusion they turned to the others, whose freely burning lamps indicated ample oil. "Give us of your oil," they pleaded, "for our lamps are going out!"

But the others only had sufficient for their purpose: "There is not enough for us and you," they replied. "Go to them who will sell, and buy for yourselves!"

They hastened to do so, but it was too late! The bridegroom came, and the procession moved on to the bridal home. It entered, and the door was shut.

Meanwhile, the foolish virgins returned, to find the procession had left for the bridal home. Their folly was apparent to all. The shame and disgrace of their state were borne home to them as they moved quickly to catch up to the procession. Instead of gracing the wedding, they had disgraced it to the disappointment and annoyance of all concerned. And now, hastening to where the marriage supper was to be held, and finding the door shut, they pleaded for entrance: "Lord, Lord, open to us!" they called.

But they had shown no consideration for him, and by their negligence had almost ruined the glory of the occasion, and so he refused their request. "Truly, I tell you, I do not know you!"

To "know" is often used in the sense of "approving" (Mat. 7:23; Psa. 1:6; 2Tim. 2:19; 1Thes. 5:12), and the Bridegroom could not approve such conduct which adversely reflected upon both him and his bride. They were turned away. The bitter disappointment, the unavailing grief, the personal recriminations remained for them. Whilst inside was light and joy and laughter, for those outside there was only darkness, gloom and misery.

So it will be for all those at the Judgment Seat who fail to have sufficient oil in their lamps.

How necessary it is that we give careful heed to these matters; that we watch ourselves, as well as the signs of the times. So the Lord concluded the parable by pressing home the lesson: ***“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man [i.e., the judge] will come.”***

By so doing, and heeding the message of these parables, we will avoid the disgrace and disappointment, the lamentation and frustration that will otherwise be ours at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But we must apply the lessons now; for tomorrow may be too late!

Interpreting the Parable

There are very important principles stressed in this parable which justify the closest attention and study.

Firstly, there is the number of virgins: ten. That is the number of completeness, and is frequently used in Scripture symbolically for a large, unspecified number (e.g., 1Sam. 1:8).

Then there is the character of those referred to as “virgins.” This speaks of those who have separated themselves from the world to serve Christ: “These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth...” (Rev. 14:4).

By contrast, the apostate religious systems of the world are symbolised as unfaithful women: “Babylon the Great; the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:5).

The parable shows that some of the virgins did not qualify for the marriage feast, implying that to merely separate from the world, is to observe only the negative aspect of God’s requirements, and is not sufficient; there remains the need to apply the affirmative principles also, and manifest the divine qualities in action.

The virgins are represented as bearing lamps fed by oil: symbolising the Truth shining in darkness (Psa. 119:105; Mat. 5:16). It was the responsibility of Israelites to beat out olives in order to produce pure oil for the lamps in the Tabernacle and Temple. Similarly, it is the obligation of Christ’s followers to carefully study the Word of God, that they might radiate its light in doctrine and action.

The ten virgins were divided into two lots of five; another significant number. Five is always associated with grace. In the case of the parable, five had grace extended to them; though, originally, both fives had been drawn by the invitation of Yahweh’s grace or favour. Five were wise. The word, in the original, is *phronimai* (feminine, plural), and signifies that they were prudent, sensible, or wise in a practical way. They were not merely virgins of understanding, but virgins who applied the wisdom they possessed. There is a gulf of difference between mere understanding of know-

ledge and the practical application of it.

The other five are described as “foolish.” This is translated from the Greek word *morai* which signifies “dull, sluggish,” and hence “stupid.” The word has been defined as, “he who sees not what is proper or necessary.” That being their attitude, these five virgins did not make adequate personal preparation for the important position to which they had been called.

They “took no oil with them” (v. 3). Actually, they did have oil in their lamps, but not in the vessels they carried with them, and which provided reserves of oil. They lacked those reserves. They were like disciples, who having come to an understanding of the basic doctrines of Truth, and having been baptised, fail to add to their knowledge of the will and purpose of God. They lack reserves of knowledge, and in times of stress or trial they more easily succumb to the pressures of life.

On the other hand, the wise “took oil in their vessels *with* their lamps” (v. 4). They had made certain that they retained ample reserves for an emergency.

The most solemn feature of the parable is the statement of v. 5: “***While the bridegroom tarried*** (cp. 2Pet. 3:9), ***they all slumbered* and slept.***” They had anticipated that the bridegroom would come earlier than he did, but when this did not prove to be the case they became drowsy through the long wait. Some began to slumber, their heads nodding* through tiredness, whilst others fell into a deep sleep.

The parable suggests that all will be in that state: either their heads



* The word “slumber” comes from a word signifying to nod the head, to be overcome with sleep.

nodding in weariness, or else asleep in spiritual or literal death. The apostles realised the significance of this suggestion, and warned against it. "Let us not [spiritually] sleep, as do others," exhorted Paul, "let us watch and be sober" (1Thes. 5:6).

The cry came at midnight, when least expected, and all arose to trim their lamps, so that the light which identified them might shine forth at its best. Thus the oil symbolises the power of the Spirit-Word, shining forth through individual actions and character. It was when the virgins came to trim their lamps, that the foolish realised how inadequate was the store of oil they had provided. Similarly it will be when we are brought under the pressure of the Judgment Seat, that we will all recognise how inadequate have been our preparations for it.

The foolish panicked and pleaded, but in vain. As Psa. 49:7 declares: "None can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him." We cannot provide the oil or the light for others. Each one must shine forth on his own account. The wise virgins acknowledged this, a principle stressed later by Peter who had previously listened to the parable with wonder as to what it might mean. He then wrote: "If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" The answer is: They will not appear as saved persons at all!

We must not be discouraged by the statement that the righteous "scarcely" are saved. If we really love God and seek to please Him, He will overlook our weaknesses and grant us eternal life.

Remember: He has revealed Himself unto us as a Father, and like as a father pitieth his children, so Yahweh pitieth them that fear Him (Psa. 103:13). The Psalmist adds: "For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (v. 14).

But we must not delay using the means that He has provided us in order that we might be saved. Among the important things delivered into our care, is His Word. If we ignore it, or fail to use the privilege of prayer, we deny ourselves the means of strength that will enable us to "shine forth as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" (Phil. 2:15). The Greek word for "nation" can be translated "congregation."

In that case, we, too, will find the door closed against us, and all our pleading will be unavailing. In the days of Noah, the door of the ark was closed against those who desired to enter once they saw the storm banking up (Gen. 7:16). In the days of Israel, the people called out of Egypt and brought into the wilderness were not permitted to "enter in [the land] because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:18-19). At the Judgment Seat of Christ the door of the entrance to the Kingdom will be closed against certain, in spite of their pleading. Christ declared: "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and you begin to stand without, and to knock at the door,

saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he shall answer and say unto you, 'I know you not whence you are' (Luke 13:25).

I Know You Not!

Christ will say, "I know you not!" In those solemn words he will disown those virgins who claim to know him. Why will he do this to those who are described as "virgins"? Because with all their profession of belief, with all their verbal acknowledgment of the principles of Christ, and with all their external identification with his ecclesia, they have failed to build into their lives any adequate resemblance of his character.

There is no real likeness to the true family of Christ.

They have failed to apply in action what they may have acclaimed in word. The Psalmist declares the need for revealing in deed the significance of doctrines embraced: "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in Yahweh," he exhorted worshippers who, in his day, failed to apply the principles they professed.

If we fail to do that, God will ignore us in time of trouble:

*"Because I have called, and you refused;
I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded;
But you have set at nought all My counsel,
And would none of My reproof;
I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when your fear cometh;
When your fear cometh as desolation;
And your destruction cometh as a whirlwind;
When distress and anguish cometh upon you.
Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer;
They shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me;
For that they hated knowledge,
And did not choose the fear of Yahweh:
They would none of My counsel:
They despised all My reproof.
Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,
And be filled with their own devices.
But whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely,
And shall be quiet for fear of evil."*

(Pro. 1:24-33).

These are solemn words of wisdom demonstrating the difference between the wise and the fool. In view of the fact that the bridegroom is at the door, it becomes most important that we apply the principles stressed therein, in case we, too, are found among those to whom the Lord will speak, when he sadly declares: "**I know you not.**"

Paul summarises the matter thus: "*The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*" (2Tim. 2:19).

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

This is the third in the final series of four parables. It is very similar to the parable of the pounds, contained in Luke 19. But there are significant differences that it is most important we discern, in order to apply the lessons thus taught. In the parable of the pounds, all the servants of the nobleman received the same amount, but each servant was awarded differently according to the increase that his trading had brought.

But this is reversed in the parable now before us. Each of the man's servants received a different amount, but were granted the same reward irrespective as to whether they gained five talents or two.

What is the reason for this? It reveals very important principles of Truth that it is necessary for us to recognise.

In the parable of the pounds, each of the servants received the same amount, because the pounds represent the Gospel which each of Christ's followers equally receive, and with which they are expected to trade. In the parable of the talents, however, each received talents "according to his several ability" (v. 15), or in varying amounts. In those days, a talent represented wealth, approximately \$4,000 (in 2005), but because of this parable it has come to stand, in the English language, for natural ability.

In the parable of the pounds, the rewards paid to the various servants differed according to the success or otherwise of their "trading;" whereas in the parable of the talents, the one reward was given to each irrespective as to whether he gained five or two talents; the reason being, that in the former parable, the pound that each received represented the Gospel, and the various rewards related to the degrees of honour that will be paid those who labour diligently at his work: some receiving more than others. In the latter parable, however, the same reward is given, namely eternal life, for in the granting of this no one will be penalised because he or she lacks the talents possessed by another. If we use our limited ability in the things of God, we will receive eternal life just as surely as will Paul or John who had greater ability in spiritual directions.

The parable of the talents, therefore, teaches that we must learn to use our natural gifts, whether mental, physical or material, in Christ's service; recognising them as talents entrusted to us to use to the glory of Yahweh (see 1Pet. 4:10-11). The

parable promises that a person of lesser ability will not be penalised if he uses his limited gifts to the best advantage (see James 1:17; 1Tim. 6:17). It is the "willing mind" that counts, and not what a person has (see 2Cor. 8:12). In Christ, even the menial tasks of everyday life are elevated into a divine service, so that work in the home, the office, or the workshop can be used to his glory (see Eph. 5:22; 6:2, 5-6).

CHRIST'S parables to date have emphasised the need to watch and wait for his coming, but in the one that he now delivered to his apostles, he showed the need for all to occupy their time in working for him as well, during the period of waiting.

The Parable (Mat. 25:14-30)

He told the story of a wealthy man who had to leave his establishment in order to travel into a far country. But before doing so, he called his bond-servants before him, and distributed to each of them differing amounts of money, according to the ability of each one, and then, immediately took his journey.

Some had received five, some two, and some one talent.

This was considerable money to leave with his servants, for it has been assessed that a talent was about \$4,000 [in 2005], indicating how precious are those natural gifts that God has granted us.

The servant with the one talent, has, at least, the capacity to understand the will and purpose of Yahweh, and this is a very precious gift with which to trade. The Book of Proverbs reminds us of that:

*"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
And the man that getteth understanding.
For the merchandise of it is better than that of silver,
And the gain thereof than fine gold.
She is more precious than rubies:
And all things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto
her.
Length of days (immortality) is in her right hand;
And in her left hand riches and honour.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her;
And happy is every one that retaineth her."*

In this outline of the benefits of Wisdom, immortality (the reward indicated in the parable of the talents) is extended in her right hand; whilst riches and honour (the reward indicated in the parable of the pounds) is extended in her left hand.

In the parable, however, the servant with the single talent went and hid that which had been delivered unto him. He did not lack the ability to use it (see v. 15), but perhaps because he was self-conscious of his lack of ability in contrast to his other companions, he feared to trade with it, or was too lazy to do so, and placed it in a safe hiding place in the earth.

Instead of hiding it in the earth, he should have done what is suggested in Psa. 119:11 and Jer. 15:16, “Thy Word have I *hid in mine heart*, That I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11). “Thy words were found, and *I did eat them*; And Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: For I am called by Thy Name, O Yahweh God of hosts” (Jer. 15:16).

The Lord’s Return After a long time, the lord of the servants returned. He called them before him, that they might give an account of their labour in his absence (2Cor. 5:10).

The first was enthusiastic: “*Lord,*” he declared, “*You delivered unto me five talents, and, behold, I have gained besides them a further five talents.*”

He had accomplished this by wisely using that left in his charge. That is the basis of John’s exhortation: “Look to yourselves,” he wrote, “that you lose not those things which you have wrought, but that you receive a full reward” (2John 8; RV).

The lord commended his servant for his faithful diligence: “*Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will promote you to be ruler over many things: enter into the joy of your lord!*”

The second servant spoke in a similar fashion, even though he could not claim the success of the first: “*Lord, you delivered unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents besides them!*”

Their lord recognised that his servant had done well, and commended him. Both these servants had acknowledged that the talents entrusted to them had come from their lord, and were not their personal possession, which is the first principle of acceptable service.

Both these servants were invited to “enter into the joy” of their lord, or to “partake of their master’s joy,” as the Diaglott renders the phrase.

The word for “joy” (*chara*) can, by metonymy, signify a feast. It is so used in the Septuagint in Est. 9:19. It was in accord with the custom of the times for a master to convey upon freed slaves the honour of feasting with their previous lord. An indication of this is given in Luke 12:37, “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh shall find watching: truly I say unto you, that he shall gird himself; and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” The Master promises that he will thus entertain

his slaves in the day of his return (see Mat. 26:29).

Both servants in the parable were therefore promoted, by being given their freedom, and were invited to rule over portion of their master's estate. These two had learned a fundamental lesson stressed by the Lord Jesus, and that is, if we desire to rule in the Age to come, we must learn to rule ourselves now. They had learned to rule their lives (see Pro. 16:32), and thus had demonstrated their ability to rule others (see Luke 22:29; Rev. 2:26; 3:21). On that basis, they were promoted in the way indicated.

But the man with the single talent had failed to do that. Though his talent provided him with the capacity to understand the will and purpose of his lord, his very comment and explanation reveals that he did not use it.

He churlishly answered his master, *"I know you, that you are a severe man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered; And being afraid, I went and hid your talent in the earth; see, here is that which is yours!"*

This sullen attitude of the man with the single talent marred the pleasure of the lord's return. He had been able to rejoice in the faithful attitude of the other servants, but now his joy was spoiled by the man with the single talent who had refused to use it.

He had offered an excuse for his attitude, but it was not valid. His words illustrated the truth of the proverb: "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason" (Pro. 26:16). He claimed that his lord had demanded more than he deserved to receive. He used the language of those who state that the Truth demands of us a greater service than we can render. But those who so claim are virtually admitting that God will not help and strengthen them in that labour.

He declared that he had hidden the talent out of fear of his lord. But if that had really been his motive, why did he not put the talent to the exchangers to gain the increase that would save him from any punishment?

No, he was a liar. He maligned that character of his lord to justify his indolence.

His lord fixed him with a steady gaze. He clearly recognised the motives of the lazy servant before him. Justice demanded that he be punished, and that the punishment fit the crime. He had proclaimed that the lord was a "hard man," and now the lord determined to reveal himself as such (see Psa. 18:26).

In the hearing of the other servants who thus witnessed the disgrace of the man with the single talent, the lord declared: ***"You wicked and slothful servant!..."*** The servant was wicked in the way he had viewed his lord; he was slothful in his application to the duties committed to his charge. He provided a complete contrast to the other

servants who were described as “good and faithful” (v. 21, 23).

The lord condemned him out of his own mouth. If he had been afraid of his lord because he demanded more than he gave, he should have obeyed him: ***“You should have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury.”***

To do so was the easiest means of gaining increase, and the lightest form of labour. It needed no great ability, so that the man with the single talent could have done that much, at least, and it would have shown that he was anxious to fulfil his lord’s will.

But he was too lazy to do so.

So he was condemned.

The talent was taken from him, and given to the man with the ten talents, who had not only revealed his capacity for using the money entrusted to him, but had done so energetically. His industry is emphasised more in the Revised Version than it is in the Authorised Version, for it renders verse 16 as: ***“Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded...”***

He did it “straightway,” immediately. He laboured hard, and so developed the talents. It is said, with truth, that genius is made up of ten per cent inspiration, and ninety per cent perspiration! It is certain that a person of limited ability who is diligent, will soon outstrip a more talented person who is indolent. “Seest thou a man diligent in his business?” asked the wise man, “he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before obscure men” (Pro. 22:29).

The Lesson Of The One-Talented Man

The man with the one talent demonstrated the truth that we must either use or lose these God-given gifts. The Lord Jesus made that point clear as he pointed the lesson of the parable: ***“For unto every one that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that has not [i.e. not added to his original talent, or traded with his God-given gifts so as to make it his own] shall be taken away even that which he hath [that opportunity originally given to him].”***

The book of Revelation teaches the same truth. It warns: ***“But the fearful [the word signifies “cowards,” such as was the one-talented man], and unbelieving... and all liars [which he was in decrying the character of his lord]... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death”*** (Rev. 21:8).

The man in the parable was consigned to a similar fate. Turning to his attendants the lord directed: ***“Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”***

The servant was unprofitable because he did not develop the one talent given to him. That one talent is the capacity to understand the will and purpose of God. Any possessing that single talent, only has



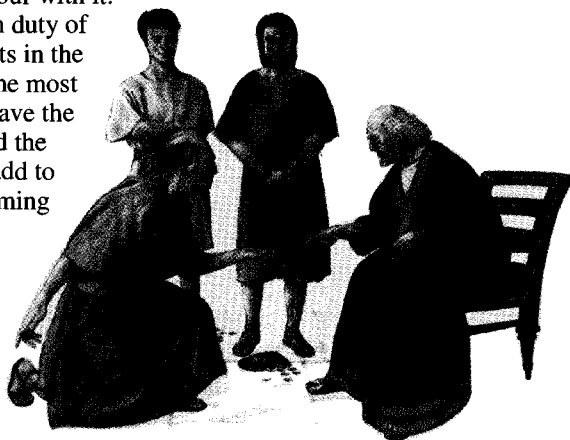
to apply that which he knows, and he has doubled in trading in the things of God.

The servant was “unprofitable,” which teaches that we must become profitable by adding to that which has been given us of God. The servant had not absconded with his lord’s money; he had merely avoided adding to it. The parable, therefore, teaches that it is not enough to abstain from doing evil; it is not enough to show a reverence for Scripture (as the man revealed awe for his



lord, and anxious care that he should preserve the talent, and so hid it away), we must labour with it.

It is the bounden duty of all to use their talents in the service of Christ. The most humble among us have the ability to understand the will of God; let us add to our talent by performing it.



Chapter 11

PARABLE OF THE SHEEP AND GOATS

Though this section of the Lord's discourse is not so clearly parabolic as his previous instruction, it is obvious that it should be treated among the parables. Normally, a parable is a story with a hidden meaning, whereas this discourse is clear on the surface and provides a prophetic picture of the judgment. Yet that picture is intermixed with allusions that are not literal, such as references to the Shepherd, the Sheep and Goats, an Everlasting Fire, and so forth.

On the other hand, there is clear teaching regarding Christ's return, the King, the Judgment Seat, the Reward, and so forth.

It will be noted in our parallelism of the Lord's discourse from Mat. 21:28 to Mat. 26:1, that at the beginning, Matthew records the Lord as giving three parables which charged the Jews with disobedience, followed by one that sums up the previous, by giving the fate of the man without the marriage garment. Following the Olivet Prophecy, he delivered three parables on the need for watchfulness (Mat. 24:45 to 25:30), which he consequently concluded with a summary of the judgment seat.

Alternatively, this discourse can be interpreted as a vision of the Judgment Seat expressed in descriptive language, rather than parabolic; and as such it represents a fitting summary of all previous discourses, including the Olivet Prophecy.

THIS is not so much a parable as a prophecy, so there is little to tell in way of narrative. It predicts that the Son of man will come in his glory with the angels, and there will be gathered before him all the nations for judgment.

The Drama of the Parabolic Prophecy (Matthew 25:31-46)

They will be separated into two great groups: sheep on the right hand and goats on the left. To those on the right will be spoken words of warm welcome and pleasure, inviting them to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and declaring the reason for the Lord's commendation.

But those on the left will be rebuked in anger, and will be reminded of duties they have failed to perform.

A feature of the judgment is the ignorance that both groups display toward the reason for their respective judgments.

Finally, the righteous enter into life eternal; and the wicked

receive everlasting punishment.

The general meaning of the parabolic-prophecy is clear on a casual reading, but important principles are unfolded when close consideration is given.

The Judge

In this discourse, the Lord described himself as the "*Son of man*." This is a most significant title, for it addresses him as Judge. On an earlier occasion he declared: "The Father hath given the Son authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man" (John 5:27).

The title of *Son of man* is drawn from two great prophecies of the Old Testament, both of which are associated with judgment and triumph: Psa. 8 and Dan. 7:13-14. The former commemorates the triumph of David over Goliath in the valley of Elah; the latter the triumph of the Lord Jesus over the forces of sin at Golgotha, 2,000 years ago. The former is typical of the latter, and the latter provides the basis for Christ's triumph in the Age to come.

The Psalm declares:

*"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?
For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
And hast crowned him with glory and honour.
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet"* (Psa. 8:4-6).

In commenting upon this Scripture, Paul declared: "We see not yet all things put under him; but we see Jesus... crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:8-9).

The reference in Daniel reads: "*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*" (Dan. 7:13-14).

Daniel thus predicted the triumph of the Lord Jesus, as Son of man, over the Jews who crucified him, his presentation to the Father in heaven after his ascension, and his return to establish his everlasting dominion.

In his parabolic-prophecy, Jesus gave this glorious picture in his last prophetic vision.

A few hours later, when walking to his death, the Lord told his unsuspecting disciples: "*Behold, the hour cometh, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me... In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have over-*

come the world" (Jn. 16:32-33).

Then, in prayer to the Father: "*Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: As Thou hast given him power over all flesh...*" (Jn. 17:1-2). In this prayer, the Lord gave expression to the fact that in him would be fulfilled the two prophecies relating to the Son of man quoted above, and which, in turn, are based upon the declaration that God made to Adam in the beginning, and which revealed His ultimate purpose in creation: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over all things" (Gen. 1:26).

The glorified Christ is the beginning of the consummation of that purpose, which will not be completed until a perfected kingdom is delivered unto the Father that God may be "all in all" (1Cor. 15:28). It is significant, that Paul, in expressing that glorious truth, quoted Psa. 8:6 in confirmation thereof (1Cor. 15:27).

And now Christ, in this concluding parable-prophecy to the disciples, provided a word-picture of the future judgment, and declared: "*When the Son of man shall come in his glory...*"

The Holy Angels

The Lord declared that he would come with his "holy angels." On previous occasions he had also spoken of them being with him at his coming, and assisting at the judgment (Mat. 16:27; Mark 8:38). In one parable, he indicated that they would be given the task of separating the tares from the true grain (Mat. 13:13, 41), and on another occasion he declared that the righteous would be glorified in their presence (Luke 12:8-9).

What a wonderful privilege it will be to stand approved before the Lord Jesus, and to hear his words of commendation in the presence of the angels of heaven! They, too, will hearken to such words with joy, for they will see in the glorified disciples of the Lord, the consummation of their own labours throughout the ages, as "the ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14).

During the long period of probation, from creation onward, they have played a part in the development of the characters of saints, overshadowing their lives for their good (see Gen. 48:16; Exo. 23:20; Psa. 34:7). In the approved they shall see the fruits of their labours.

But there will also be sorrow in that some will be condemned. It will be shown that they proved indifferent to divine guidance, and obstinate to the divine will.

The Throne Of His Glory

This expression is used in Mat. 19:28 for the Lord's future throne in Jerusalem. But the throne of Christ's glory, is also the throne of judgment on which he will sit. The imagery is derived from the

solemn mode of administering justice. Thus Yahweh's throne in the heavens, which is His throne of glory, is also described as the throne of judgment (Psa. 9:4-6). In the great prophecy of the Ancient of days and the Son of man, in Dan. 7:9, reference is made to "thrones cast down" which are thrones of judgment being placed, upon which the Son of Man, as representative of the Ancient of days, will sit in judgment upon the nations.

Who are 'all Nations'? The question thus remains as to what is signified by the statement: "*Before him shall be gathered all nations*" (Mat. 25:32). Does the judgment relate to the nations, or to the household?

Both are doubtless in mind.

As far as the household is concerned, it is made up of those "called out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9), who thus become representatives out of "all nations."

As far as the nations are concerned, Hab. 3:6 pictures Christ judging them in anticipation before moving against them at Armageddon. "He stood, and measured the earth; he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains [*symbolic of empires*] were scattered, the perpetual hills [*symbolic of long-standing nations*] did bow" (Hab. 3:6). In the terms of Christ's parabolic-prophecy, those nations are consigned either to everlasting fire (political extinction), or everlasting life (continuance throughout the millennium).

Again, these expressions seem to be drawn from Daniel's prophecy. He likewise pictures national judgments as extermination or millennial continuance. Concerning the former, he declared: "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Dan. 7:11).

This speaks of the fiery judgments that will consume the Catholic organisation of Europe. Other nations, however, will be preserved for the millennium. Thus: "As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time" (Dan. 7:12). They no longer exercise authority over their dominions, for such is given into the hands of the saints; but their national existence is extended for the period of the millennium, defined by the Lord Jesus as "life eternal," the life of the age.

Isaiah sums up national judgments by declaring: "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isa. 60:12).

According to Christ's parabolic-prophecy, national judgments will be determined according to how each nation has treated Christ's people. Concerning Babylon the Great (the "beast" of Dan. 7 to be

completely destroyed and given to the burning flame), it is recorded: "And in her was found the blood of prophets, of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (Rev. 18:24). Here is a nation that has ruthlessly ill-treated Christ's people, and for whom judgment has long slumbered. In that day it will be poured out without remedy.

Sheep and Goats

The figure of sheep and goats is used for the accepted and rejected because of the habits and colour of the animals. Sheep are inoffensive and easily led; they are noted for mildness, simplicity, innocence, patience and usefulness. Goats are naturally mischievous, wayward, quarrelsome, lascivious, and ill-tempered, and as such are a symbol of riotous, profane and impure men. Innately selfish, they represent those nations and individuals given up to their own passions and lusts, and who fail to see the needs of others. They are found quarreling with or opposing God's people, whether it be Israel as a nation, or His true sons and daughters, and will reap the fruits of their actions from the hands of him who will render a proper repayment of vengeance in due time.



Goats are extremely destructive. We were once informed, when touring Israel, that the Jews had no success in restoring forests in certain areas, until they banned goats from it, and then, immediately, they had success! Goats browse on the tender shoots of the trees, and shrubs, and so prevent growth. Even in color and habits there are significant differences between the two animals. Sheep are usually white whilst goats are brown or black, speaking of righteousness on the one hand and unrighteousness on the other. Moreover, the two animals maintain a measure of separateness, for though goats might mingle with sheep, there is no disposition on either side for more intimate acquaintance. When drinking, around wells, they appear instinctively to classify themselves apart; at night, they settle down in separate, distinctive groups.

The lessons of this are not hard to apply. In the parabolic part of the prophecy, the sheep are described as following the lead of the shepherd by helping his people; whereas the goats please themselves.



In the final apportioning of judgment, the sheep are gathered at the place of honour on the right hand of Christ, as he is on the right hand of the Father; whereas the goats are placed on his left.

Applying this parabolic-prophecy to the judgment of the household, we may well expect that after each individual saint has appeared personally before his particular angel, that his true character might be made manifest (Rom. 14:12; Mat. 13:39, 49; 2Cor. 5:10), he will be sent to join the appropriate group, to hear the final decision from the lips of the Lord.

They will appear before the Lord, who is described as Shepherd, Judge (Son of man), and King of nations (Rev. 15:3, mg; Jer. 10:7) in this solemn vision of the future.

The Reward

The righteous will be invited to inherit the kingdom prepared "from the foundation of the world." For the preparation of the kingdom has been proceeding from the very beginning of time. From the days of Adam onward, God has supervised both His people and events, guiding the latter to a predetermined end, that ultimately the whole earth should be filled with His glory.

To their surprise, the righteous will be told that they will enter the kingdom because of their actions toward Christ. They will confess that they have never been in a position to assist Christ personally; that they do not recognise the circumstances in their lives upon which the Lord makes such a judgment.

But it will be explained that inasmuch as they did it unto the least of his brethren, they performed it for him. This can be understood on a national basis (as far as Israel, or the ecclesia are concerned), or on an individual basis (in personal relationship one toward another).

Small acts of service long since forgotten, but performed in a brotherly spirit, will be credited as actions done for Christ himself! The common gestures of courtesy performed because Christ desired it thus, or kind deeds done in his name, accounted as services performed for Christ personally, will be rewarded with the gift of eternal life.

But in addition to the obvious significance of the expressions used, the services mentioned can also be given spiritual meanings. The righteous are said to have relieved the oppressed when the latter were in need of food, drink, shelter, clothing, healing and release. There is spiritual food (Isa. 55:1; 1Pet. 2:2-3), water (John 4:14), shelter (Eph. 2:18-19), clothing (Gal. 3:27), healing (Heb. 12:13), liberty (1Pet. 3:19), and as Christ has helped the righteous by providing for those needs, they, in turn, should extend the same help to others. *"In that ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,"* the Judge will declare.

Without deprecating the help that can be extended in material needs, the greatest help that we can possibly render, is assistance in those spiritual requirements. The most wealthy in material things are frequently poverty-stricken in the true riches, and need assistance in

the obtaining of those things that money cannot buy (Isa. 55:1-2).

The righteous have benefited from the bounty of their Lord, and have an obligation to pass on to others the benefits thus received. Like him, they can make many rich (2Cor. 6:10; James 2:5), feed the flock (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1Pet. 5:2), dispense the water of life (John 7:38; Philemon 7), provide shelter (Mat. 22:9-10; Rev. 22:17), heal the sick, and liberate the imprisoned.

The Punishment

On the other hand, the wicked are consigned into the “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat. 25:41). The term “everlasting fire” is more literally rendered: “the fire pertaining to the age,” the age in question being the millennium. This will not be everlasting in the normal meaning of the word, as usages of it in the Bible show. For example, Jude 7 declares: “Sodom and Gomorrah... are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” In the Greek, this is the same word as is rendered “everlasting” in Matthew 25:41, 46. It is obvious that the fire that consumed those two wicked cities of the plain did not burn for ever; for it is not burning today. However, it did continue to burn until it utterly consumed those cities, and it is in that sense that the word “everlasting” is used.

Certainly, the wicked are not to be flung into a literal fire that will be burning forever in the sight of mankind! This is obvious from the teaching that a time is coming when there will be “no more pain” (Rev. 21:4). On the other hand, the Bible reveals that the political, religious and social world of today is to be utterly consumed by fiery judgments that are to come upon it; which is the “fire” here referred to. Peter taught: “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2Pet. 3:10). This is not literal fire to consume the literal heavens and earth, but is a symbolic expression pointing to the destruction of man’s ways upon the earth.

The literal heavens and earth are to remain forever (Ecc. 1:4; Psa. 125:1; 148:6), to be the glorious abode of the divine system of things (called “a new heaven and earth”) which centered in Jerusalem, will bring blessings on all mankind (Isa. 65:17-19).

The “devil and his angels” to which the Lord made reference, is a term expressive of sin in its political manifestation (Rev. 2:10) manifested through its agents, or angels. The word “angels” means no more than “messengers,” and has been rendered as such in Mat. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52; Heb. 1:7, 14; James 2:25, etc.

The fiery judgments referred to, will consume the whole world, burning up the systems of men, in the course of which, the rejected will be consigned to the second death (Rev. 2:11; 20:14).

Whilst the “everlasting punishment” which the wicked receive, will bring upon them the utter finality of death (Pro. 21:16; Psa. 88:5), the reward of the righteous will reveal life unlimited (Luke 20:36; Hos. 13:14; Rev. 21:4; Luke 1:31-33; 1Cor. 15:53-54).

Summary

The Lord concluded this series of parables by drawing attention to the great Day of Judgment when the secret motives of the heart will be revealed (1Cor. 4:5). He took the apostles in thought to the time when it will be revealed that all mankind are divided into two classes, and that men will reap as they have sown. The consequences of evil deeds, or the failure to perform good deeds, must, in the nature of the case, work out their retribution, at the Judgment Seat of Christ if a person is responsible.

That was the impressive sequel to the Lord’s parabolic discourse on the dark slopes of Olivet’s hill, as the sun had sunk in the west, covering the golden city of Jerusalem with the shroud of night. A few hours hence, and the people of that city were to commit the crime that would cause the political sun of Jerusalem to likewise depart until, when the King returns in the glory of his Father, the Sun of Righteousness will shine forth with healing in his beams.



Sheep and the goats do not mingle together. They sort themselves into their two groups, with the goats taking the lead.

A Dictionary Of Personalities Of The Gospels

NICODEMUS: VISITOR BY NIGHT

Reference to Nicodemus is found in Jn. 3:1-9; 7:50; 19:39, and in each instance his name has appended to it the statement that he "came to Jesus by night." It is obvious from this that he did not desire others to see him openly seeking out Jesus. Events, however, finally forced him to come out into the full glare of the public view.

He was convinced that Jesus was a man come from God because of the miracles he performed (Jn. 3:2), but he was amazed at the teaching of the Lord which he found difficult to accept. Jesus instructed him in the need of a new birth "from above," and directed his attention to the serpent impaled on the stake, through which life was restored to death-doomed Israelites, when they looked to it in faith (Jn. 3:14). Nicodemus must have pondered this message, and finally, when he saw Jesus crucified in similar manner, realised the significance of it, and with Joseph of Arimathea, came and begged for the body of Jesus. Nicodemus did not lack courage.

There were three stages in the spiritual development of Nicodemus that all should emulate. He came to Jesus (Jn. 3:2); he spoke for Jesus (Jn. 7:45-52); he publicly honoured Jesus (Jn. 19:39-40).

PETER: THE ROCK

His name was really Simon, but he was given the name of Peter, or Cephas, which signifies a *Stone* (Jn. 1:42). He was a fisherman of Bethsaida (the *House of fishing*, Jn. 1:44), in partnership with his brother Andrew and the Lord's cousins, the sons of Zebedee (Lk. 5:10). He was probably a disciple of John Baptist, but was introduced to Jesus by Andrew his brother (Jn. 1:35-41), and given the name Peter (v. 42).

He received three separate calls: [1] to discipleship (Jn. 1); [2] to companionship (Lk. 5:10); [3] to apostleship (Lk. 6:13-14). He made a threefold confession of Christ, each one more vehement than the last (Mat. 14:33; Jn. 6:69; Mat. 16:16); three times he denied his Lord in similar fashion; and he made a threefold protestation of love (Jn. 21:15-17).

His ardour, earnestness, courage, vigour and impulsiveness of disposition caused him to make mistakes, as it also brought him to the forefront of the apostles (he is always mentioned first in the

lists: Mat. 10:2; Mk. 3:16; Lk. 6:14; Acts 1:13). His impulsiveness caused him to first confess Christ as Son of God, but also to be equally forward in dissuading the Lord from his chosen path of suffering (Mat. 16:22), for which he received appropriate praise and blame.

His life reveals him as naturally impulsive (Mat. 14:28; 17:4; Jn. 21:7), tender-hearted and affectionate (Mat. 26:75; Jn. 13:9; 21:15-17), possessing spiritual insight (Jn. 6:68), yet sometimes slow to grasp deeper truths (Mat. 15:15-16); courageous, yet guilty of cowardly denials (Mk. 14:67-71; Jn. 18:10); self-sacrificing, yet inclined toward self-seeking (Mat. 19:27) and presumptuous (Mat. 16:22; Jn. 13:8; 18:10), very often immovable in his convictions (Acts 4:19-20; 5:28, 29, 40, 42).

There are three distinct stages in the life of Peter:

The period of early training.

This was during the ministry of the Lord on the earth, and it concluded with Christ's testimony of confidence in Peter despite his failings (Lk. 22:31-32; Jn. 21:18-19).

His firm, bold leadership.

There was revealed a vast change in Peter following the resurrection of the Lord (Acts 4:13). He quickly rose to the foremost position among the apostles. He moved first to replace Judas among the apostles (Acts 1:15); he was chief in proclaiming the Gospel (Acts 2:14), healing, preaching, defending the faith (Acts 3:4, 12; 4:8), rebuking and judging (Acts 5:3, 8-9), preaching to Gentiles (Acts 10), justifying the extension of the Gospel message to such (Acts 15). Even so, his character was not then perfected, as the verbal conflict with Paul revealed (Gal. 2:11-14).

Final shepherding of the flock.

After the foundations of the ecclesia had been laid, Peter took a more humble, subordinate position. James dominated in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 2:9, 12), Paul among the Gentiles. Peter became known as the Apostle to the circumcision (Gal. 2:8), but seemed to limit his activities to those outside Jerusalem. Antioch (Gal. 2:11), Corinth (1Cor. 1:12), Babylon (1Pet. 5:13) received his ministrations, as he moved from place to place, taking his wife with him (1Cor. 9:5; 1Pet. 1:1). He is found guiding, tending, feeding the flock (1Pet. 5:1-4), and no longer self-assertive (cp. 2Pet. 3:15-16 with Gal. 2:11-14). Thus he is finally presented as revealing a beautiful humility which testifies to the power of Christ in his life (Acts 4:13).

Always eager, ardent, impulsive; always the man of action, he

exhibited defects as well as excellencies of character. His virtues and faults had a common root in his natural enthusiasm. But it is to his praise that his rashness was modified through Truth, and his burning zeal to follow Christ. In view of his impending work, he was given special attention by Christ during the most painful period of the Lord (Lk. 22:31), a special interview following the Lord's resurrection (1Cor. 15:5) and special instruction afterwards (Jn. 21:15).

Peter's life is rich in instruction, warning and comfort. His writings touch the depths of experience in Christ, and soar to the utmost heights of hope, so that the period of his greatest triumph and glory is yet to come.

PHILIP: THE FRIENDLY WARRIOR

See comments in *The Story of the Bible*, page 34.

PONTIUS PILATE: PREVARICATOR

Pontius Pilate was the fifth Roman procurator of Judea, and exercised authority between AD26-36. His headquarters were at Caesarea, but during such festivals as the Passover, he removed to the Tower of Antonia at Jerusalem to be on hand in the event of rioting by the assembled Jews. Josephus and other writers speak of his ruthless cruelty, and these reports seem corroborated by the statement of Lk. 13:1.

Faced with the problem of Jesus, however, Pilate did not know how to act. The calm imperturbability of the Lord worried him, particularly after his wife had sent him an urgent message that he should have nothing to do with Jesus, because of dreams that she claimed to have experienced. Pilate was superstitious, and though he had no compunction about ordering his troops to attack people, he was afraid to lay his hands on Christ. He tried to evade his responsibilities by first delivering him over to the Jewish authorities (Jn. 18:31), and then to Herod (Lk. 23:7). When Jesus was returned to him, he tried to avoid sentencing him to death by the proposal to inflict a minor penalty (Lk. 23:22). He could not silence the cry of the mob that the blood of the Lord should be shed, however, and finally directed him to be crucified, after engaging in a hypocritical ceremony of hand-washing (Mat. 27:24).

Pilate was subsequently recalled to Rome and banished to Vienna, where, according to tradition, he committed suicide in AD41.

Preparing the Disciples for Days of Darkness



THERE was now only a short time before the final crisis would envelop the Master and his disciples. It was to separate the band of apostles, for the “son of perdition” was soon to make his bold step to betray his Lord, and to bring about the crucifixion of Israel’s Messiah. The other apostles were unaware of the perfidy of their companion, who was the treasurer for the group, but later realised that such was needful in the greater purpose of the Father to provide the Lamb slain for the sin of the world. Then there was the wickedness of the religious leaders of Jewry in putting their hand to the evil deed, and both Jew and Gentile joined against the Son of God. The story continues on until the apostles gather with their Master in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, and it is here that the greatest act of love and compassion is contrasted with the vilest deceit of man. It is a revelation of the mind of God at enmity with the mind of the Flesh, and remains to remind all disciples of the need to follow the Lamb wherever he leadeth.

Chapter 1

THE TIME OF THE CRUCIFIXION DRAWS NEAR

Night had fallen over Jerusalem by the time Jesus concluded his discourse with the apostles. That meant that the twelfth of Abib had merged into the thirteenth of Abib. The Passover was slain on the fourteenth of Abib, and celebrated on the day following, for which reason, the former day was called the Day of Preparation by the Jews (John 19:14), and the latter day was called the Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread (Luke 22:1).

To determine the chronology of this most important week in the world's history, it is necessary to establish each of these points. Jesus declared that "after two days is the Passover," and many make the mistake of calling the 14th day of Abib the Passover, because the Lamb was slain on that day. But a comparison of Luke 22:1 with Lev. 23:6 will establish that the Passover was held on the 15th of the month. It is true that Josh. 5:10 states that the Israelites "kept the Passover on the 14th day of the month," but the Hebrew word "hasah" signifies "to do," "make," or "prepare," and it is rendered by the latter word in Num. 15:5, 6, 12 and Josh. 22:26. The Israelites prepared the Passover on the 14th, but they celebrated it on the 15th when they ate the lamb, and observed the sabbath.

That being the case, the events of Mat. 26:1-5 took place on the beginning of the 13th Abib, on what we now call Monday evening. All of the 13th and 14th days remained, after which, on the 15th, the Passover was kept, fulfilling Jesus' words: "You know that after two days is the Passover..."

The thirteenth day of Abib proved a most tragic day in the history of the world, for it witnessed the traitorous action of Judas in disclosing to the Jewish authorities a means whereby they could get Jesus in their power.

NAVING completed his discourse with the apostles, and with night approaching, the Lord summarised all that he had told them, but warning them of his impending death: "***You know that after two days is the Passover,***" he declared, "***and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified!***"

**Jesus Foretells
His Death
(Mat. 26:1-2;**

They did not know what he meant. They knew that the authorities were resentful of the Lord, and would destroy him if they

Mark. 14:1;
Luke 22:1-2)

could, but with their minds centred upon glory and not sacrifice, they were convinced that he would be able to escape any attempts upon his life, and shortly proclaim himself as king.

The Lord used the present tense, "is betrayed," because the initial act had already taken place on the previous Saturday, when Judas, having been rebuked of the Lord, made his way to the priests and offered to betray the Master.

But though the offer had then been made, no opportunity had arisen to implement it. In any case, though Judas might have led the Lord's enemies to a spot where they could have taken him without the knowledge of the multitude, and therefore without fear of any riot, they had nothing with which to accuse him if they did take him. They hated him for his public indictment of them in the court of the temple, but there was nothing that he had said or done that was the least unlawful.

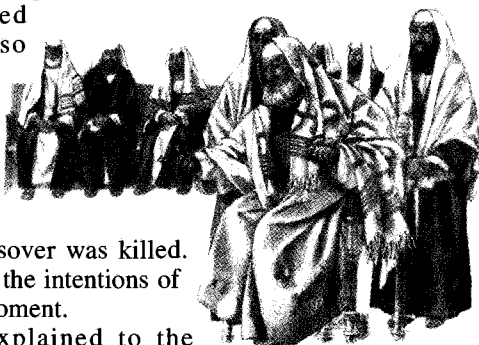
Nevertheless, it was desirable to his enemies, that Jesus should be publicly executed before the Passover, in order that the crowds then gathered together might witness his ignominious death, and spread knowledge of it wherever they might go afterwards.

But now only a few hours remained before the Passover would be slain, and therefore the time was limited for them to perform the terrible crime that they were so intent upon doing. They were driven by a relentless desire to kill this prophet of Nazareth, and to remove any influence of his teaching. To delay until the feast day would be to incite a riot among the people (Mat. 26:5).

The Jewish leaders realised that they had to move quickly if they were to accomplish their evil design.

Jesus, of course, realised their intentions. He also acknowledged that it was the Father's will that he should die in fulfilment of such prophecies as Gen. 3:15; but it was also important that this should occur at the "set time," namely, when the Passover was killed. Therefore, he had to stave off the intentions of the Jewish leaders until that moment.

Accordingly, having explained to the apostles that the betrayal was in course of taking place, the Lord went and hid himself so that he could not be taken of the Jews until the appropriate moment (John 12:36).



THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY AND THE TREACHERY OF JUDAS

Matthew, Mark and John all record the anointing at Bethany (Mat. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8), but Matthew and Mark add that it was at that time that Judas made the initial move to betray the Lord.

When did that anointing take place? Matthew and Mark refer to it and the subsequent act of betrayal by Judas after recording the Olivet prophecy, and the warning that Jesus gave that he would be betrayed to be crucified.

John, however, records it as taking place shortly after Jesus arrived at Bethany from Jericho (John 12:1-3).

This has caused some to consider that there were two anointings, and two occasions when the Lord rebuked his disciples (see *The Companion Bible*), but a careful consideration of the evidence will reveal that the unlikely suggestion is untenable. Once Jesus left the court of the temple after publicly indicting the Jewish leaders, he went and "hid himself" (John 12:36), and the house in Bethany would be useless for that purpose, for it was well known that he frequently visited it, and it was now constantly under surveillance (John 12:9).

However, Matthew was careful to state that he was not setting the events in proper chronological sequence. He does that by prefacing his account at the anointing by stating: "Now when Jesus was in the house of Bethany" (Mat. 26:6). When was that? Matthew does not say, but John supplies the answer by placing the events in proper chronological sequence, and revealing that this took place in the evening after Jesus had arrived at Bethany from Jericho (John 12:1-3). As the Lord arrived in Bethany "six days before the Passover" (John 12:1), or on Friday, the 9th of Abib, as most commentators acknowledge, the anointing took place after sunset, or on Saturday, the tenth of Abib. The proper chronological order is thus given by John, whereas Matthew and Mark, having discontinued the narrative after Jesus left Jericho until his entry into Jerusalem (Mat. 21:1), delayed referring to these incidents until they come to treat with the treachery of Judas.

Matthew and Mark, therefore, clearly show that the initial act of betrayal on the part of Judas took place the same night as the anointing, for Matthew records: "*Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests*" (Mat. 26:14). The Greek word rendered "then" is *tote*, and it signifies "at that time." The time indicated was the evening of the anointing, so that immediately afterwards Judas left the house in Bethany to seek out the priests, and agree to the betrayal. This, of course, was before

Jesus had entered Jerusalem, before he had publicly indicted the Jewish leaders, and before he had delivered the Olivet prophecy to the apostles.

However, Luke adds, that after these events, the chief priests and scribes called an emergency council of the Sanhedrin to consider how they might put Jesus to death, and that Judas attended that gathering (Luke 22:1-5).

This, then, was the second occasion that Judas had met with the Jewish leaders for that purpose, and this time, as we shall show, he put it in their power to take and condemn the Lord.



Drawing together the various references to Judas' betrayal of the Lord, therefore, the following picture emerges:

- Jesus was anointed by Mary in the house at Bethany on Saturday, 10th Abib (John 12:3; Mat. 26:6-7; Mark 14:3).
- Judas harshly criticised the action of Mary (John 12:4-5).
- The other apostles joined Judas in his complaint (Mat. 26:8-13; Mark 14:4-9).
- Judas left the house at that time to commune with the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus (Mat. 26:14-15; Mark 14:10-11).
- From thence onward, Judas sought opportunity to betray Jesus (Mat. 26:16).
- The opportunity not presenting itself, and time becoming more and more limited, Judas again made his way to the emergency meeting of the Jewish council, and revealed how it was possible to charge Jesus with blasphemy (Luke 22:1-6).
- This was two days before the Feast, thus on Tuesday 13th Abib (Mat. 26:2).

When we come to consider the circumstances of the emergency meeting of the Jewish council, we will show how Judas made it possible for Caiaphas to accuse Jesus of blasphemy, and by which the death sentence was pronounced upon him.

Chapter 2

CAIAPHAS INTRIGUES AGAINST CHRIST

The leaders of Jewry left the encounter with Jesus in the temple (Mat. 23), seething with anger. Not only had they been silenced one by one, not only had they been forced to confess their ignorance of Scripture (Mat. 22:46), but they had been publicly humiliated in the very citadel of their sanctity — the temple. Such attacks must cease! All agreed with that! The very vigour of Christ's testimony united many enemies against him: Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Priests, Scribes. Previously the Priests and Pharisees had decided to put him to death (John 11:57); now other leaders joined them in this determination. He must die! But die in such a way as to clearly demonstrate to all people that he was not the Christ. To have him executed on the stake of shame by the Romans would accomplish that purpose. It would show that the Law of God cursed this man (Deu. 21:23), and thus bring upon this prophet of Nazareth the condemnation of the people!

But even so, to gain the greatest advantage, this had to be done before the festival; before the crowds dispersed, for it was important that they should carry the news of his ignominious death throughout the land when they left Jerusalem to return to their homes. The problem, however, was how to bring this about in the little time that remained.

THE Jewish leaders were consumed with a bitter hatred against Jesus. They had been humiliated before all the people and they were not used to such treatment. Normally, people deferred to them as the custodians of knowledge and righteousness. But their dignity had been stripped from them, as they had been first silenced, and then scathingly indicted.

Now they were dominated by a burning desire to see him ignominiously suffer and die!

But how to do it? That was the problem they could not answer.

There was no law he had broken of which to accuse him. Everything he had said or done had been based upon Scripture, and therefore could not be used in evidence against him.

But something had to be done, and that quickly!

An Emergency Council Of Jewish Leaders Caiaphas, the high priest, called an emergency council of Jewish leaders to consider the problem, inviting them to meet him in the (Mat. 26:3-5;

Mark 14:1-2;
Luke 22:1-2).

court* of his house. He was a high-handed man, of cold, ruthless cunning. On an earlier occasion, he had shamelessly forced a resolution through the Jewish council that Jesus be put to death (John 11:49-53). As a Sadducee, he was a politician of expediency, and rejecting the influence of Providence, imagined that he possessed absolute power to do good and ill. Therefore, considerations of righteousness did not move him. Whatever he felt best was what dictated his policy.

Accordingly, a group of Jewish leaders met in the court of his palace to consider the problem. It was not the official assembly of the Sanhedrin, for otherwise they would have met in the hall Gazith on the south side of the court of the priests; it was a private meeting of those directly concerned with putting Jesus to death, presided by Caiaphas.

How To Put Jesus To Death

They debated the question together. They agreed that Jesus must die; but in what way, and under what charge? He had committed no sin of which they could accuse him. But that did not deter Caiaphas. Already he had declared that it was "expedient" that Jesus should die, whether or not he was guilty of any sin (John 11:50)!

Obviously, in the absence of any reason for death, but one thing remained: to murder him!

Having previously pressed the expediency of putting Jesus to death whether or not he was guilty of any crime, Caiaphas most likely did so again on this occasion, and to their eternal discredit, the religious leaders of the nation agreed to the suggestion.

How low men can sink!

Many of those men were priests, and as such, led the people in worship before Yahweh. They accepted from their hands, the offerings and sacrifices that they brought to the temple; instructed them in the Law; exhorted them with the need of obeying the ten commandments; and yet were now prepared to murder Jesus!

They hated him because his righteousness contrasted with their wickedness; his harmlessness aroused their murderous passions; his profound understanding of the Scripture revealed how shallow were their reasonings.

Their hatred completely blinded them to the enormity of their attitude; and they consulted that they might take Jesus by stealth, and put him to death (Mat. 26:4).

All agreed to the proposition; but when should it be done?

* The Greek word *aule* translated "palace" signifies "court" and often related to a covered court on the outside of a building.

It was desirable that he be put to death before the people dispersed, so that they might broadcast the news wherever they went.

But a note of caution was raised. *"Let it not be done during the festival,"* it was urged, *"lest there be an uproar among the people."*

The advice was good. They knew what could happen should a riot break out during the Passover, for it had happened before. The Roman guard was always increased on such occasions, and Pilate would have no compunction about ordering it out to violently restrain the mob should feelings run high, as was often the case at that festival.

This posed a problem. Whilst it was most desirable for their purpose that Jesus die before the Passover, it only allowed two days in which to perform the terrible deed (Mat. 26:2). It was already Tuesday (for the day was computed from 6pm on Monday), and the Passover would be slain late on Wednesday. Within that time, Jesus had to die.

Whilst it was comparatively easy to come to the decision that Jesus must die, the question remained: How was it to be legally carried out? Nobody had any suggestion as to how it might be done, and once again the conference was faced with a stalemate. But then, a sudden interruption in the proceedings raised their hopes, and suggested an easy way out of their predicament.

A man had made his way into the court of the high priest. Those assembled there recognised him as the disciple of Jesus who had previously agreed to conspire against his Lord. That had been on the 10th Abib, the day that the Passover lambs were selected and penned up, awaiting the slaying on the 14th day. In agreeing with the priests on that day to betray Jesus into their hands (Mat. 26:14),* Judas unconsciously fulfilled the type, and became the nation's representative to inspect the Lamb of God to see if there was any blemish in him. This was always done between the 10th and 14th days (Exo. 12:3-6). But Judas could not report any blemish in this Lamb; there was nothing whereof to accuse him.

* Matthew 26 is not in sequential order, as a comparison with John's gospel will show, and as we have indicated previously (see page 15). The anointing at Bethany (recorded in Mat. 26:6-13) took place earlier, as John revealed (ch. 12:1-7), and it was then, following the Lord's rebuke of him that Judas made his initial approach to the priests. This is indicated by the use of the word "then" (Mat. 26:14). It is translated from the Greek word *tote* which signifies "at that time," and relates to the time referred to in the previous verses: the anointing at Bethany. But John shows that this took place on the 10th Abib (John 12:1-2). The conspiracy recorded by Matthew in ch. 26:2-5, though recorded first, actually took place after this, as Matthew himself shows by the time period indicated in vv.1-2. In order to properly synchronise all these events, careful attention must be given to the time sequence indicated. Matthew had linked the two occasions of betrayal together, and recorded the anointing at Bethany in this place (out of chronological sequence) because they are related as cause and effect.

This had given Judas great concern, for this time was rapidly passing away, and if Jesus were to be put to death before the Passover, something had to be done in a hurry.

There was one matter...

And as Judas thought upon it, an idea entered his mind,* and as it matured, he realised that there was one way in which the authorities could successfully accuse Jesus. So he also hastened to the palace of the high priest, there to find the leaders gathered together, and to put his plan before them.



* Luke describes this as "satan entering him." Judas seemed to have been moved every now and then by fresh impulses of treachery (cp. John 13:2, 27).

Chapter 3

THE PERFIDY OF JUDAS

What caused a man like Judas to betray his Master? Consider his background. For over three years he had been a close companion of the Lord. He had heard him discourse upon the Scriptures; witnessed the miracles he had performed; gone forth preaching the Word himself. Now he engaged upon the basest act of treachery in history. It seems incredible, but the facts are there. Further, the sum paid him was pitifully inadequate for such a service. Thirty pieces of silver! This was the price of a slave gored by a bull (Exo. 21:32). Whilst this is appropriate to the type, in that Jesus was the slave of Yahweh, and the Jewish leaders are styled "bulls of Bashan" (Psa. 22:12-18), it is a miserable price to demand under the circumstances. Was Judas so avaricious that he was prepared to deliver up his friend for such a sum? And if money was his motive, why did he not seek a larger sum than he demanded. No, there was another reason for Judas delivering up Jesus. He did it to save his own skin. He had viewed the growing opposition with concern (John 11:57). He had heard that not only Jesus was marked for death, but his friends also (John 12:10-11). It was personally dangerous to be associated with the Lord's cause. Moreover, in spite of his association with Jesus, he had begun to doubt his mission. Judas was a man that wanted immediate results; and those of a concrete, material nature. He had begun to benefit himself at the expense of his friends, and his acts of dishonesty toward the common fund (John 12:6), were soon reflected in dishonest acts toward Christ. These considerations doubtless governed his approach to the Jewish leaders. By asking only thirty pieces of silver, he satisfied his avariciousness, and perhaps demonstrated that he was moved by considerations of patriotism. The leaders of the Jews could not accuse him of being only out for money, and would therefore have no reason to suspect Judas if they decided to move against the apostles after having slain Jesus. If he had demanded more, they might have considered him at heart a follower of the hated Nazarene, whom circumstances had forced into a position where he had to seek finance. But the request for the token sum of thirty pieces of silver could serve to illustrate that the betrayal was the result of considerations of the State. Or so Judas may have reasoned.

JN the court of the palace of Caiaphas, Judas conferred with the chief priests and leaders of the people concerning the arrest of Jesus. He had a scheme which he was confident would solve all their problems. He claimed that he could put it in their power to arrest Jesus, and charge him with a crime that would justify the death penalty.

Judas Schemes To Arrest Jesus

They were glad to hear this, and willingly agreed to pay him the money that they had covenanted already to give him (Luke

22:5),* provided he could justify his claim.

On the basis of this, Judas disclosed his plan, revealing unto them the grounds upon which they could subsequently lay a charge against the Lord. He also agreed to await a time when Jesus would be isolated from the multitude, when he would advise the Jewish leaders, so that they could arrest Christ without fear of the people.

What Judas Told The Priests

This act of perfidy, the worst act of betrayal in all history, is clouded by the rendering of the Authorised Version. In order to under-

stand just what Judas disclosed to the priests, and to properly appreciate the cunningness of the plot and the subsequent actions of the Lord with the apostles, it is necessary to explain Luke 22:6. It reads: "*And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.*"

The Greek word translated "promised" is *exhomologesen*, which some translate as "he accepted their offer." But that translation is obviously wrong, for v. 5 states that they had already agreed to the terms put by Judas, and moreover, he had previously sought them out and offered to act as betrayer, as is recorded in Mat. 26:14.

The Greek word does not mean to "promise" but to "confess," or to "praise." Everywhere it is used in the New Testament it has that meaning (see Acts 19:18; Rom. 14:11; 15:9; Phil. 2:11; Rev. 3:5, etc.). It is frequently used in the Greek Old Testament, but again, always in the sense of praising or confessing. Vine in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* declares that whilst *homologeō* signifies "to agree," *exhomologeō* signifies to "agree out of...;" thus to "confess forth," or openly.

* It is important to recognise that though the word "covenanted" is used in both Mat. 26:15 and Luke 22:5, they are translations of two entirely different Greek words. In Matthew, the word is *estesan*, to weigh out, and indicates that an agreement was reached as to the amount of money to be paid. In Luke, it is *sunethento*, agreed, and indicates that they had now agreed to pay it. They did this because on this second occasion that Judas approached the priests, he did so with the claim that he could put it in their power to arrest and charge Jesus with an indictable crime.

In Luke 22:6, translators have given a forced meaning to the word which it does not normally have in the Bible, and which is not required here. The normal usage of the word should be retained, and the statement would then read: "And he confessed..."

But to what did Judas "confess" that made it possible for the Jews to accuse Jesus of an indictable crime?

There was a certain statement which Jesus had acknowledged, but which the Jews would have considered blasphemy, and which he had strictly warned the apostles to keep secret, until the resurrection from the dead provided proof of its truth. It was his endorsement of Peter's declaration: "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Mat. 16:16). He had warned his apostles against telling this to anyone (v. 20), as it would lead to misunderstanding and confusion.

All Jews recognised that they were sons of God, i.e., of Elohim, but Peter's declaration obviously went further, and taught that Jesus was the Son of Yahweh in a special and personal manner.

To claim to be the Son of Yahweh, was to be guilty of blasphemy in the eyes of the Jews, and for that reason, Jesus had warned the apostles not to teach it until after his resurrection. Of course, at that time, they did not know what he meant by his resurrection, for they did not believe that he would die. They probably thought that he would ultimately be elevated before the nation. Thus Peter, who had been commended for making the declaration endorsed by the Lord, was afterwards rebuked, because he reprimanded Jesus for speaking of impending suffering and death (Mat. 16:22).

The apostles, therefore, carried with them a secret which would enable the Jewish authorities to accuse Jesus of blasphemy, if they were to disclose it. They realised that if anybody asked Jesus: "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the living God?" he must answer, "Yes!" Then, according to Jewish law, he would be liable to a charge of blasphemy.

It is of the greatest significance, that the declaration of Peter was repeated by Caiaphas in indicting Jesus.

When every other stratagem of the Jews had failed, and the trial of Jesus was on the point of collapsing, Caiaphas, in desperation, demanded of him: "*Art thou the Christ, the Son of the God?*" Jesus replied in the affirmative, and on the grounds of that declaration he was indicted on a charge of blasphemy.

How did Caiaphas know to ask that question?

It seems that it must have been this statement that Judas confessed in the court of the palace of the high priest. It was this that made the Jewish leaders glad, and caused them to agree to give him the money already weighed out. They now had it in their power to successfully charge Jesus and demand the death sentence.

Judas further agreed, in the terms of the Authorised Version: "to

seek opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude" (Luke 22:6). Here, again, the translation is unfortunate, for Judas had already betrayed his Master. The Diaglott renders it: "sought opportunity to deliver him up." He agreed to keep a watch on Jesus, and when the opportunity presented itself, to inform the Jewish leaders that they could arrest him in the absence of the multitude.

This explains the secrecy which the Lord used from then on, until the time of his death. He realised what was going on. He knew that the Jews would arrest him and put him to death at the earliest opportunity. That, however, would defeat the purpose of Yahweh. As the antitypical Lamb, it was important to the type that he should die only at the appropriate time. Therefore, he had to avoid being arrested until the right moment. He had to carefully arrange his activities to ensure that the Scripture should be fulfilled appropriately.

Meanwhile, the group of crafty schemers in the court of the palace of Caiaphas provided a remarkable fulfilment of Psa. 35:15, "*In mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me...*"

Why The Leaders Did Not Act on Judas' Confession

The Jewish leaders now had the means whereby they could successfully press a legal charge of blasphemy against him according to their law. But though Caiaphas, in desperation, ultimately had to use the means that Judas had put in his power to procure a Jewish sentence against the Lord, he was not put to death on that charge.

It would have defeated the purpose of the Jews to have done so.

The penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning, and the Jewish leaders did not want that; they wanted him to die a more terrible death, namely by crucifixion. Whilst the Jews had the power to stone a person to death, and did that in the case of the martyr Stephen (Acts 7), they had no power to exercise the Roman crime of crucifixion.

They did not want Jesus to suffer this more terrible death because of vindictiveness, but to demonstrate a principle. If Jesus had been put to death by stoning, on a charge of blasphemy, his friends would doubtless have claimed that it was a miscarriage of justice, for they knew that he was not a blasphemer. Moreover, they could well have reasoned, that he through whom God had brought such as Lazarus from the dead, would likewise rise from the grave.

No! It was not the death of Jesus that dismayed the disciples, but the manner of his death.

The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus to die in such a way as to reveal beyond all shadow of doubt that his claims of Messiahship were false. Only death by crucifixion, the Roman method of executing criminals, would accomplish that.

Why did they imagine that such a death as this would demonstrate that he was not the Messiah?

Because God's Law cursed anybody who died in such a manner; proclaiming: "He that is hanged is accursed of God" (Deu. 21:23).

Little did they realise that such a death was necessary to the purpose of God in Christ (see Gal. 3:13)!

They reasoned that Yahweh would not curse His Messiah, and therefore, such a death would demonstrate that Jesus' claims were false. It was such evidence as this that convinced the disciples that Jesus was not the true Messiah. It caused two of their number to explain: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21).

A charge of blasphemy, however, was not punishable by crucifixion; a civil crime was necessary for that. It was only Rome that used such a form of execution, and that is why the Jews had to appeal to Pilate to put Jesus to death on a charge of sedition.

It is sometimes taught that the Jews did not have the authority to execute the death penalty, but that is incorrect. The Jews put Stephen to death by stoning without recourse to Rome; and, according to Paul, he was only one of several who was so executed (Acts 22:4)

With shrewd cunning, the Jewish leaders were determined that Jesus should die in such a manner, that the very Law in which the people trusted would condemn him.* They wanted this done before Passover, in order that the news of it might be carried right throughout the world by those gathered at Jerusalem at that time.

This was the callous, cunning plot that was hatched against the Lord in the court of the high priest's palace. Meanwhile, Jesus was resting with his apostles, no doubt instructing them in the Scriptures, and fortifying both himself and them for the ordeal through which they all shortly had to pass.

* This death by hanging on a tree brought the Lord Jesus under the curse of the Mosaic Law. In the marvellous wisdom of God, His Son found himself under the condemnation of the Adamic law by his birth, and under the condemnation of the Mosaic law by his death! The former has to do with our physical condition; the latter with personal transgression. Yet, the Master was guilty of neither; in his sacrifice and resurrection he was redeemed from both, and able to lead his "children" from death unto life, removing the condemnation of both nature and transgression (Heb. 2:9-15). In accepting the "sins of the people" laid upon him in the nature he possessed (1Pet. 2:23), the Lord bore away our transgressions, and obtained divine nature.

Chapter 4

WEDNESDAY FOURTEENTH ABIB

This was a day of tragedy and triumph. The tragedy was revealed in the callous betrayal of the Lord by Judas and the Jewish leaders; his cruel execution on the stake of shame; and the lamentable unreadiness of the apostles to meet a crisis against which they had been warned so frequently. The triumph was seen in the Lord who remained master of every situation that arose; whose conduct in speech and deed honoured the Father in heaven; and who won every challenge presented to him, in spite of the greatest provocation.

The circumstances of this day are given in great detail. John devotes no less than seven chapters to it. It is obvious that we cannot afford to hurry over this material if we are to grasp the full significance of what happened. It will be found of the greatest profit to carefully consider all that took place.

JESUS knew that this would be the day of arrest and crucifixion. As the greater Passover Lamb, it was important that he fulfil the type to the very letter. In this, there would be no need of any further passover feasts, so the Lord instituted a new memorial passover which his followers have kept every since. At the first Passover (Exo. 12), the lamb was selected on the tenth day of Abib, penned up for four days during which it was inspected for any blemishes, and then slain between 3pm and 6pm on the fourteenth day of Abib, which was a Wednesday.

How Jesus Viewed The Day

As the antitype, Jesus had followed the same timetable. On the tenth day of Abib, he had entered Jerusalem to be met by the rejoicing crowds who sang Passover hymns in his honour. He subsequently had publicly presented himself to the leaders and the people, that they might all see that there was no blemish in him. Now, on the fourteenth day of Abib (the Wednesday), it is important that he stave off any efforts to arrest and kill him until the appointed time to identify with the killing of the passover lambs.

He knew that Judas was ready to betray him, and was seeking the opportunity of advising the leaders of any secret hiding place that he might use that they might arrest him. For that reason, he used the greatest secrecy in selecting the place for the last supper; and he took

care to prevent Judas leaving the room itself, until he adjudged the time was ripe when he should let him go, with the ominous words: ***"That thou doest, do quickly!"***

Christ, therefore, not only had to prepare himself for the coming crisis, not only had to pray for and fortify the apostles (Luke 22:31-32), but also had to keep a careful check on the time that everything happened, that the Scripture be not broken even in this matter.

All this must have involved a tremendous strain upon the Lord, but with faith and fortitude he proved equal to it.

How The Gospel Writers Recorded The Day

Each of the four Gospel writers treat with the events of this day in detail, as befitting the saddest day in the history of humanity. Thus Matthew, Mark and Luke each devote long chapters to narrating the events that took place, Luke adding details that were omitted by Matthew and Mark. John, however, occupies seven chapters in recording the incidents, supplying details that are lacking in the three other accounts.

It is important, therefore, to synchronise the four Gospel records, in order to obtain an overall view of the events in their sequence. When this is done, and the events are considered in detail, a more complete and intimate picture emerges of the actions and words of the Lord on that most significant day and occasion. We have set this out in order below:

THE LAST DAYS

(See page 15-16, for previous summary)

In the following harmony of the four gospel accounts, we have assumed that the Olivet prophecy and subsequent discussion took place on Tuesday, although no definite indication is given. The Lord's public discussion with the Jewish leaders in the court of the temple, took place on the 12th Abib, which we believe was a Monday. Subsequently, he left the temple for the Mount of Olives, where the apostles plied him with the questions that called forth what is known as the Olivet Prophecy. As the Jews compute the beginning of a new day from sundown, approximately 6pm, we assume that by the time the Lord had walked from the temple to the Mount of Olives, and had taken his place there, night would have fallen, and the 12th of Abib would have merged into the 13th. On that basis, we have computed the Olivet Prophecy as being delivered on Tuesday.

Tuesday — 13th Abib

- a. The Olivet Prophecy (Mt. 24:3-31; Mk. 13:3-27; Lk. 21:7-28)
- b. Warnings and Parables For Disciples:
 - Parable of Fig Tree (Mt. 24:32-36; Mk. 13:28-33; Lk. 21:29-33)
 - Parable of An Unheeding World (Mt. 24:37-42)
 - Parable of Household and Porter (Mk. 13:34-37)
 - Parable of The Thief (Mt. 24:43-44)
 - Parable of Faithful and Evil Servants (Mt. 24:45-51)
- c. Three Parables on Judgment:
 - Parable of Ten Virgins (Mt. 25:1-13)
 - Parable of The Talents (Mt. 25:14-30)
 - Parable of Sheep and Goats (Mat. 25:31-40)
- d. Jesus foretells his death (Mt. 26:1-2; compare: Mk. 14:1; Lk. 22:1)
- e. The Jews Plot to Kill Jesus (Mt. 26:3-5; Mk. 14:1-2; Lk. 22:2)
- f. Judas Reveals How Jesus Can Be Taken (Lk. 22:3-6)

Wednesday — 14th Abib

- a. To the Guest-chamber (Mt. 26:17-19; Mk. 14:12-16; Lk. 22:7-13)
- b. Jesus' Introductory Speech at Supper (Mt. 26:20; Mk. 14:17; Lk. 22:14-18)
- c. Jesus Washes Disciples' Feet (Jn. 13:1-20)
- d. Warns of Impending Betrayal (Mt. 26:21-25; Mk. 14:18-21; Jn. 13:21)
- e. Communion After Supper (Mt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22:19-20)
- f. Renewed Warning and Discussion on Betrayal (Lk. 22:21-23)
- g. Jesus Whispers That Judas Is Betrayer (Jn. 13:22-26)
- h. Judas Leaves and Discussion Continues (Jn. 13:27-35)
- i. Jesus Warns Peter — first warning (Jn. 13:36-38)
- j. The Other Disciples Dispute Who Is The Greatest (Lk. 22:24-30)
- k. Jesus Again Warns Peter — second warning (Lk. 22:31-34)
 - l. A Further Warning For All (Lk. 22:35-38)
- m. Discourse On The Peace Of God (Jn. 14:1-31)
- n. They Sing A Hymn And Leave (Mt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26; Lk. 22:39)
- o. Discourse On The Vine And Comforter (Jn. 15:1-27)
- p. Discourse On Overcoming The World (Jn. 16:1-33)
- q. The Intercessory Prayer (Jn. 17:1-26)
- r. Jesus Again Warns Peter — third warning (Mt. 26:31-35; Mk. 14:27-31)

The Lord and the Disciples then arrive at Gethsemane.

(Continued, page 323).

Chapter 5

TOWARD THE GUEST CHAMBER

Each of the Gospel writers provides details lacking in the other records. Matthew describes the circumstances only; Mark adds the curious instructions that the Lord gave when he called upon two of his disciples to follow the man with the pitcher of water; Luke tells us who the two were; John ignores those matters in order to concentrate on the actual events of the upper room in Jerusalem.

What was the purpose of the Lord in giving such curious instructions?

It was to preserve the secrecy as to where he would keep the Passover in order to ensure the timing of his sacrifice accorded with prophecy. Jesus knew that the upper room would provide the opportunity that Judas was seeking to betray him. It would defeat the purpose of the Lord if he were arrested and executed too early, for in order to fulfil the type, this had to take place at the same time as the Passover was slain. Therefore, for the moment, he had to keep the whereabouts of this room secret, lest Judas would tell the guard and precipitate his arrest. After leaving the temple, Jesus had hid himself from the Jewish leaders (John 12:36), and continued to do so until the appropriate moment when he voluntarily gave himself up to them.

THE thirteenth of Abib passed away and merged into the fourteenth. Luke 22:7 declares: "*Then came the day of unleavened bread.*" The word he used, translated "came," indicates that it had just arrived, and as Jewish reckoning accounts the beginning of a day at 6pm the night before (as "the evening and the morning" of Gen 1), the time indicated is 6pm on the 13th Abib when the day of the 14th commenced. This was the day, comments Luke, "*when the passover must be killed.*" It would be killed between 3pm and 6pm on the morrow, so then less than 24 hours remained before the Lord would be slain.

As indicated earlier, we believe that 14th Abib, in this year, fell on a Wednesday; so that the Passover was celebrated on the same day as it had been when Israel left Egypt!

This day was called "the day of unleavened bread," because preparation was made for the Passover on that day, by carefully excluding all leaven from the homes of Israelites, and by slaying the lamb which was eaten in the evening of this day, when the 15th Abib commenced.

Every detail of the events of that significant day is important, and should be carefully considered by those who have put upon themselves the name of Christ, and celebrate "his feast" from week to week.

For example, as the Jews had a day of "preparation of the passover" (John 19:14) before partaking of the Passover Lamb, so Christ's followers should prepare themselves to partake of the emblems of their Passover. Thought, prayer and practical application of the requirements of God, should be made by each one before presenting himself before the table of the Lord.

Jesus taught that in the Discourse on the Mount. He declared: *"If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you; Leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift"* (Mat. 5:23-24).

As the Jews carefully searched their homes to remove therefrom any trace of leaven; we should search our hearts with a similar objective. Paul exhorted: *"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened; for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"* (1Cor. 5:7-8).

**A Strange Mission
For Peter And John
(Mat. 26:17-19;
Mark 14:12-16;
Luke 22:7-13)**

It now being 6pm on the 13th Abib, and the 14th having thus commenced, the Lord turned to Peter and John (Luke 22:8) and told them: *"Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat!"* They replied: *"Where will you that we should go and prepare that you may eat the Passover?"* They were confident that the Lord would celebrate the Passover with them at 6pm the following day, as usual, and in the meantime, it was necessary to prepare the room for the occasion.

We can imagine the excitement of Judas as he awaited the Lord's reply. This was just the occasion he required to keep his agreement with the Jewish leaders. Once Jesus disclosed the place where he would be on his own with the apostles, Judas could have arranged to convey the information to the priests, who would then despatch the guard to arrest the Lord.

But to his bitter frustration, Jesus did not disclose the address of the place. Instead, he declared: *"Go into the city; and behold, when you entered into it, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters in. And you shall say unto the goodman of the house, The master says unto you, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?"*

And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready!" (Mark 14:13-15).

It is obvious that all this had been arranged before. The man, clearly a close disciple, would "meet" them. In other words, he would be waiting for them. He would be carrying a pitcher of water, which would be most unusual, for this was normally a woman's job, so he would be easily identified. As Siloam was the only place where living fresh water could be obtained in the city, it would be toward the pool that the apostles would go. It is clear, too, that the owner of the guest-chamber was a disciple of the Lord, for the apostles were to tell him that "the Master says unto you..."

This had all been carefully prearranged, so that Judas might remain in ignorance of the locality of the house. To his annoyance he had to continue with the Lord into the guest-chamber itself!

Meanwhile, Peter and John went on their way. They met the man, and were led to the house. The owner showed them the guest-chamber which they found furnished with carpets and reclining couches, and there they proceeded to make ready for the passover in the manner customary on the day of preparation.



Ancient mosaic of a servant bearing a pitcher of water

Chapter 6

INTRODUCTION TO SUPPER

Though we often speak of the feast of communion as the "Lord's supper," it should be clearly understood that the act of remembrance initiated by the Lord took place after supper. Supper was the largest meal of the day for the Jews, and it was "after supper" that the Lord presented them with the bread and wine which typified his sacrifice (Luke 22:19-20). The apostles, therefore, met in the room, partook of supper, and then followed with the feast of communion.

PETER and John had been sent first to the guest-chamber to make all necessary arrangements, and perhaps to prepare the supper of which the apostles later partook. At the due time,* the Lord arrived with the rest of the apostles, and the thirteen men relaxed around the table.

**Gathering in the
Upper Room
(Mat. 26:20;
Mark 14:17;
Luke 22:14-18)**

Luke records that "*he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him*" (ch. 22:14). The Diaglott renders this as "he reclined." It was the normal thing then for people to do so when partaking of a meal, and that is what the little company did on that occasion. It is obvious, therefore, that they were not celebrating the regular Passover. There are several reasons for so concluding. Firstly, the Passover was not to be eaten until the 15th of the month, and this was only the 14th. Secondly, later that evening, the apostles imagined that Judas had left to purchase some goods in view of the impending feast (John 13:29), which would be incomprehensible if they had already partaken of it. Thirdly, the Passover instructions required that it should be eaten in haste, with the members of the family standing up as though about to leave the land (Exo. 12:11). True, it had become the custom of Jews to recline when eating the Passover, but surely the Lord would not have done so, but would have celebrated it as instructed by his Father through Moses.

The Lord's

Introductory Comment In the upper room in Jerusalem, therefore, the Lord and the apostles first ate their

* At the due time, the Lord arrived with the rest of the apostles, and Matthew says: "When even was come" (Mat. 26:20). The word in the Greek, *opsias*, signifies late; after sundown.

normal supper, which was, for them, the largest meal of the day. During the course of the meal, Jesus suddenly addressed the apostles, to prepare their minds for what he was about to do. He declared: *I have heartily desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.*"

He was referring to the meal they were then eating, but was preparing their minds for the institution of the bread and wine "after supper" (Luke 22:20) as a memorial of his death.

They did not understand what he meant. They probably thought that he was referring to the Jewish Passover that would be celebrated on the day following. As to suffering, if they thought upon this at all, they probably connected it with the opposition from the Jews, but which the disciples imagined would be successfully overcome in order to immediately set up the Kingdom of God.

In order to properly understand the incidents that took place at this tragic time, it is important to view the circumstances from the standpoint of the apostles, who confidently anticipated that the Kingdom of God would be then set up (Luke 19:11). They were convinced that Jesus would shortly proclaim himself as king, and bring to pass all the predictions of power and glory spoken of by the prophets. They could not understand the reality of those things which we know now constituted his sufferings.

Even though the Lord had delivered to them the parable of the nobleman who had to go into a far country to receive his kingdom, and to return (Luke 19:11-27), and even though he had outlined to them the Olivet prophecy, they failed to understand their literal application. John recorded: *"These things understood not his disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him"* (John 12:16). Luke stated: *"They understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken"* (Luke 18:34). Jesus told the apostles: *"The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"* (John 14:26).

At first the apostles misunderstood the purpose of God, and this led them into serious mistakes. If we recognise that, we will be able to view their attitude with more sympathetic understanding, and better interpret the incidents that took place.

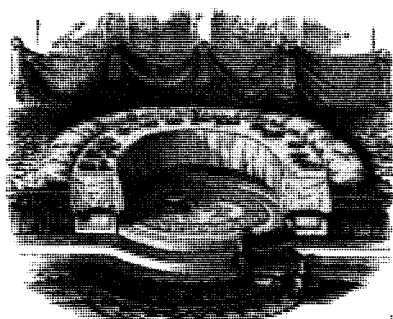
It was shattering to their concept of God's purpose to witness the arrest of Jesus, and more so, the violence against him, and finally to see him hang lifeless upon the stake, a public demonstration and exhibition of what is due to mankind from God. Paul states that by this means, the curse of God rests upon those hanging on a tree (Gal.

3:13). To them, as to all Jews who did not properly understand the principles of the atonement, that completely disqualified him as Messiah. For did not the Psalmist prophetically state concerning the Messiah: "He shall give His angels charge concerning thee; to keep thee in all thy ways; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Mat. 4:6; Psa. 91:11-12)?

That being the case, how would it be possible for Yahweh to permit His Messiah to suffer a death which brought the curse of the Law upon him!

Therefore, though Jesus spoke of suffering in his discourse in the upper room, they had no idea what was involved in the term. They probably aligned it with the opposition he was then receiving, but concluded that as he had escaped unscathed on other occasions, so he would on this.

They looked for his triumph at Jerusalem; not the tragedy of the nation.



Meanwhile, supper was almost over. At the conclusion of such meals, it was customary to serve wine. Jesus, presiding over the table, now did this, and added some words which must have aroused the curiosity of the apostles, and caused them the greatest excitement. He declared: "*I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come!*"

To the apostles, this must have sounded wonderful, exciting news! They knew that under normal circumstances, the Lord would be drinking wine to celebrate the Passover on the very next evening: the 15th Abib. Surely his statement must mean that there would be some tremendous public statement, or divine manifestation, that would bring him prominently before the people as the King-Messiah of Israel!

It did not enter their heads that soon he would be hanging lifeless from a stake of shame, ridiculed by those watching. The apostles had no conception that he must first go to the right hand of his Father in heaven as a mediator for his people, and return many years later, before the Kingdom of God would come.

Therefore, they would probably interpret his statement as an indication that the next 24 hours would witness the consummation of all their hopes!

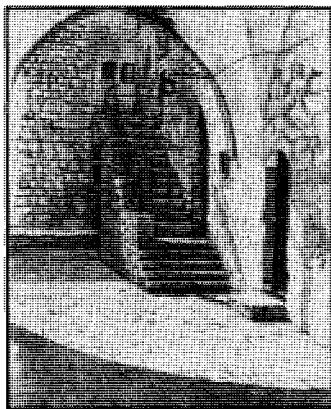
Doubtless this coloured all their thoughts and conversation during the next few hours, as they disputed who would be greatest in that kingdom, and boasted that they would never let the Lord down!

Chapter 7

WASHING THE APOSTLES' FEET

For the next act in the drama of the Upper Room, we must turn to John's Gospel, ch. 13:1-20, where is presented to us a wonderful example of love in humility. The Lord humbled himself before the apostles by performing for them a duty that was normally done by a slave: he washed their feet. John declares that this took place "before the feast of the passover" (v. 1), because the feast proper was not celebrated until 15th Abib (the day before, the 14th, being described in John 19:31 as the Day of Preparation). The A.V. states that "supper being ended," this incident took place. But, the R.V. renders this: "during supper," which is more in accordance with the context. It was during supper, therefore, that Christ performed this act as a token of that loving service which he rendered unto humanity by submitting unto the death of the stake. John comments: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." The word "end" is the Greek "telos" and signifies to "the limit," or "the uttermost." His love was such that he completed the work his Father set him to do in the redemption of mankind.

THIRTEEN men sat around the table. The heart of one was filled with a mixture of love and sadness as he looked over the faces of his friends. They were so naive, and childlike in their attitude; and yet so warm and enthusiastic toward the things that he loved. There was John, energetic and devoted. There was Peter, impetuous and lovable. There was Matthew, thoughtful and intelligent. There was Philip, cautious and retiring. There was Judas Iscariot...



Judas was the only Judean among the little company, a man of the city; and hidden in his heart that night were dark thoughts of betrayal. They had been implanted there by "the devil," the false accuser, the Jewish leaders who had conspired with him a few hours earlier to betray his Lord (Luke 22:4-5).

The Lord knew what was in the heart of Judas; he knew that he was enacting a lie as he sat at that table. He

had agreed to "betray" Jesus, or, as the word in the Greek signifies: "to deliver him over" to the authorities. And the Lord was ready for whatever lay before him. He knew that Yahweh was with him, and that he would conquer over all opposition. He realised that he had come from God, and would ascend up to Him after the triumph of the resurrection (John 13:3).

Time was short, and he must help his apostles, for he "loved them to the end," which word means to the uttermost limit.

In Humble Service (John 13:1-20)

So, with supper almost over, to the consternation of the apostles gathered with him, the Lord rose from supper and laying aside his mantle (see Diaglott), he took a towel, and tied it around himself as would a common slave.

They watched him in silence, wondering what he was doing. They looked upon him as the Christ, the Son of God, the one who would shortly proclaim himself as king, the restorer of the Kingdom of Israel. It was not right that he should humble himself in such fashion before them.

But taking a basin, the Lord filled it with the water that, most likely, had been brought by the man with the pitcher, and stooping down, he began to wash the disciples' feet.

It was the office of the meanest slave (1 Sam. 25:41).

In silence, feeling awkward and uncomfortable, not understanding the purpose of the action, the disciples each submitted.

Matthew, John, James, Philip... Judas!

Yes, even though he was awaiting the opportunity to escape from the room, and disclose to the Jewish leaders how and where they could arrest Jesus, he allowed the Lord to humbly stoop down before him and wash his feet!

How many since have accepted the service of the Lord on their behalf, and yet betrayed him!

What a scene in the quiet upper room, in the midst of Jerusalem, as the Lord humbly went from person to person!

He came to the impetuous Peter, who believed that the kingdom would soon be set up. But Peter would not permit his Lord to humble himself to that extent on his behalf! No! He was more than ready to humble himself before the king; he would kneel before Jesus; no need for Jesus to kneel before him!

"You, Master! Are you going to wash my feet?" he asked in amazement. *"You do not understand what I am now doing,"* replied his Lord. *"You shall never wash my feet!"* exclaimed Peter stoutly. *"Unless I wash you,"* the Lord solemnly replied, *"you will have nothing in common with me!"*

From Christ's comment, it is obvious that his action had a spiritual

significance. To wash, in the spiritual sense, is to be morally clean. *"You are clean through the word which I speak unto you,"* the Lord declared shortly afterwards (John 15:3). Paul referred to the Word of God as a cleansing agent, by which Christ's followers can be washed and purified from all blemishes (Eph. 5:26). A person must humble himself to receive such a washing. But Peter was not prepared to let Christ wash him. In refusing him, he claimed to have a greater humility than the other disciples, but, in fact, he lacked it.

Christ humbled himself to provide the means of washing, and his followers should humble themselves to receive it.

That was the lesson he taught them in the upper room, as clad as a slave, he knelt before his followers to assist them. In doing so, he: *"Made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"* (Phil. 2:7-8).

Meanwhile, Peter was perturbed at the last statement of the Lord. Though he still misunderstood the significance of Christ's action, if it meant that washing was necessary, he would seek a greater washing than the others.

"Master," he pleaded, *"not my feet only, but my hands and head too!"* But Jesus gravely answered: *"Those who have bathed,* have no need to wash, unless it be their feet, but are altogether clean; and you are clean, but not every one of you!"*

Literally, a person who has bathed does not need to bathe again when he reaches home, but only to wash the dust off his feet. Spiritually, a person bathes at baptism. But walking in the world, in the course of his daily environment, causes his feet to become "dusty," requiring constant washing. The daily application of the Word of God provides the necessary washing.

This lesson was impressed upon Israelites, as they watched the priests ministering in the temple. They saw that before and after attending to the things relating to the people in worship, they washed portions of their body (hands and feet) at the laver. They were washed all over at their induction (Lev. 8:6), but afterwards washed only the necessary parts of their body.

There is a daily need of washing with the "laver of the Word" by believers, for they are like priests, attending to the things of God, though compassed with a nature that causes them to fail.

Peter's undoubted love for the Master showed that he had been

* The Greek word in this place is *leloumenos* (in perfect tense), and signifies to completely bathe. The R.V. renders it as "bathed." Elsewhere in this chapter, a different word is used for "washed," namely *nipto*, and this signifies the washing of part of the body. Hence in this verse, John is referring to one who has been washed all over, as one is in baptism.

bathed, and that he desired to do those things that would please Christ; but his boasting, and his subsequent failures, showed the need for daily washing of the feet to cleanse the dust of worldliness off, in his pilgrimage journey to the Kingdom.

There was one other comment of most solemn import in the statement of the Lord. He declared: ***“You are not all clean...”***

And John, writing many years later, added: ***“For he knew who should betray him.”*** The Master knew who it was, but he tried in every way to save even Judas from the act of gross betrayal he was about to commit. The washing of Judas’ feet was a plea to him to turn back and walk in clean paths.

The Exhortation Before Communion

Silently the apostles watched the Lord complete his humble task. He put down the basin, took up his mantle and draped it about him, and then returned to his seat. They looked at him curiously. What did the action mean? He gazed around the table into the faces of his friends. How completely he knew them. He could read the heart of every one. He knew their strength and weakness; and he recognised that the latter was greater than the former. They were in need of the help of each other. Poor Peter! He felt he was so strong, yet what strength he needed! Poor Matthew! He could quote Scripture so readily, but how completely he missed its inner meaning. Poor James and John! They were filled with such enthusiasm for his ministry, but how sadly they had misread the situation.

Perhaps they might take heed of the example he had set them, and try each one to help the other.

And so he exhorted them: ***“Do you understand what I have been doing to you?”*** he asked them solemnly. ***“You call me ‘the Teacher’ and ‘the Master,’ and you are right, for I am both. If I, then (‘the Master’ and ‘the Teacher’) have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet; for I have given you an example, so that you may do just as I have done to you. A servant, believe me, is not greater than his master, nor yet a messenger than the man who sends him. Now that you know these things, you will be happy if you do them. I am not speaking about all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but this is in fulfillment of the words of Scripture: ‘He that is eating my bread, has lifted up his heel against me’ (Psa. 41:9). For the future I shall tell you of things before they take place, so that when they do, you may believe that I am what I say. Those, I assure you, who receive any one that I send are receiving me; and those who receive me are receiving Him who sent me”*** (Jn. 13:12-20).

At this point, the Lord paused. He was deeply moved, for he could not overlook the treacherous action Judas was about to commit. Here

was one who had gone forth preaching and performing miracles in his name; and yet, now, was about to fulfil Scripture by lifting up his heel, or, figuratively, raising his foot to trip up his Lord.

He felt this keenly because his love for Judas was such, that he would save him if he could. But that was dependent upon Judas as well as the Lord. So he paused, and then, impressively, he continued: “...*It is one of you who will betray me!*”

It was a terrible accusation, and the apostles were amazed at the disclosure. What did the Lord mean by somebody betraying him? They did not know! They were in complete ignorance of all the tragic events that were about to take place. They looked one at another, wondering what he meant and of whom he spoke.

The words that the Lord had spoken constituted an exhortation delivered just before partaking of the bread and wine in sacrificial remembrance. It is important, therefore, that we closely consider what they signified.



The Lord's Example In his exhortation, the Lord declared that he had given them an example. Many years later, a converted Peter remembered these words, and incorporated them into an exhortation he also delivered. He declared: “Even hereunto were you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps; Who did no sin,

neither was guile found in his mouth... Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed..." (1Pet. 2:21-24).

Christ had washed the disciples' feet literally, to symbolise the cleansing influence of his labours on their behalf. His sacrifice would make it possible for them to receive forgiveness of sins, and cleanse their way before their God. He had ministered to them in such a fashion that they could walk with cleansed feet toward the Kingdom of God.

All this provided an example they should emulate. What he did for them, they should do for others; helping them along the pathway of life. If they did that, they would figuratively wash the feet of their followers.

However, it could only be done effectively if they, like their Lord, humbled themselves to serve their fellows. It is incumbent upon all of the Lord's followers to do that.

The Lord knows the needs of every disciple. He told the apostles that he "knew those whom he had chosen" (John 13:18). He knew the strengths and weaknesses of their characters, and what each one required to develop spiritually. On an earlier occasion, he had declared that one of them was a devil (John 6:70), and now he clearly stated that one of their number would betray him.

The statement was made in a most significant context, for he had solemnly warned that those who received him received God, and those who rejected him rejected God.

Judas was about to reject both Jesus and Yahweh.

We can do likewise if we reject the words of Scripture. Are we allowing the water of the Word to wash our feet, and guide us into a clean walk in Yahweh's sight? Are we helping others to do likewise, and thus figuratively humbling ourselves to wash their feet? Do we acknowledge that Jesus knows our very heart, and, recognising our innate weakness, seek the strength that he can give? Do we in fact acknowledge him as "the Teacher" and "the Lord"? Do we reflect upon the fact that Scripture clearly teaches that there will be other betrayers of the Lord besides Judas, and that they will not find a place in the Kingdom? Do we apply his words of exhortation personally?

These are matters that were clearly set forth by the Lord in his exhortation before handing the bread and wine to his disciples.

Chapter 8

SELF-EXAMINATION

From John 13:21, we must turn back to Mat. 26:21-25 or to Mark 14:17-21 to follow the events in sequence. Following the exhortation of the Lord, and his challenge that one of them would betray him, the time for self-examination had come. Thus the pattern set in the upper room is similar to that in most ecclesias. As a congregation should give itself to meditation and self-examination on a Sunday morning following the exhortation and before partaking of the bread and wine, so it was with the apostles. Each one began to search his heart as to whether he was the betrayer Jesus had in mind, and if so, in what way would he betray him.

THE apostles heard with consternation, the Lord's declaration that one of them would betray him. The record says that they were "exceeding sorrowful," but the word in the Greek (*sphodra*) signifies to be excessively, or violently, moved. It comes from a root indicating restlessness. The apostles squirmed in their seats, as they searched their hearts to see whether there was any hidden sin there, any aspect of disloyalty against their Lord.

"Is It I?"
(Mat. 26:21-25;
Mark 14:17-21;
John 13:21)

Puzzled faces were turned in his direction, and one after the other asked the question: "*Lord, is it I?*" All except one: Judas! For the time, he remained silent. The Lord declared: "*The one beside me who dips his hand in the dish is the one who will betray me. True, the Son of Man is to go, as Scripture says of him, but alas for that man by whom he is betrayed! For that man it would have been better never to have been born.*"

They are words of ominous intent! How they must have struck home at Judas! But he had gone too far. He was now hardened in his course and, possibly, no longer believed in the Lord.

But he had to go through the motions of an innocent man. All the others had enquired, "Lord, is it I?" and now the voice of Judas was about to swell the chorus.

The hypocrite, however, changed the form of the question.

The Eleven addressed Jesus as "Lord" or "Master," but not so Judas. He addressed him as "Rabbi" or "Teacher," translated "Master" in Mat. 26:25 (ct. v. 22). In the mouth of Judas, it was an impudent

and hypocritical title. He did not accept Jesus as his Teacher; but considered him a fraud, and had already agreed to procure his arrest. With the others looking on, however, and knowing in his heart that he would betray Christ, he had to cover up with the same question, though prefacing it with a different title:

"Rabbi, is it I?"

"It is as you have said," replied Jesus frankly.

The others evidently did not hear or understand this, for the exchange had followed the words of Jesus which the Eleven were thoughtfully trying to absorb. Judas was probably taken aback by the frank answer, and possibly wondered how much the Lord knew, but there was nothing he was prepared to do about it.

No other comment was made, as the apostles continued with the evening meal.

**The Betrayer
returns his money**



Chapter 9

COMMUNION

After he had offered words of exhortation and of self-examination, Jesus then introduced the Memorials of the Bread and Wine. Some call this the Lord's Supper, but it is never so described in the Bible. Paul's described it as "the communion of the blood of Christ" (1Cor. 10:16). He provided a detailed explanation of it based upon a revelation that he received from the Lord (1Cor. 11:23-24). He also discriminated between the "Lord's supper" which the ecclesias celebrated as an imitation of the meal that Jesus had with the apostles in the upper room (and which is also described as a "love feast"), and the partaking of the emblems which occurred "after supper" (Luke 22:20), and which is the festival that we celebrate around the Table of the Lord. The early ecclesias imitated both the supper and the communion enjoyed by the apostles. They met for what is described as a "love feast," which constituted an evening meal; and afterwards they partook of the communion together. Unfortunately, the so-called "love feasts" degenerated into orgies of eating and drinking, in which the more wealthy flaunted their abundance to the exclusion and embarrassment of the poorer members. This called forth the strong condemnation of Paul to the Corinthian brethren (1Cor. 11:17-22). He told them that they came together in such a manner "for the worse," and called upon them to cease the practice, and meet only for communion. Peter (2Pet. 2:13), and Jude (v. 12), likewise made reference to those "love feasts" in condemnation of those who turned them into orgies of gluttony! As we consider such things, let us take care that we treat the ordinances of God with the greatest reverence.

THE little company of thirteen men was still reclining at supper, though, by now, the meal was almost complete. Then, without any further words of introduction, the Lord took up some of the bread in his hands, and as the apostles looked at him, he offered a word of thanks to the Father for it.

The Bread: His Body
(Mat. 26:26-30;
Mark 14:22-26;
Luke 22:19-20;
1Cor. 11:23-25)

He then broke it, and handing it to the disciples, declared: "***Take eat, this is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me!***" They were to figuratively eat the covenant victim. This was the normal

custom when covenants were made. On such occasions, the two parties who were to be joined in covenant, offered up a sacrificial victim, and having divided it in two, they met between the pieces, and ceremoniously proclaimed the terms of their agreement. They then both partook of the flesh of the offering, thus joining themselves together in solemn agreement. Examples of this are found in Gen. 15:9-18; 26:28-30; 31:44-47; Jer. 34:18-19.

In the incident recorded in Gen. 15:9-18, Abraham was told that God would enter into solemn covenant with him, and he was instructed to offer certain animals in confirmation thereof. They pointed forward to the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ. A deep sleep overtook Abraham, representing death; and during the time of sleep, a "burning lamp" passed between the pieces. This was symbolic of the Spirit of Yahweh (Rev. 4:5). By this Abraham was taught, that after his death, Yahweh would ratify the covenant through His spirit which rested upon the Lord Jesus (Rom. 15:8).

The incident recorded in Jer. 34:18-19 shows how solemn and binding is such a covenant. On that occasion, the princes of Judah had entered into an agreement to perform certain duties, ratified by the blood of a covenant victim. But when the crisis that called forth the reform passed away, they evaded their obligation, and did not carry out their part of the covenant. In anger, Yahweh gave them up to the sword.

That indicates how absolute and final is such a covenant. Should either party break it, the fate of the victim will be theirs. We need to remember that, as we take the bread in our hands, and renew our solemn vow before our God.

The bread represents the body of the Lord then about to be crucified.

What does that teach?

It reveals that life can only come through death! A body crucified represents flesh rendered powerless through death, or flesh denied. The body of the Lord hanging lifeless from the stake dramatised the fact that the righteous character developed by him had not come through obedience to the flesh, but by denying it, in obedience to the will of God.

Why is it necessary to emphasise that? Because flesh is sinful in its tendency, and even though Jesus never sinned he was of our nature, and therefore in need of redemption therefrom. Jesus died that he might live, and lead the way to salvation for all who properly approach God through him.

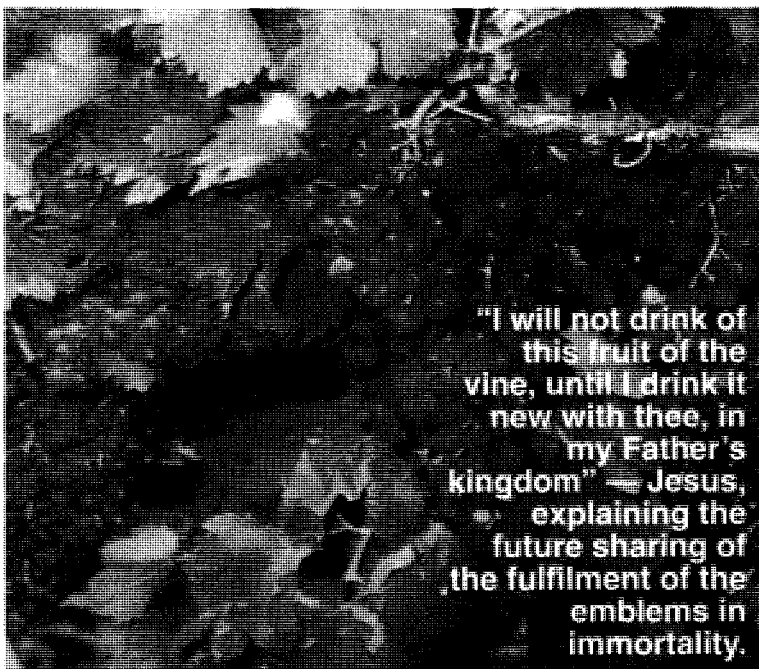
What Jesus did literally, his followers are to do figuratively inasmuch that they must identify with the Lord's work, submitting to baptism and striving to walk in newness of life. Thus Paul wrote: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

When a person concedes to God's requirements, and in obedience to His will, he figuratively crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts that are contrary to that will.

The disciples ate the unleavened bread, not fully comprehending what it all meant, for they had no thought of death in mind.

This Wine: His Blood Then the Lord took up the cup filled with wine. Again he gave thanks to the Father, and then passed it to the disciples to drink. He invited them all to do so, even Judas, saying: *"All of you drink of this; For this cup is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 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."*

There are two tokens, as there are two aspects in Christ's sacrifice: a negative and a positive one. The bread represents the negative aspect of sacrifice, in that it points to flesh crucified, that is, to flesh rendered inactive by self-denial. In itself, this accomplishes nothing. It merely means that we refrain from sin, or that we ask forgiveness for sins committed. There is nothing that we can offer God in that, for it only means that we have avoided offending Him. Are people rewarded if they avoid breaking the laws of the land? They are not!



That is something that is expected of them. They do not break the laws, and they in turn are not punished. It is all negative.

But what if they render some outstanding service to the State? In that case they will be acknowledged and rewarded.

So it is with God and with Christ. Therefore the Lord passed the wine to his disciples as the token of his blood.

What is the significance of that? Lev. 17:11 teaches that the life of a person is in the blood. Blood poured out on the altar (ch. 4:30, 34) represents life dedicated unto Yahweh in sacrifice, that is, a life given unto Him, even to the death of the body. A life dedicated is a life active in doing the things that please God. Therefore, whereas the bread suggests the avoidance of sin, the blood suggests the doing of righteousness. It is not enough to deny the flesh, we must also build the divine characteristics into our lives by doing His will.

It is a scriptural principle, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). This means two things: firstly, there must be an identification with the sacrifice of the Lord as being the fulfilment of the divine will; secondly, there must be a manifestation in life of the principles of that sacrifice, without which we will not receive remission (the Greek word *aphesis* signifies the "repairing; releasing; granting liberty"). In other words: "Without shedding of blood (an acknowledgement of the need of Christ's offering, and the dedication of our own lives unto Yahweh) there is no remission." Thus Christ taught the disciples to pray: "Forgive us our debts (remission), as we forgive (pouring out our blood) our debtors."

We must apply in action the principles symbolised by the bread and wine. We must deny self (bread), and serve God (wine). The personal application of the bread and wine suggested above, does not negate that other great principle illustrated by the offering of Christ, namely, that flesh, being what it is through sin, had to be atoned for, and in doing so, Jesus stood forth as the representation of those he came to save. Thus the atonement provided is efficacious only for those in him.

The Tokens As Symbols

It was unleavened bread that the Lord passed to the disciples, for only such was permitted in the houses of Jews at that time.

Leaven stands for sin revealed (1Cor. 5:8), of which the Lord was not guilty, though he bore the nature that, in all others, has given rise to transgression. The bread in the hands of the disciples, therefore, represented a sinless body that was to die in atonement for hopeless humanity. It represented the "bread from heaven," strengthened from above to render perfect obedience (Psa. 80:17; Isa. 11:2-4), and to provide the means to life eternal for those who eat it with understanding (John 6:53).

The aspect that Christ was strengthened from above to perform what he did must never be forgotten. He insisted upon it (John 6:63). It is only as we follow his example, and draw upon the strength that is available to us, that we will succeed. Paul taught: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me"* (Phil. 4:13). God strengthened Christ to gain the victory (Heb. 10:5), and will strengthen us also as we attempt to follow Christ.

What of wine?

Wine is the fermented fruit of the grape ripened by the action of the sun upon it. The bloom of the grape is necessary to create wine. When ripe, the fruit was picked and trodden underfoot; that being the ancient method of extracting the juice, called *"the blood of the grape."* It was then permitted to ferment, for fermentation is a sign of active life. This is why wine, and not merely grape juice, was used at Passover. It is claimed that, unlike leaven, the process of fermentation creates a chemical that preserves the wine. Wine, therefore, is a symbol representing a new life created after treading underfoot the old fruit. It thus provides a wonderful token of the new life in Christ, one which will preserve us unto life eternal.

First we need the warming, ripening influence of the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), which we receive from the Word; then we need to humble ourselves before Yahweh, by crushing underfoot the *"old fruit"* and pouring out our lives in dedicated service unto Him; finally we need to manifest the new life, which shall preserve us for the Kingdom.

The Scriptures speak of wine as *"cheering God and man"* (Jud. 9:13). It is the manifestation of this symbolic wine that is cheering to God, and the humblest servant can manifest it.

Paul's Explanation Of Communion

The most detailed account of the significance of the bread and wine is given by Paul in 1Cor. 11:23-34. Apparently, he received this as a special revelation from the Lord Jesus, for he wrote: *"I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread..."*

Paul then outlined the significance of partaking of the bread and wine.

However, there are statements that he makes, which have greatly troubled some people. For example, he declares: *"He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body"* (v. 29). Many feel that they are not worthy to eat and drink the bread and wine, and therefore are deeply concerned with this statement.

Let us carefully consider Paul's vitally important exposition of the communion. He wrote: *"When he [Jesus] had given thanks, he brake*

it [the bread], and said, *Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of me.*"

But this seems contrary to the record of the death of Jesus, because we read that "not a bone of him was broken" (John 19:36). In fact, in accordance with the R.V., the Diaglott, and other translations, the word "broken" should be omitted from this statement as it is not in the original Greek, and we should read: "*This is my body, which is for you.*" Although no bone was broken, the Lord had certainly "broken" the flesh, by refusing it any degree of allowance throughout his life.

Consider also the statement "*in remembrance of me.*" What is meant by that? Do we merely recall that Jesus lived and died two thousand years ago? No, the word in the Greek is *anamnesin* and it signifies not merely recalling to mind, but an awakening of the mind. The feast of communion is designed not merely to recall to mind what Jesus did, but to awaken our minds to the significance of his action, that we might apply the principles expressed.

Let us remember that when we partake of this solemn feast, and meditate upon what is involved in the bread and wine as suggested above: the need to deny self (bread), the need to build into our lives divine characteristics (wine); together they indicate the need to identify with both the Lord's sacrificial self-denial, and to also deny ourselves, in order to walk in the newness of life exemplified by the Lord in his life. We must reflect that same sacrifice in a life of dedication to God, and the application of these principles in daily experience.

Paul continued: "*For as often as you eat this bread, and drink*



this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come" (v. 26). He declared we do this as "often" as we have communion. His use of this word implies that there is no set time for this; no special day appointed such as Sunday (though, for convenience, such meetings are usually held on a Sunday). Whenever the feast is held, those partaking of it, "show" the Lord's death, "till he come." Thus they look forward to the coming of the Lord, as they look back to his sacrifice. They look forward because he declared, when presiding over the communion feast in the upper room in Jerusalem, *"I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until I drink it new with you in the Kingdom of God."*

The word for "show" in the Greek is *katangello*, and signifies "to proclaim; to bring home to one's mind." The principles expressed in the feast are brought clearly home to each one, that they might be applied in personal action.

Paul continued: *"Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."*

What is meant by eating or drinking unworthily? The Greek word again helps us. It is *anaxios*, and signifies "in an improper manner; treating it as something common, and not comprehending the solemn symbolic import of the act." If believers gather around the table of the Lord, and partake of the bread and wine as though it is something common and ordinary, refusing to acknowledge the solemn import of what they are doing, they can be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. It is as though they were crucifying him again, and such is possible by foolish actions (see Heb. 6:6; 10:29).

The word "guilty," however, does not really signify that. In the Greek the word is *enochos*, signifying "to be liable to charge, or action, at law." Understanding the word in that light, we see that Paul is warning us that if we treat the eating of the bread and drinking of the wine as something ordinary, and neglect to appreciate the solemn import of the action, we can be held liable to an action being pressed against us.

In the light of that, Paul further warned: *"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."* When a believer is before the table of the Lord, he must examine himself; put himself to the test. He should review his actions and motives. Has he been really consistent? Has he failed to measure up to the standards of Christ? Has he forgotten God in his life? Does he deny himself sufficiently in order to avoid the things that God dislikes? Does he give his life in dedicated action as Christ did, whose poured out blood is symbolised in the wine?

We need to come before the Lord with some such thoughts; recognising the reality of sin; bearing in mind our personal failings

and weaknesses, and realising our need of Christ. Then the bread and wine will not be seen as something common, as something lacking real meaning or purpose. On the contrary, we will recognise our vital need of the atonement in the Lord; and so we shall eat and drink.

Paul's warning instruction did not cease at that point. He continued: ***"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body"*** (v. 29).

We have seen what is meant by eating "unworthily." It is to eat as if we had no need of Christ's atonement; as though the bread and wine are completely superfluous and have no purpose; or to be quite unmindful of its real significance in our own lives.

If any person eats and drinks in that frame of mind, he will not give any practical application in life of the things relating to Christ. He will not see the need for seeking the forgiveness of God for sins committed, for the reality of sin will be hidden from his eyes.

But a person who does eat "worthily" — who recognises that Christ conquered the flesh, and poured out his life in dedicated service to his Father, and who compares his own measure of obedience with that of Christ — will be conscious of his own lack, and the need to strive more consistently to please God.

What will he do?

He will transmit his conviction into action. He will realise that he has been "bought with a price," and therefore will make an effort to "glorify God in his body, and in spirit" which he will recognise "are God's" (1Cor. 6:20). He will acknowledge the need to be separate from the world, for only on such conditions will God accept him and "be a Father unto him" (see 2Cor. 6:17-18). That is what Paul taught as he expounded upon the Memorial Meeting.

Unfortunately, it is not very clearly expressed in the Authorised Version, for it reads that a person eats unworthily by "not discerning the Lord's body."

What is meant by the phrase, "not discerning the Lord's body"? Why merely the "Lord's body," and not "the body and blood of the Lord" as in v. 27? Because Paul is not really referring to the "Lord's body." This is brought out clearly in other translations (such as the Revised Version, Diaglott, and so forth) where the word "Lord's" does not appear, and the phrase reads: "not discerning the body."

Whose body?

The believer's own body, part of the collective body of Christ!

But surely a worshipper can "discern" that!

Consider just for a moment. The word "discerning" is translated from the Greek word *diakrino* which signifies "to separate." The word is compounded of two Greek words: *dia*, "through," and *krino*, "distinguish," and by implication to discriminate by separating.

Rotherham thus translates it: "setting apart," and renders the verse: *"But let a man be proving himself, and so of the loaf let him eat, and of the cup let him drink; For he that is eating and drinking, judgment unto himself doth eat and drink, if he be not setting apart the body."*

Accepting this rendition, Paul taught that a person eats and drinks judgment against himself if he does not live a separated, consecrated life; if he does not "set apart the body" to do the will of God.

Rotherham adds this note: "When setting ourselves apart as consecrated persons, we partake of the one sacred loaf, the feast is likely to be well kept." We eat worthily, therefore, when we try to put into practice the principles expressed by the bread and wine, even though we are conscious of sins and failings. But if we are apathetic to the obligations attendant upon partaking of the emblems, we most certainly eat unworthily.

Paul warned: *"For this cause* [i.e. because some did not give practical application to the principles incorporated in the bread and wine] *many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep* [i.e. spiritually]."

He then adds other words that need interpreting: *"For if we would judge ourselves we shall not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."* The meaning of this verse is made simpler, when it is recognised that there are two different words in the Greek that are both translated "judge." The first one, in v. 31, is *diakrino*, which we have seen means "to separate," as Rotherham translates it. He renders the statement: "If, however, we had been setting ourselves apart," we should not be judged. Here the word is *krino*, which signifies to make a decision. The context implies that the judgment in question is an adverse one pronounced upon one who had failed to separate himself, or to put into practice the principles taught in the bread and wine.

Now let us apply the words of Paul, and observe how they work out. If we review our actions, as we partake of the bread and wine, we will be self-condemned if we realise that they are inconsistent with our profession. In that sense we would be "judged," and if our minds are exercised by the Word, we would be "chastened by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

On the other hand, if our review of ourselves discloses that we have been setting apart, or concentrating our body to the will of God, we will not be condemned.

The social, political and religious world of today is doomed to destruction, and we need to stand aside from it, otherwise we will be condemned with it.

In view of all the factors advanced, Paul offered the Corinthian brethren some advice: *"Wherefore, my brethren, when you come*

together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that you come not together unto condemnation.

These may seem strange words. What does he mean by "tarrying one for another"? The R.V. renders the word as "wait," but even this does not seem to give the sense. The Greek word is *ekdechesthe*, compounded of *ek*, from, and *dechesthai*, to receive, and signifying, "to receive from another," "to follow another," or "to come next," and therefore, by implication, to humble oneself. This latter meaning seems to be the sense in which Paul used the word. The Corinthian brethren had been pompous in their attitude at the feast (ct. v. 21), and so Paul urges the need for humility.

As to their so-called "love feasts," they had better be discontinued, advised Paul. If a person be hungry, let him eat at home, and so avoid the condition then existing in the ecclesia which could only lead unto condemnation.

As the Memorial Feast is described in but a few words in the Gospel accounts, we are eternally grateful to the apostle Paul for so beautifully expounding upon it at such detail. Let us closely meditate upon the significance of this most solemn act of worship, and put into practice the principles revealed.

Judas And The Emblems

Jesus passed the bread to his disciples, and they all ate; he handed them the cup, and commanded: "***Drink ye all of it.***" He did not exclude Judas, even though he knew that he was a thief.

Why?

Because Judas as a responsible person should partake of the emblems. They provided the opportunity for him to repent and find forgiveness of his sins. That, however required that he consecrate himself to doing the will of Yahweh. If he failed to do that, the eating and drinking would result in him being "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1Cor. 11:27). Already, the solemn warning had been given: "***The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born!***" (Mat. 26:24).

With that terrible warning ringing in his ears, Judas stretched forth his hand to take the bread and wine, and, in view of his subsequent actions, sealed his fate. He could have avoided it; his fate was not inevitable! If he had repented, some other means would have been devised to fulfil God's will, that Jesus should die as the means of salvation for perishing humanity.

Chapter 10

WARNING AFTER COMMUNION

Luke records that immediately after partaking of the bread and wine, the Lord further warned the disciples. The drama was now reaching its climax, and Judas must have become increasingly restless as he heard the repeated warnings of the Lord, and reflected on his intentions. It seems incredible that a man could continue on in such a course as he had selected in the face of such warnings; but it reminds us of how hard the human heart can become. This was the man that earlier had rejoicingly returned to the Lord with a report of how the people had listened to his discourses on the Gospel, and how he had healed them. But, having gone so far along the downward path, Judas found it impossible to return.

BEFORE partaking of the bread and wine, the Lord had given a solemn warning against betrayal, and had reminded them that one in their midst would be guilty of a base act of treachery. Actually, the warning was needed by all, for all in measure would betray the Lord before the crisis was over.

So, having partaken of the bread and wine, he continued his warning: "**Behold,**" he declared, "*the hand of the man that is betraying me is beside me upon the table! True, the Son of Man will go as determined, but alas for that man by whom he is betrayed!*"



**The Betrayer
Is Present!**
(Luke 22:21-23)

This additional warning caused discussion. Who would act in such a base manner? The Lord offered no further explanation, and the apostles began to quietly enquire among themselves, each with his neighbour, as to who would do such a thing.

Chapter 11

JUDAS GOES INTO THE NIGHT

From Luke's account, we must now turn to that of John to follow the sequence, the connecting verses are Luke 22:23 and John 13:22. Luke records that the apostles all commenced enquiring among themselves as to who would betray the Lord, and now John records how the question was put directly to Jesus.

THOUGH supper was over, the apostles and the Lord still remained, reclining around the table in the manner of the times, each with his head directed toward his neighbour. Two or more would lay on a couch, each resting on his left elbow, with his feet sloping away from the table toward the back of the couch. He that turned his back on his next neighbour was said to be lying on his bosom.

At the Table (John 13:23-30)

John occupied that honoured position as far as the Lord was concerned. He was in a position therefore, where, by leaning back a little further, he could whisper to the Lord without being heard.

Peter saw that, and from his position, he secretly gestured to John that he should ask Jesus who would be the betrayer (see John 13:24).

John, just as curious as Peter, did so. He leaned back on the breast of Jesus (v. 25, Diaglott), and whispered: "**Lord, who is it?**" Naturally, nobody heard the whisper except he for whom it was intended: Jesus. He replied in an answering whisper, so that nobody heard it except John: "**It is the one,**" whispered Jesus, "**to whom I shall give a piece of bread after dipping it.**" He stretched forth his hand, and taking a piece of bread, he dipped it and handed it to Judas.

Normally, companions helped themselves to food upon a table, but to pass food to another in such a way as that, was an indication of friendship. And it was doubtless so meant by the Lord. Judas had dark thoughts of betrayal in his heart it is true, and he had heard Jesus warn the apostles against such an action as he contemplated, but this act of friendship urged that he could still receive full fellowship if only he turned from the projected betrayal. But, on his part, Judas may have misjudged the action of the Lord and perhaps interpreted it as indicating that Jesus did not have him in mind when he spoke of one betraying him. Thus he could have taken this act of friendship as an indication that his secret was still not properly known, or, at least, the extent of his proposed betrayal not fully comprehended. Therefore, he

felt within himself that the time for action had come.

John declares: *"After the sop Satan entered into him."* The evil thought came to him that the moment was propitious for the act he intended. Already the "devil" had put into his heart what to do (see John 13:2), in that the Jewish leaders had prompted the idea, and now self-interest and personal advantage drove him to the deed (cp. John 12:10). He saw Jesus isolated with his apostles, and realised that this was the very opportunity for which he had been waiting. So the thought entered his heart that he would seize the first opportunity to slip away and betray the circumstances to the Jewish leaders.

Whilst he was thinking upon this, probably still munching the morsel of bread given to him, he heard the voice of Jesus directed to him: *"Do what you are going to do at once!"*

It was the final appeal. He could do one of two things: repent or betray; but whatever the choice, now was the time to act.

None around the table understood what the Lord meant by those words. Even John, who had been told who the betrayer was, did not realise the extent of the betrayal. The disciples thought that the Lord's words to Judas were a directive to him to buy something in preparation for the Passover about to take place, or, perhaps to give something to the poor.

Even Judas, misunderstanding the act of friendship extended to him by Jesus, did not realise that the Lord read the depths of his heart, and knew the extent of his infamy.

He saw this as a wonderful opportunity to excuse himself without anybody realising what he was doing. And so, "having received the sop" he went immediately out.

And John adds: *"It was night."*

This apostle went out into the blackness of night; but even so his heart was blacker! He left the upper room and the presence of the Sun of Righteousness, entering into the darkness of a Jewish night that was typical of that about to fall upon the nation, and upon him personally.

What an opportunity had been his! How much he was giving away! What was he to receive? He had received "the sop." The Diaglott renders it as "the little piece," and it was a gesture of friendship; a "portion" offered as to a friend. But it was, in effect, his reward for the gross betrayal he was about to commit,

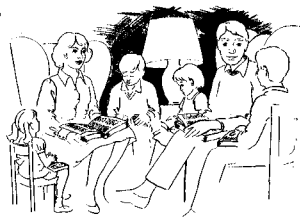
He walked out into the night both literally and figuratively. A night that brought for him utter despair, and a suicidal death; the blackness of oblivion, and the utter condemnation of the rejected.

How many have followed Judas into the night!



ADVICE FOR FAMILIES

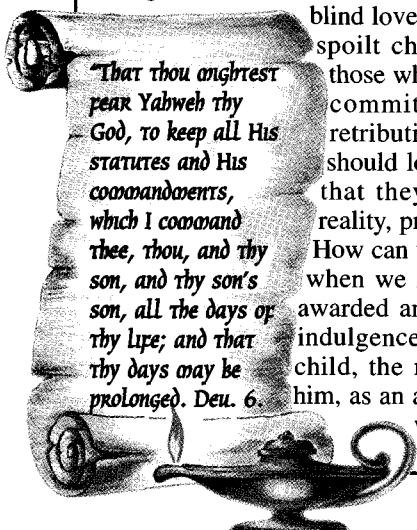
Sunday Schools are a boon, but they must not be allowed to displace or lessen the instruction that should be given in the home. They cannot be expected to supply the benefit that can alone come from faithful parental teaching. The schools should be used as an auxiliary, not as a substitute, in the religious training of young ones. No mention is made of Sunday schools in the Scriptures, but much is said of the duties of fathers and mothers in imparting knowledge to their children. They are enjoined to teach them daily and painstakingly — to go out of their way to open out to their minds the Truth of God in all its bearings. They are required, too, to set a good example to the children in their conduct, and in their love and reverence for the Bible. They should remember that the young are quick to observe and very imitative — that they pin their faith to what father and mother do. How many are the examples of good and bad parentage that are recorded in God's Word for our learning. Let us heed our obligations in this matter. In this day of increasing ungodliness and unbelief, there is added reason why we should be careful and obedient even though it will certainly entail self-denial and self-sacrifice. This affluent age is not conducive to the development of faith before God, and "without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb. 11:6).



SPOILT CHILDREN

A spoilt child is an unfortunate victim, who proves the weakness of his parent's judgment much more forcibly than the strength of his affection. Doomed to feel by daily experience that blind love is as bad as clear-sighted hatred, the spoilt child, when he embitters the life of those who have poisoned his, is not so much committing an act of ingratitude, as of retributive justice. Is it not natural that he should love those too little, who by thinking that they have loved him much, have, in reality, proved themselves his worst enemies? How can we expect him to be a blessing to us, when we have been a curse to him? It is the awarded and just punishment of a weak over-indulgence, that the more we fondle a spoilt child, the more completely shall we alienate him, as an arrow flies further from us the closer we draw it to our bosom. — H. S.

*"That thou mightest
fear Yahweh thy
God, to keep all His
statutes and His
commandments,
which I command
thee, thou, and thy
son, and thy son's
son, all the days of
thy life; and that
thy days may be
prolonged. Deu. 6."*



Chapter 12

WITH THE ELEVEN

The Lord and the disciples first partook of the normal evening meal in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, at the close of which, Jesus washed the feet of his followers. He then exhorted them concerning their responsibilities one toward another, warning them that one of their number would betray him. Following this address, he introduced the feast of communion: his passover, comprising bread and wine, representing the solemn covenant into which they had entered with Yahweh. Then once again, with greater urgency, he warned them that one of their number would betray him. The apostles did not understand what was meant by "betrayal," but, nevertheless, each asked in wonderment whether he were the guilty party. Even Judas did so, to receive an affirmative answer from the Lord, though evidently he did not realise that Christ knew the full measure of his perfidy. The exchange between Jesus and Judas, apparently went unheeded by the others, for John, whose head was close to that of Jesus, whispered to the Lord at the instigation of Peter, that he indicate who it was that would so act. This caused the Lord to pass a sop of bread to Judas as the sign that he was the betrayer. This act, normally one of friendship, put Judas off his guard. He evidently was reassured that the extent of his impending betrayal was not known to Jesus. Therefore, when the Lord gave him a last opportunity to repent, by inviting him to act one way or the other, Judas left the assembly and hurried out into the night, to perform his dreadful deed. It is important to realise that none of the apostles, with the possible exception of Judas, knew what Jesus meant when he spoke of the betrayer, and the betrayal. They probably thought that it indicated some minor act of misdemeanour on the part of one of their number, for they had no idea of the tragic events that were about to follow.

JUDAS rushed out into the darkness of the night to perform his terrible deed, leaving the rest of the little company to enjoy the warmth of communal fellowship in the lighted room. Jesus felt a sense of relief to see him go. He had tried to reclaim him, warning him of the consequences of his action, urging him to repent, but in vain. Judas was determined to proceed along the course he had chosen, as Bible prophecy had indicated he would (Psalm 109).

Meanwhile, the presence of Judas had been an embarrassment. Now that he had gone, Jesus could give his undivided attention to the

rest of the apostles. But he also had to carefully watch the time.

He knew that Judas had left to alert the Jewish leaders that it was now possible to come and arrest the Master without fear of a public rising; and whilst he was prepared to submit in obedience to the will of God, it was also important to the divine purpose that the tragic events that would bring about his death should be sufficiently delayed so as to cause it to happen at the right time: when the Passover Lamb was being offered. Until then, the moments were precious, and had to be used to the best advantage.

He took the opportunity of impressing the apostles with the significance of what had taken place. *"Just now was the Son of man glorified,"* he declared (see Diaglott), *"and God was glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify him!"*

**The Responsibility
of Discipleship
(John 13:31-35)**

Jesus had glorified the Father because the forbearance and kindness that he showed toward Judas in spite of that disciple's treachery, stemmed from God who dwelt within the Lord by His spirit. Thus Jesus was "God manifest in the flesh" (1Timothy 3:16), and would soon be "justified in the spirit," because the fact that God was glorified in him, made it certain that God would "glorify him" in return.

How would God do that? The apostles did not know; in fact, they did not understand Jesus' words.

The significance of his words was revealed later. Jesus had glorified the Father by revealing His glorious characteristics without fault, and God raised him from the dead to appropriately clothe upon such a divine character His own glorious, imperishable nature (see John 17:3-5). He will do similarly for all who imitate the wonderful example that he set them (2Pet. 1:4; 1Pet. 2:21-24).

Meanwhile, with Judas gone, Christ's thoughts turned more directly to the apostles before him. He knew that they would all be thoroughly tested within the next few hours, and he felt a tender solicitude toward them. He would shelter them all, if he could; but he knew that he must leave them for a time, and that they would then be like orphans. So he addressed them in terms of great affection. *"Little children,"* he said to them tenderly, *"I am only to be with you a little longer; then you will look for me, and, as I told the Jews I tell you now, where I go you cannot come!"*

"Little children!" (Gr. *teknia*). This is an expression of tender affection, nowhere else used in the Gospels. Christ's thought was for his "children" soon to be orphaned, because he was to be taken from them to ascend into heaven. They could not follow him there, and therefore it was necessary for them to prepare for the time when they

would be left more to themselves. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," was particularly impressed with the expression. Later, when he had grown in spiritual maturity, he more frequently used the term himself when addressing the ecclesia (1John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21).

But at the time, the apostles failed to understand what he meant. He therefore continued: "*A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.*" The commandment to love one another was not "new" in the sense that such a command had never been given before, because a similar injunction had been laid down by the Law of Moses (Lev. 19:18); but it was "new" in the sense of the meaning imposed upon it by Christ's example. They were to love as he had loved. They had an example of what that meant in the way that he had treated Judas in spite of the dark treachery that lay hidden in the heart of the traitor. Jesus was about to give up his life for his disciples, and this action of complete dedicated sacrifice provided the measure of love expected of his followers in their attitude one toward another in obedience to his command. The greatest witness to Truth is the manifestation of its principles in action.

"*By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one toward another,*" the Lord declared. The love of which Jesus spoke will only be manifested where God's Truth is properly understood and upheld; for it is based on "rejoicing in the Truth" (1Cor. 13:6). And what a beautiful thing it is when such a love is revealed! Let opposition be ever so strong; let frustrations and difficulties make life ever so dark and cheerless; there is inexpressible comfort, joy and encouragement where mutual sympathy and reciprocated helpfulness is manifested. On the other hand, alienation, distrust and antagonism among brethren add greatly to sorrow. There is nothing quite as distressing as discord among those who should be united as one.

How important it is that Christ's followers imitate his ways! If we accept his teaching, we should learn to apply his principles. If, on the other hand, we embrace and teach his doctrine, we deceive ourselves if we do not act upon it. That is the constant exhortation of Scripture (Mat. 7:21-29; James 2:18; 1John 2:9-11).

Peter Is Warned That He Will Deny Christ (John 13:36-38) The Lord's exhortation on love went largely unheeded at that time. Perhaps the apostles thought it was unnecessary, in that they imagined that they were already manifesting sufficient of it one toward another! In any case, they did not comment upon Jesus' words.

One aspect of the discourse, however, troubled Peter at least. The Lord had declared that he was going away (John 13:33). What did he mean? Was it not his intention to immediately proclaim himself king, and restore the kingdom to Israel? How could he do that if he were about to leave them?

Peter pondered the problem, and then broke the silence that followed the words of the Lord with a question: "*Lord, where are you going?*"

It was the only aspect of Christ's discourse that he was interested in at the time. The Lord replied: "*I am going where you cannot follow me at present, but later you will follow me!*" He was referring to his impending sacrificial death upon the cross. It was to be a foreshadowing of the manner in which Peter would later meet his own death (John 21:18-19; 2Peter 1:14).

Peter, however did not understand that Jesus was speaking of death. It was reassuring to hear the Lord say that he would ultimately follow him; but why not continuously? Peter's mind was filled with thoughts of glory and the kingdom, and he did not want to miss any part of it. Why could he not follow Jesus wherever he might go? He was prepared to serve him to the uttermost; or so he thought. "*Lord,*" he exclaimed, "*why cannot I follow you now? I am prepared to lay down my life for your sake!*" And Peter really believed it. Little did he imagine how completely he would be taken off guard a few hours later, and deny the very one whom he now professed he would serve even unto death.

The Lord knew, however, and sadly and solemnly answered Peter:

"*Will you lay down your life for my sake? Truly, truly, I say unto you, by cock-crow, you will deny me three times!*" Peter listened to the Lord incredulously. It was then late at night. The Romans divided the night into four watches (Mark 13:35): 6pm., 9pm., 12 pm. and 3am. At those hours, each of which was called a "watch," the guard in the Tower of Antonia, that overlooked the temple, was relieved at the sound of a trumpet. The last two trumpet sounds were called the cock-crowing. Jesus' words thus meant that before 3 am. Peter would deny his Lord three times!

Peter felt hurt that Christ should think this of him; so hurt, indeed, that he could find nothing to say. He withdrew within himself, and remained silent.

**Strife Among
the Apostles
(Luke 22:24-30)**

But the other apostles did not remain silent. Perhaps they were somewhat pleased that Peter had been put in his place. On earlier occasions, they had manifested a certain amount of jealousy when Jesus had given special privileges to Peter. Now that he had been silenced, it gave them the opportunity to be

more vocal in their own support. Each one claimed that he would never betray the Lord; that he was prepared to serve him more than his fellow. In fact, in their desire to show their loyalty unto Christ they became argumentative, each, for himself, claiming to render a more complete service. Luke records: *"There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest"* (Luke 22:24).

The word "strife" is *philomeika* in the Greek, and signifies "love of strife," and thus an eagerness to debate. Recorded on the background of the rebuke administered to Peter, it doubtless indicates that a noisy, verbal, argument arose among the apostles as each one claimed that he would never deny the Lord, but would serve him more loyally than any other.

It does not necessarily signify that each claimed that he was morally or intellectually better than the others.

But whatever the cause and subject of the strife, Jesus took the opportunity of teaching them a valuable lesson. They had forgotten the humble service of love that he had ministered unto each of them in washing their feet, so now he brought their minds back to consider it once again in their service to him and to one another. He declared: *"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over their subjects, and they who exercise authority are given the title of Benefactor. But with you it must not be so. He that is greatest among you, let him take a junior's role; and he that is chief, let him act as a servant. For which is greater, the diner or the server? Surely the diner, the master at the table, and yet I, the Master, have humbled myself as a servant!"*

Surely such words as those must have made them feel thoroughly ashamed of themselves. Each wanted to be the greatest; well, let each humble himself more completely in service to the other! That was the answer to their argument! Surely it reduced them all to the level where none was great!

Who was really the greatest among them? Why, Jesus, of course! They would all agree to that! They had all witnessed him ministering to them by washing their feet (John 13:4-5)! Let them imitate his action in that way. In other words, he taught them that whilst the great of the world claimed the title of Benefactor in word only, they, as the kings of the future, should demonstrate it in action.

Actually, the title "Benefactor" (Gr. *Euergetes*) was a name borne by several kings in Egypt, and Syria, and had become proverbial for a tyrant. The word signifies "to do good," but was only used as a title, for those claiming it did not reveal goodness in action. Christ's followers must not be like that; they must not claim to be what they are not. They must be great in action as well as in word, rendering a service of love in humility.

The Lord's example revealed what is required. He had ever manifested kindness and compassion towards those in need of it, and

that, often, in the face of derision and persecution. The apostles had witnessed him quietly performing the will of his Father in spite of the aggravations he had experienced through the opposition of hypocrites. His great desire at all times was to please his Father, and the Father, in turn, delighted in His Son, and was pleased to grant him the Kingdom. Let the apostles apply the lessons they had seen, and they, too, would be given authority in his kingdom. So he taught them: *"You are men who have continued with me in spite of all the trials I have endured; and just as the Father has covenanted to give me a kingdom, so I covenant to give you royal authority in that kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

They delighted to hear this, for their hearts burned to see the kingdom set up. But the Lord was careful to emphasise that entrance into it as his associates in its rule is conditional upon those called manifesting true greatness: the rendering of a humble service in truth designed to help others. The Lord's words, therefore, constituted a rebuke for the manner in which the disciples had acted.

**A Second Warning
For Peter
(Luke 22:31-34)**

Silence followed the Lord's rebuke of the apostles. Perhaps they were a little ashamed of their action in so vigorously pressing their personal claims of greatness. Certainly they could not justify them in the light of the Lord's own example.

The Lord broke the silence by again turning to Peter and speaking to him. But he did not address him as Peter (Rock); he called him Simon (Hearer), for he wanted him to listen carefully to what he was about to say.

"Simon, Simon, behold," he began kindly, *"Satan has desired to have you [plural] that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you [singular] that your faith fail not; and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren!"* There is tremendous significance in these urgent words of the Master. The first "you" is in the plural number, and thus concerned all the apostles; the latter one is in the singular number, and related to Peter as an individual.

Who was the Satan who desired to have the apostles, and sift them as wheat? The word means merely "adversary," and described the Jewish authorities who had determined that they would put to death the friends of Jesus as well as the Lord himself (John 12:10-11). Therefore, they intended to sift the apostles, to separate the wheat from the chaff. They had already succeeded as far as Judas was concerned, and evidently hoped for similar success among some of the others.

The Lord knew this, and had given his particular concern in the prayers that ascended from his lips to the Father in heaven.

He had given special thought to the case of Peter, praying earnestly on his behalf that his faith would not fail him. He knew Peter through and through. He realised that such a character: impulsive, warm, unpredictable, could fail completely, or else become a tower of strength to others. So he pleaded with him: "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren!" The word "converted" signifies to retrace one's steps! In using such an expression, Jesus predicted that Peter would drift from him, and would find a need to turn back to him again. When that happened, and when Peter had been humbled and upbuilt by his own experience, he called upon him to "strengthen his brethren."

This, too, is a very significant expression. It is a translation of the word *sterizo* from *sterix*, a prop. Peter would have to learn by experience to retrace his steps back to the Lord, and once the valuable lesson had been learned and a humbled Peter had been strengthened spiritually himself by reverses, he was called upon to "prop up" his brethren in similar situations.

We anticipate the record to observe that Peter wonderfully benefited by the humbling experiences he subsequently went through, to become a more excellent disciple, and to help others in need. It is significant that he uses this very word twice in his own epistles, there rendered as "stablish" and "established" (1Pet. 5:10; 2Pet. 1:12).

But, for the moment, Peter failed to realise his own need, and his lamentable weakness. Instead he boldly and confidently asserted he would never let the Lord down. "*Lord,*" he boastfully asserted, "*I am ready to go with you, both into prison, and to death!*"

Peter, of course, never realised that prison and death awaited the Lord. He probably imagined that Christ's warnings of impending trouble merely meant opposition from the Jewish authorities, an opposition that Christ would overcome triumphantly, as he established his authority in the land and set up the kingdom.

In his boast, he had forgotten the clause in the Lord's prayer: "Lead us not into trials, and deliver us from evil." His confidence was in himself. Peter never realised what was apparent to everybody else: that he had moments of great weakness, in spite of his belligerent assertiveness.

Quietly, solemnly, the Lord again warned him: "*I tell you, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before you have disowned all knowledge of me three times!*"

Peter was silenced by the rebuke, but frankly disbelieved it. He was confident in his assertiveness, and felt sure that he would never let Christ down. Jesus must be mistaken.

Chapter 13

“GO, BUY A SWORD!”

Though Christ had more directly warned Peter, he also indicated that all of the apostles would fail under testing. The others had probably experienced a sense of self-satisfaction in hearing Peter so plainly rebuked, but, in fact, they had all been warned to take heed. Having publicly rebuked Peter the second time, the Lord launched into a general exhortation to them all, advising them that the divine protection that they had enjoyed to that moment of time was about to be withdrawn, at least partially. The Lord's remarks on this occasion have been sadly misunderstood, and they therefore justify the close attention of the careful reader. Remember that they were uttered when the apostles were still in the Upper Room talking with Jesus, and that meanwhile Judas was about to lead the guard to where the Lord could be arrested.

Jesus earnestly addressed them all. “*When I sent you out as my messengers without purse, provision bag or shoes, did you go in want of anything?*” The apostles’ minds went back over the events of the past few years. Some of them had left a lucrative business; others had left families; all of them had sacrificed something in faith; but they lacked nothing by so doing. They recalled times when they were sent out on preaching missions with no apparent means of support, but, remarkably, there had been always somebody to care for them, to give them food and shelter. They had experienced the overshadowing protection of God, guiding them from day to day. They lacked nothing; marvellously all had been provided.

“*No, we were in want of nothing!*” they exclaimed.

The Apostles to be Left to Their Own Resources (Lk. 22:35-38)

There was to be a change now, however. The former protection had been designed to develop their confidence in Yahweh, in anticipation of the time when they would be called upon to endure more in His name.

Soon there was to be an intensification of opposition. The time was at hand when people no longer would consider them as “followers of the prophet” from Nazareth, but would “number them with the transgressors” as Jesus proceeded to tell them.

“*It is going to be different now,*” he remarked. “*Whoever has a purse had better take it with him, and his provision bag as well; and*

he that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For, believe me, that which has been written about me must be fulfilled: 'He was reckoned among the criminals.' Indeed, all the things concerning me will find their fulfilment!"

These words have been sadly misunderstood. That Christ did not mean his directions to be taken literally is shown by his answer to the apostles when they showed him two swords (Lk. 22:38), his attitude when one was used (v. 51), and his reproof of Peter for using it (Mat. 26:52). In graphic language, the Lord was warning the apostles that greater trials were at hand (v. 31). The shepherd was about to be smitten and the sheep scattered (Zech. 13:7). In other words, Christ was about to be taken from them, so that the protection that his presence afforded would be withdrawn. Moreover, greater opposition would be experienced, and they would have to learn to fend for themselves. In the Olivet prophecy, he had predicted: "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake" (Lk. 21:12). The immunity from such trouble that they previously experienced would be no longer enjoyed.

However, there is another sense in which the Lord's words can be applied figuratively. The purse can stand for treasure in heaven (Lk. 12:33; 1Pet. 1:7) which it is incumbent upon a follower to accumulate; the provision bag ("scrip," A.V.) can represent spiritual food (Heb. 5:13-14) which disciples need for their sustenance; the sword is used as a symbol for the Word of God (Eph. 6:17), and a person must be prepared to deny himself the necessities of life, if necessary, to purchase this (Pro. 23:23; Isa. 55:1; Rev. 3:18; 2Pet. 1:5).

But again, the apostles completely misunderstood the Lord. It is remarkable how frequently they gave a figurative import to teaching he intended to be taken literally; and a literal meaning to those expressions used figuratively.

On this occasion, they thought that he meant his instructions to be taken literally. They realised that they would experience a measure of opposition, and doubtless thought that this would be because Jesus would proclaim himself king and set about establishing the kingdom. Perhaps it would involve actual fighting, and for that swords would be necessary. In the room there were a couple of swords, and the apostles directed his attention to them.

"*Lord,*" they said, "*Look, we have two swords here!*" They did not understand, and it was useless pursuing the conversation.

"*It is enough!*" was all that he said.

They had failed to follow him closely. He had quoted Isa. 53:12 to them: "He was reckoned among the transgressors," and had declared that the words therein written would be fulfilled "in him." If they had

gone to that chapter, and carefully meditated upon its teaching, recognising it as prophetic of him, they should have been able to foresee the tragedy of his impending crucifixion.

But their minds absorbed with thoughts of immediate glory and triumph, even though temporary setbacks might be experienced, they failed to comprehend the solemn warning of such Scripture.

A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospel

JOSEPH: THE LORD'S GUARDIAN

See volume 5, pages 166-168.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

He was a man of Arimathea. The site is unknown. It has been identified with Ramathaim-Zophim (*The Lofty Place*) where dwelt Elkanah and Hannah, but of this we are not sure. Joseph was a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin who had built for himself a sepulchre where he laid the Lord's body (Mat. 27:57-60).

He was a man of intelligence and skill. With Nicodemus, he stood out against the scheming and actions of his fellow-counsellors (Lk. 23:51). It was probably the skilful and penetrating questioning of these two clever men of the Sanhedrin that frustrated the false witnesses who had been carefully schooled to testify against Jesus (Mat. 26:60). The accusation they made against Jesus was simple enough, and under normal circumstances, it should not have been difficult for them to agree, but somebody in the Sanhedrin council tore their evidence to shreds, and it must have been these two Pharisees.

He was a man of faith. He desired the coming of the kingdom of God. Immersed in Old Testament Scriptures, like his friend Nicodemus, he was looking for the reign of the promised Messiah (Lk. 23:51).

He was a man of integrity. Luke claims that he was "a good man and just" (Lk. 23:50-51). The expression "good man" points to his inner motives; the term "just" indicates their outward manifestation. He was good in the sight of God; he was just in the sight of his fellow-men. Thus it was nothing new for him to stand up in the counsel against unfair tactics.

He was a man who believed. Like Nicodemus, he secretly believed in Jesus, but obviously was not sure (Jn. 19:38). He doubtless discussed this with his friend, who most likely revealed to him his conversation with Jesus. During that discourse, Jesus had stated that, as the serpent in the wilderness had been lifted up,

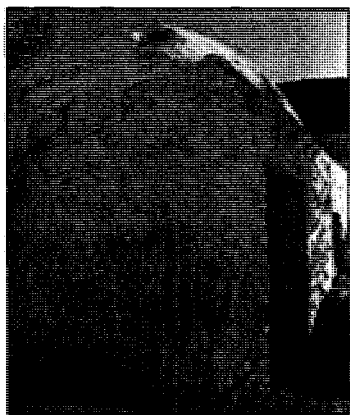
so must the Son of man (Jn. 3:14-15). This evidently impressed itself upon the mind of Nicodemus and his friend, for when they saw Jesus publicly revealed hanging on the stake it convinced them that he was the Messiah. They, therefore, took the dead body of the Lord and laid it in the sepulchre of Joseph, even though the handling of one dead would disqualify them for the Passover that very evening.

He was a man who fulfilled prophecy. Isaiah predicted of Jesus: "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death" (Isa. 53:9). But the word "made" is the Hebrew *nathan*, and can signify "set" or "appoint." The statement has been rendered: "His grave was appointed with the wicked, but he was with a rich man in his death." The Jewish Sanhedrin appointed that Jesus should be buried with the wicked: that is, flung into the burning valley of Gehenna: but Joseph, who knew this, thwarted their dreadful plot. He begged the body of Jesus, and gave it an honourable burial in his own grave.

He was a man of destiny. It is significant that both at the birth and death of Jesus there was a Joseph to look after him at times when he was incapable of looking after himself; firstly as a helpless babe; and then as a lifeless body. The name Joseph signifies *Increase*. Both Josephs completely disappear from the record as soon as they perform their duty toward Christ. But both will rise from the grave to receive the increase due to them for the labours they performed.

JOSES: THE PARDONER

His name means, *He that pardons*, though the Revised Version gives it as Joseph, *Increase*. He was one of the half-brethren of the Lord (Mat. 13:55; 27:56; Mk. 6:3; 15:40-47).



Whited sepulchres, painted so that visitors to Jerusalem at the time of Passover might not unwittingly "touch them" and so be ceremoniously defiled!

Chapter 14

COMFORT IN TROUBLE

(Jn. 14)

In order to follow the sequence of events, it is necessary to turn from Lk. 22:38 to Jn. 14 where the Lord's continued conversation with his disciples is recorded. Lk. 22:39 declares that he left the house, and therefore synchronises with Jn. 14:31 where it is recorded that Jesus led the way from the room. Meanwhile, the discourse of Jn. 14 was delivered. In it, the Lord tried to comfort the apostles. He had told them of impending trouble, had warned them that the most trusted (Judas the treasurer), and the boldest, (Peter the belligerent), of the disciples would be among those who would deny him, whilst all the rest would be humbled by their experiences. Yet there still remained a source of fellowship and peace if they would but seek it. Troubles would surely arise, the greatest crisis of their existence was even then arising; but their trust and belief in him and in God must remain unshaken. So he addressed them with the beautiful and comforting words recorded in Jn. 14.

THE Master looked at the disciples gathered with him in the house. "Let not your heart be troubled," he counselled, "you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many abiding places: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going!"

Preparing the Dwelling (vv. 1-4)

The Father's "house" is His spiritual temple (1Pet. 2:5-6), or the completed ecclesia (Heb. 3:6). It is likened to a building built "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" with "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20). In that house there is room for all: many "abiding places" in which the faithful can shelter. But it was necessary for Jesus to ascend into heaven, that he might act as mediator between God and men, to ensure the security of that shelter (1Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:24).

The Lord's heavenly labours, however, are not to continue indefinitely. The time will come when he will return to earth, to complete the spiritual temple, whose foundation he laid at his first advent. Then all the "living stones," the "abiding places," will be

brought together, to form a glorious habitation for the manifestation of Yahweh on earth.

Meanwhile, Christ had to ascend to the Father. And, in a spiritual sense, it was possible for the apostles to follow him there (see Heb. 6:19-20). They knew "the way" for he had often explained it to them. It was along the path of "seeking those things which are above," of "setting their affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). This would lead them to mentally ascend to the Father; and from that lofty eminence to see beyond the troubles, trials and frustrations that they would find on earth, and, which tended to hide the distant view from their gaze, to the vision of glory beyond.

However, the apostles once again failed to grasp the point of Christ's discourse, and Thomas was frank enough to say so. "Lord," he protested, "*we do not know where you are going, and how can we know what road you are going to take!*"

The Way to the Father (vv. 5-7)

The Lord explained that he was "the way" to the Father. As such, he was the very embodiment of Truth, for he was the Word made flesh and dwelling among them. Moreover, he was "the life," for their lives must be motivated by him. Later, Paul wrote: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Jesus thus replied to Thomas: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If you had learned to know me, who I really am, you would know my Father also, but from now on you will come to know Him, and realise that you have seen Him!*" It was a promise that they would come to comprehend the Truth better, and more fully recognise that the Father is manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Reveal to Us the Father!" (vv. 8-14)

The discourse was proving more and more confusing to the apostles; they could not understand it at all. Puzzled, in their bewilderment, they probably glanced at one another. It was left to Philip to voice the question on behalf of the others: "Lord," he said, "*show us the Father, and we will be satisfied!*"

The question shows how completely the apostles failed to comprehend all that Jesus had revealed to them. He had explained this subject before (see e.g. Jn. 12:45), yet they either did not listen, or did not heed. They should have recognised the manifestation of the Father in the Son; but it was not until later that they came to fully understand the person and mission of the Lord, and the doctrine concerning God manifestation that he taught them (see Jn. 10:6; 12:16; Mat. 15:16).

Nevertheless, the Lord did not upbraid them because they did not understand; he realised that he had spoken deep things unto them, and with patience tried to guide them into a better understanding of Truth.

Jesus was the perfect manifestation of God in flesh. In thought, word and deed he reflected the Father, and revealed Him unto men. He brought "into captivity every thought to the obedience" of Yahweh (2Cor. 10:5); he declared: "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me" (Jn. 7:16); he prayed: "Not my will, but Thine, be done" (Lk. 22:42).

In everything but nature, he displayed divine characteristics.

*The Christadelphian Instructor** expresses it beautifully thus: "He was human as to the substance of which he was made; but divine as to the source from which he came; the Spirit from which he derived his wisdom; and the pattern of the character which he possessed. Jesus and the Father were one by the Spirit, which, proceeding from the Father, embraced them both. God was thus in Christ, and Christ was thus the manifestation of God: which things cannot be said of any other man" (Questions 44, 45).

This truth had been clearly testified unto the apostles in all that Christ had done and said. It was therefore rather shortsighted of Philip to say: "Show us the Father, and it will satisfy us."

They had seen the Father in the Son.

The Lord replied: "*Have I been with you all this time, without you really knowing me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father! How can you say, show us the Father? Don't you believe that I am in union with the Father, and that the Father is in union with me? The very words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father, who ever dwells in me, does His works. You must believe me that I am in union with the Father, and that the Father is in union with me, or else you must believe me because of the very works that I do. Truly, truly, I say unto you, He who puts his faith in me, will do the works that I do, and even greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father. And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it!*"

What tremendous words! They teach that all that Christ performed was done through the indwelling of the Father; but they also express a promise that the apostles would perform similar works through the indwelling of the Son.

More, the Lord promised that they would do "greater works" than he had accomplished. His labours had been limited to Judea; their's

* Written by Robert Roberts, this monumental work presents the Bible message in a series of questions and answers. It contains valuable information and teaching. Copies are available from the *Logos Office* (see inside front page).

would extend to the ends of the earth. His work had been limited to preaching the Gospel to Jews; their's would extend to offering salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. He proclaimed an impending sacrifice for sins; they announced a risen Christ offering justification for sins.

But this "greater work" would not be possible unless he ascended to the Father. Then, through the power granted unto him, he would dwell in them that this greater work might be accomplished. They could not accomplish it on their own; but by prayer and the divine guidance and blessing it would be made possible.

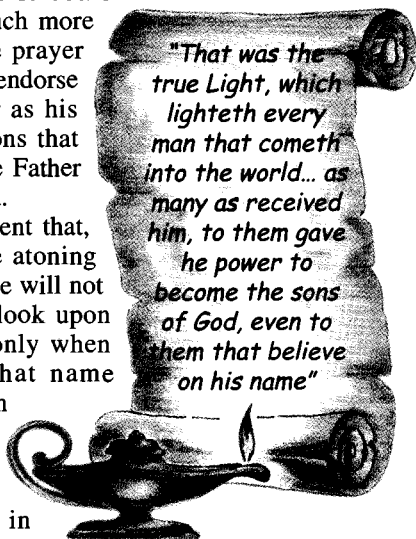
Therefore, the Lord promised that any prayer offered in his name would have his endorsement, and would be fulfilled. Of course, this statement is governed by the context in which it is found and has relation to the "greater work" that the apostles would accomplish. Nevertheless, it revealed the tremendous reservoir of power that was made available to them, and which they could tap through the privilege of prayer. Such prayer, however, had to be "in his name." In other words, the prayers and pray-ers should be in such union with Christ as to petition only for those things which he would endorse.

That, really, is what is meant by praying "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." The statement does not mean that a prayer is acceptable just because a person utters the words: "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!" as though there is some magical power in the formula. Much more than mere words is required! The prayer must be such that Christ is able to endorse it, and to present it to the Father as his own. If the prayer contains petitions that are at variance with the will of the Father and the Son they will not be granted.

Further, it is an acknowledgement that, unless a person is covered by the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, he or she will not be heard, since Yahweh will not look upon sin. Our prayers are acceptable only when presented "in the name," as that name represents all that is honourable in the sight of the Father.

How important it is that we seek to know the will of the Father and the Son, that we might pray in conformity with their will. If our

prayers are thus limited, we can utter them in confidence that they will be heard, even though the manner in which they are granted to us, may not necessarily be in accordance with our personal desires.



Chapter 15

THE PROMISE OF THE COMFORTER

(Jn. 14:15-17)

The Lord promised the apostles that he would guarantee to fulfil all petitions that were made to the Father in his name. But how could they learn to pray in such a way as to be sure that Christ would endorse their requests? They needed help to that end, and accordingly, he promised to send them "another Comforter" or Advocate, even the Spirit of Truth. This Comforter would assist them to an understanding of the divine will that would enable them to more clearly comprehend that which Christ would be ready to endorse in prayer.

In recording Christ's words, the Authorised Version uses the personal pronoun in relation to the Spirit, and refers to it as "him" and "he." This has led some to imagine that the Holy Spirit is a person, part of the Godhead. But if that doctrine were true, all references to the Holy Spirit should be consistently treated in the same manner throughout Scripture, whereas, in some cases, the neuter gender is used. An example of this is found in Rom. 8:16 when Paul explained: "The Spirit itself beareth witness." Why is this variation in the pronouns used? It is because of the idiom of the Greek language which personifies an inanimate object to identify it with the person to whom it belongs. For example, if a desk belonged to a man, it would be given the masculine gender, and any pronouns would be given in the feminine, with the pronouns "she" or "her." In other cases, where it might be for general use, it is rendered in the neuter gender. This seems strange to us for we are not used to it, but it is a peculiarity of the Greek language. In English, an inanimate object is normally given in the neuter gender (except in certain instances such as a ship which might be described as "she") and the translation should follow that practice. That should be the case here, and references to the Holy Spirit rendered as "it."

THE apostles listened to the Lord in silence, though doubtless still puzzled over the words he spoke to them. They were golden words of truth, though their beauty was only dimly appreciated by his hearers.

**An Advocate
on Earth**

"If you love me," he continued, "**you will keep my commandments.**" The manifestation of this love would keep them "in the name." And Jesus clearly revealed that the only genuine test of true

love is obedience: it must be seen in action. The love of which he spoke is moral and not merely emotional; it is a divine love, stemming only from God, and being described as "the love of the Father" (1Jn. 2:15). It is generated by knowledge, and finds its outworking in the performance of those things that knowledge reveals as desirable to the Father.

Conditional upon the apostles striving to keep his commandments, the Lord gave them a promise. He declared: ***"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter to be with you always; even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but you know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."***

The word "Comforter" is a translation of the Greek word *parakletos* and signifies, "called to one's side" i.e., to one's aid, and therefore a helper. In Greek usage, a witness called to one's side in a law case, or an advocate called in to plead a cause, was called a *parakletos*. The term was also applied to a person called in to instil encouragement in a company of depressed and dispirited men, such as a company of soldiers facing a dangerous and difficult assignment. Originally, the English word "comforter" came from the word "fortis," meaning "brave," and that indicates the meaning of the word here. Thus Jesus, in speaking of the difficult and dangerous mission before the apostles, promised to provide them with that which would give them courage, and assist them as a helper and an advocate beyond the aid of mere flesh.

The same word is translated "advocate" in 1Jn. 2:1, and there applied to Christ himself: "We have an advocate [a helper, a pleader] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Christ's followers, therefore, have two helpers: one on earth and the other in heaven; the former is the Word of Truth, the latter is the Lord Jesus.

The Comforter, or "Spirit of Truth," therefore, is the power of the Word working in the heart and mind of a believer. Jesus declared: "The world cannot receive it, because it seeth it not." The word "seeth" in this place is from the Greek *theoreo*, which signifies to view as a spectator, to carefully peruse in all its details. The world refuses to do that in regard to the Truth, and therefore does not know it.

But, as the Lord told the apostles, ***"It will dwell with you, and shall be in you."*** He indicated that the Spirit of Truth would assist them to pray correctly in his name, and thus enable them to secure the petitions they required (Rom. 8:26-27; Eph. 2:18).

Chapter 16

THE PROMISE OF FELLOWSHIP

(Jn. 14:18-24)

Previously the Lord had told the apostles that he would leave them for a time, and that they would be largely left to fend for themselves. Now he encouraged them with the promise that they would not be left destitute as orphans, but, even in his absence, they could enjoy fellowship with his Father and himself. This was conditional upon them manifesting divine love in action.

THE apostles were disturbed at the words of the Master. They were anticipating that he would immediately set up the Kingdom of God at Jerusalem, and they could not reconcile that with expressions they now heard that spoke of him leaving them. They looked puzzled, downcast, and confused, and as he saw this, he sought to encourage them.

“I Will Not Leave You Orphans”

“I will not leave you orphans,” he declared (Jn. 14:18, mg.), “for I will come back to you. In a little while, the world will see me no more, but you will see me; and because I live, you shall live also. At that time it will be clear to you that I am in union with my Father, and that you are in me, and I am in you. He who has received my commandments and obeys them, truly loves me; and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will make myself real to him!”

In this promise to return to the apostles, Jesus did not have in mind his second advent, but was referring to a coming manifestation of his presence in their midst by means of the Holy Spirit, after he had left them to ascend to the Father (cp. Acts 4:29-31). Earlier, the Lord had told them that where “two or three are gathered together in his name” he would be with them (Mat. 18:20), and later Paul wrote of Christ, that he should “dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph. 3:17).

Though Christ is in heaven, he offers his services as advocate, or helper, to all who desire them, and in that way will leave no one without assistance who seeks it. This help is not available to the world, but only to his own. And they are those who love him in such a way as to sacrifice their own inclinations to fulfil his will. Any who do that are loved of the Father, as well as by the Son who will manifest himself unto them as a real help in time of need.

Paul experienced that help and wrote: “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

How Christ Manifests Himself to Believers Judas, the brother of James, now interrupted the Lord with a question: "Lord," he enquired, "how is it that you will manifest yourself unto us, and not unto the world?"

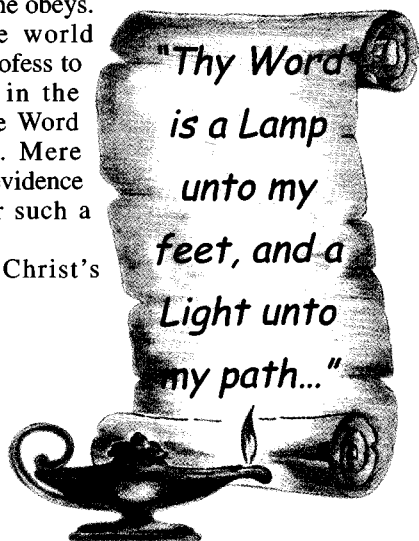
The Lord answered: *"If one loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. But he that loves me not, does not keep my word, and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. I have told you these things whilst I am with you, but the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in my name, will bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you."*

Christ thus sharply divided humanity into those who love him and those who do not. The former are those who love him by keeping his word; the latter are those who might make a profession of love, but fail to apply it in action. The criterion of love is obedience. In its absence, love is non-existent.

A person obeying Christ's words will manifest Christ in character. His changed character will testify that the Father and the Son abide in him, through the Word which he obeys.

On the other hand, the world ignores that Word. It might profess to love Christ and God, but in the absence of a respect for the Word such a love is impossible. Mere emotional religion is not an evidence of it; Christ had no use for such a profession of love.

All this is involved in Christ's answer to Judas.



Chapter 17

THE PROMISE OF PEACE

(Jn. 14:27-31)

In the upper room in Jerusalem, the apostles were isolated from the world without. But they knew that the world was antagonistic to Christ, and would forcibly restrain him if it could. Thus trouble surrounded them, and this disturbed them. Nor did Christ's words pacify them, and consternation was shown on their faces. So now he offered them peace; the peace of mind such as the world knows not, and which it is beyond the heart of man to conceive. The word "peace," as used in the Bible, is an important one. The Hebrew word is "shalom," and in Greek it is "eirene," and both come from roots signifying to be whole, complete, or united as one. They thus describe harmonious relationships existing between two parties. The world uses the word "peace" to describe the mere cessation of war; but Christ used it to define the harmony existing between parties where true fellowship or "oneness" exists. It was that peace which he promised his disciples.

JUDAS' question had interrupted the channel of Christ's discourse, and now, having answered it, the Lord again reverted to his main subject. He declared: ***"Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace I give you. It is not the world's peace that I offer, for it cannot give peace!"***

Christ's Care for His Own

Christ offers real peace of mind. In contrast, the world speaks of peace, but in its lips, peace is a mere empty phrase, for whilst it proclaims its platitudes, hate is hidden in its heart.

Christ's peace is complete union with the Father and the Son, based upon forgiveness of sin.

The world cannot offer a peace such as that.

But the apostles did not then experience peace, for it is based upon a true understanding, and they lacked this at that time. In fact, they were bewildered by the Lord's apparently conflicting words of peace and trouble, his references to him leaving them, and his suggestions of trouble ahead. They showed their disturbance on their faces, and the Lord tried to pacify them. ***"Do not allow your hearts to be disquieted or afraid,"*** he said. ***"You heard me say that I was going away, and would return to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced because I said, I go to unto the Father; for my Father is***

greater than I." The Lord promised that he would return after he had ascended to the Father. He gently rebuked the apostles for their sorrow at his statement that he must leave them for a while, and pointed out that if they really loved him, they would not regard their own sense of loss, nor grieve at their own personal inconvenience, but desire that which was best for Christ. Moreover, it was essential for the Son to ascend to the Father because of His greater strength, and in order that they might co-operate for the very difficult work yet to be accomplished.

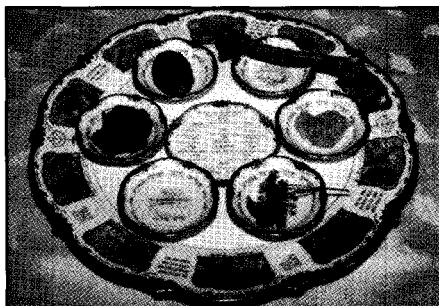
"I have told you all this before it come to pass," continued the Lord, ***"that when it does come to pass, you may have faith. I have not much further time to speak with you, for the prince of this world is coming, and he has nothing in common with me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father has ordered me what to do, even so I do!"***

The "prince of this world" relates to the leaders of Jewry, for they considered themselves in control of the community in Jerusalem. Time was rapidly passing away. Judas had by now met the Jewish leaders and arranged for the guard to arrest Jesus. At that very moment, he was returning to the room through the dark streets of the city, leading the soldiers to the house where they could take the Lord without the people being aware of it.

The guard comprised Jewish and Roman soldiers, and as such, it represented the prince of the world, the ruling authorities. Jesus had nothing in common with either — whether Jew or Gentile — so that a compromise was impossible. That meant that a clash was inevitable, and would bring about his death. The Lord realised the indignities that would be heaped upon him, and the shame of the death he would suffer, but because of his boundless love for the Father, he was prepared to submit to it all.

Time was fast running out. He still had much he desired to tell the apostles, but if he waited any longer in that room he would be arrested, and would have no opportunity to say it. Therefore, he called upon them to arise, that they might leave the room.

"Arise," he said, ***"let us now leave this place!"***



The traditional Passover Plate showing the portions and the lambshank bone

Chapter 18

THEY LEAVE THE UPPER ROOM (Mat. 26:30; Mk. 14:26; Lk. 22:39; Jn. 14:31)

In his exhortation to the apostles, the Lord had proclaimed his determination to submit to the will of his Father. He did so with unshaken courage, out of love for mankind, and obedience to the divine will. He manifested himself as both shepherd and sacrifice. As shepherd, he led the sheep along a path of loving obedience to God unto eternal life. As a sacrifice, he denied self that he might dedicate his life to God. As the Lord left the room in Jerusalem, and led the apostles toward Gethsemane, he spoke to them of these things.

BEFORE leaving the room, the Lord and the apostles stood up and sang a psalm (Mat. 26:30, mg.). It was appropriate that they should do so. Jesus had described the offering of the bread and wine as “his passover,” and as it was normal to sing a hymn at the conclusion of the Jewish Passover, so it was decided that they should do so now.

It was customary to sing Psalms 115-118 after celebrating the Passover, and those are the Psalms they most likely sang on that occasion. A better selection could hardly be made, for they are prophetic of the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

Psa. 115 foretells how Yahweh would be glorified in the life of His Son (vv. 1, 17); Psa. 116 predicts his impending death (vv. 3, 15), his confidence in a resurrection (v. 9), the partaking of the emblems (v. 13), and his vows and promises (vv. 18-19); Psa. 117 anticipates the preaching of the Truth to all nations, and is quoted by Paul in that context (Rom. 15:11); Psa. 118 describes the glory of the future Kingdom, and was quoted by Christ in that regard (cp. v. 26 with Mat. 23:39).

Thus, in order, these Psalms prophesied the life (Psa. 115), memorial and death (Psa. 116) of the Lord; the universal preaching of the Gospel (Psa. 117), and the ultimate establishment of the Kingdom of God (Psa. 118). It is significant that, at each Passover, Jews sing of the past, present and future work of the Lord. Unconsciously, they give testimony to the true Passover Lamb shortly to be revealed to the nation.

Twelve men sang those Psalms in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, but of those who sang it on that occasion, only one, the Lord Jesus, understood its full significance, the impending drama and ultimate glory that they proclaimed. The others sang it, probably, with their

minds in the past, glorying in the marvellous deliverance under Moses, not understanding the dramatic fulfilment of the words in their prophetic sense, nor the tragic manner in which they were then about to be fulfilled in their Lord.

But how deeply moved the Lord must have been, as he sung such words as:

*"Not unto us, O Yahweh, not unto us,
But unto Thy name give glory,
For Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake!"*

(Psa. 115:1).

*"The dead praise not Yahweh,
Neither any that go down into silence.
But we will bless Yahweh
From this time forth and for evermore.
— Halleluyah."*

(Psa. 115:17-18).

Or:

*"I love Yahweh, because He hath heard
My voice and my supplications.
Because He hath inclined His ear unto me,
Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.
The sorrows of death compassed me,
And the pains of hell got hold upon me;
I found trouble and sorrow.
Then called I upon the name of Yahweh;
O Yahweh, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul."*

(Psa. 116:1-4).

*"For Thou hast delivered my soul from death,
Mine eyes from tears,
My feet from falling.
I will walk before Yahweh in the land of the living."*

(vv. 8-9).

Again:

*"I will take the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of Yahweh.
I will pay my vows unto Yahweh,
Now in the presence of all His people.
Precious in the sight of Yahweh
Is the death of His saints.
O Yahweh, truly I am Thy servant;
I am Thy servant, the son of Thine handmaid:
Thou hast loosed my bonds."*

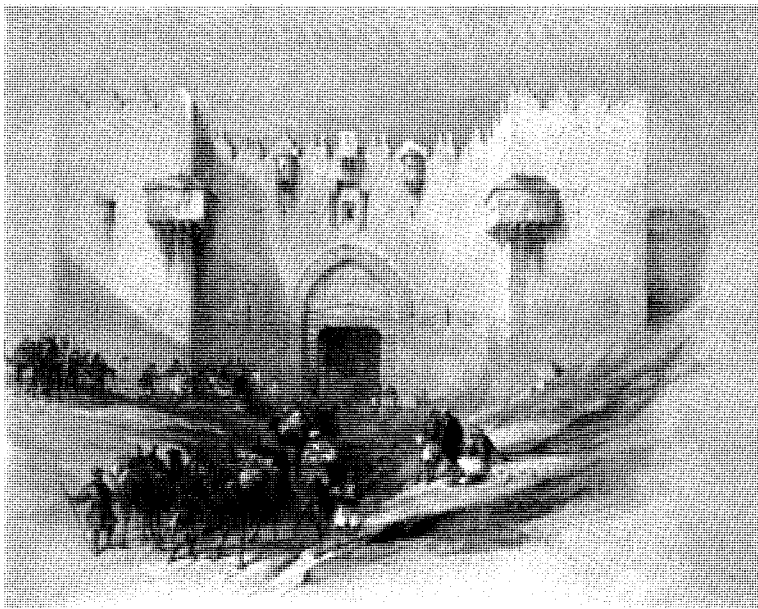
But can the words of v. 11 be applied to Christ? They read:

*"I said in my haste,
All men are liars."*

Certainly, for they can be rendered:
*"I said in my alarm [or fear],
All men are a vain hope."*

The statement expresses the utter futility of placing any confidence in flesh for help. Well might the Lord sing those sad words with full meaning in view of what he knew would happen within the next few hours; for then, even the apostles, the very men who had so volubly professed their determination to assist him come what may, would themselves turn from him, when they beheld him on the stake! Moreover, even as he and the apostles were engaged in singing, he knew that one of their number was already leading a guard of soldiers through the dark narrow streets of Jerusalem, to where they might arrest him.

It was nearing midnight (cp. Psa. 119:62) when the little company finished their song of thankfulness, praise and prophecy, and the Lord led the way out of the room, into the night, thus, for the moment, avoiding capture.



Chapter 19

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

(Jn. 15:1-11)

The vine was the recognised symbol of Israel. It was the emblem placed on the coins issued by the Maccabees to identify the State, whilst one of the glories of the temple was the great golden vine upon the floor of the Holy Place. Yet throughout the Old Testament where it is so used, it is always with the idea of degeneration (Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Eze. 15; 19:10-14; Hos. 10:1; Psa. 80:8, 16). It is a plant that requires a great deal of attention if the best fruit is to be obtained. The ground has to be perfectly clean and properly cultivated. The vine itself must be subjected to heavy pruning if the best results are to be gained, and all non-fruit-bearing branches must be drastically and mercilessly cut away so as not to drain away the strength of the plant. Only by this ruthless treatment of pruning and cutting will the best fruit be obtained.



THE twelve men left the brightness of the upper room to descend into the gloomy, dark, silent streets of the sleeping city. There they made their way, probably through one of its southern gates, in an easterly direction toward the Kedron Valley.

They did not walk in silence. As the Lord led the way through the streets of his city, he continued to instruct and exhort the apostles. He tried to bring clearly home to them their true relationship to him.

The True Vine

— vv. 1-4

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman,” he commenced. “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me.”

The apostles were used to regarding the vine as a notable symbol of the nation, but now the Lord applied the symbol to himself, claiming to be the “true” vine. The word *alethine* signifies that which is “true, real or genuine” in contrast to the figurative, false or counter-



feit. Jesus thus claimed to be the true vine in contrast to the degenerate vine of Israel. It is not Jewish blood, but faith, that gives life to the branches of the true vine.

As a plant, the vine is only good for fruit. It is useless alike for wood, shade or beauty, for during most of the year, it is only an ugly, naked creeper. Its function being fruitbearing, therefore, those parts that do not bear fruit are cut away by the husbandman, in order that they may not drain the strength necessary for the other branches to bear fruit. For that reason, such as Judas had to be severed from the Christ vine!

But even branches that bear fruit, must be constantly pruned to increase the bearing, or the quality, of the fruit. Therefore, the apostles could expect to be "pruned," that their characters might be improved to the glory of Yahweh, the Husbandman.

The pruninghook is the Word. The Lord made that clear when he declared: "You are clean through the Word." In this statement he used a word closely related to that translated "purge" or "prune" in the previous verse. It therefore can signify "to be clean through pruning."

But even though dead branches are cut away, and fruit-bearing ones are pruned, there will be no fruit unless the root and stem provide the necessary nutriment. There is a constant need, therefore, for disciples to abide in Christ, and for him to be manifest in them, if they are to produce fruit to the glory of the Father.

As they walked the streets of the city toward the eastern gate the Lord constantly used this word "abide" in his discourse with the apostles. It is a most significant word. A translation of the Greek *meno*, it has been variously rendered. In Jn. 15:9-11, it is represented by three words: "abide" (Gr. plural, *meinate*), "continue" (Gr. future, *meneite*), and "remain" (Gr. present, *meno*). It is used of persons abiding in a home, and not merely visiting it. It signifies more than a passing acquaintance, and implies an intimate, continuous association and communion. It suggests the ideas of fellowship, union, family-relations, harmony, friendship.

We must abide in Christ in that way. As a branch is dependent upon the stem and root for strength and nutriment to produce fruit, so we are upon the Lord Jesus. Without him we will miserably fail.

The Need to Produce Fruit (vv. 5-8)

The Lord continued his instruction: "*I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in me, and I in him, will bring forth*

much fruit; for severed from me you can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples."

A believer will only remain fruit-bearing through constant contact with Christ through the Word. Thus abiding in him, he will obtain the strength to walk in purity of life, with Christ sharing in all the interests of his life, mediating on his behalf before the Father, and strengthening him through wisdom and faith to succeed. It is only to the extent that Christ becomes the motive of our actions that we bear fruit to the glory of the Father. The fate of all others is to be cut off as useless branches, to become dried and withered, and finally to be given over to destruction.

Where Christ's words abide in a person (v. 7) however, fruit must result. Moreover, prayer will be found a strengthening influence, and will be granted, because Christ's teaching will govern requests, and filter prayer, so that it will be in accordance with his will (see Jas. 4:3). The fruit thus revealed will reflect glory to the Father, and will be pleasing to Him.

The Way to Produce Fruit (Jn. 15:9-11) Believers occupy a position of great privilege, for they are recipients of the divine love. They must, therefore, see that they appreciate the value of the privilege granted them, and continue in that love. The apostles had particular need to observe the warning, for they were soon to see the terrible result of failing to do so, in the sad, suicidal death of Judas. Many other believers, beside Judas, have committed suicide, though the fact may not be revealed until the Judgment Seat of Christ is set up. Meanwhile, the Lord encouraged the apostles in the following words: *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you: continue you in my love. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be fulfilled"* (vv. 9-11).

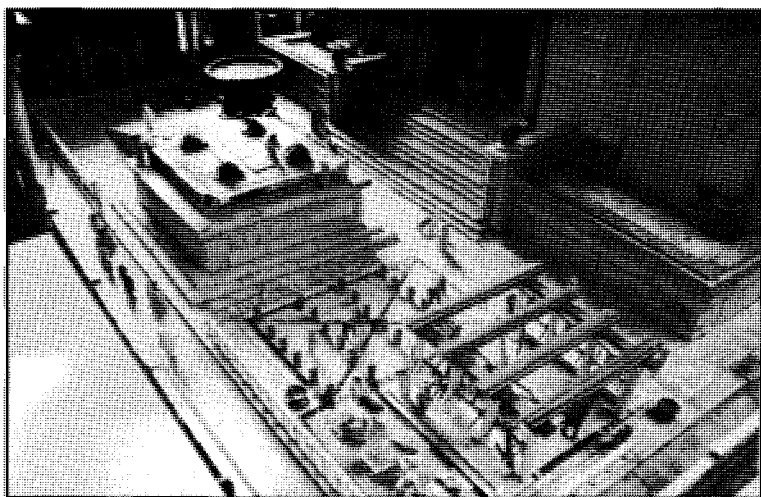
As Jesus had manifested divine love unto the apostles, believers are expected to do likewise one to the other (Mat. 5:43-48; Rom. 5:8; 1Jn. 4:11). And what is divine love, or, as John styles it, "the love of the Father" (1Jn. 2:15)? It is doing what is best for another at the expense of one's own convenience. It is not a mere emotional urge; that is, it does not stem from unenlightened flesh. It is based on a knowledge of the Truth (1Cor. 13:6). John taught that it is "of God" (1Jn. 4:7), so that the manifestation of a true love is impossible apart from God.

The world describes love as fulfilling the will of another. But that is not the love described in Scripture, and designated by the word *agape*. This divine love is an affection that stems from Truth, seeks the greatest good for its recipient, even though it may be misunderstood. Thus Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *"I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved"* (2Cor. 12:15).

Being created of divine revelation and truth, this love knows what is the best for its object, and is not blinded or deflected by other considerations. It was revealed in its purest form in the offering of Jesus. John wrote: "Hereby perceive we the love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1Jn. 3-16).

Having been drawn into fellowship with the Father and Son through that love, we continue in it by keeping the commandments.

So Jesus taught the apostles, as they walked through the dark streets of Jerusalem a few hours before he laid down his life as the supreme act of love on behalf of sinning, suffering humanity.



Model of the sacrificial altar at the temple in Jerusalem, restored by Herod at the time of Christ. Note the racks for preparing the animals for offering.

Chapter 20

ON LOVE AND HATE (Jn. 15:12-20)

Jesus spoke much on love, and demonstrated it by laying down his life for the redemption of believers. He called upon his followers to manifest such a love in their relations one to another. So important is this theme, that we do well to summarise it. The word in Greek translated "love," is "agape." It is a word not found in any Greek manuscripts outside of the Bible, and this has led students to believe that it is a word that was unknown to the Greeks. It springs from intellect and not merely emotion. It is pre-eminently a divine attribute (1Jn. 3:16), and therefore should not be confused with that which passes current for love. It is based on the Truth (1Cor. 13:6), and therefore should not be confused with mere flesh-likings. It describes an affection created by the Word, which is self-sacrificing in its application, and manifests itself in doing the greatest good for its object, even though it may bring pain in so doing. It is pre-eminently God's love (Jn. 3:16), and is reproduced in the lives of believers by the action of the Spirit-Word (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22).

 NCE again, the Lord urged upon the apostles, the necessity to develop that greatest of all true Christian virtues: love. He declared: ***"This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you."***

The Commandment to Love (vv. 12-14) Love must be shown in action; we must love in deed and not merely in doctrine. This demands the sacrifice of self-interest in obedience to Christ's commandments. Where Christ's word is ignored, and his commandments set aside, there is no love. A person may speak honeyed words of endearment toward another, and may even reveal acts of kindness, but that is not the love to which Christ referred, as he walked dauntlessly to the place where he knew the soldiers would arrest him. True love is to reproduce in action one toward another, a measure of the self-sacrificing service that Christ revealed when he laid down his life for his friends.

The Privilege of Believers (vv. 15-17) Jesus told the apostles that he treated them as friends, not as servants. This is a position of

great privilege, as he went on to explain: *“I will not now call you servants, for the servant does not know what his Lord does; but I have named you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that you love one another.”*

One of the greatest privileges that a believer has in Christ is the revelation of the divine purpose, thus confiding in him “things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1). It is given to produce fruit; and that is brought forth when others embrace the truths thus given.

But it is not enough to gain converts; there remains the responsibility to see that such are properly fed when brought into the Truth. Therefore, Jesus reminded the apostles that the fruit they might bring forth “should remain.” That demands loving and careful aftercare, so that converts are built up into virile disciples. In that regard, they were not without help, for Christ promised them aid if they approached the Father in his name.

Finally, they were called upon to observe the “things” that Christ commanded them. What “things” was he referring to? They include “fellowship” (v. 10), or the sharing of privileges in Christ based upon an understanding of the divine purpose; “joy” (v. 11), or the rejoicing happiness that comes from association with Christ; “love” (v. 13), or an imitation of his self-sacrificing obedience to the will of God; “dignity” (v. 15), or the elevation of humble men and women to divine service; “co-operation” (v. 16), or the granting of the resources of heaven to believers who seek the Father in prayer.

The World's Hatred (vv. 18-19)

It is a strange anomaly, that where true love is manifested under present conditions, it generates hatred. Christ commenced to speak of this: *“If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”* The world had manifested hatred toward the apostles even then, in that the Jewish leaders sought to destroy both Jesus and his friends (Jn. 12:10-11). Jesus had earlier warned of this (Mk. 13:9-13; Mat. 10:17-19; Lk. 12:2-9, 51-53). Then it was limited to Jewish opposition, the time was coming, however, when it would spread throughout the world.

Not long after Christ ascended to heaven, intense persecution of Christians broke out throughout the Roman Empire, and the Government ultimately became completely intolerant of Christians because of their alleged disloyalty to the State. There was introduced the

principle of Caesar worship which was opposed by the believers. At first, this opposition was treated tolerantly, but soon the attitude of the Caesars hardened. One writer states: "There came slowly the day when once a year every inhabitant of the empire had to burn his pinch of incense to the godhead of Caesar. By so doing, he showed that he was a loyal citizen of Rome. When he had done so, he received a certificate to say that he had done it. This was the practice and the custom, and the convention which made all men feel they were part of Rome, and which guaranteed their loyalty to the State. Now Rome was the essence of toleration. After he had burned his pinch of incense and had said, 'Caesar is Lord,' a man could go away and worship any god he liked, so long as the worship did not affect public decency and public order."

True believers, however, refused to compromise with this seemingly tolerant order, and were hated because of it. They were hated also because they refused military service, as Gibbon points out in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. So they were hated as insurrectionists. Their motives were distorted. They were falsely accused of flagrant and promiscuous immorality from false reports of their love feasts, of interfering with family relationships because of demands on separateness, and finally they were hated because their manner of life was a constant reproach to the evil environment that surrounded them.

The basic demand laid upon Christ's followers then and now, is the requirement that they should have the courage to be different, and this inevitably incites the hostility of the world. The world hated Christ, and it will hate his followers.

A believer, therefore, must choose between the love of Christ, or that of the world. If he chooses the former he will inevitably receive the hatred of the latter. The ways of Christ are so foreign to those of the world about us that such a requirement is absolutely essential.

The Reason of the World's Hatred

It seems an anomaly that one like Christ: so thoughtful, compassionate, kind, good and helpful, should be hated by his contemporaries. It is a testimony to the wickedness of the world of flesh about us that this is so. Moreover, the hatred that was shown toward him, will be experienced by those who are like him. It is the inevitable manifestation of the "enmity" that naturally exists between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). Christ warned his disciples that this would be the case: "**Remember the word that I said unto you? A servant is not greater than his master! Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you; if they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not**

Him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they would not have been guilty, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He whoever hates me, also hates my Father. But this has come to pass that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law; They hated me without a cause!" (vv. 20-25).

How shocked the Jewish leaders would have been to hear those words! They would have loudly proclaimed that they did not hate the Father. But they could not deny that they hated Jesus; they could not deny that he had performed wonderful miracles; that he spoke as never a man spoke; that he was obviously a prophet sent from God. They hated him for the very things that identified him with God, justifying completely the Lord's statement that their hatred of him reflected a hatred of the Father.

What did he mean by saying: ***"If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also?"*** (v. 20). The word "kept" is a translation of the Greek *eteresam* (past tense), and signifies to "watch," or "wait for," and is used here in a hostile sense. The Diaglott renders the word as "observed." The words "they will keep" (Gr. *teresousin*) is in the future tense, and appears twice in verse 10. The Jewish leaders had watched, or had hearkened to his sayings with hostile intent, hoping to trap him in what he said (see Lk. 11:51-54), and would do the same to the apostles' teaching. And so it came to pass (see Acts 6:13-14).

Such an attitude seems incredible, and yet it was inevitable. The Lord drew attention to an Old Testament prophecy to show that such an attitude had been predicted. Psal. 69:4 declares: "They hate me without a cause." The whole Psalm is prophetic of Christ's life. It not only speaks of the hatred that he would receive from the Jews, but also the opposition he would experience from his mother's children" (v. 8 — but, significantly, not from his Father's children!). It refers to his great zeal for God (v. 9), his agony on the stake (v. 21), and the fate of Judas (v. 22). This Psalm will justify a close study in conjunction with the life of the Lord. No Psalm is quoted in the New Testament more than Psal. 69, with the exception of Psal. 22. Like the Passover Psalms, it predicts the past, present and future ministry and glory of the Lord. The following is an analysis of the Psalm:

- *Christ's complete submission to Yahweh* — vv. 1-5;
- *His prayer on behalf of his disciples* — v. 6;
- *The unreasonable opposition of his enemies* — vv. 7-12;
- *His prayer at Gethsemane* — vv. 13-19;
- *His crucifixion* — vv. 20-22;
- *The casting off of Jewry* — vv. 23-28;
- *The elevation of the Lord Jesus* — vv. 29-30;
- *The efficacy of his offering compared to those of the Law* — v. 31;
- *The widespread proclamation of the Gospel* — vv. 32-33;

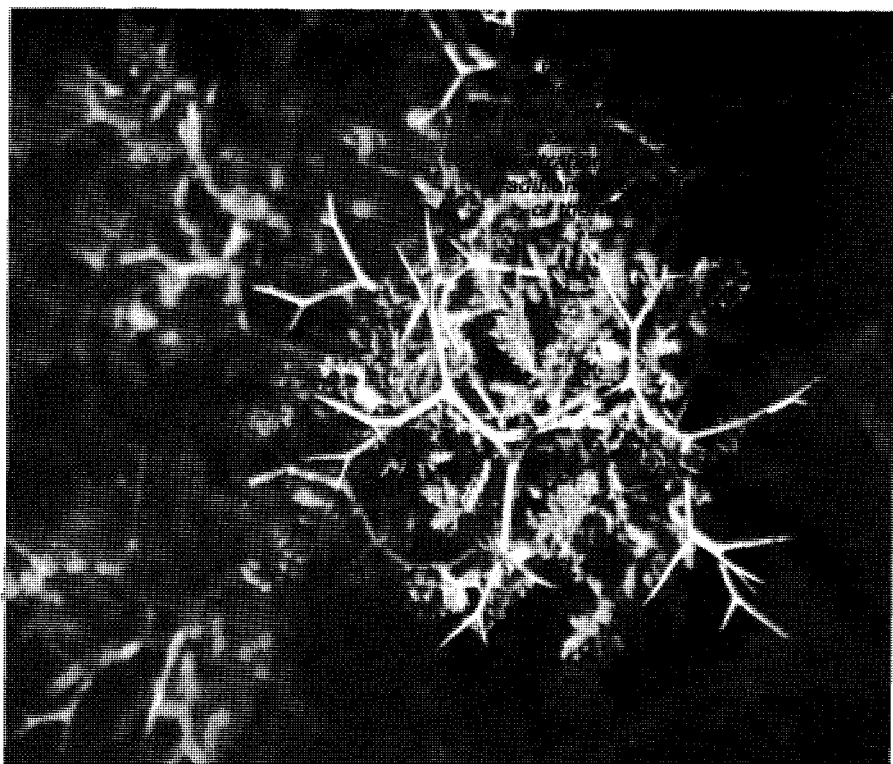
• *The future establishment of the Kingdom of God — vv. 34-35.*

In a wonderful and detailed manner, the whole of the Lord's life was set down in the Old Testament prophecies for him to ponder over. He therefore knew what was before him before it came to pass.

**Co-operating with
God (vv. 26-27)**

The Lord completed this portion of his discourse by summarising the purpose of his work as far as they were concerned. He again told them that he would send them the Comforter from heaven which he described as the Spirit of Truth, and that when they received it, it would be their responsibility to proclaim the message it would recall to their minds (Jn. 15:26-27).

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you, and which issues out from the Father, he will bear witness of me; and you also must bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”



Chapter 21

WARNING OF COMING TROUBLE

(John 16)

John chapter sixteen completes the series of discourses to the apostles to prepare them for what awaited them in the future. In it he warned of trouble to come. To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and if the apostles had heeded the words of Christ more completely, they would not have been taken off their guard when the crisis came upon them. Their failure to heed his words is a warning to us. During his ministry the Lord spoke of conditions to be expected at his second coming, and we need to heed his teaching, lest we be taken unawares as were the apostles.

CHRIST probably paused for a moment after concluding his previous remarks, and for a short time, the company of twelve men continued on their way through the narrow, winding streets of the city. But again the Lord spoke, this time to warn them of persecution to come: *“These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not stumble. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time is coming, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. I have told you of these things, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.”*

Warning of Persecution (vv. 1-4) The terrible feature of Jewish persecution against the Lord and the early ecclesia, is that it was engaged upon by men who considered themselves religious. They thought that they did “God service.” The word in the Greek is the normal word used to describe the service that a priest rendered at the altar, and therefore a religious service. Yet though they were very religious, claimed the Lord, they knew not the Father, in that He made no impact upon them.

The Need for Christ to Depart (vv. 5-11) The apostles not only failed to understand the Lord’s teaching, but his constant repetition of how he would shortly leave them, and the opposition and persecution they would then receive, together with his mysterious references to death puzzled and depressed them. He saw this, and tried to help them.

“I did not tell you these things before,” he declared, “because I was with you. But now I go my way to Him that sent me; and yet none of you are enquiring, where are you going? I say that because

I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth: it is necessary for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not be sent to you; but if I depart, I will send it to you. And when it is come, it will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

"Of SIN, because they believe not on me; of RIGHTEOUSNESS, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; of JUDGMENT, because the prince of this world is judged."

Despite the confusion and sorrow of the disciples, therefore, Christ's departure was necessary for their spiritual development. They did not understand his words, yet did not properly enquire as to their true meaning. If they had rightly enquired the cause and purpose of him leaving, they would have found reason to rejoice. Instead, they were dominated by a self-centred sorrow that allowed no place for the divine purpose or the consolation of future glory and triumph.

How much they needed the Advocate he promised to send them, even the Spirit of truth! The impending crucifixion and ascension of the Lord (which they did not then understand) would reveal the reality of sin, and means of justification (or righteousness), and the need of judgment upon the powers that be.

Meanwhile, he told them, *"I go to my Father, and you will see me no more"* (v. 10).

The Work of the Advocate on Earth

The Advocate, or Comforter, is described as the Spirit of Truth which would "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (Jn. 16:8). The Revised Version renders "reprove" as "convict." The Greek word *elenchxei* (future tense; 3rd person) is used in the sense of exposing in Jn. 3:20 mg., and Eph. 5:11. It is the word that is used for the cross-examination of a witness, a man on trial, or an opponent in an argument. It has always the idea of cross-examining a man until he sees and admits his errors, or acknowledges the force of some argument which he had not previously seen. It is, for instance, sometimes used by the Greeks for the action of conscience on a man's mind and heart. Now, clearly, such cross-examination can do two things: it can convict a man of the crime he has committed or the wrong he has done; or it can convince a man of the weakness of his own case, and the strength of the case which, up to this time, he has opposed. In this passage we need both meanings; we need both conviction and convincing. The word illustrates the work of the earthly Advocate, the Spirit of Truth. An example of its influence is seen in Peter's Gospel address. He convinced and convicted the Jews of [1] Sin (Acts 3:13-18); [2] Righteousness (Acts 3:19-21); [3] Judgment to come (Acts 3:22-24).

By that he did not mean that they would never see him again, because he had previously promised them that they would see him again (Jn. 14:3). He meant that in that he was about to ascend to the Father they would never again see him as he was then: in the humble state of suffering and abasement (see Jn. 17:24).

The Need of

Greater Knowledge

The Lord could see the confused looks on the faces of the apostles, could sense their complete misunderstanding of all that he had said. Their minds were set on the Kingdom and the Glory, and they did not realise that the cross must come before the crown.

He promised to provide for their need by sending the Spirit of Truth to help them to a clearer understanding of the divine purpose. Meanwhile, a period of frustration ensued, during which it was impossible to penetrate the barrier of their ignorance. It was necessary for them to go through the humiliating experiences that lay before them before the full impact of truth would be felt. He made reference to that feeling of frustration: *"I have still many things to say unto you,"* continued the Lord, *"but you are unable to bear them now. However, when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father has are mine; on account of which I said that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you"* (vv. 12-15).

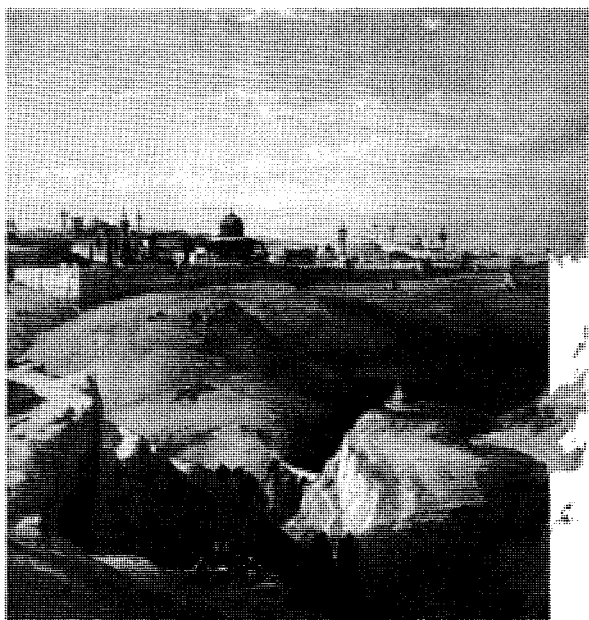
The Lord personified the Spirit of Truth, which is a very common Hebraism, an example of which is given in Pro. 8, where wisdom is personified as a woman. The Spirit is thus represented as listening to and obeying the instructions of the Father, and consequently receiving and passing on the revelation of Yahweh to the apostles. In this way, the Spirit-Word linked them with the Father and the Son, passing on to them the revelations of heaven. John, who alone of the apostles reported this conversation of the Lord, received the Book of Revelation through the Spirit, and called upon believers to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias."

Above all things, the revelation that would come from the Spirit of Truth would glorify the Lord Jesus, by revealing that he is the manifestation of the Father. The Spirit would bring "all things to the remembrance" of the apostles, so that they would vividly recall every detail of conversation they had engaged upon with the Lord (Jn. 14:27), and it would reveal its meaning to them (Jn. 16:13). It would make them quick in the understanding of the things of Yahweh (Isa. 11:1-3).

Your Sorrow Will Turn to Joy (vv. 16-24) Utterly confused, the apostles could not understand the deep significance of the Lord's words; nor would it have been wise for the Lord to have further simplified them at that time. Best for the full power of his teaching to be more deeply inscribed upon their mentality by experience as well as teaching. Thus, having laid the foundation for fuller knowledge, he left it to experience, and the revelation of the Spirit of Truth to clear away the mists of doubt. The Lord warned them that their present sorrow would intensify, but would ultimately give way to great joy. The joy would come as the result of his resurrection.

"A little while, and you shall not see me," continued the Lord, *"and again, a little while, and ye shall see me!"* (v. 16; the rest of this verse should be omitted as in the Diaglott). He was speaking of his impending death and resurrection, but the apostles understood nothing of that. As they walked through the streets of the city, they hearkened to his voice, but his words were very confusing to them. In the darkness, they began to whisper among themselves: *"What is this that he says unto us, a little while, and you shall not see me: and again, a little while, and you shall see me, and because I go to the Father?"*

"I do not know what he means," another answered, *"What does 'a little while' signify? What is this?"* These whispered words of confusion reflected an attitude of mind similar to that of the Israelites in the wilderness when they first viewed the manna. They asked: "What is this?" and so the bread from heaven was called "manna" (see Exo. 16:15, mg.). And now, on the very eve of Passover, the apostles asked the same question, without realising that the counterpart of the manna in the wilderness was in their midst. The revelation of all that it meant was soon to be made manifest unto them, and in it they would receive an answer to their question of bewilderment.



Chapter 22

THE CONFUSED APOSTLES

John 16:19-33

In the darkness of the night, the Lord led the apostles through the streets of Jerusalem, toward one of the gates of the city. As he did so, he continued to speak with them, giving them last-minute instructions, exhortation and warning. He knew that he was going forth to his death; but they did not realise it, nor did they understand the full significance of what he was telling them. They struggled with his words but could not comprehend their meaning. He had spoken to them of the Holy Spirit which would guide them into all knowledge; he had warned them of troubles that would arise; he had told them of the need of greater understanding — but it was all quite beyond them; they were completely confused.

JESUS looked at his eleven friends, and realised that they were confused, and were seeking further information about the things of which he had spoken. He explained: *“Are you trying to find out from one another what I meant by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me indeed?’ Truly I tell you, that you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will suffer pain, but your pain shall turn to joy. A woman in labour is in pain because her time has come; but no sooner is the child born, than she forgets her trouble in her joy that a man has been born into the world. You, in the same way, are sorry now; but I shall see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will rob you of your joy. And at that time you will not ask me anything; in truth I tell you, if you ask the Father for anything, He will grant it to you in my Name; ask now, and you will receive it, so that your joy may be complete.”*

The travail of childbirth is frequently used in the Old Testament as a figure for Israel in trouble, and was appropriately used by the Lord to describe the strivings of spiritual Israel. But as the pain of travail gives place to the joy of birth, so he promised the apostles that the sorrow they would shortly experience would lead to the joy of a new experience and relationship on their part.

Firstly, they would experience joy in the resurrection, and learn the real purpose of the Lord's death (Rom. 4:25); and secondly, they would experience a spiritual resurrection (Col. 3:1), which would be as the spiritual birth of the multitudinous Christ (Eph. 4:15-16). At that time, when the mists of doubt had been cleared away, they would rejoice with a joy that no man could take from them, and which would be greater than any persecution they might suffer (Phil. 4:4).

In the risen Christ, they would fully comprehend the relationship existing between the Father and the Son, and in the light of the new knowledge, they would be able to place their requests before the Father in the name of the Son, with complete confidence that they would be favourably received.

Once again, however, it is important to emphasise, that when the Lord stated that his disciples would receive anything that they asked for “in his Name,” he did not mean that any petition they made would receive favourable consideration merely because the words “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” might be appended thereto. To ask for something “in the Name” of the Lord, is to petition for something that he would approve and endorse. Therefore, the statement limits the scope of prayer, rather than widening it. It means that only those prayers will receive favourable consideration in heaven which have such affinity with Christ’s will that he is able to endorse them.

The Apostles’ Privileged Relationship The Lord continued to instruct the apostles as they proceeded on their way. He told them that he had previously spoken to them in parables and hard sayings, but the time would come when he would speak freely and unreservedly unto them (v. 25), so that they would understand him completely.

But, for the moment, they were not ready for such a revelation. For one thing, they did not then properly comprehend the true relationship between the Father and the Son; and such knowledge is essential if one would truly understand the divine purpose (Jn. 17:3). When the time came that they did understand the doctrine of God manifestation, they would fully realise that he “came out from God,” or was an extension of the Father in manifestation, and not merely just another prophet in Israel. They would then possess an understanding that would enable them to have free access to the Father. So the Lord concluded: *“I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.”*

This can be literally rendered: “I came forth from the side of the Father...” The Lord was thus speaking figuratively. His statement meant that he was an extension of the Father, as Eve was of Adam*, and therefore, he was not only “one” with God as Eve was with Adam, but also that he manifested the Father unto others.

In a limited degree, the apostles recognised this, for they had

* The word in Gen. 2:21 translated “rib” is the Hebrew *tsela*, better rendered as “side” (see *Christadelphian Expositor: Genesis*). Thus it describes the creative act of the Elohim as producing from the “side” of Adam a woman to complement him in his position before Almighty God. It speaks of the intimate and unique relationship between Adam and Eve, fulfilled in the wonderful relationship between the Father and Son in this verse above.

acknowledged him as the Son of God, and not merely as a prophet. Therefore, they confidently rejoined: ***"You are using plain words at last, and not speaking in parables. Now we are sure that you know everything, and need not wait for any one to question you. This makes us believe that you did come from God."***

The apostles thought that they understood, but subsequent events soon showed that they then failed to comprehend the divine origin of the Lord, the reality of his impending death or the fact that he would subsequently ascend into heaven (cp. Acts 1:6).

They probably claimed to understand his words on the grounds of a mistaken interpretation of their meaning. They probably thought that when Jesus said he was about to "leave the world," he was indicating that he, like Elijah, would be taken from them for a brief moment, to return to them in triumph almost immediately afterwards.

Certainly they never imagined that he would have to endure the shame of the stake, nor that he would be taken from them into heaven, there to remain for centuries before the kingdom would be set up.

Christ's Confidence in the Father (vv. 31-33) The apostles had stated that they understood the words of the Master, but he knew better.

"Do you really believe?" he asked them ironically. "Listen! the time is coming, indeed it has come, when you are to be scattered, each going his own way, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. Meanwhile, I have spoken to you in this way, so that in me you may find peace. In the world you will find trouble; yet, take courage! I have overcome the world!"

Those words contained warning, hope and confidence. Warning, in that the Lord told them that in the world they would find only tribulation — and therefore they should avoid it as much as possible; hope, in that he called upon them to be of good cheer in spite of difficulties facing them; and confidence, in that he could proclaim: ***"I have overcome the world."*** How could the Lord claim to have overcome the world, inasmuch as he knew that he was walking to his death, and within a matter of a few hours, the world would seem to have triumphed to the extent that he would be hanging lifeless upon the stake?

Because of the nature of his death. It would not be the death of defeat, but the voluntary death of victory, through which the diabolos, or sin in the flesh, would be itself "put to death" (Heb. 2:14). He would overcome the world in that, in spite of the most severe provocation, he would be a sinless victim of the death that would be imposed upon him, and therefore, because God is just, he would rise again to life eternal (Acts 2:24).

But in the meantime, and within a few hours, the apostles who had

heard that triumphant declaration: "I have overcome the world," would be challenged with the spectacle of him hanging lifeless from the accursed stake, and would flee from the sight, believing that they had been mistaken in him.

A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospel

JUDE: THE CONTENDER

His name is the English form of Judas, and means *Praise*. He was one of the brethren of the Lord, a half-brother of Jesus and brother of James, the writer of the epistle known by that name (Mat. 13:55; Mk. 6:3; Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13; Jude 1). With the other half-brothers of the Lord, he was probably with Jesus in his early ministry (Jn. 2:12), but as it gathered momentum they became ashamed of him, embarrassed by his seeming extreme zeal and the fact that the leaders of the Jews clearly rejected their half-brother. Christ's dedicated life, his burning zeal was misunderstood by "his mother's children" (Psa. 69:8 — though not his Father's children, the "spiritual seed" of 1Jn. 3:9), and they tried to put him under constraint (Mk. 3:21). Their familiarity with him bred a contempt and misunderstanding of his mission, and at times when enthusiasm was greatest, they attempted an unwarranted interference (Mat. 12:46; Lk. 8:19), receiving a well-merited rebuke. They were ultimately converted by his resurrection (1Cor. 15:7), and from then onward, they associated with the apostles (Acts 1:14).

There seems to have been a certain strong opinionativeness, a Judaistic obstinacy about them which may have accounted for this attitude. However, with conversion there came a complete change, and they threw in their lot completely and enthusiastically with the work of the ecclesias.

Jude describes himself in his epistle as "the brother of James" (Jude 1), though he does not lay claim to being the brother of Jesus. On the other hand, he calls himself "the servant of Jesus Christ," and the fact that he does not claim fleshly relationship, but rather servitude, to the Lord, speaks of a commendable humility and a recognition of the exalted state of his half-brother.

Jude's epistle reveals him as a person of great devotion. He had ardently desired to write to the brethren of their common salvation (v. 3), instead of the fiery little epistle he felt obliged to write because of the laxity of ecclesias and their leaders in the first century. But, even so, he constantly used the term "beloved" (vv. 3,

17, 20), thus indicating the warmth of his feelings toward them. At the same time, when the Truth was in danger, Jude was prepared to vigorously defend it, as he shows by his epistle. It constitutes an earnest warning and appeal to the saints to defend the faith in the face of apostasy. Using vigorous, figurative language, he revealed the need to contend (vv. 1-16), and the way to contend (vv. 17-25), reminding his readers of the resources available to them in times of crisis.

JUDAS ISCARIOT: THE TRAITOR

Judas Iscariot signifies *Praise the Man of the City*, and the Bible reveals that it was Cain who built the first city! Judas was the only member of the band of the apostles who was not of Galilee. His terrible crime against the Lord and his final disgrace was predicted in Psa. 109:5-8; whilst the callous bargain he struck with the leaders of the nation, was foretold in Zech. 11:12-13.

Judas was a thief (Jn. 12:6). He kept the "bag" which represented both opportunity and obligation. He was chosen as treasurer for the Twelve because of his commercial ability; but he prostituted this responsibility. His very ability became a snare, so that what could have been a blessing was turned into a curse.

He betrayed Christ with a kiss. It was not a cold salute, but one normally reserved for those who command the greatest affection. The depths of his wickedness and his crime were reached when he used that means to betray the Lord, as though to disguise his real intent. Thus his journey along the pathway of sin gathered momentum, until it reached its end in the bitterest remorse and suicide.

We learn from the experience of Judas, that it is sadly possible to be associated with the Lord, to hear His gracious words, to work in the extension of his teachings, and yet drift from him until we deny his basic principles and find association with the opponents of the Lord.

Judas was among the Twelve who were sent forth preaching the Gospel, and returned to the Lord rejoicing that even the demons were subject to their control. He was sent out with Simon the Zealot (Mat. 10:4), and participated in this important ecclesial activity.

What was the cause of Judas' failure?

He was motivated by *Avarice*. Like Matthew he had practical and administrative talents that constituted both his opportunity and his temptation. He proved unfaithful to his trust, and used the

common purse of the brotherhood for his own ends (Jn. 12:6). In this he was unlike Matthew, who had similar business talents, but used them profitably in the Lord's service. As far as Judas was concerned, the germs of avarice probably surfaced gradually, in spite of the many warnings from the Lord (Mat. 6:19-34; 13:22-23; Mk. 10:25; Lk. 16:11; Jn. 6:70).

He was *disappointed* by failure of his hopes. In common with the other apostles, he sought an immediate kingdom of glory (Lk. 19:11). Unlike the others who mistook the literal teaching of Jesus concerning his sacrifice, the practical Judas probably understood the allusions of the Lord to his approaching death (Mat. 16:21; Lk. 18:31-33), and yet doubted the possibility of his resurrection. His hopes of immediate glory faded, and he lacked the faith to penetrate beyond the immediate future. The disappointment of his hopes caused him to turn from Christ.

He was moved by *self-preservation*. He sensed the growing opposition to Christ (Jn. 11:8, 57), and realised that this brought danger to the Lord's own following (Jn. 12:10; 11:16). It was obvious, that to save his own life, he must reveal to the Jewish leaders that he was not really a committed follower. The pitiful sum that he requested as the price of his perfidy, could be represented as a mere token payment, demonstrating that he really acted against Jesus by motives of patriotism to the State. The small payment that they made to him, was as a receipt to his action, and bound the elders and priests contractually to him. Having made the payment, they could hardly move against him as a disciple of the Lord, as evidently they intended to do against the other apostles.

He was moved by *natural aversion* to spiritual principles. Many of the sayings of the Lord were opposed to the principle of materialism which Judas represented. In the face of personal danger, the candour of Christ's teaching that once attracted him, then began to repel. Suspecting the criticism of the Lord, he openly received it at Bethany (Jn. 12:4-9), and this made him angry. He could feel in the sting of the rebuke, that Jesus had discovered his secret sin (Jn. 12:6), and instead of this knowledge shaming him and causing him to seek forgiveness, it angered him further, and resulted in his completely throwing in his lot with the enemy.

Judas stands as a type of all betrayers of the Lord. The steps of his decline are so gradual that they are hardly discernible, until the full fact of betrayal is revealed. Let us be not highminded, but fear (Rom. 11:20). "*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*" (1Cor. 10:12).

Chapter 23

CHRIST'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER

(John 17)

This prayer was uttered in the darkness of the night as the Lord and the apostles walked the streets of Jerusalem, toward one of the gates of the city, most likely that on the east overlooking the brook Kidron. John clearly indicates this, by recording the point of time when they left the upper room (Jn. 14:31), and, later when they left the outskirts of the city (Jn. 18:1). He shows that the conversation of Jn. 15 and 16, and the prayer of ch. 17, took place after they left the room, but before they passed through the gate of the city to the precincts beyond. The prayer was uttered aloud, so that the apostles heard it, and recalled it afterwards. It was presented on the background of the tragic events about to take place, but in the knowledge of certain victory over the forces of sin (Jn. 16:33).

As the high priest, on the Day of Atonement, made intercession for himself, his household, and the nation (Lev. 16:17), so, in this prayer, the Lord prayed for himself (vv. 1-5), for the apostles (vv. 6-19), and for the whole ecclesia (vv. 20-26). All the petitions were made on the basis of his impending offering, so that the expressions of it were anticipatory. He thus could pray: "Thou hast given power" (Jn. 17:2), though that power was not in reality conferred until he rose from the dead (Mat. 28:18).

The prayer is composed of three main sections:

- 1. A statement concerning the Lord's own ministry and its successful completion (vv. 1-5).*
- 2. A petition seeking divine help for the apostles who were to represent him in the world (vv. 6-19).*
- 3. A request for the union in love of the whole Ecclesia welded together as a unit with the Father and the Son (vv. 20-26).*

HAVING proclaimed his confidence in certain victory (Jn. 16:33), the Lord gave himself to prayer, seeking the help of the Father in the victory yet to be won. "*Father,*" he prayed, "*the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: As Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.*"

"I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now, Father, glorify Thou me with

Thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." As the Son glorified, or honoured the Father in his life, so Yahweh glorified His Son by raising him from the dead, and bestowing divine nature upon him. This honoured Jesus by acknowledging his true status as Son of God, and gave divine endorsement to all that he had said and done during his lifetime. Furthermore, his resurrection to life eternal testified to the benefits that accrue from self-sacrificial obedience to the will of the Father.

Personal Petitions
(Jn. 17:1-5)

In his prayer, the Lord cited Gen. 1:26 as illustrating the extent of the triumph and conquest that had been won. In that passage, God invited Adam to "have dominion" over all flesh. The animal creation referred to was divided into clean and unclean species, which, in their typical counterpart, relate to Israel and the Gentiles.

A beautiful type emerges when Genesis ch. 1 is considered in that light. It records that the end of the sixth day saw a man and a woman created "in the image of God," witnessed them united together as one in marriage, and hearing the proclamation that they were to exercise dominion over the lower creation. This is the purpose that God has in store for His Son and the ecclesia, styled "the Bride the Lamb's wife," at the end of the sixth millennium from creation. Made "equal unto the angels," they are to be united in a spiritual marriage, and are to exercise dominion over all mortal nations; antitypically, the lower creation (see Rev. 19:1-8).

Shortly after creation, however, sin marred the intention of God. The promised dominion now could only be obtained through conquest of the flesh. That could only be effected by war. David recognised that, and saw his victory over Goliath as a type of the coming conquest of sin and death by his more glorious Son, whom Yahweh would strengthen for the purpose. In a Psalm commemorating his victory over Goliath (Psa. 8 was composed following the death of the giant), in which he gives expression to this thought, he quoted (v. 6) Gen. 1:26 to illustrate the typical significance of what he had done. He asked: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?" And then he quoted: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet."

But the flesh had first to be conquered, and the Lord Jesus, like David before him, was going forth to meet the giant in a battle unto the death. Like David, he did so with a prayer on his lips, and the assurance that the victory would be his. Triumphantly, he declared: *"Thou hast given him power [lit., jurisdiction] over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given him."*

"Power over all flesh" is a reference to Gen. 1:26. Whilst the Lord

now exercises jurisdiction over all, he will grant eternal life only to those who are specifically his, because Yahweh has given them unto him.

What is Life Eternal? Jesus said in his prayer: *“This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”* These are deeply significant words; but often greatly misunderstood. Many interpret them because they are given in the present tense: “This *is* life eternal.” On that basis it is claimed that life eternal is a present possession. When it is pointed out that men die, “life eternal” is defined as a moral kind of life, manifested at present, and which forms the foundation of immortality in the Age to come.

However, when all the usages of “eternal life,” or “everlasting life” (the same words in the Greek) as occurring in the Bible, are gathered together, it is obvious that the term relates to immortality, being divine nature. For example, Paul wrote that he was “in hope of eternal life” (Tit. 1:2), and elsewhere claimed that “hope which is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why does he yet hope for?” (Rom. 8:24-25). Paul would not hope for something he already possessed, so it is obvious that he did not then have eternal life. He wrote that those who seek immortality, will receive eternal life (Rom. 2:7).

If eternal life is something we must yet receive, why did the Lord speak of it in the present tense, as though already obtained? There are two reasons. Firstly, it is a Hebraism to speak in the past, or present, tense of something that is yet to be given, if the fact of it being granted is beyond all doubt. Paul makes that point in Rom. 4:17, where he writes: “God, who quickeneth the dead, calleth those things which be not as though they were.” Thus Jesus used the present tense in relation to life eternal because there is no doubt about it being granted to those who fulfil the requirements of God.

Secondly, such an expression can signify: “This (the correct understanding of the relationship of the Father to the Son) is the basis upon which eternal life will be granted.” A similar form of words is used in Jn. 3:19: “This is condemnation...” What is meant is, This is the basis of condemnation. Again, in Jn. 6:29, “This is the work of God, that ye believe...” Rather, this is the basis by which the work of God is performed, that ye believe. Again: “His commandment is life eternal” (Jn. 12:50). This means that obedience to His commandment is the basis upon which life eternal will be granted. Applying that usage in relation to Christ’s prayer, we understand him to say: This is the basis upon which life eternal will be granted, that a man “might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ.”

The word “know” is the plural *ginoskosin*. It signifies more than

mere academic knowledge; it implies an intimate understanding such as establishes a personal relationship between the person knowing and the object known. It is a term used to describe the most intimate union between man and woman by which fruit is ultimately brought forth to the glory and pleasure of both (Gen. 4:1).

The kind of knowledge referred to by the Lord Jesus, is one that is manifested in action. The Lord “knew” the Father in that way, because he was able to say: ***“I have glorified Thee on the earth.”***

The ultimate result of such divine knowledge is eternal life, divine nature (2Pet. 1:4). So the Lord prayed to the Father, asking Him to glorify him with His own self (divine nature), a glory which it was intended from the very beginning that he should have and which the Father (who knows the end from the beginning, and expresses himself accordingly — Rom. 4:17), had, in anticipation, already bestowed upon the Son.

People unfortunately also interpret the words of Jesus to signify that he pre-existed, and therefore teach that he received the glory in some prior existence. That, of course, is wrong, and is shown to be so by the Lord’s use of similar language in regard to the disciples. Praying on behalf of those who would believe on him in future times through the testimony of the apostles (v. 20), he declared: ***“The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one”*** (v. 22). How could the Lord have given (past tense) divine glory to a people not then in existence? Only in anticipation. It is obvious, therefore, that when he spoke of the Father having given him glory “before the world was,” he meant it in the same way.

Care for the Apostles: Having completed petitions on his own behalf, the Lord besought help for the apostles who would have to maintain his work in the world when he was taken from them. He prayed: ***“I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou hast given them to me; and they have kept Thy word. Now they know and understand that all Thou hast given me belongs to Thee, for I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me; and they have received them, and know that I came out from Thee, and they believe that Thou didst send me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world; but for those Thou hast given me, for they belong to Thee. All mine are Thine, and all that are Thine belong to me; and I am glorified through them.”***

“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep in Thy name, those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are one.”

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name. Those Thou hast given me I guarded and protected, and not one of them has been lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

“And now I am coming to Thee. I say these things while I am still in the world, so that my joy may be made full in them. I have given them Thy word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world. I do not ask that Thou take them out of the world, but that Thou wilt keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Thy Truth; Thy Word is Truth.

“Just as Thou hast sent me into the world, I have also sent them into the world; and so for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in the Truth.”

The Lord had manifested the divine Name unto the apostles (v. 6), by revealing the characteristics of his Father in action. He was God manifest in the flesh (1Tim. 3:16), for Yahweh was the Author of all that the Master thought, said and did.

Now he desired to be glorified in the apostles. That would mean that he must become the author of their thoughts and actions. He reminded the Father of how they had been separated from out of the world, and had been given the Word of Truth. He prayed that divine strength might continue with them, to keep them in the Name that he had manifested unto them (vv. 6-11). As he was about to be taken from them they would need additional help, particularly in view of problems that they must face.

He plainly declared that he did not pray for the world (v. 9) because the world was not worthy of such a prayer. It had turned its back upon God, and was even then preparing to crucify the Son, and would manifest hatred toward his disciples. As Christ was not of the



world, neither were they, but as they were appointed to carry on the work he had commenced, they were in need of his intercession, and the strength of God, that they might glorify Him (1Cor. 4:9-10; 2Cor. 4:9-11; Gal. 2:20).

The forces of darkness would temporarily triumph against him, prior to his resurrection and ascension to the Father, and as the Good Shepherd who had cared for the sheep, he delivered the flock to its Owner, that He might protect it in his absence, accounting for every member of it, except the one who was the betrayer, and who fulfilled that mission in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

He knew the ordeal that was before them. The world would hate them as it hated him, and they would be in need of strength and help. From whence could it come? From One only, and to Him he prayed that He might overshadow the apostles in their hour of need. He did not ask that God should take them out of the world, but that He should protect them from its evil. He declared that the apostles had not been taken out of the world,* even as he had not been taken out of the world, and therefore they were in close proximity to it and its hate. But he prayed that they might be sanctified (being separated) by the power of the Truth, particularly as they had to go into the world. He had been sent into the world as they would be likewise, and for their sakes he had sanctified himself, as a means whereby they could be spiritually sanctified or separated. He did this as their sacrifice and priest, though he himself benefited in his own redemption in the process of doing so (Heb. 9:12).

**Christ's Prayer for
the United Ecclesia
(vv. 20-26)**

This prayer comprised the intimate out-pourings of the Lord's heart to the Father. The apostles heard the words as they followed him, but they did not understand them, for they were unprepared at that stage, for the deep truths that they expressed. Having prayed for himself and also for his apostles, the Lord turned his thoughts to those who would embrace the Truth through the testimony of the apostles. They, too, would need the

* The preposition in the Greek is *ek* signifying "out of." The Lord thus prayed: "*They are not of [out of] the world, even as I am not of [out of] the world.*" As he was in a world that hated him, so also were the apostles, and the danger to them was very acute. The prayer comprised: [1] A request that the Father should not take the apostles out of the world but preserve them from (*ek* — out of) the evil (v. 15). [2] A reminder that the disciples were in a world that hated them and would be subjected to attack, even as he was still in the world and was about to be attacked. [3] A petition that the apostles be guarded against the influence of the world by their sanctification (their separation for divine use) through the power of the Truth. [4] A statement that the means had been made available for their sanctification, inasmuch as he had sanctified himself unto that purpose.

divine help, and for them, for us, the Lord in his hour of need, prayed to the Father: *"Neither pray I for these only, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. 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. And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made completely one in us; so that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me."*

"Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me: for Thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world."

"O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

The Lord thus prayed that his completed ecclesia might be welded in one with himself and the Father, and that as the Father was manifested in him, so he would be revealed in those who believed on him through the testimony of the apostles. That glorious unity, which will be revealed in its fulness in the Age to come, when the ecclesia will be glorified with the Lord, and be a testimony unto a world that hated or despised his disciples, that these were loved of the Father as He loved His Son. The Lord's prayer, moreover, reveals that his love for the ecclesia is so strong, that he ardently desires the time to come when he will be united with it. It then will be able to personally behold, and share, the glory that the Father has granted the Son, a glory that has been reserved for both him and the ecclesia from the foundation of the world.

The basic difference between the world and the ecclesia, declared the Lord, is that the former knows not the Father, whereas the latter does know Him, and recognises that He was manifested in the Son.

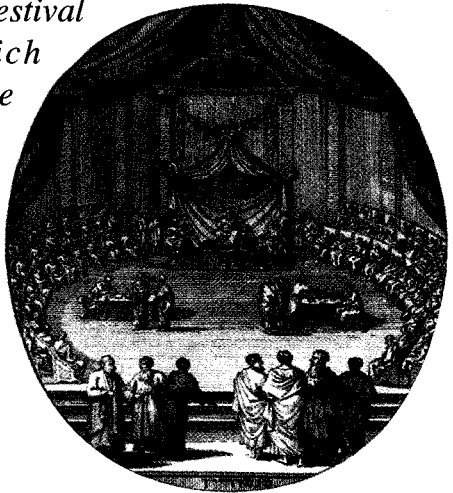
Earlier in the prayer, Jesus had declared that he had manifested the Father on earth (v. 6); now, at its conclusion, he stated his intention of continuing to proclaim that name, *"that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them [his disciples] and I in them"* (v. 26). All who genuinely embrace the Truth share that love, for they form part of that glorious company referred to by Simeon when he declared that "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14).

The divine love blots out sins and leads to eternal life. But those who are recipients of it must justify the bestowing of that love by revealing the qualities of God in their lives, even as did the Lord Jesus Christ.

Genuine Accusers



THE wickedness of the nation came to a climax as schemes were put into place to secure the conviction of the innocent prophet of Nazareth, and to fulfil the prophetic declaration concerning those who would pursue his life. The Jewish council determined to involve the Roman law in its course, knowing that by such means the faith and belief of the Lord's disciples could be destroyed. Although the Jews could have dealt with the Master themselves, by stoning to death, as was later done to Stephen (see volume 8), they were determined to involve the Roman Governor in their evil designs. So the Sanhedrin met to make the case for the conviction of the Master, The trial was entirely illegal, and conducted at night, as well as on the eve of Passover: the festival of the Jews which reminded them of the great deliverance from Egypt — whilst they had determined to commit a man to the death of the Gentiles!



Sketch of the Sanhedrin in session

THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF THE LORD

(continued from page 242)

THE FINAL DAYS

Our harmony of the four Gospel Records now directs attention to the great trials of the Lord in the Jewish and Gentile courts of Jerusalem. This took place on Wednesday, 14th Abib, which commenced at 6pm in the evening and continued through the following day. Whilst still dark, the Lord was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, and from then onward was subjected to false accusations, ridicule and rejection by six trials: three Jewish interrogations, followed by three Gentile trials. Then the Lord was conducted to Golgotha for crucifixion, and whilst on the stake, he uttered seven particular sayings. This section of the harmony brings to a conclusion the mortal ministry of the Master.

Wednesday — 14th Abib (cont):	Mat.	Mark	Luke	John
Agony in Gethsemane (3 prayers)	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:39-46	18:1
Betrayal and Arrest	26:46-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:2-11
Tried by Annas (1st Jewish Trial)				18:12-13
Tried by Caiaphas (2nd Jewish Trial)...	26:57-68	14:53-65	22:54,63-65	18:14-24
Peter Denies Him	26:69-75	14:66-72	22:55-62	18:25-27
Morning Dawns				
Formally condemned by the Sanhedrin (3rd Jewish trial)		15:1	22:66-71	
Brought before Pilate (1st Gentile Trial)	27:1-2	15:2-4	23:1	18:28
Judas commits suicide....	27:3-10			
Pilate acquits Jesus	27:11-14	15:5	23:2-6	18:29-38
Herod acquits Jesus (2nd Gentile trial)			23:7-12	
Crowds converge on Pilate's Palace	27:15	15:6-8		
Pilate desires to release Jesus			23:13-17	
Crowds demand Barabbas' Release	27:16-25	15:9-14	23:18-23	18:39-40
Jesus mocked and scourged	27:26-30	15:15-19	23:24-25	19:1-3
Before Pilate and Condemned (3rd Gentile Trial)				19:4-16
To Golgotha	27:31-33	15:20-22	23:26-32	19:16-17
Jesus crucified	27:34-38	15:23-28	23:33-34	19:18

Priests protest at superscription				19:19-22
Soldiers cast lots for his gown	27:35-36	15:20-47	23:26-56	19:23-24
Prayer on the stake (1st saying)			23:34	
Mocked by Priests and People	27:39-43	15:29-32	23:35	
Mocked by Soldiers			23:36-38	
Mocked by Thieves	27:44			
The Repentant Thief (2nd saying).....			23:39-43	
Jesus Provides for Mary (3rd saying)				19:25-27
Three Hours of Darkness	27:45	15:33	23:44-45	
Prayer on the Stake (4th saying)	27:46	15:34-35		
Jesus Thirsts (5th saying)				19:28
He is Offered Vinegar	27:48-49	15:36		19:29
"It is finished" (6th saying)				19:30
His Last Prayer (7th saying)			23:46	
Death	27:50	15:37	23:46	19:30
Convulsions of Nature ..	27:51-53	15:38	23:45	
Onlookers Converted	27:54-56	15:39-41	23:47-49	
Proof of His Death				19:31-37
The Burial	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42



Chapter 1

TO GETHSEMANE

The Garden of Gethsemane is situated on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives, just opposite to where the temple once stood. It is divided from the city by the deep, rough valley of the Kidron. Its name means "Oil Press," and, significantly, as the olives were bruised to produce the golden oil to provide light for the lamps, so, in this place, he through whom was to come "the oil of joy" instead "of mourning" (Isa. 61:3), was to be "bruised" (Isa. 53:4-5).

After leaving the city, the Lord made his way to Gethsemane, that he might commune with the Father and gather strength for the terrible ordeal before him. It is interesting to recall that the first Adam was tried in a Garden, and so also was the second Adam!

THE Lord concluded his prayer as he reached the gate of the city (Jn. 18:1), followed by his eleven apostles. Coming to the south-eastern corner, they turned north along its eastern precincts toward the great temple. The darkness was mildly lit by the pale moon above, which was then, at Passover time, at its full. The city was quiet, though earlier it had been busy with activity, as people prepared for the feast on the morrow. Above the small group towered the high city wall, and higher even than the wall, was the gold-decorated temple, gleaming in the silvery light of the moon; though the very brilliance of that proud building only served to emphasise the hard-heartedness of those who worshipped there.

They Leave the City
(Mat. 26:30;
Mk. 14:26;
Lk. 22:39;
Jn. 18:1)

expresses it:

At last they came to the place where they had to turn east to cross the rough, deep valley of the Kidron. This word means "dark," "turbid," from a root signifying, by implication, "to mourn." It was thus fittingly named for that sad occasion, when, as a hymn sadly

*T'was on that dark and mournful night,
When Jews and Gentiles joined their power,
Against the Son of God to fight,
To mock his name, his life devour.*

Ascending from the valley, the Lord led the way to an enclosed garden called Gethsemane which he often frequented. He had not remained silent since leaving the city.



Conversation on the Way (Mat. 26:31-35; Mk. 14:27-31)

After having prayed on the behalf of the apostles, he had continued to instruct them, warning them of conditions that they would have to face. He declared: ***"You will be offended over me today, for it is written: 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.' But after I have risen, I will go before you into Galilee!"***

The quotation is a prophetic utterance of Zechariah, recorded in ch. 13:7. On the basis of that Scripture, the Lord warned the apostles that he would be violently put to death, and they would be scattered from him in fear and doubt. But to encourage them, he added a note of hope. He told them that he would rise again from the dead, and meet them in Galilee, from whence he had earlier called them to be his disciples.

The eleven apostles listened in disbelief to the words of the Lord. They would be offended in him and desert him! Surely not! That would never happen! Boldly, Peter refuted his gloomy predictions. He claimed that they would never apply to him! Notwithstanding what any of the others might do, he would never desert the Lord.

"Though all shall be offended over you, yet I will never be offended," he confidently declared.

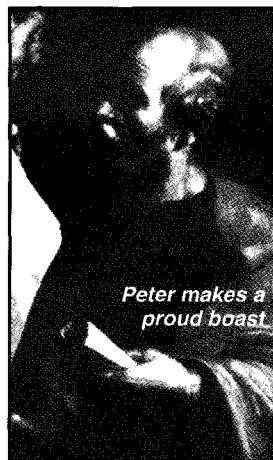
But sadly, for the third time, the Lord rebuked him: ***"Truly I say unto you; this very night, before the cock crow twice, you will deny me thrice."***

Peter considered the suggestion preposterous! Though the Lord had now warned him three times that he would deny him, he persisted in rejecting the suggestion. Once again, more dogmatically than ever, as though to convince those about him by the very fierceness of his language, he declared: ***"Even though I have to die with you, I will never disown you!"***

And in a chorus of voices, the rest of the eleven boldly asserted the same thing.

Moreover, they meant it. They believed that Jesus was the Christ of God, and in love and loyalty they were prepared to lay down their lives for him. Meanwhile, they listened to the Lord's comment with surprise and complete disbelief: ***"This very night, before the cock crow twice, you will deny me thrice!"***

The reference to the "cock-crow" related to the time divisions of the night introduced by the Romans. They divided the night into four "watches" which terminated at 6pm, 9pm, 12 midnight and 3am. At those times, the watchman in the Tower of Antonia that overlooked the



Peter makes a proud boast

temple, released the guard by the sounding of a trumpet. The last two were called the "cock crowing" (cp. Mk. 13:35).*

Therefore, when Jesus said to Peter: "This very night, before the cock crow twice, you shall deny me thrice!" he was warning Peter that he would three times deny his Lord before 3am that very morning!

The statement made Peter indignant, and called forth his angry repudiation.

At Gethsemane
(Mat. 26:36;
Mk. 14:32;
Lk. 22:39;
Jn. 18:1)

Disturbed in mind, and somewhat tired, the small company of men approached the enclosure of the Garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and passing through a gate, they entered the Garden itself. It was still and peaceful: the very place for communing with God. In the west, they could see the majestic silhouette of the temple towering above the encircling wall, and overshadowing it, the Roman Tower of Antonia.

The Lord knew, as he made preparation for prayer, that even then Judas was leading the guard made up of Roman and Jewish soldiers through the city, determined that they might take him captive.

Time was short, and he felt the need of the strengthening influence of communion with the Father, that he might successfully face the ordeal before him. He suggested to the apostles that they, too, prepare themselves. "*Pray that you enter not into trials,*" he recommended (Lk. 22:40).

Then, as they stood around, probably wondering what to do, he continued: "*Sit here while I go over there and pray!*"

He knew that it was the last time that he would be with them on their own before the enemy would come upon them, and it was with reluctance that he tore himself away from them (as the original word translated "withdrawn" in Lk. 22:41 signifies), to leave them to their own spiritual resources.

But they were drowsy, and their heads began to nod. It had been a long day, and was now early in the morning. Little did they realise that the most tragic events of all history were about to take place. Thus, instead of praying, they slept, to be ultimately awakened by the

* The Diaglott comments: "It is well-known that no cocks were allowed to remain in Jerusalem during the Passover feast. The Romans, who had a strong guard in the castle of Antonia, which overlooked the temple, divided the night into four watches, beginning at six, nine, twelve, and three. Mk. 13:35 alludes to this division of time. The last two watches were both called cock-crowings. The Romans relieved the guard at each watch by the sound of a trumpet; the trumpet of the third watch was called the first, and that of the fourth, the second cock. And when it was said the cock crew, the meaning is, that the trumpet of the third watch sounded; which always happened at midnight."

rowdy noise of soldiers pushing their way through the gate into the garden, by the confusion of lights raised aloft to aid in the capture of Jesus, by the harsh commands of officers to the guard under them, and by the frightful evidence of betrayal on the part of Judas.

The First Prayer
(Mat. 26:36-39;
Mk. 14:32-36;
Lk. 22:41-44)

Meanwhile, taking with him only Peter, James and John, he separated them from the rest of the apostles that they might watch. Then deeply moved and distressed because he could foresee what would take place, he said: ***"My heart is sad, even to death; stay here and watch* with me!"***

Thus speaking, he withdrew even further, and prostrating himself to the ground, he gave himself over to prayer. He prayed aloud, and doubtless they could hear him. But they, too, were drowsy, and soon their heads were nodding as well. It was not long before the voice of the praying Saviour ceased to be heard by them as sleep claimed them.

The Lord was left on his own, and poured out his heart unto Yahweh, seeking strength for that which he knew lay before him. Christ had to drink the cup of suffering to its very dregs. That involved, in addition to enduring physical pain and death, the sorrow of witnessing the most vile sin ever committed — the ridicule and crucifixion of the Saviour of humanity — and that by a people he had come to save. In rejecting him they rejected Yahweh (Mat. 10:40), and that very deeply affected him. In his distress at the disobedience of the people, and in sad anticipation of its consequences, he had already wept over Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41). Now, acutely sensitive to the enormity of the sin he was about to witness and personally experience (a sensitivity which we who sin cannot fully comprehend), and deeply feeling the terrible shame of the nation's rejection of both the Father and himself, it seemed as though his heart would break (Psa. 69:20; 116:3).

The fact that the reproaches he endured, and the sufferings he experienced, were predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures, did not lessen the sorrow. If Jeremiah could speak of his heart being "broken" because of the false prophets (Jer. 23:9), and could pour out such heart-rending lamentations when his prophecies were fulfilled (Jer. 9:1; Lam. 1:12), how much greater was the mental agony of Christ who had to witness:

1. *One of the apostles betray him with a hypocritical kiss of love.*
2. *The high priest, custodian of Yahweh's Truth, pervert the Law in order to condemn him.*

* The Greek *gregoreite*, signifies "to keep awake, to remain alert;" but they fell completely asleep.

3. *The people demanding the release of a murderer, instead of the Messiah.*
4. *His closest friends deny and desert him.*
5. *The nation he loved commit spiritual suicide, be rejected, punished and scattered.*
6. *The humiliation and agony of the stake.*

In such circumstances he could obtain strength from one Source only; and to Yahweh he turned. He prayed, asking that if it be possible, the hour might pass from him. He did not pray that he might escape death, because he knew that as the Good Shepherd who must save the sheep, it was impossible for him to do so. His teaching in the past had emphasised that death was inevitable. He had declared: "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so **must** the Son of man be lifted up; That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life*" (Jn. 3:14-16). "*Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again*" (Jn. 10:17). "*Truly, truly, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal... Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this very purpose that I have come to this hour [that I might undergo it — Amplified Bible]...And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die*" (Jn. 12:24-25, 27, 32-33).

The Lord realised that there was no other way. He did not pray to escape death, but that the terrible cup of protracted agony and of long, drawn-out witnessing of the sadness and sin attendant to the circumstances might be swiftly taken from him; for he deeply felt, with an intensity we cannot share or appreciate, the failings of those he came to save (Isa. 53:5-6). Throughout that sad night and day of sorrow, shame and suffering, his thoughts were continually for others: for the apostles (Lk. 22:31-32); for the nation (Mat. 23:37); for his mother (Jn. 19:27); even for Judas (Psa. 55:12).

So he prayed that the hour might pass from him. The request had nothing to do with the fear of death, but was a petition that he should successfully endure the hour of darkness and evil that would engulf him, so it might come to an end and pass from him. When he declared that the "cup might pass," he was speaking of the trials that commenced with the cup in the Upper Room, a cup which he continued to figuratively drink in the Garden of Gethsemane, for it spoke of the all the trials of his sacrificial work. The words in the Greek translated "might pass from" (Mk. 14:35) are *parelthe apo*. The first word is compounded of *para*, signifying "beside" and *erchomai*, to "come or go." Thus it can signify "to go from beside one"; thus

here, "to go from beside me the hour." If it is "beside" one, it is not avoided by that individual. The second word signifies "away from," and this again suggests the close proximity of the "hour." If, however, Christ failed, the hour of darkness would not pass from him, but would remain with him. The forces of evil would triumph, and he would remain in the grave.

"O my Father," he prayed, ***"if it be possible, let this cup pass from me?; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt"*** (Mat. 26:39). ***"Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt"*** (Mk. 14:36). This is a reconstruction of the prayer. In Mark's account, however, it is prefaced by introductory words (see Mk. 14:35) which give it general support.

The prayer, itself, is made up of three requests, recorded in Mat. 26:39 and Mk. 14:36. At first sight, it would appear as though these two passages are repeating the same petition, but a careful consideration of the Greek reveals significant differences.

In no instance did the Lord pray that he might escape the death of sacrifice, for it would be sin for him to do that. His requests were that:

1. *With the Father's help he might successfully complete his mission;*
2. *If it pleased the Father, his sufferings might be cut short.*

Paul taught that his requests were granted. He wrote: "When he [Jesus] had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, he was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7). The preposition "from" is *ek* in Greek, and signifies "out of," and not "from." Jesus was saved "out of" death, in that he did not escape death. His second petition was also granted, for his sufferings were cut short. When it was reported to Pilate that Jesus was already dead, "Pilate marvelled" that the end had come so quickly (Mk. 15:44).

Thus Jesus was granted the two petitions for which he prayed.

A consideration of the terms of the prayer will reveal that it was for these alone that he prayed. Consider, first, the general introduction to the prayer, recorded in Mk. 14:35. It states that the prayer comprised a petition that "if it were possible" the hour might pass from the Lord. What is involved in such a request? It should not be interpreted as asking that he might avoid "the hour," for he knew that such was not possible if salvation was to be made available to humanity. However, he could ask that the hour might successfully be brought to an end, and in that way pass from him. That is doubtless the meaning of the request. It was accomplished by him enduring all that was involved in it with the help of the Father (see Jn. 16:32). Only by such means was it possible for the hour of darkness to pass away.

The introductory epitome of the prayer, therefore, expressed the Lord's dependence on the Father to successfully bring to an end the "hour and power of darkness" (see Lk. 22:53) that was about to overtake him.

To suggest that the Lord was trying to avoid death, is to teach that he prayed for an impossibility. He knew death was inevitable. He did not pray for something that could not be granted. The preposition "if" in this introductory comment by Mark (ch. 14:35), is the Greek *ean*, and signifies a possible hypothesis. It could be rendered: "As it is possible." What was the possible hypothesis? That the hour might pass from him which implies that the "hour" was first with him. It could only be brought to an end by him successfully enduring it, and for that he prayed.

The first section of the actual prayer is recorded in Matthew 26:39. Jesus declared: "***O my Father, if [ean] it be possible, let this cup pass [parerchomai] from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.***" This is similar to the introductory comment recorded by Mark. The "cup" embraced all his sufferings: the treachery of Judas; the denial of Peter; the desertion of the apostles; the cruel, relentless enmity of the priests and rulers; the heartless abandonment of the people; the insults; the scourging; finally, the painful and shameful death upon the stake.

He prayed for the ultimate removal of that cup, which implies that he sought strength to successfully drink it.

But do not the words: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt," imply that he wanted the cup removed entirely? By no means. The phrase, "not as I will," denotes "not in the manner that I desire it to be done." The Lord desired that the drinking of the cup of sorrow should be of short duration, but he added words that testified that he would submit to whatever the Father required of him.

That this is the correct interpretation is shown by the second request of the Lord, recorded by Mark (ch. 14:36) and Luke (ch. 22:42). Jesus prayed: "***Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me.***" Again, it is important to stress, that those words do not request that he be allowed to avoid drinking of the cup. Rather, they acknowledge that it was only possible for him to successfully drink of it through the help of the Father. The help of God was required for the cup to be taken "from him," and for that to be done, it is obvious that he must first have possession of it. In this petition the words "take away," are translated from an entirely different Greek word from that quoted above. It is *parenegke*. Bullinger's Greek Lexicon defines this as signifying, "to bear from beside; to take away as does a stream." The prayer, therefore is a request that the cup of sorrow and suffering (which he already had commenced to drink) might be taken away from him speedily. He was

prepared to drink its content, but prayed that it might be of short duration.

He addressed Yahweh by two titles: *Abba* and *Pater*. These are the Hebrew and Greek words for “father,” and significantly, the word *Abba* is the first word a Hebrew child learns to pronounce; the word *Pater* is generally used by an older person of their father. The Lord used them both to indicate that the great family of God, which would be brought into existence through his offering, would be made up of both Jews and Gentiles; used by both younger and older.

He completed his prayer with a declaration that he was prepared to submit to whatever the Father required of him: “Nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt” (Mat. 26:39; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:42). He had prayed that the cup of suffering be removed speedily, but now declared that if the Father deemed that protracted sufferings on his part were necessary, he was willing to submit. He trustfully left the decision in the hand of God.

Close examination of the prayer, therefore, will reveal that in no instance did the Lord pray for the impossible — that he might avoid the death of the stake. He prayed that the hour of darkness should ultimately pass from him; that he should successfully drink the cup of suffering; and, if it were in accordance with the will of the Father, that his sufferings should be shortened.

All three requests were granted by God.

**Strengthened in the
Agony of Prayer
(Lk. 22:43-45)**

It is obvious that only a brief epitome of the Lord’s prayer is recorded in the Gospel accounts, and that he must have spent much more time in mental communion with the Father than is suggested by the few words recorded.

Moreover, he had visible confirmation that his prayers were received in heaven. At the completion of the first portion of his first prayer, he was conscious of the presence of somebody beside him. It was an angel, sent to strengthen him. The means by which this was done is not recorded; but it could have been by the angel speaking with him of his impending victory, of all that would be accomplished thereby, and particularly of “the joy set before him.” Paul later wrote that the consideration of this enabled him to “endure the cross and despise the shame” (Heb. 12:2). It therefore was an element of his successful striving with the flesh at this time.

The helpful presence of a heavenly messenger was a repetition of his experience at the beginning of his ministry when he was tempted in the wilderness. At the conclusion of his contest on that occasion, an angel came and ministered unto him (Mat. 4:11). So, with loving understanding, the Father sent His messenger to sustain the Son in his terrible trial and his wrestlings with the flesh on this occasion.

The angel withdrew, and the Lord prayed again with greater intensity of feeling. He agonised in prayer, pouring out his heart unto God. He realised what was involved in drinking the cup set before him, and sought divine strength, not only for himself, but for all others involved.

The cup embraced all his sufferings: the treachery of Judas; the denial of Peter; the desertion of the apostles; the cruel, relentless enmity of the priests and rulers; the heartless abandonment of the people; the insults; the scourging; the painful and shameful death itself; the problems and trials of believers yet unborn; finally, the development of a multitudinous Bride “without spot, or blemish, or any such thing” (Eph. 5:27).

It was a long prayer, filled with the greatest intensity of emotion possible to man. The extreme mental pressure induced by the agony of effort had a physical reaction. It caused the pores of his skin to dilate, and perspiration, like great drops of blood was exuded therefrom.

The Sleeping Apostles Finally, the Lord rose to his feet, tired by the and the **Second Prayer** lateness of the hour, the long and difficult (Mat. 26:40-42; day, and the intensity of his feelings in Mk. 14:37-39) prayer. He returned to where he had left the three apostles to watch.

But he found them fast asleep.

It was not the first time that this had happened when they had been called upon to watch. It had occurred on the Mount of Transfiguration, when they had been invited to view his glory (Lk. 9:32). Thus, both in triumph and in trial, the flesh had proved too infirm for the apostles to give unto the Lord the measure of companionship and communion that he sought, and that was his due. As he looked down upon his sleeping disciples, who were then completely unaware of the crisis rushing to its climax, he experienced the truth of the Messianic Psalm 69:20,

I am full of heaviness,

And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none;

And for comforters, but I found none.



Meanwhile, his presence disturbed the apostles. They awoke and sleepily looked at him. “*Simon Peter,*” the Lord said gently to the apostle who had been foremost in his boast of what he would do for his Lord, “*What! could you not keep awake and alert with me for*

one hour? Keep awake and pray, that you do not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak!"

How wise the advice for disciples of every age!

The apostles had boasted that they were willing to die for Christ, but had shown that they could not even keep awake when the need was there! How easy it is for us to boast; how difficult to put our words into action! How careful we need to be before we vow unto God; how necessary it is to take into consideration how weak is the flesh!

Again he left them to watch, and returning to the place of prayer, he repeated, in substance, what he had uttered on the first occasion. ***"O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done!"*** He thus expressed his willingness to comply with all that the Father required of him. He recognised that only by drinking the cup, could it be removed from him.

These brief words, recorded by Matthew (ch. 26:42), are but an epitome of the second prayer which was, in substance, a repetition of the first one (Mk. 14:39).

Again he arose and went to where he had left the three apostles. And, again, he found them sound asleep, for "their eyes were heavy." There was no help for him from that source, for flesh is too strong. In fact, they could not help themselves; they were so tired. It was probably about midnight when they had left for the Garden (Psa. 119:62), and if the term "hour" is to be taken literally, as it well might (see Mat. 26:40), it would have been about 1 am by then.

Nevertheless, they struggled out of their sleep, as he approached them, and with heavy eyes looked up at him. Again he reproached them, asking why could they not keep awake. On this occasion, feeling deeply ashamed, they did not know what to answer him (Mk. 14:40).

The Third Prayer
(Mat. 26:44-46;
Mk. 14:41;
Lk. 22:45-46)

Once again the Lord returned to pray. There had been three forms of temptation at the beginning of his ministry (Mat. 4); there were three trials impending; and he was fortified by three prayers.

The third prayer was in essence the same as the two previous petitions, and again he returned to the apostles to find them asleep. "Still asleep?" he asked them as they struggled into wakefulness. "Still resting? Why are you sleeping? Arise and pray that you may not enter into trial (Lk. 22:46). The hour is near, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinful men. Come, rise, let us be going; here is my betrayer close at hand!"

Even as he spoke, the tramp of the guard, the flickering light of the lanterns and the flaring torches, would have been heard and seen

approaching from the city and up the slope of the mount of Olives, heading for the Garden of Gethsemane which Judas knew to have been oftentimes frequented by the Lord (Jn. 18:2). Most likely Judas had returned with his companions to the Upper Room, but finding it empty, had then sought for the Lord in the familiar garden.

The Lord did not attempt to avoid capture. With faith and courage he went out to meet the foe, rather than avoid him. He could easily have hidden in the caves and grottoes which are a feature of the Kidron Valley, but in accordance with his prayer, he submitted to the will of the Father. His action illustrated the words he had earlier spoken unto the Pharisees: *"No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down myself. I have power [lit., the right] to lay it down, and I have power [lit., the right] to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father"* (Jn. 10:18).

Judas Betrays the Lord with a Kiss
(Mat. 26:47-49;
Mk. 14:43-45;
Lk. 22:47-48;
Jn. 18:3-11)

It was a large company of men that had marched to the Garden of Gethsemane that night, for John states that Judas had received "the band* of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees" (Jn. 18:3). They were accompanied by "officers" or members of the temple guard (Jn. 7:32, 45). Thus a large mixed group of Jews and Gentiles had been despatched to take the Lord Jesus, and now approached him as an army might attack a dangerous foe. Six hundred men, equipped with all kinds of weapons, against the defenceless prophet of Nazareth!

But where had Judas been all that time until now?

He had hurried away from the upper room to an assembly of the chief priests and Pharisees, to disclose that the Lord was in a situation where he could be taken without arousing any opposition from the people. They, in turn, had approached Pilate to obtain the military support of the Roman guard. These, together with the normal temple guard, Judas had led to the Upper Room, where he supposed Jesus to be still in conference with his apostles.

But by the time the company of soldiers arrived there, the Lord and his followers had left. The owner of that house was a disciple of the Lord, and it was probably the home of Mark's people. Mary, the mother of Mark, was a believer in the Lord Jesus, and later her house in Jerusalem became the centre where the disciples used to gather (Acts 12:12-17). It probably was the house of the Upper Room, and the last supper. This supposition is supported by an incident recorded by Mark. He described how that a young man was present when Jesus

* The word "band" is *speiran* in Greek, and *the speiran* (cohort) could comprise upwards of 600 Roman soldiers. These probably constituted the guard garrisoned in the Tower of Antonia.

was taken captive who had hastily dressed himself and followed the soldiers to the Garden. That young man was obviously Mark, who had been awakened by the rowdy entrance of soldiers into the house.

Realising that the beloved Lord was in danger from such a large force, he decided to try and alert him to the fact. Not waiting to dress properly, but merely hastily throwing a linen cloth around him, he made his way to the street, to seek Jesus and advise him of the intention of the soldiers.

But Judas was already leading the way. He knew that Jesus frequently visited the Garden of Gethsemane. So now Mark followed the company of soldiers led by Judas. Thus, along the very route where the Saviour of the world had earlier walked, speaking words of courage, comfort and consolation to his disciples, Judas the traitor now walked at the head of the marching soldiers, who with lanterns and flaring torches, lit up the way before them, as though moving on to battle.

Down across the Kidron Valley they marched, and up the other side toward the Garden where the apostles were sleeping and the Lord was praying. Their noise awakened the sleeping apostles at the entrance of the Garden. Among the others, Matthew started up from sleep, and the first sight that met his startled gaze (see his exclamation "*lo, Judas, one of the twelve!*" — Mat. 26:47), was the person of Judas at the gate, leading the company of guards and soldiers against the Lord. His first confused view took in a great company of fierce, determined men. He saw the swords carried by the Roman soldiers, and the staves held by the Jewish temple guard, and witnessed in horror the most sorrowing tragedy in all history take place. But he saw, also, the attitude of superb calm and courage with which Jesus faced that moment.

Although he knew all things that should come upon him (Jn. 18:4) the Lord, like the Good Shepherd, took the initiative to guard his disciples from the crowd of soldiers that thronged the Garden, not sparing himself.

Stepping forward in the sight of all the excited assembly, Jesus approached those who had come to arrest him.

"Whom do you seek?" he asked the soldiers.

"Jesus of Nazareth," came the answer.

"I am he," the Lord replied.

The crisis had taken the apostles off their guard. They stood transfixed, wondering what would happen next. They saw Judas, separated from their company, and standing with the enemy. He had changed his allegiance and now identified himself with the band of Roman soldiers and the temple guard, gathered there to take Jesus captive.

It was an act of base treachery; and the eyes of John were fixed on

Judas with incredulous horror. Long afterwards when he came to write the account of that terrible night, the sad and awful spectacle of Judas at the head of the army of the enemy, his person illuminated by the glare of their torches and lanterns and protected by their swords and staves, remained fresh in his memory like a horrible nightmare.

He recorded, as though as to emphasise the almost unbelievable fact: "*And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with THEM!*" (Jn. 18:5).

And then occurred a strange incident!

When Jesus had said unto the soldiers, most probably singling out the temple guard, "*I am he,*" he had instantly drawn attention to himself. Holding aloft their lanterns and flaring torches, they turned in his direction, and looked upon the calm, solemn, dignified countenance of the Son of God. They saw him majestic in his dignity, and calm in the courage that comes from faith. He was no criminal to be afraid of, no blood-thirsty rebel to arrest with a display of force. They saw in his face a glory that is divine, so that a strange feeling of unease came over the temple guard. Who was this man of miracles? and from whence came his power? There was something in the demeanor of this Jesus of Nazareth that frightened them. An indescribable fear took possession of them so that they began to back away from him, and fell to the ground (Jn. 18:6).

That left the Roman guard standing with their weapons. Jesus now addressed them: "*Whom do you seek?*" he enquired.

"*Jesus of Nazareth,*" came the answer.

"*I told you that I am he,*" the Lord replied, "*so, if you seek me, let these others go free!*"

He was as the Good Shepherd, standing in front of the flock to defend it from the wolves that would scatter and consume it. John remarks (Jn. 18:9) that this was to fulfil the words of his intercessory prayer: "Of those whom Thou gavest me, I lost not one."

For the moment, the enemy was confused. The soldiers did not know what to do. The proceedings had not gone as they had expected. Judas had promised them that Jesus would be taken with ease. But the soldiers experienced a strange reluctance to arrest the man before them. Obviously, it would have been easy for him to have evaded capture if he desired to do so.

Judas, probably realising this, tried to fortify those with him. He had arranged that when they came upon the company of the Lord and the apostles, he would step forward and kiss Jesus so that the temple guard would know which one of them was he. Then, without any fuss, they were to take him captive and lead the way.

Judas made these arrangements, probably because he recalled previous occasions when the Lord had easily evaded capture (Lk.

4:30; Jn. 8:59), and was determined that such would not happen this time.

But the encounter had not gone as he expected. Instead of the Lord attempting to evade capture, there he was, standing out before the apostles, and inviting the soldiers to arrest him! Instead of them arresting him, there, some of them, were prostrate on the ground!

Judas stood looking at the Lord as though transfixed. He realised that something must be done to complete the work he had set out to do, and to bring the soldiers out of the feeling of inertia that had overcome them. He recalled the sign he had promised to give them, and which was to act as a command. Whilst everybody stood as though frozen to the spot, he now stepped forward, and greeted the Lord. ***"Hail, master!"*** [rabbi] he said.

And then he tenderly kissed him.

The word that Matthew used to describe it (*katephilesen*) is an intensified form of the usual word for "kiss," and denotes a tender, intimate kiss, such as a forgiven sinner might give the Saviour (Lk. 7:38, 45), a loving father might give a beloved son (Lk. 15:20), or brethren might exchange who have a deep, fraternal regard for each other (Acts 20:37).

The nature of the kiss emphasised the depths of deception and hypocrisy to which Judas had sunk. And yet, how many have betrayed the principles of Christ by such hypocrisy since. They give the Truth the kiss of death. How true are the words of Pro. 27:6, ***"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."***



And how true are the prophetic words of Psa. 55:20-21 in regard to this action of Judas:

*"He hath broken his covenant.
The words of his mouth were smoother than butter,
But war was in his heart;
His words were softer than oil,
Yet were they drawn swords!"*

And now as Jesus turned to Judas, the two leaders of the two groups faced each other: "**Judas**," said the Lord to his erstwhile companion, "*would you betray the Son of man with a kiss? Friend, why are you here?*"*

Those words become ominous when considered in the light of the title that the Lord used to describe himself. For "Son of Man" is his title as judge (Jn. 5:27), and Jesus had already described the awful fate of the one who would betray him (Lk. 17:1-2).

The Arrest
(Mat. 26:46-52;
Mk. 14:46-49;
Lk. 22:49-54;
Jn. 18:10-12)

Judas' action encouraged the guard. They overcame their momentary fear and, moving forward, laid hands on Jesus and seized him. It also alerted the apostles. They could see what would happen, and perhaps calling to mind their earlier boasts, they made ready to

resist the attack. Moving closer to Jesus, whom the soldiers had seized, they enquired: "*Lord, shall we strike with the sword?*"

They had brought with them the two small swords to which they had made reference when in the Upper Room. Peter held one of them, and his natural belligerency now asserted itself. Rushing to his Master's side and wildly swinging the sword, he cut off the right ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest.

It was a foolish thing to have done, and fraught with the gravest danger. Resistance by eleven men, against such a large company of soldiers was completely hopeless, and could have brought about the slaughter of all the apostles. It was the kind of action which could

* The word "friend" is from the Greek *hetaire*, comrade, companion, associate, and is not a term of endearment. The Lord's use of the term would serve to remind Judas of his previous association with the Lord, a companionship that he had now destroyed forever. It also recalls the words of Psa. 55:12, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." The RSV, in a footnote, gives an alternative rendition of Christ's words: "Friend, do that for which you have come!" This seems much to be preferred, and far more significant than the rendering of the AV. Christ recognised that Judas was beyond redemption, and urged him to complete the work begun in accordance with the prophetic scriptures.

have incited the retaliation of the Roman guard, who would have had no compunction in ruthlessly cutting down the small group of men before them.

Moreover, it was contrary to the express teaching of Christ: ***“No more of that!”*** he commanded Peter. He stretched forth his hand to Malchus, and by his healing touch he restored the ear. Afterwards he soundly rebuked Peter. ***“Put your sword back into its place,”*** he sternly ordered him. ***“All who draw the sword shall perish with the sword! Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me? (Jn. 18:11). What! do you think I cannot appeal to my Father to furnish me at this moment with over twelve legions of angels? Only, if I requested that, how could the Scriptures be fulfilled — Scriptures that say this must be so?”*** (Mat. 26:53-54).

During the course of his ministry, Jesus had taught his disciples that they must not resist evil, so that Peter’s action was a negation of all that he had heard. It was not the time for military action, but the reverse. They had to stand aside from all such. Why, even in time of war, when Judah would be invaded and Jerusalem surrounded by enemies, they were commanded not to participate, but to flee from the site of battle (Lk. 21:20-21).

The Lord now warned them even more emphatically that his true followers must cease from such action as Peter contemplated. ***“All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword,”*** he warned him. To “perish” is to be eternally lost (Jn. 3:16), and not merely, as has sometimes been suggested, to be slain. The word “with” is *en* in the Greek, and signifies “in the sphere of.” The statement therefore, teaches that those who become involved in war to preserve an order of things destined to be destroyed, will themselves perish in the destruction that awaits these things (cp. Rev. 11:18).

How futile was the action of Peter. The Roman soldiers who were with the temple guard could have overwhelmed the apostles with ease.

Moreover, the Lord did not seek to escape. He was prepared to drink of the cup which the Father had placed in his hands, even though he could have avoided doing so if he wanted. He could have commanded twelve legions of angels in his defence. A legion was made up of ten cohorts (one of which had been sent to arrest him), and comprised a complete army of infantry and cavalry. He could have commanded twelve complete armies of all-powerful angels if he desired: one each for himself and the eleven apostles.

But he did not do so, because his ministry then required his death and he was prepared to submit as a voluntary sacrifice. How else could the prophetic Scriptures be fulfilled?

The healing of the ear of Malchus must have impressed the soldiers with the remarkable powers possessed by the Lord Jesus.

Evidently, for the moment, they were again taken aback, and this gave the Lord opportunity to address the company before him. He could see some of the priests and elders mingling with the temple guards (Lk. 22:52), and turning to them, he asked: ***“Have you come out to arrest me armed with swords and cudgels as though I were a desperate ruffian? Why, day after day, I sat in the temple teaching, and you never seized me. However, this has all happened in fulfilment of the prophetic Scriptures!”***

That was enough! The spell of miracle was broken! Some of the Roman soldiers, with the temple guard, seized Jesus and bound him (Lk. 22:54; Jn. 18:12).

And when the disciples saw this, they all forsook him and fled.

What now of their boasts, that they would go to prison and to death for his sake! It was all forgotten, and as the soldiers converged on the Lord, and showed by their actions that they would forcibly resist any attempt at rescue, and indeed may have threatened to arrest the apostles, they turned on their heels and fled for escape into the shadows of the Garden, and the night beyond. Their action fulfilled prophecy, for the Lord had told them: ***“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me”*** (Jn. 16:32).

Deserted of his friends, the Lord was now surrounded by enemies that hated him.

As the triumphant priests and elders led the bound Saviour away, they imagined that they had him completely in their power; they little knew that Almighty God was with him, and that they would have to pay an awful price for the liberty that they had taken with the Son of God.



As they led the Lord Jesus away, they saw a young man following him, clad with a linen cloth about his body. It was Mark, at whose house* the Lord Jesus had probably conducted the Passover memorials. The soldiers went to seize the young man, but he eluded their grasp, slipping out of the linen cloth of which they had taken hold, and running away from them naked.

* The name of the young man is not given. The incident is only recorded by Mark (Mk. 14:51), and that fact suggests that it was the author of the Gospel record himself.

Chapter 2

ACCUSED OF BLASPHEMY BY THE JEWS

In a remarkable parallelism, the events of the closing hours of the Lord's ministry are set in series of threes. Three times Peter boasted that he would never deny the Lord; three times the Lord warned him that he would do so; three apostles were set apart to watch whilst the Lord three times prayed to the Father; three times Christ stood trial before the Jews; three times he did so before the Gentiles; three times the accusation was placed over his stake in three languages. The number three is significant in Scripture, and speaks of the principle of death and resurrection. The three parallels surround the situation now facing the Master.

A careful consideration of the Gospel records reveals that he was brought before the Jews on three occasions: first before Annas, who was father-in-law to the high priest and a politician of considerable influence; second, before Caiaphas the high priest; third, before the Sanhedrin. This all took place in the early hours and darkness of the morning. Assuming the Lord was arrested about 1am, he would have been then taken to the house of Annas for cross-examination, then to the palace of Caiaphas, and then, in the first hours of daylight, before the full assembly of the Sanhedrin. It was when the Lord was in the Palace of Caiaphas that Peter denied him, and full of remorse hurried outside where, possibly, the first streaks of dawn could be seen.

THE soldiers hurried the Lord back across the Kidron Valley, and up its western slope into the city of Jerusalem. It was early in the morning, perhaps 1am, and the city was still sleeping. They moved swiftly through the silent streets to the western side of the city where was situated the palace of the high priest.

Brought Before

Annas (Jn. 18:12-14)

The palace was occupied by Annas as well as Caiaphas. Annas was father-in-law to the high priest, and was a most unscrupulous politician. His name is a Greek form of Hananiah, *Yahweh has been gracious*; but he really knew nothing of grace, nor of Yahweh. He was an astute and powerful ecclesiastical Statesman, a Sadducee, who did not believe in the resurrection, and considered the doctrine of expediency to be the highest form of religion. He was therefore prepared to compromise on every issue, so long as his policy prevailed.

He was one time high priest, being appointed to that position by Quirinius, governor of Syria, about AD7, and deposed by the procurator of Judea, Valerius Gratus, about AD14. He was succeeded by Ismael Ben Phabi, then by his son Eleazar, AD16, then by his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, AD18-36. But although he was no longer officiating high priest, Annas was still extremely influential, so that the title was still used in regard to him (Lk. 3:2; Acts 4:6). Caiaphas, though actual high priest, deferred to his powerful father-in-law. After Caiaphas, four other sons of Annas held the position of high priest, the last of whom, another Annas (AD62) put James to death.

Meanwhile, the title of high priest was retained by Annas because he continued to exercise the authority as though he actually held the position. He dwelt in portion of the high priest's palace, though in a different part from that occupied by Caiaphas. The high priest's house or palace, was an elaborate building with many apartments, built round a central courtyard.

Bound and surrounded with soldiers, the Lord was marched into this huge building, through the central courtyard, and led into the chamber where Annas was awaiting him. Having delivered their charge, the Roman guard returned to the Castle of Antonia, whilst the temple guard returned to the courtyard, and there kindled a fire for warmth (Lk. 22:55), awaiting further instructions.

The purpose of the preliminary trial before Annas was to endeavour to extract some incriminating evidence against the Lord, pending the more formal investigation before Caiaphas. It was all highly illegal, for actually no case should have been pressed against Jesus without a formal charge supplemented by a witness. None of this had been done. Moreover, it was still night, and, according to Jewish law, the death sentence could not be imposed at that time; it had to await the light of day.

All these considerations played a part in the curious circumstances surrounding the trial of Christ. Time was running short for the Jewish leaders. The Passover would be celebrated in a few hours' time, and the execution of the Lord had to be hurried through before then. Before daybreak, they had to establish a case against Jesus with witnesses; then, to conform to their laws, at daybreak, they had to bring him before the council of the Sanhedrin to procure the death sentence; finally, they had to hurry him off to Pilate, to secure the sentence of death by crucifixion.

The preliminary trial by Annas, therefore, was important. If he could obtain evidence against Jesus, it would save valuable time. Jesus could then be brought before Caiaphas and the elders of the Jews in order to quickly confirm the case against him, and supplement it with witnesses.

For, as yet, no case against the Lord had been established.

Meanwhile, another drama was taking place in the courtroom, of which Peter was the principal. He, too, was on trial.

Peter's First Denial of Christ

**(Mat. 26:69-70;
Mk. 14:54, 66-68;
Lk. 22:54-57;
Jn. 18:15-18)**

The apostles had fled when Jesus had been arrested, forgetting their earlier boasts, in which they had declared their determination to go to prison and to death for his sake. But, after a while, at least two of them returned that they might see what happened to the Lord. They were Peter and John. They followed the Lord and the guard of soldiers as they marched through the streets of Jerusalem toward the palace of the high priest. They saw the guard move in through the doors to the court inside, which immediately closed upon them.

John followed them. He was known to the high priest (Jn. 18:15), and was granted entrance by the servants of the palace, who recognised him.

Not so Peter. He was left standing outside.

As soon as John realised that, he returned, and explaining to the maid that had charge of the door, that Peter was his close friend, he gained access for him and conducted him into the court as well.

There they separated. John moved quickly through the court in order that he might keep Jesus in view, for the Lord had been taken into a separate chamber. On the other hand, Peter remained in the court. His mind was in a quandary. He was deeply disappointed and distressed at the turn of events. He had been so certain that the kingdom would be set up in triumph, but now it was obvious that the Lord's enemies controlled the situation. Moreover, Jesus had not permitted him to resist the arrest. Even when Peter had used the sword in loyalty to his Lord, Jesus had turned on him with words of rebuke. It was obvious that Jesus was going to capitulate to the demands of the Jews.

So Peter must have thought, as he despondently waited in the court. He felt terribly distressed and ill at ease, particularly among the temple guard that stood around him. What if they identified him with Jesus! Best to allay any such suspicion by mixing with them. Peter sat down among the servants as though he was one of them (Mk. 14:54). Externally, at least, like Judas before him, he had taken up his position with the enemies of the Lord; and there he sat "to see the end!" (Mat. 26:58).

The maid who kept the door saw him there. "Are not you also one of this man's disciples?" she asked. She might have been despatched to subpoena a witness against Jesus; one who knew him and could testify to his claims.

It was an awkward situation. The soldiers around Peter looked at

him curiously. If he were one of the disciples of the accused, what was he doing in that place? Should he not also be arrested? Peter felt his position keenly. He did not know what to say. Certainly he did not want to confess that he was a follower of Jesus, the man who had been led bound through the court, and whom he was now convinced would be condemned by the Jews. Nor did he want to betray Jesus, which might happen if he was required to testify in the court. Trapped by the question, and impetuous as ever, the lie sprang to his lips: "*I am not!*"

Now he felt even more tense and restless. He knew that he should not have lied as he did. He felt sick at heart, and ill at ease. He stood up from the seat upon which he was sitting (cp. Lk. 22:55; Jn. 18:16, 25), as the people around him observed his unease and nervousness.

Then, because he could not stand their curious looks any longer, he moved out toward the door that he might be on his own (Mk. 14:68).*

Annas Questions Jesus Messengers were swiftly sent through Jerusalem, advising the chief priests, elders and scribes that Jesus had been taken into custody, and inviting them to gather at the Palace of Caiaphas in order that an indictable charge might be formally laid against him (Mk. 14:53).

Meanwhile, Jesus was interrogated by Annas (Jn. 18:13), the most unscrupulous, ecclesiastical politician of his day. He was a man who retained all the authority of the high priest (so that he is given that title in the narrative — Lk. 3:2; Jn. 18:13, 19-24; Acts 4:6), though, in fact, he had been deposed from that office.

He first enquired concerning the disciples of Jesus, and then his doctrine (Jn. 18:19). He evidently desired these details, so that he would be able to move against the apostles after the Lord had been silenced.

That was a most illegal act on his part. A case in Jewish courts was determined by witnesses (Deu. 17:6-7; 19:15). They laid the charge, and then were subjected to questioning. No evidence was permitted unless it was corroborated: "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

Annas, however, reversed the process; he questioned Jesus to obtain evidence against him. Although to some questions Jesus

* Mk. 14:68 states that at this point "the cock crew." This, however, is omitted by the Diaglott, RSV, and other renditions, though retained by some texts. If retained, it would represent the first cock-crowing, for Matthew likewise records that after the third denial, the cock crew (Mat. 26:74). If Mark's reference is retained, it would indicate that it was the first of the trumpet calls, and the time was 12 o'clock, which, however, seems too early, in view of all that had taken place.

remained silent, he now replied so as not to incriminate his disciples. He constantly spoke in the first person, singular: "I," assuming full responsibility for all that had been said and done. He did so as the Good Shepherd to protect his disciples, the flock in his care.

As to his doctrine, he reminded Annas that he had openly spoken in the temple, so that if he were guilty of wrong teaching, or of blasphemy, it should not be difficult to proffer a charge against him.

"I have spoken openly to the world," he declared. "I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews gather; I have said nothing in secret. Why ask me? Ask my hearers what I have said to them; they know what I said!"

The Lord's reply was proper in every respect. But it showed how improper, how illegal, was the action of Annas. The Lord called upon Annas to produce his witnesses, as the Law required. "Ask them," he declared.

His words probably made the *de facto* high priest highly embarrassed. He was at loss for words. One of the officers standing by noticed this, and brutally slapping Jesus across the face, taunted him: ***"Is that how you answer the high priest?"***

The Lord meekly, but with courage, replied: ***"If I have said anything wrong, prove it; if I have said what was true, why strike me?"*** The blow the Lord received was the first of many that were to be showered upon him. The shrinking fear that the temple guard had shown in the Garden (Jn. 18:6) had long been overcome, and from now on, they did not hesitate to heap upon the Lord the most shameful indignities, and most terrible cruelties. Prophecy was being fulfilled. Isaiah had predicted: "I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isa. 50:6). Micah also had prophesied: "They shall smite the judge [Ruler; RSV] of Israel with a rod upon the cheek" (Mic. 5:1; see Jn. 18:22, mg.).

The blow struck by the cowardly officer in the chamber of Annas set the pattern of terrible things to follow.

Jesus Before Caiaphas Annas had been unable to extract any incriminating evidence from Jesus, and therefore sent him to Caiaphas,* that the high priest

(Mat. 26:59-68;
Mk. 14:53-65;

* Jn. 18:24 records: "Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas" which would suggest that the interrogation of the previous verses had been by Caiaphas to whom Annas had already sent Jesus. But that was not so. The RV renders in the present tense: "Annas, therefore, sent him bound unto Caiaphas." The cross-examination of the previous verses was conducted by Annas who having failed to extract incriminating evidence from Jesus, sent him to Caiaphas and the council, which had by then assembled in another part of the palace.

Lk. 22:54, 63-65
Jn. 18:24)

might arrange to do so. The Lord was sent bound, back through the courtyard, to the portion of the palace set aside for the

appointed high priest.

But what were the council to do with him? Its members had no charge that they could level against him, or, if they did, no witnesses to substantiate it. And though their proceedings were highly irregular, they felt the need of a certain degree of legality to justify their criminal action. Their attitude fulfilled the words of Psa. 64:3-6,

*They whet their tongue like a sword,
And bend their bows to shoot their arrows,
Even bitter words:
That they may shoot in secret at the perfect:
Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
They encourage themselves in an evil matter;
They commune of laying snares privily;
They say, Who shall see them?
They search out iniquities;
They accomplish a diligent search;
Both the inward thought of every one of them,
And, the heart, is deep.*

It was also predicted that "false witnesses would rise up against him" (Psa. 27:12), and they did! "They laid to my charge things that I knew not. They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul" (Psa. 35:11).

These words were fulfilled in the chamber of Caiaphas. When Annas reported that he could find no evidence against Jesus, the assembled priests and elders sought for it among those gathered together. They desired a charge sufficiently serious to procure the death sentence against Jesus (Mat. 26:59). But though a number of false witnesses came forward, their evidence was not satisfactory, for it did not agree.

The Law demanded the evidence of two witnesses to secure a conviction (Deu. 19:15; 17:6), and, of course, the case against Jesus had to be legally sound! The Lord stood a silent witness to the trumped-up charges being levelled against him, saddened beyond measure by this false attitude manifested by a people who possessed such privileges before Yahweh, and who at that very time were preparing to celebrate the Passover: a remembrance of their redemption from the oppression of Egypt.

In the shadow of that great memorial of deliverance, they were preparing to kill this prophet of Nazareth, their antitypical Deliverer, the true Passover Lamb!

At last the council produced two special witnesses. They had been carefully schooled in what they had to say. There was not any doubt that they would agree in their testimony, for it was simple and

straightforward.

They stood up to give their evidence concerning the charge of blasphemy against the temple, which the Jews revered as a holy place.

“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands’,” they declared.

It was based upon a statement that Jesus had made in the court of the temple some three years earlier (Jn. 2:19), though the wording and intent of the statement were hopelessly distorted.

Their bringing forward in evidence words so old as those, shows how carefully the teaching of Jesus had been recorded and examined by his enemies, to see if they could obtain evidence against him.

But to the frustration of the council, even the testimony of these two witnesses did not agree. Why did not their evidence agree?

Though we are not specifically told, there are implications which suggest the cause. There were at least two Pharisees (and probably more) in the council who sternly disapproved of the action being taken against Jesus. They were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. On several occasions in the past (e.g., Jn. 7:50-52), Nicodemus had stood up in the defence of Jesus against his fellow Jews, and doubtless did so on this occasion. Of Joseph, it is recorded, that he was “a good man, and a just” and “consented not to the counsel and deed of them” (Lk. 23:50-51). He therefore was in the inner counsels of the Pharisees, but disapproved of this action against an innocent man.

They were both highly intelligent and astute Pharisees, and more than a match for the witnesses who stood up to testify against Jesus. Evidently they subjected the witnesses to close cross-examination, with the result that the evidence submitted did not agree, and therefore their witness was not sustained.

Even the two carefully schooled witnesses were unable to maintain their testimony in the face of the skilful, penetrating questioning of these two highly-placed Pharisees. So the evidence against Jesus collapsed, and the council was in a quandary.

What was to be done?

It was left to Caiaphas to bring out evidence that he had, but which he had determined to use only as a last resource as it required the use of their tradition. As all else had failed, so it was necessary for him to now use the means that he had kept in reserve.



A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels

JUDAS THADDAEUS: DISCIPLE WITH A QUESTION

Little is known of Judas. He is mentioned as the brother (or son — see vol. 7, page 52) of James (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13), and by his surname of Thaddaeus in the two gospel records (Mat. 10:3; Mk. 3:18). Matthew uses the alternate name of Lebbaeus, but this is eliminated in the R.V., as not occurring in the original manuscripts. Judas is distinguished from his namesake, Judas Iscariot, in Jn. 14:22, where the only record of his utterances is contained. On that occasion, Judas Iscariot had left the Upper Room in Jerusalem, and the Lord was endeavouring to strengthen the Eleven against the trials developing. Being unable to understand the Lord's comments concerning the purpose of his ministry, Judas questioned him, and received an explanation (v. 24) and a promise (v. 26).

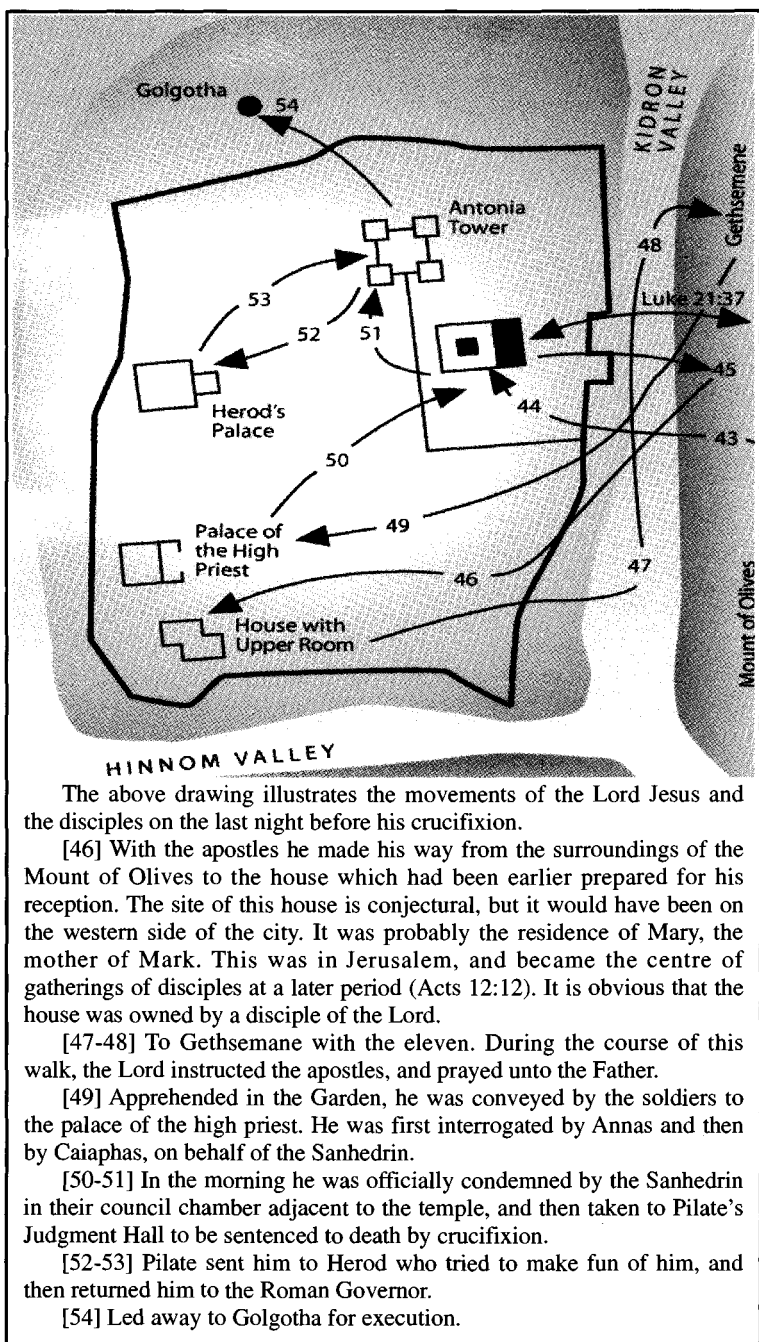
As the Lord and his disciples moved from the room into the darkness outside, so the record similarly closes over the life of Judas.

LAZARUS: A SILENT WITNESS

His name means *El hath helped*, and he was a beloved friend of Jesus. The Lord delighted to visit the house of Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, at Bethany. Though he was the subject of the greatest and most startling miracle of the gospel records, Lazarus' voice is not heard, nor his life recorded! He is revealed only as a sick man who died and was raised again. But this brief incident played an important part in the drama of the Lord's life. The miracle caused the leaders of Jewry to determine finally that Jesus must die (Jn. 11:47-51), and as the living Lazarus proved incontestable evidence of the miracle, the leaders decided that he must die as well (Jn. 12:9-10).

Jesus visited the home of Lazarus when he arrived at Jerusalem for the Passover, but in view of the rising antagonism of the leaders to both him and Lazarus, he evidently moved therefrom to reside elsewhere on the Mount of Olives during his remaining days at Jerusalem. To have remained with Lazarus, Mary and Martha would have placed their lives in jeopardy.

With the statement of the leaders' opposition to Lazarus, the record of his life ceases, and this quiet man passes from the scene. He awaits the coming resurrection, of which the miracle was a token, and the glory of immortality in the kingdom of his friend.



Chapter 3

JESUS CONDEMNED BY THE SANHEDRIN

The carefully-schooled false witnesses who had been hired to convict Jesus had proved completely unreliable in the face of cross-examination. The case against the Lord, therefore, had either to be dropped, or fresh evidence advanced to force a conviction. The latter course was quite illegal as far as Jewish law was concerned, but it was the only means left to the Lord's adversaries if they were to succeed in their scheming. In desperation, the high priest adopted it.

THE atmosphere in the council-chamber of the Sanhedrin was tense. The witnesses had proved completely unreliable, so that Jesus did not deign to reply to the charges laid against him on such flimsy, contradictory evidence. His silence was frustrating to his accusers. If he would only speak, they might be able to convict him out of his own mouth! But under Jewish law it was not necessary for the accused to speak or testify in evidence on his own behalf. The case against him must first be established by witnesses whose evidence agreed, before he need speak at all in his defence.

So Jesus remained silent.

**The High Priest
Questions Jesus
(Mat. 26:62-66;
Mk. 14:60-64)**

His attitude angered the high priest. He rose out of his seat in mingled exasperation and pretended indignation. Turning to Jesus, he demanded: "*Have you no reply to make?*"

What of this evidence against you?" He adopted an attitude of disgust at the blasphemy allegedly uttered by Jesus against the Temple of Yahweh, but his indignation was assumed, and his pose theatrical. His real object was to provoke Jesus into saying something incriminating, so that a charge could be successfully proffered against him. But he failed completely, for the Lord calmly faced him, and remained silent. The Master was in full control of the situation, and refused to be incited to utter anything injudicious.

It was a frustrating moment for his enemies. According to the Mosaic Law, the case should have been dropped at that point, for no witnesses remained to testify against the accused.

Unlike English law, Jewish law required witnesses to state the charge levelled against the accused, and to provide corroborated evidence of its validity. In Gentile law, a charge can be pressed

against a person with or without witnesses to support it. But the divine Law of Israel demanded: *"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established"* (Deu. 19:15).

The witnesses having proved contradictory, there was no case for the Lord to answer, and he should have been released. Then, as the Law of Moses demanded, the false witnesses themselves should have been dealt with by the court, and should have been treated *"as they had thought to have done unto their brother"* (Deu. 19:16-21).

The Sanhedrin, however, neglected to proceed on that basis.

And still no formal charge had been proffered against Jesus!

The whole proceedings were most illegal, and the authors of the action taken, were condemned by the very law they claimed to uphold.

It was a moment of extreme frustration for Caiaphas. He remained standing before the Lord in pretended horror at his supposed blasphemy. Before him were the crestfallen witnesses, self-condemned by the fact that their evidence had been shown false, whilst he observed that the Sanhedrin itself was divided between those whose hatred of the Lord blinded their eyes to his innocence, and others, such as Nicodemus and Joseph, who were very deeply concerned at the obvious hypocrisy of their fellow-members.

In that tense and divided atmosphere the Lord remained quiet, calm, thoughtful, the master of the whole situation.

Caiaphas had failed to extort a reply from him. But he had not yet exhausted all his resources. He had in his possession a secret that he was convinced would place Jesus in his power. It was one that had been disclosed to him by Judas Iscariot. Judas had attended an emergency council called by the chief priests and scribes, at which they had planned how they might destroy Jesus. After every idea had proved abortive, Judas had revealed his secret. It caused jubilation among the conspirators, and they planned to take Jesus if Judas would arrange to inform them when the Lord would be on his own.

Luke, alone, records the circumstances: *"And he [Judas] promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude"* (Lk. 22:6).

This statement, as it appears in the Authorised Version, reads strangely, because Judas, at an earlier meeting with the Jewish leaders, already had agreed to betray the Lord, and was in secret communication with them. The word "promised," however, is translated from the Greek *exomologesen*, and should be rendered "confessed," as it is elsewhere (see Acts 19:18; Rom. 14:11; 15:9; Phil. 2:11, etc.); and the word "betray" signifies "to deliver him up," and not merely to verbally betray him.

So what Luke recorded was that Judas “confessed” something to the priests, and then agreed “to deliver Jesus up” when the opportunity presented itself to do so “in the absence of the multitude.” Luke also states that the priests “were glad” at the attitude adopted by Judas, and doubtless also at the information he was prepared to give them.

What did Judas confess to the priests that caused them to rejoice, and to feel that once they arrested Jesus they would be able to successfully charge him with an indictable offence?

It was a secret that Judas possessed along with the other apostles. When Jesus was in Caesarea Philippi, near Galilee, he had asked the apostles as to whom they considered him to be, and Peter had declared: *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!”* Notice the constant use of the definite article: “the.” The declaration was bold and definite, and the evidence suggests that Peter used the divine Name on that occasion: *“Thou art the Son of the living Yahweh!”* It was undoubtedly the truth; but, as Jesus warned, it was not a doctrine to be broadcast until the resurrection of the Lord would demonstrate its veracity beyond all doubt. Meanwhile to proclaim such would be considered blasphemous, and likely to incur a charge of blasphemy with its penalty of death by stoning. Jews freely acknowledged that the title “a son of Elohim” could apply to outstanding men in Israel, but not *“the son of the living Yahweh!”*

Therefore, whilst Jesus acknowledged the truth of what Peter had said, and told him that such, indeed, was the revelation of the Father, he strictly warned that he should not then openly teach it (Mat. 16:16-20). It would be extremely dangerous to do so.

This secret Judas possessed in common with the others; and it was this, evidently, that he disclosed to the priests when they called an emergency council to see what they could do to restrain the Lord Jesus.

Where is the evidence to suggest that this was what Judas confessed to the priests?

It is found in the very question that Caiaphas put to Jesus in order to incriminate him, after all other efforts had failed. Caiaphas had not used this information earlier, because he and his fellow-conspirators had tried to preserve the fiction of a legal trial, and had hoped to bring a charge of blasphemy against Jesus on the evidence of the false witnesses. That had failed, and the time had come to use the means that remained with Caiaphas, or to release Jesus.

But would Jesus speak, and so incriminate himself?

He had refused to do so to that moment.

The high priest determined that he would compel him to do so by using the Jewish Oath of Adjuration to extort a confession from the Lord.

This, likewise, was quite irregular and illegal. True, the Law permitted one to extract evidence on oath from a witness (Lev. 5:1), but not from a principal. But illegalities did not deter Caiaphas. He had Jesus in his power, and was not going to let him go.

Dramatically he addressed Jesus. ***"I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you be the Christ, the son of God,"*** he confidently demanded.

One cannot exaggerate the extreme tension that must have gripped everybody present. How will he answer? Will he dare say, "Yes," and by it commit the crime of blasphemy, the evidence for which they are waiting? Or will he say, "No," and by this denial save himself, but destroy his cause?

The high priest waits, hopes fiercely for the "Yes," for he wants the death of Jesus. And what he expects happens: Jesus answered: ***"You have said,"*** which is equivalent to saying: "Yes, I am!"

That answer would have been quite sufficient in itself to earn him the sentence of death, but Jesus solemnly added two assertions about himself which were considered no less blasphemous in the ears of his judges. He continued: ***"Moreover [see Diaglott] I say unto you: Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven!"***

Thus Jesus' judges heard what they considered to be a threefold blasphemy, for he had declared:

1. *He was the Son of Yahweh;*
2. *He would ascend to heaven to sit at the right hand of Yahweh;*
3. *He would return to reign on earth as Yahweh's representative.*

It was all the evidence the high priest wanted, and more. In assumed horror at the supposed awful blasphemy of the prisoner, Caiaphas dramatically tore his robes, and turning to the assembled judges, cried: ***"He has uttered blasphemy! Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your judgment?"***

And from their seats, the members of the Sanhedrin, hating Jesus because of all for which he stood, and for the scathing public indictment he had poured out upon them in his ministry, in one terrible shout for vengeance and for blood, answered: ***"He is guilty of death!"***

Jesus' Answer Considered

How amazing the Lord's words must have sounded coming from one such as Jesus was then. He, a manacled, undignified prisoner, facing an unjust judge who had previously declared his intention of putting the Lord to death whether he was innocent or guilty (Jn. 11:49-50), could thus compare his present state of humiliation with the wonderful glory that awaited him when he ascended into heaven to appear before the greatest Judge of all (Dan. 7:13), and later to

return to himself judge on Yahweh's behalf! (Mat. 16:27).

It was an answer of defiance. The Lord declared that he would rise triumphant from the death to which they would consign him, to meet his chief adversary, Caiaphas, at a time when he would act the part of judge; for "Son of Man" is the Messiah's title as judge (Jn. 5:27). As a Sadducee, Caiaphas did not believe in the resurrection, so that Jesus was now virtually flinging this doctrine in his face, and proclaiming to all and sundry (and the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin did believe in the resurrection) that Caiaphas would be raised to die!

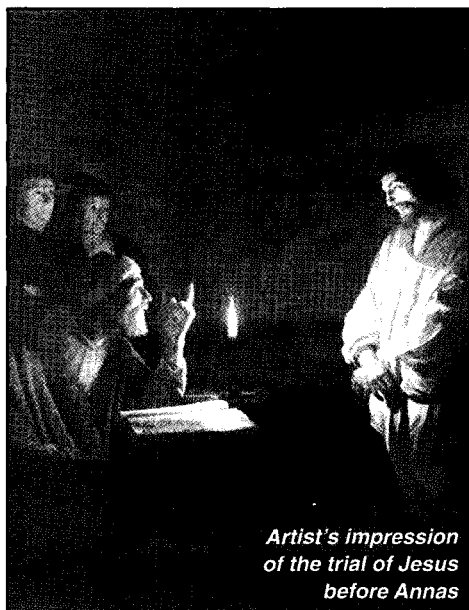
In his reply, Jesus had quoted from two significant passages of Scripture, both of which relate to the Messiah. The first is Psa. 110:1, "*Yahweh said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*" The second is Dan. 7:13, "*One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven.*" Drawing from these two passages of Scripture, the Lord proclaimed his conviction in his ultimate triumph no matter what they might do to him.

But how could he claim that Caiaphas will "see" these two Messianic prophecies fulfilled in him? The word "see" is a translation of the Greek word *opsomai*, and signifies not so much the action of personally seeing, as of truly comprehending and knowing.

Moreover, the verb is in the future, passive tense, indicating something that would take place in the future without the help of the one viewing it! It suggests that those to whom the Lord spoke would be helpless, passive observers of the fulfilment of these prophecies in him.

The first prophecy came to pass after the Lord ascended into heaven; the second one will be fulfilled at his second coming. After the Lord had been raised from the dead, he told his disciples that "all power" had been given unto him, both in heaven and in earth (Mat. 28:18).

They shortly afterwards experienced the effect of that power. The Holy Spirit was given unto them, and through their preaching ecclesias were established in Palestine and beyond, throughout the Roman



*Artist's impression
of the trial of Jesus
before Annas*

Empire. In this, the Sanhedrin saw evidence of the heavenly power of the One they thought they had put to death for ever. They witnessed miracles (see Acts 5:23-29), so much so, that one wise counsellor in their midst urged that persecution against the Christians should cease, lest the Jews find themselves fighting against God (vv. 34-39).

Though Caiaphas and his fellows of the Sanhedrin could not see the Lord Jesus seated at the right hand of power, they could perceive the influence that was emanating from that source (Acts 7:56). Later, in AD70, they felt the Lord's power more directly, for then he allowed the Roman armies to pour over the borders of the land, and lay Judah in the dust.

Caiaphas will also witness the Lord in glory when he comes the second time, and is seen in company with his angels, and ultimately, with the glorified saints. On an earlier occasion, Jesus had declared that many of those who knowingly rejected him at that time would be raised to judgment in the future Age (Lk. 13:28-29). Caiaphas will be among their number. He will witness the glory of the manacled prisoner that stood before him when power was in his hands. His judgment and rejection in that day will be an object lesson to all who heed it, that the teaching and authority of Yahweh cannot be spurned with impunity. The rejected, in that age, will, by their very rejection, reveal unto the world at large, the value of accepting the teaching and decrees of the Son of Man who will have returned to rule over the nations.

**Jesus is Mocked
by the Guard
(Mat. 26:67-68;
Mk. 14:65;
Lk. 22:63-65)**

Caiaphas had asked the Sanhedrin for a vote by acclamation, and not by formal count. The reason being that this was but a preliminary hearing of the case, whilst the formal court would meet early in the morning. The Jewish oral law demanded that a sentence of

death must not be proclaimed during sundown, and whilst the Jewish leaders were determined that Jesus must die whether innocent or guilty, they yet observed a hypocritical scrupulosity in their consideration of these unimportant details. Their attitude toward Jesus, which they would justify on the score of expediency, shows how blind flesh can become to its own shortcomings.

Therefore, once it had been determined that Jesus was guilty of death, the court adjourned until daybreak, when it was arranged to meet again to officially condemn him to death.

Meanwhile, Jesus was given into the hands of the temple guard. These soldiers had lost their earlier fear (Jn. 18:6), and now imitated the leaders in their hatred of the lowly Nazarene.

They began to mock him and to beat him. Some came up to him, and insolently gathering spittle in their mouths, spat the filthy

contents into his face. But not a word of anger came from the lips of the Lord. With tremendous will-power he ignored those who were baiting him, and with a silent prayer, "committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1Pet. 2:23).

His passive non-resistance angered the cowardly guard. One bully clenched his fist,* and brutally struck the Lord on the face. Others followed and did likewise; some slapped him with the palms of their hands. The Lord was knocked from one to the other, surrounded by a circle of laughing, jeering Jewish soldiers; men who were appointed to guard the Sanctuary of Yahweh; yet failed to recognise that there was one greater than the temple in their midst.

After a while, they tired of this sport, and tried to think up new ways of amusing themselves.

He claimed to be Christ the prophet, did he? So they took hold of him, and roughly binding his eyes so that he could not see, they struck him on the face, inviting him to prophesy who had done it!

"Prophecy to us, you Christ!" they exclaimed. "Who was it that struck you?"

How brave are men when their enemy is helpless before them! These men had fallen over backwards when they were face to face with Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane! Now that they felt they had the mastery over the Lord, they laughed and jeered as they spat and struck. Their portrait had been drawn in the Messianic Psalm: "*In mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not [he was blindfolded, and could not see them]; they did tear me, and ceased not; as hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. Lord, how long wilt Thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions...*" (Psa. 35:15-17).

The answer to this prayer, and the terrible judgment that would fall upon the nation that permitted such things to take place, had been foretold by Isaiah: "*Now therefore be you not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord Yahweh of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth*" (Isa. 28:22). That "consummation" would take place in AD70, when, in fulfilment of the warning parable of the Lord, the Roman armies would be sent to "destroy those murderers, and burn up their city" (Mat. 22:7).

* "They buffeted him" (Mat. 26:67). The Greek word *ekolaphisan* signifies to strike with the fist, from *kolaphos*, the fist. So those cruel bullies began to punch him, a fact that Peter never forgot (see 1Pet. 2:20).

Chapter 4

PETER'S NIGHT OF TRIAL, TUMULT AND TRAGEDY

As Jesus was being treated with the grossest cruelty, and experienced the crudest indignities heaped upon him, an even sadder scene took place in the courtyard of the high priest's palace. There Peter awaited the outcome of the trial. Surrounded by those he considered enemies, and faced with the need to declare himself, Peter denied his Lord on several occasions. The many denials by Peter arrange themselves into three groups. First there was the denial he uttered when he was accosted by the portress after he had been granted entrance into the courtyard (see p. 315). As a result he went out into the porch. Again, after an interval, he was once more approached by another maid with a similar question, and returned to the group at the fire, only to have them, too, join in the accusations. Finally, after an interval of an hour, men again took up the question. Others joined in baiting Peter, as his Galilean brogue betrayed him. It ended with Peter confirming his denial with an oath. At this moment, Jesus was led through the court, and looked on Peter. In anguish of heart Peter rushed out into the early dawn weeping bitterly.

THOUGH Peter could not understand why events had taken the course they had, he still felt that in some way the Jesus whom he loved so much, and had followed so devotedly, would yet assert himself, and by a word, and the manifestation of divine power, would reveal that he were the Messiah, and take command of the situation. At first Peter had wanted to force the coming victory; but he had been rebuked by the Lord for this. Now he was content to sit still and see it break forth.

**Peter's Threefold
Denial of Christ
(Mat. 26:69-75;
Mk. 14:66-72;
Lk. 22:55-62;
Jn. 18:25-27)**

He waited to "see the end" (Mat. 26:58). By that is not meant the end of Jesus, but the outcome of his trials, which, Peter felt, would yet bring victory. At the same time, he was very conscious that he was among enemies. Already he had lied his way out of an awkward situation, and felt sick at heart, and ill at ease, for having done so.

He mooched around the gateway of the courtyard. He was tired and despondent. His earlier confidence had given place to abject fear. His joyful enthusiasm that the kingdom of God would shortly be set

up, was now replaced by bitter doubts concerning Jesus that made him feel miserable.

One of the palace maids was talking to a group nearby, of the exciting events of the night. It was most unusual for the Sanhedrin to be called together at such a time, and for such a purpose, and the servants doubtless were discussing the outcome of the trial. Peter's misery was plainly written on his face for all to see. The maid saw him, and recognised the cause of his downcast countenance.

"This man with the other was with him!" she said.*

One of the bystanders took up the theme: *"You also are one of them!"* he challenged Peter (Lk. 22:58).

The first lie having been uttered by the apostle, the second one came more readily to his lips, and as he saw curious looks cast in his direction, he became nervous, and enforced this second lie with an oath: ***"Man, I am not!"*** he angrily retorted. ***"I do not know the man!"***

Meanwhile, the trial of Jesus proceeded inside the palace. Peter did not know what was happening there. The minutes dragged by interminably. He became more and more sick at heart as the time moved on, and nothing seemed to occur. An hour went by (Lk. 22:59). A group of men passing by spoke to the apostle. Peter muttered a reply. They recognised the notorious accent. One of them turned to him: *"Are you not one of his disciples?"* he asked.

"I am not!" Peter abruptly replied.

"I am sure you are one of them, for your accent betrays you," said another.

"Yes, you are a Galilean," declared a third.

"Man, I do not know what you are saying," exclaimed Peter hysterically.

But among that group of men was one of the servants of the high priest, a relation of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off. He looked carefully at the shrinking apostle: *"Did I not see you in the garden with him?"* he enquired.

Peter again denied it. A lie meant nothing to him now. He felt like a trapped animal, and as he looked upon the circle of hostile faces that surrounded him, he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear in support of his denials of Christ.

"I do not know this man of whom you speak," he asserted.

* This is how her statement (see Lk. 22:56) can be rendered. Perhaps the guard had been talking about John. It seems that Peter might have wanted to avoid being associated with Jesus, in case he was called upon to witness as to the Master's teaching concerning himself, and to identify him as the Prophet of Nazareth — which would have incriminated the apostle and have brought about the conviction of Jesus. For whatever reason, Peter resorted to lies and brought upon himself the distress and shame of his action.

But even as he angrily uttered those words, he heard the crowing of the cock. It was 3am (see footnote p. 337). The noise of the trumpet from the tower of Antonia, which was called the “cock-crowing,” reminded Peter of something; but before he could call it to mind, there was a disturbance in the courtyard. Jesus was being led forth surrounded by the temple guard. The crowd of men around the apostle turned to look at the Lord. They, with Peter, saw the manacles on his wrists, the bruised face where he had been punched and slapped, the filthy spittal running down the noble forehead. But they also saw the grave, thoughtful countenance of the Saviour, reflecting goodness and truth. The kind, understanding eyes of the Lord looked deep into the hunted, shamed eyes of the apostle. There was no anger in them, only sorrow and concern. If Jesus had flashed a fiery look of indignation at the lying apostle, Peter could have borne it; but he saw only a look of anguish and love.

It was too much. At that point, Peter remembered the words that he had been trying to recall when he heard the cock-crowing. He knew now what they meant, for the Lord had said: ***“Before the cock crows twice today, you will deny me three times!”***

Before the astonished gaze of the men in the courtyard, Peter broke down and wept bitterly. Then, blinded by the scalding tears that flowed freely from his eyes, he rushed out into the darkness of the early morn.



Chapter 5

THIRD JEWISH TRIAL: CONDEMNED BY THE SANHEDRIN

The preliminary trials before Annas and Caiaphas were designed to establish a case against Jesus which had not been done at the time of his arrest. He was first taken before Annas who questioned him concerning his doctrine and followers. This, however, did not reveal anything upon which an accusation could be laid against him. Meanwhile, the ordinary council of the Sanhedrin was assembling (Mat. 26:57), and Jesus was subsequently taken into the part of the palace where it met, to be tried before Caiaphas (Mat. 26:59-66; Mk. 14:55-64). This was conducted during the night for it was necessary to hasten matters next day; but, because it was held at night, it did not have any legal validity. Jewish law laid down the principle that a capital case must be heard during the day. Therefore, though Caiaphas had extracted a statement from Jesus that he held to be blasphemous, the legal fiction of justice had to be upheld, and a third trial was ordered before the full council of the Sanhedrin at daybreak. Thus Jesus was tried three times by the Jews (see listing on page 323, and Introductory note, page 342).

THE council chamber of the Sanhedrin was adjacent to the temple itself. The seating, for seventy-one persons, was arranged in a half circle, so that members might be in view of one another. Before them stood the two scribes of the Judges, one to the right and one to the left, and they wrote down the words of them that favoured conviction.

The Sanhedrin

Meets Again

**(Mat. 27:1; Mk. 15:1;
Lk. 22:66-71)**

Before them sat three rows of disciples of the Sanhedrin, and each knew his proper place. If they needed to appoint another as a judge, they appointed him from the first row, and one from the second row came into his place, and so on. The Court called to try Jesus having assembled, the first duty of the high priest was to be sure that each judge possessed the necessary qualifications to adjudicate. The Jewish Oral Law laid it down: "In a capital case only those members of the Sanhedrin who were priests, Levites and Israelites that may give their daughters in marriage unto the priestly stock are qualified" (*Mishna, Sanh.*, iv. 2).

The judges having been selected, the witnesses were then called in as a body and instructed. They were then sent out, and one by one

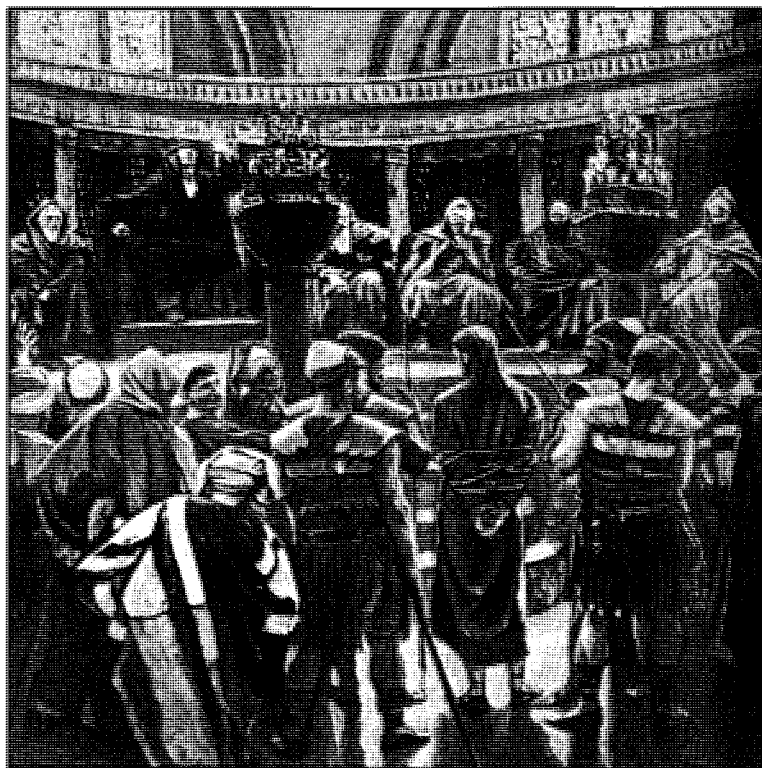
were brought before the Sanhedrin and questioned. If the evidence they submitted was sustained, the judges discussed the matter: a *prima facie* case had been established, after which the accused could be heard in his defence.

In the case of Jesus, none of this had been followed.

The only charge laid against him had resulted from his own confession, and on that evidence according to Jewish law the case should not have continued. A famous Jewish lawyer, Salvador declared: "Our law condemns no one to death on his own confession."

But once a charge of blasphemy had been established such as warranted the death penalty, the court was granted a stay of proceedings for twenty-four hours, to enable the judges to pair off and discuss the case. It was their bounden duty to discuss all possible reasons for an acquittal before considering reasons for a conviction.

None of this had been followed in the case of the Lord; instead, the proceedings had been hurried through with hardly a semblance of legality. The gathering of the Sanhedrin on this occasion, was a large, and probably a stormy meeting. Joseph of Arimathea, at least, "had



not consented to the counsel and deed of them" (Lk. 23:51); and it seems that he was supported by Nicodemus and others. Caiaphas wanted a conviction on the accusation of blasphemy, and an endorsement of the death sentence.

The whole council "held a consultation" (Mk. 15:1), and in view of the extraordinary case, and the proximity of the impending festival of Passover, they decided to waive the normal procedure, and instead of interrogating the witnesses, they would do so directly to the accused. Jesus was brought forward, and the eyes of the whole council in their half-moon-shape tiers of seats looked at the meek and lowly Nazarene before them. Many hours had passed since he had rested; the weariness and agony of all he had gone through showed clearly on his countenance, marred as it was with the brutal blows of the cowardly guard and the filthy condition to which they had reduced him. Illegally, they proceeded to question him: "*If you are the Christ, tell us,*" they demanded.

Instead of doing so, Jesus reminded them that their action was utterly unjust and wrong. "*If I tell you, you will not believe,*" he replied, "*and if I ask you questions, you will not answer!*"

It was his right, as a defendant, to subject any witnesses to cross-examination. They were witnessing against him, and this right should have been granted him by the presiding judges. But, as though he were tired of the whole proceedings, he repeated what he had told Caiaphas, and what he knew they were waiting to hear: "*But shortly the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God!*"

"*Are you the Son of Yahweh,* then?*" they enquired.

"*Yes,*" was the answer.

Jesus had sealed his death warrant. It was the answer that the hypocrites in the Sanhedrin wanted to hear; one which filled their hearts with joy because they had at last forced Jesus to acknowledge that fact, though they carefully set their faces with looks of horror at such apparent blasphemy. It meant nothing that they had illegally called upon the Lord to testify against himself; that contrary to the Law they had not heard the corroborated evidence of witnesses. He was guilty of a capital offence, and that was what they wanted.

"*We do not need any further testimony,*" declared the judges, "*for we have heard it ourselves from his own lips.*"

* Jewish oral law demanded that the Name itself be pronounced before a charge of blasphemy could succeed. The main witness was asked to expressly say what he had heard, and when it was pronounced, the law required the judges to stand on their feet and rend their garments, so that they might not mend them again. That is why Caiaphas acted as he did when Christ acknowledged that he was the Son of the living God. Obviously, though reluctantly, the memorial name of Yahweh must have been used by Caiaphas.

There was, however, one thing further that should have been done in a just trial, but which was not done. The claim advanced by Jesus should have been investigated.

This they were afraid to do!

How could they explain away the miracles that the people acknowledged he had done? How could they match him in his exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures? What if he had advanced the testimony of John, who had openly declared his belief in the Messiahship of Jesus?

They did not want to hear that evidence, so they dispensed with the normal forms of justice, and having proclaimed his guilt, took counsel together as to how they would put him to death.

The Law of Moses prescribed that, in the case of blasphemy, death was to be by stoning; and in such cases, the principal witness had to throw the first stone. The principal witness, on this occasion, was Caiaphas; and the subordinate witnesses, the rest of the Sanhedrin. No other witness had testified successfully against Jesus; no other witnesses had heard his alleged blasphemy.

But death by stoning did not suit the purpose of Caiaphas and his associates; they wanted such a death as would cause such stigma to rest upon Jesus as to convince all that he was not the Messiah. They wanted a death that would remove all his claims to be the promised Redeemer of the nation. A Roman death by crucifixion answered their purpose admirably, for, remarkably, the Mosaic law specifically cursed anybody put to death in such a fashion (Deu. 21:23; Gal. 3:13).

In view of this they had already made arrangements with Pilate. They had represented Jesus as a dangerous political agitator, who was claiming to be king, and therefore should be apprehended and punished. Punishment for such was death by crucifixion, the very death cursed by God in His Law. Pilate had already given his support by sending some of his Roman soldiers to take Jesus in the garden.

It was this diabolically clever scheme that the priests had devised. It would mean that the mother of the Lord, together with his intimate friends and followers, would publicly see that Jesus was repudiated by the nation and cursed by his God.

How could anybody believe in his Messiahship then!

Jubilantly, those murderers made their plans to destroy the Lord.

They took him bound from the council room of the Sanhedrin, which was situated just south of the temple area, and led him to the Praetorium, Pilate's Judgment Room, just north of it (Jn. 18:28). Thus they publicly paraded the Lord in front of the temple where he would have been seen by the onlookers. There would have been many there that day, for the Passover was impending.

And among those that witnessed this act of humiliation imposed upon the Son of God was Judas!

Chapter 6

THE SUICIDE OF JUDAS

(Mat. 27:3-10)

Jesus had warned: "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Mat. 26:24). Christ's words were fulfilled in the sad drama that ultimately brought Judas to a suicide's grave. Tremendous opportunities had been made available to him in that he had been called to be an apostle; great privileges had been extended to him in that he had been permitted to become a close associate of Christ. But he had spurned his opportunities and despised his privileges, with the result that his end was worse than that of those to whom such things are never revealed.

Judas is the Ahithophel of the New Testament. Ahithophel likewise died a suicide's death (2Sam. 17:23). He was originally the trusted associate of David, but he turned traitor at a time when the tide was running against the king, and he had been deposed from his throne and driven into exile. Ahithophel's treachery caused David to pen words that became prophetic of the experiences of the Lord Jesus. David wrote: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Psa. 41:9). "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my companion [R.V.], and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company" (Psa. 55:12-14).

Let us be warned by the mistake of Judas, and so order our lives that we are not found among the betrayers and traitors of the Lord and his truth.

IT was with horror that Judas witnessed the Lord Jesus being led into the direction of Pilate's judgment seat. At last he recognised the dreadful consequences of his vile deed. He had known all along that Jesus would be condemned on a charge of blasphemy, but he did not reckon with what followed: the delivering up to the Romans for the cursed death of crucifixion, of him who had been his companion for three years.

But all this became terrible reality as he saw the Lord being led away in the midst of his captors, and remorse at last seized him.

Matthew records that he “repented himself.” The word in the Greek is *metameletheis*, “to be sorry.” It signifies to have pain of mind rather than change of mind; a change of purpose rather than change of heart. It is a different word from *metanoeo*, rendered “repent” in similar circumstances (see Acts 2:38), and which signifies a change of mind and purpose. Judas was filled with remorse, but not with “godly sorrow” that could lead to true repentance (2Cor. 7:10).

Judas’ Repentance and Act of Despair

Remorse, however, drove him to try and correct what had been done. It must not come to this that Jesus end on the stake of shame. He decided to arrest the course of things. According to Jewish law, if a serious objection is raised against a decision, it must be heard in defence of the condemned, no matter how late it was made. Therefore, a legal loophole remained for Judas. The case could be re-opened, and fresh evidence submitted which could correct the decision that had even then been made.

With this in mind, Judas hurried to where he had placed the thirty pieces of silver that had been paid him, in order that he might return it to the priests, and turn back the clock. This money was as a silent witness to his crime, and he imagined that by destroying the witness, he could be delivered from the crime. But remorse alone governed him, not true and faithful repentance, and so he lacked the faith to really make proper restitution. He put his confidence in his own scheme of a re-opened trial, and not in the strength and mercy of Yahweh.

With the thirty pieces of silver in his hand, he hastened back to the temple, and accosted the chief priests and elders that remained there. “*I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood!*” he blurted. His purpose was to



force the priests and elders to re-open the trial of Jesus. He had a legal right to do so. According to the Jewish Oral Law (*Tract Sand. vi. 1*), a condemned person is allowed to turn back from the way to execution if he claims he has something important to say in his defence, and this he may do even four or five times.

But the plea of Judas failed. The priests and elders were encased in their own conviction that legal right was on their side. They could do without the evidence of Judas. They had heard what they considered words of blasphemy from the lips of Jesus, and, themselves were witnesses of his crime. Coldly, bluntly, they answered Judas with words that stabbed him to the heart: “*What is that to us? See you to that!*” (i.e., You settle that with your own conscience!).

A more unfeeling answer could not have been given. They

claimed that they were innocent, but that he was guilty and would suffer the consequences of his guilt. In their hardness, they scorned his weakness, and left him without hope.

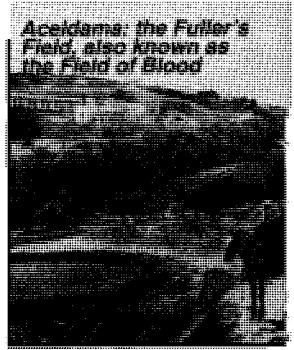
Moreover, they were too busy at the moment to concern themselves with Judas. Time enough later to do that if necessary. And Judas, by his confession of sin, had likewise placed himself in their power as a blasphemer. For what did his words mean when he said: "I have betrayed innocent blood?" They meant that Jesus was what he claimed to be: both Messiah and the Son of Yahweh! If Jesus were a blasphemer, so also was Judas!

The Death of Judas When the priests refused to re-open the case of Jesus, the remorse of Judas turned to despair. He had offered them the thirty pieces of silver, but the paltry sum had been contemptuously refused. And now complete blackness of depression, unrelieved by a single glimmer of hope, settled on the traitor. He looked at the hard faces of the priests and saw by such that there would be no help from that quarter of retracing his steps. He forgot the mercy of Yahweh and the compassion of the one he had betrayed. In a futile act of weak defiance, he flung the few pieces of silver down on the floor of the temple (probably the court of the priests), and with a bowed head and bitter heart, rushed from the Sanctuary of Yahweh, from the city of the great King. He knew that his action had destroyed any immunity that the priests had promised him. In thus flinging down the blood money, he virtually signed his own death warrant, for the bribed informer was a dangerous man to have about once he had repented. Judas knew that the ruthless, hard-hearted priests would ultimately move against him.

But one thing remained for him to do: to take his own life! Filled with bitter remorse, haunted by a realisation of the enormity of his useless crime, completely without hope, Judas rushed from the temple and city, down into and across the Valley of Gehenna, up the steep sides of the overhanging mountain to a field that he possessed on the other side. Ascending some precipitous rock, he unwound his girdle, in which, perhaps, he had carried the pieces of silver, and fastening it to his neck and securing it to some tree, he flung himself from the height. But in his haste, he had failed to secure it properly. The rope broke, and he fell headlong down the cliff on to some rocks below, where his body was torn open, to gruesomely spill its grisly contents into the valley, which afterwards became known as Aceldama or The Field of Blood (Acts 1:16-19).

The shed blood of Jesus would provide a covering for humanity's sins; the shed blood





of Judas provides an object lesson of the hopeless fate of those who refuse the cover offered them in the slain Lamb.

Could Judas have gained forgiveness if he had thrown himself on the mercy of the Father through the Son? He could have, provided his heart was right. Judas, however, had forgotten the words of Jesus. The Lord had declared: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men... whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him..." (Mat. 12:31-32). All, at some time or other, in greater or lesser degree, prove traitor to the requirements of Christ, but there is endless forgiveness in the mercy of God if approached in the right manner. Judas, however, lacked the faith, and probably the humility, to do so.

Even in the terrible end of Judas, Scripture was fulfilled. Compare the manner of his death with this requirement of the Mosaic Law: "The judges shall make diligent inquisition; and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall you do unto him, as he had thought to do unto his brother: so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee" (Deu. 19:18-19). On his own admission, Judas had falsely witnessed against the Lord Jesus. The penalty to be exacted against Christ was crucifixion on a stake; therefore, the penalty to be exacted against Judas should be likewise. In his blind despair, Judas brought upon himself the requirement of God's law, so that justice was upheld.

Judas, however, was not the only one to commit suicide. The nation itself committed that. A little later on, and the people would shout: "His blood be upon us and on our children," and in doing so would commit national suicide. The name Judas is the same as Judah, and the action of the man at this time, dramatised the action of the nation in repudiating its Messiah and therefore its God. The action of Judas in selling the beloved Son of Yahweh to the priests was foreshadowed by that of Judah who led the way in selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites for "twenty pieces of silver" (Gen. 37:26-28). Thus the very name and action of the traitor was typified in the history of the nation.

The Priests and the Blood-Money

And now followed an act of the most blatant, cold-blooded hypocrisy on the part of priests who were prepared to murder an innocent man, whilst, at the same time, seeking to preserve the ceremonial niceties of the laws they established. Time and again, in the trial and execution of the Lord Jesus, they revealed that they were but "blind guides, which strained out gnats, but were prepared to swallow camels" (Mat. 23:24). The grossest illegalities were committed, whilst

scrupulous attention was given to observing unimportant requirements of man-made laws. Before them, on the floor of the court, there rolled the thirty pieces of silver flung down by Judas in the blackness of his despair.

What were they to do with them?

They knew that it was blood-money, and therefore unlawful to be employed for any divine use (see Deu. 23:18). Under normal circumstances, any money gained by improper means, which had been given for divine service was, on proof of the same, returned to the donor, or placed to some public benefit. *"It is not lawful for us to put them into the treasury, for it is the price of blood!"* Little did they realise that they were self-condemned by so speaking; for it was virtually a confession of bribery. Later, they took counsel together as to what should be done with the money, and they purchased what was known as the potter's field, as a burial place for strangers. This was the very field where Judas had committed suicide, so that evidently, after his death, the field was purchased by the priests for a mere pittance, and used for the purpose indicated.

The field is traditionally to the south of Jerusalem, across the valley of Gehenna, and is called the Hill of Evil Counsel.*

Jeremiah's Prophecy Fulfilled Matthew, who so constantly aligned the doings of the Lord with Bible prophecy, observes that in these events there were fulfilled words "spoken" by Jeremiah the prophet. Those words are preserved in the prophecy of Zechariah who dramatised the words earlier spoken by Jeremiah, though not recorded in his book. Zechariah enacted the Jewish leaders' rejection of Jesus, and was paid thirty pieces of silver for so doing. He likewise cast the money down on the ground that it might be paid to the potter (see Zech. 11:13).

Critics of the Bible have challenged the veracity of Matthew's comment by pointing out that the prophecy of the thirty pieces of silver is recorded in the book of Zechariah, but not in that of Jeremiah. Matthew, however, is careful to note that they were words "spoken" by Jeremiah, and not written by him. This is not the only incidence where the Bible quotes the words of prophets which they themselves did not actually record. The teaching of Enoch is referred to by Jude (vv. 14-15) though it is not recorded in the Bible; and Paul refers to sayings of Jesus that are not found in any of the four gospel accounts (Acts 20:35). There are many similarities between the writings of Jeremiah and Zechariah, so that it is suggested that the

* In Acts 1:19 it is called *chorion hainatos* — "the place of blood," relating to the suicide; in Matthew it is *agros hainatos* — "the field of blood," because purchased with blood money. It thus had a double meaning.

latter was greatly influenced by the former. That was evidently the case in regard to these “words” of Jeremiah and referred to by Matthew, which were incorporated into the book of Zechariah.

Jeremiah and the Potter’s Field

In a very detailed manner, all the circumstances of Christ’s life are foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures, so that as he pondered them, guided by the Holy Spirit, he would have set out for himself a biography of his destiny.

Even the purchase of the potter’s field is foreshadowed therein, being enacted by both Jeremiah and Zechariah. Jeremiah warned his people that the Judgment of Yahweh would be poured out upon Judah because the leaders of the nation had filled Jerusalem “with the blood of innocents” (Jer. 19:4), and this was re-echoed by Judas when, filled with remorse, he declared: “I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Mat. 27:4). Jeremiah was told to prophesy that, as a result, the valley of Gehenna would no longer be called such, but would be renamed the “valley of slaughter.” This was the name given to the field purchased with the blood-money flung at the priests by Judas when he rushed out and committed suicide (Mat. 27:8).

The prophet revealed that because of the wickedness of the nation, Yahweh would “make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem” (Jer. 19:7), and instead of the nation and city being delivered out of the hand of the enemy, it would be destroyed thereby, so that the valleys outside the city would be noted for slaughter. This was the lament of the Lord Jesus as he was being led to his death, for he told the mourning women of Judah, not to weep for him, but for the troubles that would engulf the nation in destruction (Lk. 23:27-29). The prophecy was fulfilled when the Romans besieged the city, and Jerusalem was ringed around with stakes on which writhed the bodies of crucified Jews.

Thus the counsel of the leaders in the days of Christ was “made void,” for they hoped, by destroying Jesus, to avoid the Roman invasion (see Jn. 11:50-51).

The Type

Jeremiah was sent to the potter’s field nearby, to the Valley of Gehenna (Jer. 19:2) to enact the tragedy of Judah’s rejection of divine counsel. This was close to the place destined to be associated with the nation’s greatest crime: the betrayal of the Messiah (Mat. 27:3-8).

Innocent Blood

Jeremiah declared: “*You have filled this place with the blood of innocents*” (Jer. 19:4).

Christ warned: “*You are the children of them that killed the prophets*” (Mat. 23:30-31).

Judas lamented: *"I have betrayed the innocent blood!"* (Mat. 27:4)

The priests replied: *"What is that to us!"* (Mat. 27:4).

Gehenna: A Field of Blood

Jeremiah prophesied: *"The days come when Gehenna shall be called 'The Valley of Slaughter'"* (Jer. 19:6).

Christ warned: *"How can ye escape the condemnation of Gehenna"* (Mat. 23:33) — the destruction of AD70.

The people cried: *"His blood be on us, and on our children"* (Mat. 27:25).

The record states: *"That field [in Gehenna] was called, The field of blood"* (Mat. 27:8).

The Counsel of Judah Made Void

Jeremiah prophesied: *"I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies"* (Jer. 19:7).

The leaders reasoned: *"It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not"* (Jn. 11:50).

Christ warned: *"Upon you will come all the righteous blood shed"* (Mat. 23:35). *"Thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee... and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee"* (Lk. 19:41-44).

The Destruction of the City

Jeremiah prophesied: *"I will break this people and this city"* (Jer. 19:11).

Jesus warned: *"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"* (Lk. 21:24).

Divine Judgment Inevitable

Jeremiah prophesied: *"Thus saith Yahweh: Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear My words"* (Jer. 19:15).

Christ warned: *"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"* (Mat. 23:38). *"Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down"* (Mat. 24:2).

Christ's Experiences Foreshadowed

Like the Lord Jesus, Jeremiah taught in the temple (Jer. 19:14), was scourged (Jer. 20:2), imprisoned, buried in the pit (Jer. 38:6), resurrected therefrom (v. 13). In his experiences, he typified the Lord as *"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."*

THE THREE GENTILE TRIALS

Having pronounced Jesus guilty of blasphemy, the Sanhedrin hurried him off to Pontius Pilate, in order that the Romans, too, might condemn him. Thus, both Jews and Gentiles were ranged against the Son of God, so that the whole world was guilty before Yahweh (Rom. 3:19). Significantly, in accordance with the parallelism to which we have referred earlier (see p. 334), there were three Gentile trials to match the three Jewish trials that preceded them. Jesus was first taken to Pilate for a preliminary trial; but before passing sentence, Pilate sent him to Herod the Idumean. Herod, satisfied that Jesus was innocent, but disappointed that he would not perform miracles for him, returned him to Pilate. Pilate again examined him, and acquitted him, but through fear of the Jews, delivered him up for execution by crucifixion.

Why should the Jews, having condemned the Lord to death, send him to Pilate? It is claimed by most that they had no right to impose the death sentence without confirmation by the Roman governor. But that is not so, as Josephus proves, and the Bible reveals. For example, the Jews did not hesitate to stone Stephen to death on a charge of blasphemy (Acts 7:58) without appealing to Rome for permission to do so; and Paul afterwards acknowledged that Stephen was only one of many so treated at the time of the great persecution (Acts 22:4). Why then did the Jewish leaders appeal to Pilate in the case of Christ? Because Caiaphas and his fellow-conspirators did not merely want the death of Jesus, but such a death as would impress all, and particularly his own followers, that they had made a mistake in believing in him as the Messiah. The Roman form of execution was death by crucifixion, whilst the Jewish law cursed everyone who thus hung upon a tree (Gal. 3:13). If Jesus were made a public spectacle in that fashion, no one would accept him as Messiah, for they would see in him one condemned by his fellow-men and cursed by Yahweh! Caiaphas, therefore, cleverly schemed for Jesus to be crucified, and then for his body to be burned in the rubbish heap of Gehenna, where the bodies of the most repulsive criminals were cremated. He succeeded in accomplishing the first, but through the careful vigilance and action of Joseph of Arimathea, who was also a member of the Sanhedrin, he failed in the second.

This was predicted by the prophets. Isaiah 53:9 predicted; "He

made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." The verb "made" is 'nathan' in Hebrew, and signifies "to be given over." Thus the verb has been rendered: "His grave was appointed with the wicked, but he was with a rich man in his death." The Jews appointed his burial place — the rubbish pile in Gehenna into which criminals were usually thrown — but Joseph who had "not consented to the counsel and deed of them" (Lk. 23:51), frustrated their intentions, by pleading with Pilate for the dead body of the Lord and placing it in his own sepulchre. Thus the amazing prediction of Isaiah was wonderfully fulfilled.

WHILST Judas, full of remorse, was hastening to his death, the Lord Jesus was conducted by the temple guards, chief priests and other members of the Sanhedrin, to the Tower of Antonia, on the northern side of the temple.

The First Gentile Trial (Mat. 27:11-14; Mk. 15:1-5; Lk. 23:1-6; Jn. 18:28-38)

It was the residence of the Roman governor whilst he was in Jerusalem, and the palace, therefore, where he held court, and gave judgment on matters that were brought before his attention. Arriving at the Tower, the servants conducted Jesus into the Hall of

Judgment where Pilate was waiting to receive him, but the priests and the other members of the Sanhedrin remained outside. They were anxious not to become ceremonially defiled by contact with this Roman building. They were very scrupulous about such things, and yet were prepared to arrange the legal murder of an innocent man!

They were guilty of the most blatant hypocrisy, whilst they fulfilled the sad prediction of the Lord Jesus that his own people would deliver him up to the Gentiles to be slain (Mat. 20:18-19). Yet though the Jews might appear clean in their own sight (Pro. 30:12-14), they were loathsome in the sight of Yahweh (Isa. 66:3-4), and thus ultimately brought upon the city the curse of Tophet (Jer. 19:12-15; Mat. 22:7).

Brought Before Pilate "It was early," John records (ch. 18:28). It was necessary for the Jews to hurry the proceedings along, because the Passover lamb was to be slain that day, and time was limited if Jesus were to be put out of the way before the festival commenced.

But though it was early, Pilate was ready to conduct the trial together with the whole staff of the court of justice necessary for such proceedings. Why should that be? Because Pilate was working in conjunction with the Jewish leaders to a preconcerted plan. That is

obvious from the fact that, earlier, a group of Roman soldiers, under an officer, a *Chiliarch*, a commander of 1,000 men (Jn. 18:12), had been despatched to the Garden of Gethsemane to take Jesus. It had all been conducted with Pilate's connivance; he was expecting the accusers and the accused to appear before him.

But then something went wrong with the plans. Pilate went out to where the members of the Sanhedrin were gathered in front of the Tower, with a request that the Jews did not expect to receive:

"What accusation do you advance against this man?" he asked.

The Jews were confused at the demand. All arrangements had been made beforehand to deliver Jesus up before Pilate, and it was not expected that he should question the validity of their action nor the cause of it. They doubtless had already told him that this imposter claimed to be the Jewish Christ, and as such was in danger of leading a section of the community against the constituted authority, which meant against the rule of Tiberius. As such he was a dangerous criminal agitating against the constitutional authority of Rome.

On those grounds, Pilate had agreed to judge Jesus, and had granted permission for the Roman soldiers to apprehend him. But, meanwhile, the governor had had second thoughts about the matter. He realised that the charge that Jesus was a dangerous criminal was unfounded and unjust. The chiliarch who, on Pilate's order, had assisted at the arrest of Jesus, had doubtless given him a full report on the matter. Pilate had heard with amazement what Jesus had done and said in the garden. One who orders the drawn sword to be put back into its sheath, and who immediately heals the damage done by it, presents no danger to the emperor in Rome. Pilate, therefore, was now hesitant to carry the trial through as the Jews wanted. For some reason that he probably could not explain himself, he felt uneasy in the matter and disposed to be rid of the whole disagreeable affair.

Moreover, he did not trust the Jewish leaders; for he well knew of their hatred of Jesus.

Therefore, he demanded of them a specific accusation, and this threw them into confusion. The only accusation they had against him was a nominal charge of alleged blasphemy, and even this had not been properly investigated. There they gave Pilate an evasive answer: *"If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto you!"* they replied.

That was not sufficient for Pilate. Once again he tried to evade the responsibility of a trial. He said unto them: *"You take him, and judge him according to your law!"* This would have meant execution by stoning (Lev. 24:14), but such a death as that would have defeated the purpose of the Jewish leaders. It could have been discounted as a miscarriage of justice by the friends of Jesus. No, they wanted such a death as would make it obvious to all that Jesus was not the Christ.

Death on the stake, the Roman form of execution, alone would accomplish that, for the Law cursed anybody who died in such a manner (Deu. 21:22-23).

They, therefore, answered Pilate: "*It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.*" This is not strictly correct as it reads in the Bible (Jn. 18:31). For, as Josephus has recorded, the Jews did have the power of execution (*Jos. Ant.* 20.9.1). But the Law did not allow them to put Jesus to death in the manner they wanted him to die, that is, by crucifixion! They had accused Jesus of blasphemy, and the Law specified that death, in such cases, should be by stoning. Therefore, when they said it was not lawful for them to put any man to death, they meant, by crucifixion.

This is evident from John's explanatory comment: "*That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die*" (Jn. 18:32). On several occasions, Jesus had predicted that he would die by crucifixion (Mat. 16:24; 20:19; Jn. 3:14; 12:32), and now the Jews demanded such a death. But observing the reluctance of Pilate to try Jesus without a specific

The Specific Charge Against Jesus

There are three counts to the charge that the Jews laid against Jesus: [1] Perverting the nation; [2] Treason; [3] Sedition. The legal involvements of these three points are as follows:

Perverting the Nation

This could involve religious or political agitation. Hunter's "Roman Law," p. 1066, declares: "Prophets were to be beaten, and expelled from the city... Persons introducing new kinds of worship, unknown to custom or reason, disturbing weaker minds, were to be punished: if persons of rank, with deportation; if not of rank, with death." Political agitation, however, could take the form of treason or of sedition.

Treason

This is a breach of the duty to render allegiance to the Emperor (see Jn. 19:12).

Sedition

Sedition is an act or teaching that excites discontent and dissatisfaction against the Sovereign, to excite ill-will between different classes of his subjects, to bring into hatred or contempt the Sovereign or Government, the laws or constitution of the realm, or excite public disorder or unlawful associations, assemblies, insurrections, etc. All were punishable with death.

The charge of the Jews against Jesus involved all forms, though Pilate, in his interrogation of the Lord, limited it to the political aspects.

charge, they supplied him with one: *"We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king."* Armed with this charge, Pilate returned to the Judgment Hall, where the prisoner was awaiting him. He gave him a searching look. He did not look like a dangerous agitator or rabble-rouser. He saw the Lord's face marked with the terrible ordeal of the past hours; the bruises caused by the brutal battering he had endured at the hands of the temple guard; the lines of emotional strain and exhaustion on the noble brow; the prematurely aged face of a man who had borne the burdens of humanity.

Pilate was impressed. In the lonely prisoner there was something that held his attention and made him reluctant to act against him. Yet, normally, an individual or a life meant nothing to the haughty Roman governor. He had not hesitated in the past, and would not hesitate in the future, to order the Roman legions out to ruthlessly crush a Jewish riot if circumstances demanded it, for he was prepared to shed blood with impunity on the slightest provocation.

Moreover, in spite of the reputation of the governor, and the fact that he held the power of life and death in his hands, the prisoner did not cower before him. Instead, he met his gaze calmly and fearlessly. It was Pilate who felt uneasy, felt that the initiative was slipping from him. He experienced the curious feeling that somehow the nondescript prisoner before him was really the master of the situation, and that both he and the members of the Sanhedrin were the accused.

Pilate sat down in the Judgment Seat, and called the prisoner to come before him. *"Are you the King of the Jews?"* he asked.

Jesus answered: *"Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"* Jesus was not evading the question, but merely asking who was pressing the charge: Pilate or the Jewish leaders? The latter had accused him of blasphemy; but now the charge had been changed to sedition!

Pilate immediately repudiated any personal accusation. He replied: *"Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me! What have you done?"* Pilate thus explained that he was investigating a charge preferred against Christ by his own countrymen, and that personally he had no charge to lay against him.

Jesus replied: *"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingdom is not from hence."*

In this answer, Jesus entered what lawyers would call a plea of confession and avoidance. It is a common defence in civil action. English law states: "In addition to or instead of denying the allegation made in the statement of claim, the defendant may in his defence, set up an affirmative case either by stating his version of the facts, or he may plead in Confession and Avoidance, and show that notwith-

standing the facts stated by the plaintiff, he has a defence.”

Thus Jesus pleaded guilty: Yes, he was a king; but he added a rider that revealed he was no political agitator nor a threat to the State: “My kingdom is not from hence.”

He declared that his kingdom was not “of (Gr. *ek*, out of) this world.” The word is *kosmou*, and signifies order or arrangement of things. His kingdom was not of that present arrangement of things, with his people subject to the Roman power. If it were, then would his officers (Gr. *huperetai*, officers — not servants) fight. That time would come later.

Pilate heard the statement with contempt. A king whose officers did not fight, was a king without power. But, anyway, the prisoner acknowledged he was a king! Pilate looked at him with amused contempt: “***After all, therefore, you are a king!***” he declared.

It was not a judicial enquiry, but a burst of ironical surprise. He had satisfied himself that Jesus was no political rival, and therefore was induced to treat him with derision. But his statement of ridicule received a dignified reply from the Lord: “***Yes, I am a king. For this purpose I was born; and for this purpose I have come into the world to bear witness to the Truth. Every one who is of the Truth hears my voice!***” Christ thus declared he was both a king and a prophet. He was born into royalty, as a king; and he had come into the world to bear witness to the Truth, as a prophet. This latter statement, which expressed the purpose of his ministry, explained why though a king he did not manifest royal power. He was no agitator against the government; only those who hearkened to his voice acknowledged the truth of his future kingship.

But Pilate had heard enough!

“***What is truth?***” he exclaimed. With this exclamation, Pilate dismissed Christ’s claims as irrelevant. What had truth to do with the charges of political sedition laid against him by the Jews! Absolutely nothing! Pilate felt irritated at the way he had become involved in a case he did not understand, and which made him uneasy. He decided to get rid of the whole matter once and for all.

Taking Jesus with him, he returned to the members of the Sanhedrin expectantly waiting for him outside. Time was moving on, and they wanted to complete the unsavoury matter of Christ’s execution as soon as possible, so as to get ready for the Passover worship.

But how surprised they were when Pilate presented the Lord to them and publicly acquitted him of the charges laid against him. “***I find no crime in this man!***” he announced.

In other words, he is not guilty. That being the case, Jesus should have been instantly released. The Jews realised that, and for the moment were dumbfounded at the unexpected sight. Was all their

scheming to go for nought? That could never be! Then anger took possession of them, and they began to fling all kinds of accusations in the face of the Lord. Pilate looked down in surprise at the mounting fury. Why should they manifest such extreme vehemence against so harmless a man? Why did not the prisoner seek to justify his innocence, seeing he was in such grave danger? He could not understand what was taking place.

He turned to Jesus: *"Have you no answer to make?"* he enquired. *"See how many charges they bring against you!"*

But Jesus ignored both him and them.

Meanwhile, the members of the Sanhedrin were working themselves up into a frenzy. They became more and more rowdy, and flung the wildest accusations at the Lord Jesus. *"He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place,"* they shouted at Pilate.

This chance remark provided Pilate with an opportunity that seemed to enable him to escape the predicament that was closing in on him. He now feared either to release or condemn Jesus. In regard to the first, he was fearful of the influence of the Jews at Rome where his once powerful patron, Sejanus, had fallen, and the slightest suggestion of incompetence on his part would be followed by his recall — and he also feared the remarkable man before him. He was most uneasy in his presence. He therefore decided to shift the responsibility.

"Is he from Galilee?" he asked.

"He is," came the answering shout.

"In that case," reasoned Pilate, *"he belongs to Herod's jurisdiction, and as Herod is at present in Jerusalem, he can judge him."*

**Second Gentile Trial
Before Herod
Again Acquitted
(Lk. 23:7-12)**

Herod was in Jerusalem for the Passover. Though he worshipped as a Jew, he lived and acted as a Gentile. He was a mixture of Gentile and Jewish blood, and was known for his unscrupulous cunning. Whilst at Jerusalem, he occupied the old palace of the Asmonaeon princes, and it was to that place that Pilate sent Jesus under guard.

This gesture pleased Herod greatly. Firstly, he was pleased at the honour paid him by Pilate, and this helped to heal a breach that had developed between the two Statesmen; secondly, he had desired to see Jesus for a long time, and hoped to witness some miracle performed by him.

Thus Jesus was to Herod Antipas what a juggler is to a sated court: an object of curiosity to while away an idle hour. He viewed the Saviour with a monstrous mixture of levity and superstition, in the

face of which the Lord maintained a dignified silence.

Herod questioned Jesus with many words, but the Lord answered him nothing. Not so the chief priests and others who had followed Jesus to the court of Herod. They were most voluble, and stood vehemently accusing him of his supposed crimes.

The king was disappointed in the whole performance. He had nothing but contempt for the Jewish priests, and he felt irritated at the silent Jesus. Seated on his royal throne, and with his men of war standing around, Herod refused to treat Jesus seriously. He mocked him, not as a criminal, but as a religious fanatic. His very attitude in refusing to take Jesus seriously, however, was actually an acquittal of the charges levelled against Jesus by the Jews.

Thus Herod found no wrong in Jesus (Lk. 23:15). He acknowledged, however, that the charge of sedition laid against Jesus by the Jews was out of his judicial authority. To him, the charge that Jesus claimed to be the Christ, a king, was a crime against his Imperial Majesty, and therefore one that had to be dealt with by the local representative of Rome.

Accordingly, Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate.* More than that, in view of the honour paid him by the Roman Governor, Herod accompanied Jesus back himself. Arraying himself in royal festive garments, he made his way to the Tower of Antonia, and to the Judgment Hall of Pilate.

Arriving at the Tower of Antonia, Herod and the members of the Sanhedrin, together with the Roman guard surrounding Jesus, found a great company of people assembled. They were assembled to witness a ceremony that was conducted each year when the Passover was about to be celebrated. On such occasions, it was customary for the Roman Governor to release a prisoner; thus, typifying the principle of Deliverance emphasised by the keeping of the Passover.

Third Gentile Trial: Inside the Judgment Hall, Pilate received the

* The A.V. reads as though Herod dressed Jesus in a "gorgeous robe" and sent him back to Pilate thus clad. But why should Herod waste such a garment for that purpose? The word "sent" in Lk. 23:11 signifies to send up as before a judge or tribunal, that is, to a higher court. This is what Herod did to Jesus when he returned him to Pilate. He virtually said, I find no fault in him, judge him yourself. Apparently, in order to visit the Governor, the king arrayed himself in his festive apparel. It is claimed that the Greek word *peribalon* ("arrayed") even though in the active voice, can mean to put on to oneself. He therefore clothed himself in his festive robe (for it was Passover time), and made his way, suitably dressed, to Pilate. This can be inferred, though it is not openly stated in Lk. 23:11; but it is plainly stated in Luke's account in Acts 4:27, "Against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together." Obviously, for the final trial of the Lord, all his enemies were appropriately brought together that they might share in the common guilt.

**Before Pilate Again:
Nothing Deserving
of Death**

(Mat. 27:15-26;

Mk. 15:6-15;

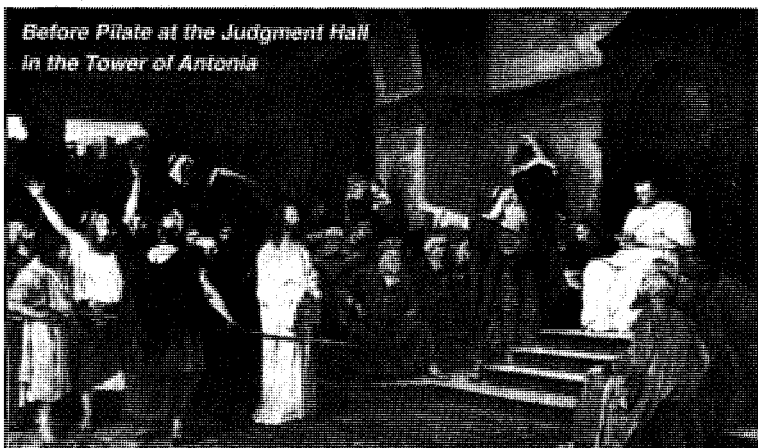
Lk. 23:13-25;

Jn. 18:39-19:16)

report from the officer in charge of the guard, and listened to Herod's account of the proceedings. He felt more convinced than ever, that he was being used as a tool by the Jewish leaders to an end that he did not understand. Of one thing he was certain, however; the prisoner before him was not guilty of sedition, had done nothing deserving of death. Moreover, as he considered the remarkable stories that he had heard of Jesus, he felt even more reluctant to become embroiled in matters he could not comprehend. He determined to do exactly what Herod had done: acquit him and return him to those who had delivered him into his charge.

Accordingly, he led Jesus to the pavement outside the Tower, and faced the crowd below him. Firstly, he ordered the members of the Sanhedrin to come forward (Lk. 23:13), and when they had done so, after making their way through the crush, he gave his considered judgment: *"You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people, and after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him; neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Behold, nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will, therefore, chastise him, and release him"* (Lk. 23:14-16).

It was normal, under Roman law, to scourge and banish false prophets or teachers of strange religions. Actually, having pronounced Jesus as innocent, Pilate should have immediately released him; but his suggestion to punish the Lord was a concession to the feelings of the Sanhedrin, and also, perhaps, to satisfy the custom of releasing a prisoner.



Pilate's Scheme: But Pilate could see that his suggestion was not agreeable to the members of the Sanhedrin. Therefore, before they could answer, he gave them an alternative. He shrewdly had thought of an adroit means of making the Jews themselves ask for the release of Jesus. The custom to set free a Jewish prisoner in order that he might celebrate the Passover feast with his people would suit his purpose. He had in the Roman prison, a dangerous, notorious zealot by name of Barabbas, who was awaiting crucifixion. He decided to give the Jews the choice of asking for either Jesus or Barabbas, for if they did, they would show that they preferred a political agitator and murderer to one whose harmlessness had been shown in that he had healed the hurt made with the sword. If the Jews demanded Barabbas, would they not be chargeable with secret confederacy with the zealot? Would not it reveal that their pressing of a charge of sedition against Jesus was mere hypocrisy? Would it not demonstrate that they were the ones working against Rome, and not the prisoner whom they had committed for trial?

So Pilate the politician may have argued; but if he did so, he did not reckon with the blind hatred that Jewish bigotry and jealousy had developed against Jesus. Knowing now that the Jews had delivered Jesus into his hands only out of envy, and going over the heads of the members of the Sanhedrin to appeal to the crowd, he addressed the people: *"Whom will you that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?"*

An Urgent Message Pilate sent for Barabbas, and meanwhile sat for Pilate (Mat. 27:19) down on the Judgment Seat, giving the people time to consider his alternative. A messenger demanded to see him on urgent business. Worried with the problems before him, anxious to avoid a riot on this day when riots were common, Pilate did not want to be interrupted, but the messenger was insistent. He was sent by Claudia, the wife of Pilate. According to tradition, she had embraced Judaism, and it is claimed that ultimately she became a follower of the Lord. Be that as it may, her mind had become agitated by the events of the day, and her troubled thoughts had affected her dreams. Her message did nothing to allay the disturbed condition of Pilate. On the note handed to him he read a mysterious message: *"Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream."*

It was enough. His superstitious fears were aroused to the utmost. Pilate was determined to release Jesus (Lk. 23:20; Acts 3:23). But he had not reckoned with the persistence of the Sanhedrin. Whilst he was busy with the messenger and his thoughts, the chief priests and

members of the Sanhedrin had agitated among the people, stirring them up to demand the release of Barabbas rather than Jesus (Mat. 27:20; Mk. 15:11).

“We Want Barabbas!” Once again Pilate stood before the people. (Mat. 27:20-22; Mk. 15:11-13; Lk. 23:18-21; Jn. 18:40) On this occasion he had with him the two prisoners: Jesus and the notorious Barabbas. The former was *The Son of the Father*; the latter’s name signifies: *Son of a father*. The former was begotten of Yahweh; the latter was a child of the flesh. The former was prepared to offer his life for the people; the latter was a convicted robber and murderer (Lk. 23:19; Acts 3:14). The former was the Christ; the latter was a violent, political agitator.

The decision the Jews were about to make is the decision that all mankind must make one time or another: *Who will you have: Barabbas or Christ?*

But Pilate was confident that he had manoeuvred the Jews into a position where they would be forced to ask for Christ, or demonstrate that their indignation at the alleged sedition of Jesus was merely assumed. So he addressed the people: ***“Which of these two will you have me release unto you?”*** But to the astonishment of Pilate, the people cried with one accord: ***“Barabbas! Barabbas!... “Away with this man, release to us Barabbas!”***

Barabbas! Pilate had never thought for a moment that they would make such a demand! It demonstrated how false were their accusations against Jesus. It was preposterous for the Jewish leaders to demand the execution of Jesus on the grounds that he was an agitator of the people, when they could bring no tangible evidence of his crime before him, and yet, at the same time, demand the release of a convicted murderer and agitator!

But worst of all, Pilate angrily recognised that he had lost in the gamble with the people, and, in fact, he was now in an invidious position. He had to give way to their demands, and yet if he did so he, himself, would be guilty of releasing a political agitator and murderer! At the same time, he was anxious to avoid a riot, and yet could see that the temper of the people was rapidly reaching the point where he would have one on his hands, if he did not exercise extreme care. He tried to reason with them: ***“What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ, whom you call the king of the Jews?”*** he asked (Mat. 27:22; Mk. 15:12).

Again there came a shout, perhaps louder than before: ***“Let him be crucified!” “Crucify him! Crucify him!”***

How tragic was this demand! Only a few days earlier a great multitude of Jews had honoured Jesus because of the notable miracle

he had performed in raising Lazarus from the dead. When he entered Jerusalem, crowds had applauded him, singing: "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" Now they cried: "Crucify him!" How fickle are the feelings of the mob; how easily the flesh is swayed from right to wrong! It is the Word of God alone that should motivate us. When it dictates our thoughts, feelings, and words, its influence will be manifested in those avenues, and they will reflect to the glory of its divine Author. But when the Word does not so move us, we can be as easily induced to crucify that which God would keep alive, as the Jewish mob was swayed to shout for the blood of Jesus 2,000 years ago.

Pilate Pleads Jesus' Cause

But once again, and this the third time, Pilate proclaimed that Jesus was innocent, and pleaded with the people to let him go (Lk.

23:22). ***"Why, what evil has he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go!"***

But the priests and elders had stirred the passions of the people so that they lusted for blood. Nothing but the death of Jesus would now satisfy them. Pilate sensed their ominous restlessness. He knew how notoriously excitable the Jews were at Passover time. He realised that a riot was in the making, and that he must exercise the greatest care to avoid it. Normally, on such occasions, he would have had no compunction in delivering an individual over to the whim of the crowd, irrespective as to whether he were innocent or guilty, but now he was deeply concerned about Jesus, and made more so by the mysterious message of his wife.

He decided to make it clear to the people that Jesus was innocent, and he would take no personal responsibility for putting him to death. If they insisted upon it, and divine judgment followed such a miscarriage of justice, the sole responsibility would be with them. He did so dramatically. Calling for a bowl of water, he ceremonially washed his hands, and addressed the now silent people.

"I am innocent of the blood of this just person" he solemnly declared. ***"See you to it!"***

Pilate's words and action are highly significant. The first endorsed the words and judgment of his wife regarding Jesus, and she, it is believed, worshipped at the temple; the second was drawn from the Mosaic Law, and perhaps also reflected the influence of his wife (see Deu. 21:6). The Law also required that in the case of an unsolved murder, the elders of the city closest



to where it had been committed were required to gather together, and after disclaiming personal responsibility in the crime, wash their hands in water, and pronounce the following words: *"Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Yahweh, unto Thy people Israel, whom Thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto Thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of Yahweh"* (Deu. 21:6-9).

But the elders of Jewry, in the days of Christ, were not shamed by the appeal and exhortation of this Gentile Governor, but boldly, impudently, and irreverently cried: ***"His blood be on us, and on our children!"***

This was the very reverse of what the elders were called upon to say according to the Law. It virtually defied Yahweh to avenge the blood of His Son. Even the hardened Roman Governor and his soldiers, so used to blasphemy as they were, might well pale before such an insane, suicidal shout of defiance as that!

And in answer to it, from thence onward until the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, at the close of one of the most frightful sieges in history, those words were literally fulfilled. The Jews had called a curse upon them and their children; and because their children manifested the same attitude as the fathers, they suffered at the hands of the Gentiles whose rulership they preferred to God's.

Jesus is Scourged

(Mat. 27:26;

Mk. 15:15; Lk. 23:25;

Jn. 19:1)

The decision of the mob having been given, Pilate had no choice but to abide by his word, and to set Barabbas free. What joy in the heart of that murderer, thief and agitator who had previously been condemned to be crucified, as he now moved out into the crowd a free, forgiven man, to receive the enthusiastic congratulations of the people.

To what did he owe his escape? The condemnation that had been imputed to the righteous Jesus. Thus there was dramatised in his deliverance the story of man's redemption. Though man is under the shadow of death just as much as was Barabbas, he can be freed therefrom through the risen Christ who once bore the curse that rests upon humanity (see Gal. 3:13).

Meanwhile, Pilate, noticing by his failure what bitter exasperation he aroused in the Jews by attempting to set Jesus free, decided to try and reach his aim in a different, more tactful way, and one that would suit his desire as well as being in accordance with his wife's plea. He believed that he had absolute power to execute or release Jesus; but he could see that it was not wise to grant the prisoner his freedom in the face of Jewish antagonism. Perhaps the feeling of the multitude

could be assuaged if he scourged Jesus! After all, they hated him because he claimed to be Christ, their anointed king. Scourging, however, would so degrade this strange Jew in the eyes of his fellow countrymen, that nobody would ever consider him the anointed king, nor concern themselves with his claims.

Moreover, in the face of such suffering, the attitude of the mob might soften toward Jesus, to the extent that they might agree that he should be freed. Some such considerations as these moved Pilate to scourge Jesus, as the word "therefore" in Jn. 19:1 implies.

As a result, Jesus was given into the hands of the Roman guard for scourging. They led him into the Praetorium, the Judgment Hall, that he might be subjected to the cruel punishment. The heart sickens, and emotion is moved to indignation, as the mind attempts to reconstruct the terrible scene. Brutal Roman soldiers, hardened to violence and cruelty, roughly stripped the meek, unresisting Son of God to the waist, and tied him to a post so that he was bent over in a posture to receive the thrashing. Whilst it is true that many others have been similarly treated, and, in fact, floggings and lashings have been common throughout man's cruel history, none equalled this, either in the extent of its injustice nor in that of its pain. It is claimed that the more intelligent a person is, the more susceptible he is to feeling and pain. Here, then, was one, more keenly sensitive to all forms of wickedness and brutality than any other, and possessing a vivid, spiritual mind which recorded in stark reality the vileness of man's actions. That being so, how excruciatingly painful must have been that scourging for the highly intelligent, sensitive Lord, who had such feelings for others, that he wept at the graveside of a friend whom he knew was to be raised shortly to life again. Consider his feelings as he was forced to put up with the coarse blasphemy of rough soldiers who harshly tied him to the whipping post as they probably uttered crude jokes that would reflect against the God of Israel in heaven as well as Israel's King on earth.

The scourge was made of leather thongs weighted with sharp pieces of bone or lead. Suffering under the lash was intense. The body was frightfully lacerated. It has been known for victims to be so torn by the scourging that their veins were laid bare, and the inner muscles and sinews and even the bowels were exposed. Already the Lord's face was bruised by the pummelling he had received from the hard fists of the Jewish guard, and now the whip descended upon his back to increase the agony, tearing out pieces of flesh, whilst his heart was torn by the bitter malevolent words against the holy things of God and his own trauma that had been flung at him over the past hours.

Perhaps Pilate ordered that the thrashing be not as severe as was normal; and that the Lord be spared the full agony of a scourging that, in many cases, caused powerful men to faint, and in some instances brought death.

In this agonising act of humiliation, as he endured the strokes of the weighted lash that must have felt as though he was being cut in two, the words of the prophet had awful fulfilment: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord Yahweh will help me; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (Isa. 50:6-7). "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

**Mocked by
Roman Soldiers
(Mat. 27:27-30;
Mk. 15:16-19;
Jn. 19:2-3)**

Inside the great Judgment Hall, after the scourging, Jesus was given over to the cruel, heartless sport of the soldiers. The whole band came together to view the alleged king of the Jews (Mk. 15:16), so that flesh was completely in charge, and nothing was considered sacred. They made sport of him. King, was he? Well, let us crown him! Give him a crown suited to the people over whom he is supposed to reign! Not a golden crown, for such would belong only to Caesar! Not a laurel crown, for that is given to victors!

Give him a crown of thorns!

With a great shout of laughter, the rough, crude soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and crowned Jesus with it, doubtless pushing it firmly down on his head and brow so that the spikes would painfully penetrate the skin.

Then they took a purple robe as befitting the alleged regal dignity of the prisoner, and roughly pulled it over his naked, bleeding back; they took a scarlet scarf such as officers used, and draped it about him; they took a reed and "anointed" him with it by slapping him across the face; they came up close to pay mocking honour to the king of the despised Jews and spat the salival contents of their mouths in his face; they kept kneeling before him in ridicule, greeting him with the words: "*Hail, King of the Jews!*"

And when, in spite of all this agony, humiliation, pain and sorrow, the patient, strong, faithful Son of God, who could have called twelve legions of angels to avenge him; instead, with iron control of his feelings, refused to give way by reviling them in turn, endured it all, until they became irritated and angry, and with sadistic brutality gave him sharp blows to draw his attention to the way in which they were mocking him.

Through all that dark nightmare of pain and humiliation, the Lord could feel that the strength of the Father was still with him (Jn. 16:32). With consummate faith and confidence he was able to lift his mind from the torture and the shame of his trial, and seek the bright, hopeful presence of Him who has declared that He will never leave

nor forsake us, nor allow us to be tried above what we are able to bear.

If only we can keep in mind the cruel tribulation and anguish that the Lord experienced at that time without capitulating to the forces of darkness, and seek for ourselves a measure of the same help that he obtained then from his Father, we will find the strength to overcome the lesser trials that afflict us. We need to “consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb. 12:3-4).

**Jesus Presented
Again to the Jews
(Jn. 19:4-7)**

Meanwhile, Pilate again went outside to the Jewish people, to once more appeal to their compassion to let Jesus go free. He addressed them: *“Behold, I will bring him out to you, that you may know that I find no crime in him!”*

He brought Jesus forth to them!

The crowd beneath looked up at their Messiah! They saw him grotesquely wearing the crown of thorns which bit into his brow; they observed the purple robe and scarlet scarf flung about him that indicated that the Romans had been making sport of him; they noticed the arms tightly drawn to the back where they were manacled together; they perceived the filthy spittle of the Roman soldiers on the bruised and battered face; they saw the tired, worn, exhausted pain-racked countenance; they observed the humiliated bowed body in agony from the cruel thrashing.

Even Pilate had compassion for him, but the Jews none!

“Ecce homo!” declared Pilate to the crowd.



“Behold the man!” “Look at him: bleeding, bruised, humiliated, covered with spittle! Look at the pitiable figure! See what has been done to this so-called king! Has he not suffered enough?”

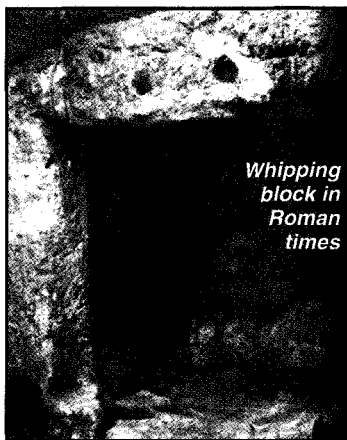
Pilate’s ejaculation was uttered in sarcasm, and yet how true it was. Of all that concourse, it could be said of Jesus alone that he “stood fast in faith,” and that he “quitted himself like a man, and was strong” (1Cor. 16:13).

The sad, pathetic figure of the Lord in humiliation made no impact on the rage of the blind, bigoted Jews before him. Their hearts were too hardened, their hatred too intense, to be softened by sympathy. The chief priests and elders took the lead in denouncing him, and calling for his blood. At their instigation, the mob took up the heartless, cruel chant: ***“Crucify him! Crucify him!”***

Their insatiable blood-lust and hard-hearted cruelty angered Pilate further. He was becoming thoroughly tired of the whole proceedings. If Jesus had to die, let it happen. But he was not going to be forced into doing what they wanted. He despised and hated the Jews, and, weak man that he was, refused at that stage to capitulate. If Jesus was to die, let them put him to death themselves. ***“You take him and crucify him,”*** he angrily told the Jews. ***“For I find no fault in him!”***

But there came back an answering shout: ***“We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God!”***

Son of God! The statement made Pilate pause. Here was a new twist to the accusation against Jesus. He recalled the reports he had heard of the one before him: that of the miracle in the Garden the night before; the solemn warning of his wife. Now, his own superstitious fears, perhaps his own troubled conscience, were touched. They began to work upon the mind of Pilate, and he became afraid in himself. If this one were a Son of God, he was higher than Caesar, for he was living whereas Caesar was only considered divine when he was dead! Pilate knew that Jesus was no political agitator and wondered what was behind the Jewish demand for his death. Now he felt he had an inkling of the Jewish hatred of Jesus. What did the charge really mean? Pilate determined that he would try to find out from the prisoner himself, whose abject appearance had failed to move the hard-hearted Jews. He took Jesus back again into the Judgment Hall, away from the mob.



*Whipping
block in
Roman
times*

SALOME: THE AMBITIOUS

References to Salome, the wife of Zebedee, are found in Mat. 20:20-24; 27:56; Mk. 10:35-40; 15:40, 41; 16:1-2. From a comparison of Mat. 27:56; Mk. 15:40; 16:1; and Jn. 19:25, it seems that Salome was sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus, so that James and John, her sons, would have been cousins to the Lord.

Salome was among the women who followed Jesus in Galilee and ministered unto him (Lk. 8:1-3; Mk. 15:40-41). She was one of the Lord's early disciples, and doubtless encouraged her two sons, James and John, to completely throw in their lot with him. In fact, the whole of Zebedee's family seemed to have embraced the Truth with enthusiasm, and in this the husband must share the praise with the wife.

She is particularly known for her request to Jesus on behalf of her sons. She wanted positions of eminence for them on the right and left hand sides of the Lord in the day of his glory, which she anticipated was then at hand (Mat. 20:20-24). In this request, she was joined by her sons (Mk. 10:35-40), whom she had doubtless urged to make it. Jesus rebuked both mother and sons, telling them that they did not know for what they asked. A few days later, they witnessed two thieves crucified on the right and left hand of the Lord in the city which they had thought would have then seen his glory. The request of the mother and her sons roused the indignation of the other apostles, and led to the Lord explaining that positions of eminence in the Kingdom will be granted to those who now become slaves to others.

Zebedee's family was prosperous, reverent, and of good social standing, and this may have stimulated the ambitious, though thoughtless, petition of Salome. She had heard the Lord promise thrones to the apostles (Mat. 19:28), had noticed the pre-eminence given her sons by Jesus (Mat. 17:1), was filled with the general expectancy of the approaching kingdom (Lk. 19:11), and impatiently awaited its glory.

Her ambition was a good one, unfortunately carried to extremes. She was dominated by the desire to gain the Kingdom, but not content with that, she wanted the highest positions for her sons. We can appreciate her feelings, whilst, at the same time, endorsing the gentle rebuke of the Lord. Nevertheless, Salome provided a wonderful example to her family, in that she freely ministered to Jesus of her substance. She was prepared to give both her time and her means to smoothe the path for the Lord. How powerful is the influence of a good woman in the home. Salome

was one such, and doubtless will live again to see her sons glorified in the Kingdom.

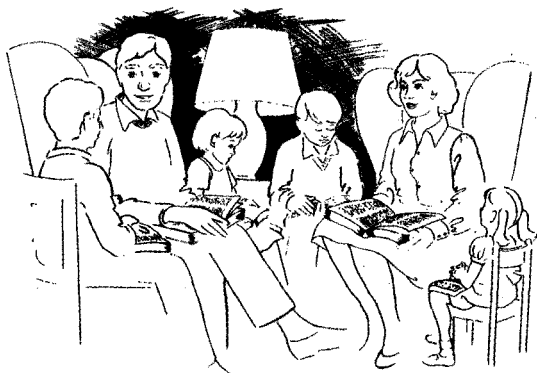
At the end of the Lord's ministry, Salome was with the other women to witness his crucifixion and resurrection, and therefore experienced the sorrow and joy of those occasions.

SALOME: WHOSE DANCING BROUGHT DEATH

Salome is the feminine form of Solomon, from the Hebrew word *shalom*, meaning peace. She briefly appears in the Bible record in connection with the death of John Baptist (Mat. 14:6-11; Mk. 6:22-28). She was the daughter of Herodias by her first husband, Herod Philip; but Herodias left Philip for Herod Antipas. Salome's shameless dancing at Herod's feast called forth the applause of the drunken company, and the promise of Herod that she could have whatever she desired, even to the half of his kingdom. Spurred on by her mother, she requested the head of John Baptist served on a charger. The terrible request sobered the drunken king; but, having made the promise, he felt compelled to keep it in view of the assembled company. Salome disappears from the record as quickly as she appeared, and nothing more is heard of her.

SUSANNA: THE GRATEFUL

She is referred to only by name in Lk. 8:2-3, but from the context, it would appear that she, like Mary Magdalene, received some healing benefit from the Lord which she attempted to repay in part by loving, personal service. Her name means *A White Lily*, and may well typify her righteous, unassuming character. The services of women like Susanna have greatly smoothed the work of the Truth throughout the ages.



Chapter 8

PILATE THREATENED BY THE JEWS

(Jn. 19:8-12)

Pilate was deeply embarrassed by Jesus. Normally, he would not have hesitated to deliver a Jew up to death if it suited his purpose, even though he were innocent. But in the case of Jesus, there was a difference. True, it would have helped him in his relations with the Jews to order his execution, but he was deeply troubled in mind regarding this, and filled with superstitious foreboding. Because of this, he did not immediately capitulate to their demands; but, instead, again questioned the Lord to ascertain whether there was any way in which he could secure his release. It was one of many steps he took to rescue Jesus. Already he had:

- 1. Publicly proclaimed that Jesus was innocent;*
- 2. Sent him to Herod, hoping that "that fox" would assume responsibility of the problem;*
- 3. Suggested that he be set free as the Passover offering, thus appealing to the people over the heads of the priests;*
- 4. Offered to scourge him instead of crucifying him;*
- 5. Appealed to the compassion of the Jews.*

All these attempts had proved in vain. John records how that Pilate, in successive stages of the trial, set aside various accusations. He:

- 1. Rejected the vague, general charge that Jesus was "an evil-doer" (Jn. 18:30).*
- 2. Recognised the harmlessness to Rome of Christ's claims of kingship (Jn. 18:39).*
- 3. Refused to become involved in the religious charges pressed against the Lord (Jn. 19:7).*
- 4. Only yielded finally through fear (Jn. 19:12).*

Thus Pilate capitulated and condemned an innocent man to death, whilst releasing one guilty of the very crime for which he delivered the other to a criminal's execution. He was induced to act in this inconsistent way through the implied threat of the Jews to report his misdemeanours to Rome. Probably, by that time, Pilate's patron, Sejanus, had fallen from favour in Rome, and Tiberius was executing all associated with him. An accusation of high treason might have proved fatal, and in view of the Jewish threat to accuse him to Rome of this, Pilate gave way under pressure.

Thus Jew and Gentile combined to set at nought the Son of God.

WHEN Pilate had suggested that the Jews themselves take Jesus away and crucify him, the rabble, assembled outside the Tower of Antonia, had shouted back that he should do this himself, for Jesus was worthy of death, having claimed to be the Son of God.

The accusation filled Pilate with superstitious awe. He recalled all that he had heard concerning Jesus, and what his wife had said regarding him. In consequence, he became "the more afraid" (Jn. 19:8). He withdrew to the Praetorium, the hall inside the tower, taking Jesus with him, deeply pondering the charge now laid against the prisoner, with all that it meant to his superstitious mind.

Pilate Again Questions Jesus

Inside the hall, he again looked at the prisoner. Was he a Son of God? He saw the purple robe grotesquely draped around him; the crown of thorns cruelly embedded into the noble brow; the bruised face, deeply lined through the effects of sorrow, fatigue and suffering; the filthy spittal that crude and ignorant soldiers had spat at him! But he saw something more. He discerned through all these external appearances of suffering and rejection, a nobleness of bearing and character, and evidence of intellect that was high above the ordinary. He looked into eyes that were fearless and probing, and became himself uneasy under their gaze. It seemed to Pilate that it was he who was on trial, and not the prisoner before him.

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

But Jesus ignored the question; he gave no answer.

Pilate's superstitious fears were aggravated by this silence. ***"Why do you not speak?"*** he demanded harshly. ***"Do you not know that it is in my power to release you or to crucify you?"***

Jesus answered this statement with words that troubled Pilate even more, and confirmed his opinion that he was dealing with no ordinary man. Calmly the prisoner under the shadow of death replied: ***"You would have no power over me, unless it had been granted you from above. So you are less guilty than he who betrayed me to you!"***

Thus Jesus acknowledged that he stood in a special relationship with God. Further, whilst he apportioned the greatest blame to the Jewish leaders, he did not exonerate Pilate of responsibility, but indicated that his vacillating weakness would result in a great abuse of justice.

This made Pilate even more determined to obtain the release of Jesus. He returned to the waiting crowds outside to appeal that he be allowed to go free. The priests and leaders detected a new determination in him, and decided to forestall it by a shrewd attack on his weakest point. There came a yell from the crowd that was instantly taken up by others: ***"If you release him, you are no friend of***

Caesar's!" "Anyone who makes himself a king is against Caesar!"

These shouts not only reminded Pilate that the prisoner was really charged with sedition, but included a threat that if the Governor did not act accordingly, he, himself, could be similarly charged. The Jewish leaders knew that Pilate's patron* in Rome was no longer in favour with the Emperor Tiberius, and that the censure of Tiberius would automatically fall on the associates of the fallen favourite. Disgrace and death stared Pilate in the face when he heard that ominous shout from the crowd. "The fear of man bringeth a snare" declares the Proverbs (Pro. 29:25), and this was so in the case of Pilate. He was caught; there was no way out except to give Jesus over to death. To save his own skin he must give way to the pressure placed upon him, and deliver the prisoner up to be crucified, even though he were innocent.

Jesus is Condemned
(Jn. 19:13-16)

The Tower of Antonia, in which Pilate dwelt whilst he was in Jerusalem, was situated on the northwestern corner of the temple. In front of it there was a raised platform called *The Pavement* on which was placed a seat called the *Bema* or Judgment Seat. From this place, judicial decisions were made known to the people.

Pilate now sat down on this seat, indicating that he was about to pass judgment on the prisoner who stood not far from him, looking down upon the sea of angry faces that glared up at him.

It was about the sixth hour, about 12 o'clock. For many weary hours, the Lord had been subjected to every form of cruelty and indignity. He stood there: bruised, bleeding, covered with spittle, dressed in robes that mocked his high office.

The charge was that he claimed to be the King of the Jews.

What a king! thought Pilate as he looked at the lowly, lonely figure. The Governor glanced down at the Jews gathered before him. He disliked them at any time; now he hated them for the predicament in which they had placed him. He would have liked to spurn them, to refuse their wish, to turn his guards upon them. But he dared not. He was afraid of what they might do to him at Rome. His weakness made them strong, but still he sought some means of retaliation.

"Behold your King!" he said unto them mockingly.

It was an ironically insulting comment based upon Jewish-Messianic hopes. Pilate sarcastically invited the people to look at the pathetic figure standing not far from him, and see in him a king worthy of such a nation as was theirs, under the power of Rome.

His taunt stung the people into furious anger. They retaliated with

* Chief administrator of the empire, and the general of the army, Sejemus plotted to overthrow Tiberius Caesar, and was arrested and executed (Josephus, *Ant.* XVIII:16, Sect. 6).

words that virtually repudiated their Messianic hope which was fundamental to a true worship of God. Shouts of fury arose from the crowd which was rapidly working itself up to the point of rioting.

"Away with him! Away with him!" some cried.

"Crucify him! Crucify him!" others shouted.

"Shall I crucify your king?" mocked Pilate from the platform above.

His words were a warning that their Messianic hope made them guilty of sedition against Rome. But instantly the chief priests answered: *"We have no king but Caesar!"*

It was checkmate for Pilate. The Jewish denial of their Messianic hope implied that Pilate himself was guilty of sedition by speaking of Jesus as king. It made the Roman Governor's position fraught with the greatest danger. He knew what the result would be if it were reported back to Rome that he had defended one claiming to be king. Death stared him in the face, and made him afraid. The Jewish leaders had forced his hand, and he saw nothing else but the need to submit. He capitulated to their demand, and ordered that Jesus be crucified.

But his action had clearly made it evident that they were responsible for the greatest crime in history.

Later, the apostles levelled this charge against the Jews. Peter declared: "Jesus, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

You were responsible for this wicked deed, Peter told the Jews.

Again: "The God of our fathers, hath glorified His servant Jesus; whom you delivered up, and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. You denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:13-15).

The Jewish leaders hated the Romans, but they feared and hated the Lord Jesus even more. They looked upon Gentiles as dogs, and yet they delivered their Messiah into the hands of one such and demanded that he kill him. They did this out of complete ignorance of the Word of God. Paul bluntly told this to the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia: "They that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain."

It was bad enough to be guilty of injustice and murder; it was even worse to use as their tool to that end, one whom they described as a Gentile dog. Yet, in doing so, they fulfilled Bible prophecy. Psalms 22, which predicted the crucifixion of the Lord by stating "They pierced my hands and my feet," also declared that "bulls of Bashan" (Jewish

leaders) would combine with “dogs” (Gentiles) to put the Lord to death (vv. 12, 16).

THE CHARGE OF BLASPHEMY

Jesus was condemned to death by the Jewish council on a charge of blasphemy. But such a conviction was only possible, according to Jewish law, when the accused had been pronounced guilty of having irreverently uttered the Divine Name of Yahweh. It is obvious, therefore, that when the high priest declared: “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God,” he must have used the name Yahweh in order to procure a conviction. Jewish law absolutely demanded this, and Caiaphas would not have hesitated to have complied.

It is significant, that the question asked by the high priest is identical in its wording with the confession of Peter recorded in Mat. 16:16. Jesus had asked the disciples, “Who do you say that the Son of man is?” He asked this because of his waning popularity, and because the people no longer looked upon him as the Messiah, but merely as one of the prophets. The Lord’s question could signify: “Do you also now think that I am only just a prophet?” It was Peter who instantly, and warmly replied: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mat. 16:16).

It is important to understand this confession aright; and it can be understood only from the subsequent words of Jesus. He told Peter that it had not originated from him, but was the revelation of the Father: “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 16:17).

What was the divinely revealed mystery? That Jesus was the Christ? By no means. The disciples knew that he was the Christ from the beginning. At the commencement of the Lord’s ministry, Andrew had told Peter: “We have found the Christ” (Jn. 1:41).

Was it that Jesus was *a* son of God? By no means, for such a confession had earlier been made. When Peter had tried to walk on the water and had begun to sink, only to be saved by Jesus, he had declared, according to the Greek text: “Thou art *a* son of God” (Mat. 14:33; Jn. 6:69). There is no definite article to either “son” or “God” in this statement. But in the statement of Mat. 16:16, and in the words of Caiaphas as recorded in the Greek (and in the A.V.), the definite article is given to both “Son” and “God.” It there reads: “Thou art *the* Son of *the* living God.”

To claim to be a son of Elohim was not considered blasphemous, but rather a proper description of a true Israelite; but to claim to be “the Son of Yahweh [the living God]” would most certainly be considered so, and for that reason, the Lord forbade that his disciples teach this truth until his resurrection from the dead would demonstrate its veracity (see Mat. 16:20; Rom. 1:4).

Peter, therefore, must have declared that Jesus was “the Christ

the Son of Yahweh." To proclaim a doctrine would have been fraught with the greatest danger, and could have resulted in a charge of blasphemy being successfully made against the disciples.

Now it is a remarkable fact that in all four gospels only twice is there mention of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and these two statements are recorded in Matthew: one from the lips of Peter (Mat. 16:16), and the other from the lips of Caiaphas (Mat. 26:63).

After efforts to convict Jesus by false witnesses had failed, and after Jesus had, by his silence, frustrated Caiaphas' attempt to catch him in his speech, he demanded: "I adjure thee by the living God (Yahweh), that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of the God" (see Greek text). When Jesus acknowledged that he was, the high priest rent his clothes and declared: "He has spoken blasphemy." This was acknowledged by the council, so that all the judges became ear-witnesses of what they considered to be a blasphemy, and declared: "He is guilty of death."

It is important, indeed essential, to know when and in what circumstances a blasphemy worthy of death is under consideration. The Jews themselves laid this down in the Mishna (the oral law). In the Tract *Sanhedrin of the Mishna*, it is stated that the death sentence should only be imposed when the accused has abused the Name of Yahweh. The description of the Court procedure in such a case shows with what superstitious scrupulosity the use of the Name was avoided during the procedure. When examining the witnesses, a special substitute-name, chosen for this particular purpose, was used. One might, for instance, say "Josa," meaning thereby Yahweh. But after the enquiry had been completed, the sentence of death was not given on the basis of this substitute-name; instead, the chief witness was called again and admonished: "Now pronounce clearly what you have heard." He then declared: "Yahweh." Thereupon the judges would rise and tear their robes. But the second witness did not then also say: "Yahweh," but instead said: "I the same as this one." And the third witness also said: "I too as this one." Then the death sentence was pronounced.

In the case of Jesus, however, he did not utter the name. All that he did was to answer the high priest's question in the affirmative. But as it was imperative in order to gain a conviction, that the Name be pronounced, the high priest himself must have done so in his adjurement. His question, therefore, must have been: "I adjure thee, by the living Yahweh, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of Yahweh?" On Jesus acknowledging the truth of this, it was agreed that he was worthy of death!

In fact, the one guilty of blasphemy in that assembly was Caiaphas himself, who had uttered the Name in a most irreverent fashion, in order to procure the death sentence against one who was completely innocent of any crime.



THE darkest day in human history had arrived! It was to witness the most vile of acts, the worse of human design, and the complete abandonment of all logic and reason. But out of it all was to be seen the overshadowing providence of the Father, the mercy of the Master, the petition of a suffering sinner. The world of Jew and Gentile gathered on the hilltop of Golgotha, and the parade of destiny was publicly revealed. There was the Master hanging on the centre stake, whilst alongside were two thieves, crucified with him, and representing both the "just and unjust" who find themselves associated with the death of Christ. But out of all the sadness and trauma of that experience, there came the clear voice of Truth, as seven sayings poured from the mouth of the Lord, and the voice of appeal, as one of the transgressors put his destiny into the hands of the Master. It was the moment of decision — a decision which faces all who come into contact with the Lamb of God!



Chapter 1

THE CRUCIFIXION

(Mat. 27:31-60; Mk. 15:20-46; Lk. 23:26-54; Jn. 19:16-42)

Calvary is the Latin equivalent of the Hebrew Golgotha, which signifies The Place of a Skull, or Skull-hill. It was situated outside the northern wall of the city, in a public place, not far from where was a garden in which had been hewn out a sepulchre. The only spot perfectly fitting all requirements, is that which is today called the Garden Tomb. It is situated outside the Damascus Gate. Immediately in front of that Gate there is a steep precipice, about as high as a house, forming the south side of the hill called by some Calvary and more correctly, Golgotha. In that wall of rock there are three large holes somewhat resembling the eye-sockets and mouth hole in a human skull. Hence the name, Skull-hill. However, the name may well have been also taken from the fact that beforehand, David brought the skull of the sin-power Goliath to this area for burial — an act of prophetic importance (1Sam. 17:54). Adjacent to it there has been found an ancient sepulchre and evidences of a garden that existed there many centuries ago. This may well be the very spot where the Lord was taken to be publicly crucified.



THE Jews had cried: "We have no king but Caesar," and had forced Pilate to order the execution of Jesus. And now God hid His face from them, and gave them into the hands of the king of their choice. Earlier they had said: "His blood be on us and on our children," and later, at the siege of Jerusalem, they were to pay dearly for their words and action. They and their children were crucified in hundreds outside their own walls by the Romans, till room was wanting and wood failed, and writhing forms screaming in agony encompassed Jerusalem with a ring of misery.

But even that was not the end of it. They had rejected their Messiah and their God, and denied themselves the defence that such could provide. So their history has been written in blood to our times, and Jews have paid a terrible price for their folly.

**Preparation for
Crucifixion**

Meanwhile, Pilate, completely frustrated in his attempts to rescue Jesus, gave the order

to the soldiers to make ready the rough stake upon which the Lord would be crucified.

Two other prisoners were to be executed that day, and when all was ready, the wood was laden on the backs of the three as preparations were made to proceed to the place of execution. For to bear the cross was the badge of the criminal.

When the Lord told Peter that his disciples must be ready to take up the cross and follow him, he meant that they must be prepared to be looked upon as criminals for the Truth's sake. That has been the case with Christ's true disciples ever since. Even today, the badge of criminality is attached to them, in that they refuse to conform to the requirements of the State in regard to military service, and other matters which conflict with the law of God.

For that matter, there is mutual antipathy between the adherents of Christ (the seed of the woman) and those of the world (the seed of the serpent). Each looks on the other as a criminal to be crucified, and thereby removed from influence and power! The world would put to death the Truth if it could; and Christ's followers look to the time when the world, as it today exists, will be executed as a criminal.

So Paul taught: "I glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

As the stake of shame was being made ready for Jesus, he was stripped of the cloak the soldiers had flung around him, and clad again in his own garments. In addition, as was normal, Pilate ordered that a placard be prepared stating the reason for the execution. This was usually inscribed upon wood, and either carried by a soldier so that all could read it, or hung around the neck of the guilty party, so that he placarded his crime as he walked to the place of execution. This was to warn others to avoid such a fate.

Pilate saw in this custom an opportunity to retaliate against the Jewish leaders who had proved too shrewd for him. In Jesus' case, he ordered that the inscription be written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin that all might read it, and that it bear the caption: *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*.

At last all was ready, and with a Roman guard, the three prisoners were brought forth. It was then that the Jewish leaders saw the inscription, and were appalled at what they read. It implied that they were guilty of killing their King-Messiah. They pleaded with Pilate to change the wording. "*Write not, 'The King of the Jews',*" they requested, "*but that he said, I am the King of the Jews.*"

But Pilate refused to do it. They had advanced the charge against Jesus, and had failed completely to justify the sentence of death that they had demanded; he would not change the wording. "*What I have written remains!*" he declared.

The inscription virtually said: You say this man is a criminal; I say he is the king of the Jews. For you, a criminal-king under sentence of death from Rome, is all that you Jews deserve.

They hated Pilate all the more for the inscription he caused to be written.

Then, the three prisoners set off with the Roman guard protecting them. In the case of Jesus, the Jews led the way (Jn. 19:16), and he followed with the wooden placard hanging about his neck, and the heavy stake resting on his lacerated, bleeding back.

The city, at that time, was crowded with visitors who had come from all parts to celebrate the Passover, so that as this sad procession started on its way, the eyes of many people would be turned toward it.

Simon Carries the Stake (Mat. 27:32; Mk. 15:21; Lk. 23:26) The Lord had now almost reached the end of his physical endurance. The stake was the climax of terrible suffering. First there were the days of agitation, debate and tension; then there was the night of deep, emotional strain; followed by the mental agony of the garden, by six exhausting trials before Jews and Gentiles, by brutal treatment at the hands of both Jewish and Roman soldiers during which he had been punched about the face and body, by aggravating taunts and mocking, by the sickening lacerations of scourging.

Though mentally he remained as staunch as ever, his physical strength became enfeebled. Exhausted with his long vigil and lack of food, suffering the agony of pain, sorrow and shame, the verbal and physical attacks from those surrounding him, his body tortured with open wounds and loss of blood, he sank beneath the weight of the stake as he staggered along the hilly road that led from the Tower of Antonia to the northern precincts of the city.

The soldiers became impatient as the weary prisoner lagged behind. They caught sight of one Simon of Cyrenia, a city of North Africa, who was then living adjacent to Jerusalem, and ordered him to carry the stake. Simon was most likely a disciple of the Lord. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus, names of believers referred to in Paul's epistles. There was a Cyrenian synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9), some members of which embraced the Truth, and helped to spread its message to foreign parts (Acts 11:20).



Simon was evidently a prominent member of that community.

If so, he followed his Lord, bearing the stake (Lk. 23:26, RSV), thus illustrating what every disciple should do, and providing a cameo of the divine purpose in the atonement.

The Weeping Women A large company of people joined the (Lk. 23:27-32) miserable procession as it moved slowly along. Among it were many women who commenced to lament at the sad sight, weeping and bewailing, as the cavalcade advanced to the place of execution.

They "lamented him," Luke records. The word, in Greek, signifies to sing a dirge, thus a lamentation. Apparently, it had become common for public mourning to be conducted in times of national distress, and doubtless these women saw in the condemnation and impending execution of the Lord, an appropriate occasion for such an exercise.

The practice dated back to the sad and violent death of King Josiah. At that time, Jeremiah had composed the Lamentation, and the public mourning had been proclaimed as "an ordinance" to be observed on future occasions by Israelites (2Chr. 35:24-27).^{*} How appropriate to the sad procession to Golgotha are the words found in Lam. 1:12,

*"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?
Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow,
Which is done unto me, wherewith
Yahweh hath afflicted me!"*

The bowed head of the suffering Saviour lifted as he heard the solemn chant of the mourning women. Did they not understand that Yahweh would punish the terrible sin that the nation was then committing, and therefore the mourning should be reserved for those who would suffer when it came to pass? Why, the book of Lamentations is a dirge commemorating the destruction upon the guilty city of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah because its people failed to hearken and apply the message of Yahweh's servants! Could they not see that Jerusalem was again heaping to itself a terrible retribution at the hand of Yahweh? He paused and addressed them: "*Daughters of Jerusalem,*" he warned. "*Do not weep for me, but for yourselves and your children. For behold, the days are coming when they shall say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains; 'Fall on us;' and to the hills, 'Cover*

^{*} The Lamentation of Jeremiah will be heard again in Jerusalem in the future, when Jewry again will "look upon Me whom they have pierced" and will mourn as it did in the days of good king Josiah (Zech. 12:10-14).

us.' For if they will do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry!'"

The Lord was referring to the terrible judgment, that ultimately came upon Jerusalem in AD70. His comments were based upon the prophetic visions of Hosea (ch. 9:12-16; 10:8) and Ezekiel (ch. 17:24). The first two Scriptures speak of the terrible punishment that was experienced by the northern tribes when the Assyrian devastated the land, and which the Lord now inferred would be felt by Judah. They would be such days of suffering that death would be preferred to life, and men would seek political oblivion in order to bring an end to the trouble that would overwhelm them. Applying the context of Hosea's words to the judgment of AD70, the people could expect to see children "brought forth to the murderer" (Hos. 9:13), and the people "driven out of Yahweh's house," because of their wickedness. The punishment would stem from the invasion of a brutal, foreign power (Hos. 10:9). So it came to pass in AD70.

The third Scripture speaks of how the "sap" of Israel's fig tree would be dried up and consumed by the fire of divine anger. The teaching of John the Baptist and of the Lord Jesus constituted the "sap" in the "tree" at that time; but when it dried up, as the Lord implied it would, then the tree would be given over to complete destruction by burning.

One man was dying that day through the folly of the leaders; but a million would die in the holocaust of Jerusalem, when blood would flow like water, and death would seem as a happy release from sorrow, starvation and torture. Meanwhile, more than emotional mourning was required: even an intelligent understanding of the divine will and purpose, and repentance to follow in a way of sanity leading to life.

The mourning women doubtless stopped their lamentation to hearken to these strange words from a man about to die, but it is very doubtful whether they would have understood their meaning apart from the general idea that the coming generation would experience a terrible judgment because it persisted in the way of its fathers.

At Golgotha

At the hill of Golgotha the three stakes of wood were prepared for their terrible purpose. The word translated "cross" in the Bible is *stauron* in Greek, and signifies "stake." It normally comprised an upright piece of stout wood, and a transom.

Crucifixion was a brutal, torturing kind of death. However, the Jews did alleviate the pain caused by giving to the condemned, immediately before execution, a draught of wine medicated with some powerful opiate; in the Lord's case, mixed with myrrh. This was a narcotic that helped to stupefy the mind, and dull the pain (Psa.

75:8). They now offered this to the Lord. Racked with thirst, and in agony, the Lord accepted the drink and tasted it*; but as soon as he discerned what it was, he refused it. He needed all the powers of mind for the ordeal ahead of him, so that he might glorify the Father in death as he had in life. Moreover, he had told the apostles that he would not drink of wine until the Kingdom of God come (Mk. 14:25), and he was determined to keep his vow.

And so they crucified him.

First they stripped him of his clothing, leaving only a slight covering for decency's sake.

Then the stake was laid upon the ground; the inscription was nailed to the top of it; the transom was put in its place. Then came the most awful moment of all. He was laid down upon the stake. Huge, rough Roman nails were driven through his hands and feet, pinning him to the wood, ruthlessly hammered through the quivering flesh by a mallet. Then the stake was set upright in the hole prepared for it. There was no rest for the feet. The body was supported by nails and by a projecting pin called the seat. The condemned's feet were raised up until the soles lay flat on the upright beam. They were only a little above the ground, so that it was possible for beasts of prey to gnaw at the bodies placed on the stakes.

Then the sufferer, bleeding from the cruel scourge, and experiencing untold agonies, was left to slowly die.

How much more agonising was all this to the sensitive, intelligent mind of the Lord, who not only suffered physical pain, but the mental torture of witnessing all the evil he had seen that day. It is said, that the more intelligent is a person the greater does he experience pain. If that be so, how excruciatingly agonising must it all have been for the Lord Jesus. It is terrible to contemplate it; how shocking to experience it. Prophetically, the Psalmist declared (Psa. 69:19-21):

*"Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour;
Mine adversaries are all before Thee.*

Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness;

I looked for some to take pity, but there was none;

And for comforters, but I found none.

They gave me also gall for my meat;

And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

Three stakes stood starkly upright on Golgotha's Hill. The central one was more prominent than the other two. It was graced by a most

* In the Upper Room, the Lord declared he would not drink of the "fruit of the vine" (used in a memorial of sacrifice) until his kingdom should come (Mk. 14:25). Being offered wine on the stake he refused it (Mark 15:23, where the Gr. word οἶνος, *oinos*, is translated "wine" but refers to an adulterated version, being "mingled with myrrh"), but accepted the "vinegar" (Gr. οἶκος οξος, *oinos oxos*, Jn. 19:30). The Master refused the drugged wine; but accepted the vinegar.

unusual inscription which identified the crime of which the one impaled thereon was guilty. It read: **THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

On each side of this central stake was another on which was crucified one of the thieves; and over their heads were the inscriptions telling of their crimes.



And so the words of Isaiah 53:12 were fulfilled: "He was numbered with the transgressors..."

A Prayer From the Stake (Lk. 23:34)

We can imagine how the two criminals would have reacted to the cruelties laid upon them. No doubt the air would resound with cries of anguish, and bitter language would be poured upon their tormentors, as the cruel nails would be driven ruthlessly through hands and feet.

But that was not the case with the one impaled upon the stake in the centre. He remained calm and quiet throughout the ordeal, sustained by the strength that came from communion with the Father above (Jn. 16:32). Then, when the three were impaled in that public place before the curious eyes of the gaping multitude, he at last broke his silence. But it was not to curse his tormentors, nor to utter a natural cry of anguish wrung from a tortured body, but to pray on behalf of his persecutors. They heard him plead: "**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!**"

What a prayer to be offered at such a time! It fulfilled prophecy, it exemplified his own teaching, and it provided an example for his followers to emulate. As to the first, Isaiah predicted: "He made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). As to the second, Christ taught: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 5:44-45). As to the third, Peter recorded: "Even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously (1Pet. 2:21-23).

How often we allow the small, irritating things of life to so affect us that we speak inadvisedly with our tongue! How often we indulge in hasty, angry words, whereas a "quiet answer would turn away

wrath!" How important it is that we strive after every failure to try, with the strength that comes from above, to discipline ourselves better. James taught that "the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (Jas. 3:8-10). So it is by nature. But by the power of the Word we can gradually derive the means to control both thought and tongue, and use both to the glory of God.

Through a strength he derived from Yahweh, and through willing subjection to His guidance, Christ had perfected this quality (Psa. 80:17), and we can partially succeed in the same endeavour by the strength that comes from the same Source through the mediatorship of the Lord Jesus (Phil. 4:13).

Jesus prayed for those of his tormentors who acted in ignorance. And Yahweh, in His mercy, granted the prayer. He provided a further opportunity to the people of Israel to repent and turn to Him. For that purpose, the apostles were sent to the nation preaching the doctrine of forgiveness even in regard to its rejection of the Messiah, on the grounds that it was performed in ignorance.

"Now brethren," taught Peter (Acts 3:17), "I realise that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers."

"It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you," declared Paul to the Jews (Acts 13:46).

Why was it necessary, since the same method is not adopted now? It was necessary then because God required it in fulfilment of Christ's prayer on the stake. How great is the mercy of Yahweh (Psa. 103:11-13); how boundless is the love of Christ (Eph. 3:19)!

**The Soldiers Claim
His Clothing**
(Mat. 27:35-36;
Mk. 15:24-25;
Lk. 23:34;
Jn. 19:23-24)

But even as that prayer of love and mercy was uttered, the Lord was subjected to further indignities by those who were his persecutors. Crowds gathered before him, many of whom were prepared to mock the dying man. In front of the stake was a guard of four soldiers in the charge of a centurion.

They were there to prevent any attempt at rescue, and they claimed the clothing of the victims as a reward for so monotonous and disagreeable a task.

They did so with the garments of the Lord Jesus. Hardened to the suffering he experienced, indifferent to the prayer of mercy that had been uttered, they took the last of his earthly possessions, to divide among themselves. The outer garments (*himatia*) were easily divisible among the four soldiers, but the inner garment, or coat (*chitona*), was like that worn by the high priest: woven throughout of one piece (Jn. 19:23; Exo. 28:32). It was evidently a linen garment that reached to the feet (Rev. 1:13), and it was now to be taken to provide a covering for one who had crucified him!

The soldiers recognised that to divide such a garment into four would be to completely ruin it. ***“Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,”*** they declared. This was done, and in a remarkable way, Bible prophecy was fulfilled. Psalms 22 which deals in detail with the sufferings of Christ on the stake, predicted: “They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.”

Mocked by the People A public road ran past the hill of Golgotha, (Mat. 27:39-40; and on that saddest of days in Israel’s history, Mk. 15:29-30) it was crowded. A large number of people had followed the procession from the Tower of Antonia to the place of crucifixion, and many of them merely stood to gaze upon the terrible scene of agony and death. They were augmented by others, passers-by, who not merely gaped upon the scene before them, but added to the misery of the occasion by shouting mocking insults at the Lord. They could have included the false witnesses hired to bring a charge against him in the palace of the high priest, but who had been thwarted in their attempt, or some of those who had been urged on by the priests to shout “crucify him!” outside the Roman barracks.

Be that as it may, they railed on him, shaking their heads in derision and shouting: ***“Ha! You who claimed to be able to destroy the temple, and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the stake if you be the Son of God!”***

This was the charge that the false witnesses had levelled against the Lord, and means that either they were there at Golgotha at this time, or else the priests had been busy circulating the charge of blasphemy against him on the grounds of his alleged statement concerning the temple. The priests were anxious to counter any influence that Pilate’s inscription could have on any who might have been impressed with the teaching and miracles of Christ during the previous week.

The mocking taunt of those passers-by was designed to put Jesus to the test. One can imagine the priests pointing out to any doubters, that if Jesus really be the Christ, he should be able to “save himself.” Did not Zechariah 9:9 promise that, in regard to the King-Messiah (see margin)? If the inscription over his head be true, let him illustrate it by fulfilling this prophecy, and save himself!

So, to many minds, on a test of Scripture, Jesus failed! It could be, that some of the Lord’s own disciples, hearing the taunt, waited for him to save himself as Zechariah’s prophecy indicated, expecting him to continue his work of miracles — to vindicate himself. If so, they waited in vain, whilst the Lord’s detractors now felt that they had Scripture to endorse their attitude.

If they had looked more closely at Scripture, they may have found

that it predicted the very part they were playing in the sad drama. Psa. 22:5-6 anticipated the sufferings of Christ:

*"I am a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised of the people.
All they that see me laugh me to scorn;
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head,
Saying: He trusted on Yahweh that He would deliver him;
Let Him deliver him, seeing he delighted in Him."*

Psa. 69:26 (another Messianic Psalm) declared:

*"For they persecute him whom Thou hast smitten;
And they talk to the grief of those whom Thou hast wounded."*

The mocking public fulfilled those words by casting in the face of Jesus all the accusations levelled against him during his trials: the comment about rebuilding the temple in three days, his claim to kingship, his claim to Sonship. Doubtless the priests had hastened from Pilate to explain to all and sundry the reason for the execution, and to urge them on in their railing against Jesus. By such means they countered any influence that the inscription at the head of the stake might have had.

**The Priests and
Elders Mock the
Lord (Mat. 27:41-43;
Mk. 15:31-32;
Lk. 23:35)**

Not satisfied to merely urge on the crowd to mock at the Lord, the priests so far forgot the dignity of their position as to boldly and blasphemously take up the very refrain of the people which they had incited, and likewise to fling it in the face of the suffering Saviour.

"He saved others," they heartlessly told the crowds, *"but he cannot save himself! He, the King of Israel! If so, let him come down now from the stake; and we will believe him! He claims that his trust is in God, does he? Let God deliver him now, if He cares for him! He said he was the Son of God!"*

Little did those ignorant priests realise that they were using the very words which Psa. 22:7-8 predicted they would use against the Lord! Like the people, they called upon Jesus to demonstrate the validity of his claim to be the promised king, by saving himself. In fact, he was fulfilling the words of Zechariah, and "saving himself," by submitting to the will of the Father even unto the death on the stake!

But the very fact that those priests subjected the Lord to the test of such Scriptures as Zech. 9:9, indicates that they were somewhat uneasy as to their action against the one impaled before them. After all, they must have been impressed by his calm dignity in the face of such trials, the miracles he had earlier performed, and even the power of his teaching. They therefore sought to mutually strengthen one another in the conviction that they had acted rightly, for they spoke

these words "one to the other" (Mk. 15:31), as though seeking justification for their actions.

**The Thieves Mock
Jesus (Mat. 27:44;
Mk. 15:32;
Lk. 23:36-43)**

Thus a chorus of invective arose against the Lord as he hung upon the stake. Even the poor wretches who likewise hung there to die, cast the same accusation in his face.

From all sides, from every class, there arose mocking taunts to add to the suffering of the Lord. Priests, people and prisoners joined in the terrible chant, as the seed of the serpent spat its poison in the direction of the Seed of the woman.

At the foot of the stake, the Roman guard that had divided his garments among themselves, joined in the shocking baiting of an innocent man about to die. They derisively took up the words of the priests, and mockingly approaching close to the stake, they tauntingly offered a toast to the crucified king from the sour wine of their mid-day meal (Lk. 23:36).

But the Lord, having uttered the prayer of mercy, remained silent. There was nothing to be gained by doing otherwise. The people would not have heeded his words if he had attempted an explanation, whilst, on the other hand, it was beneath him to answer railing with railing. Instead, he provided an example for all time (1Pet. 2:23).

His very silence was eloquent.

It proved so even then.

One of the thieves crucified with the Lord, took up the railing words of the priests,* and turning his head toward Jesus, declared: "*If thou be Christ, save yourself and us!*"

The other thief, however, had been deeply impressed by the attitude of the Lord. He noticed how calmly Jesus took his sufferings; how quietly he submitted to the noisy railing of the people; how mercifully he had pleaded on the behalf of his tormentors. His eyes turned to the inscription above the stake claiming that Jesus was the King of the Jews.** He pondered the meaning of the message. Perhaps, on earlier, happier occasions, he had heard the Master discoursing on the Scriptures. Perhaps his very presence on Golgotha was a miscarriage of justice as was that of the Lord's.

* Mat. 27:44 speaks of both thieves "casting the same in his teeth," whereas Lk. 23:39 refers to one of them "railing" on him. The verb in Matthew is *oneidizo*, and signifies "to reproach," but that in Luke is *blasphemeo*, and is a much stronger word. The repentant thief commenced with a reproach but ended with a prayer; the other thief began by reproaching and ended by blaspheming. One followed the example of Christ; the other that of the priests!

** This is suggested by the way Luke introduces the inscription, and then goes on to write of the repentant thief, as though indicating that the message above the stake had an influence upon him for good.

Be that as it may, he recognised the great difference between Jesus in the centre, and himself and his companion on either side. Though he was suffering in pain, he realised that he had committed a crime for which he had to pay; but what of Jesus? What crime had he committed? The very inscription over the head of the Lord testified that the priests had failed in their charges of blasphemy and sedition according to Pilate. Perhaps, as he faced his death, his mind went back over the Scriptures, and recalled some of those which speak of the suffering servant of Yahweh (2Sam. 7:14; Psalms 22; 40; 69; Isa. 53; Mic. 5:1-2; Dan. 9:26, and so forth). Perhaps, on the stake, he prayed for enlightenment. In any case, it came. In spite of the mocking taunts of the priests and people, he saw, as it were, the light of Truth. He recognised the identity of the one by his side, and sought his help.

But first he rebuked his companion in crime.

“Do you not fear God, seeing you are suffering the same punishment?” he asked. ***“We suffer justly; we are getting what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong!”***

Then, turning his head to the Lord: ***“Jesus,”*** he pleaded. ***“Remember me when you come into your kingdom”*** (Lk. 23:42).

What inexpressible comfort those words uttered by the dying criminal must have brought to the Lord Jesus. At a moment when the priests were disgracing their grey-haired dignity and lofty reputation by their heartless reproaches, and the people were mocking at the Lamb of God as they gathered to remember the Passover Lamb, and soldiers at the foot of the stake were winning laughs by toasting to the king, this word of confidence in his ministry, encouraged the Lord with the fact that he would not die in vain.

Again the Lord broke his silence. Turning his head in the direction of the thief (he could not turn his body), he promised that his declaration of faith would not go unheeded. ***“Truly I say unto you today, you shall be with me in paradise!”*** he promised. It is obvious from this brief conversation, that the repentant thief was both discerning and humble. This is shown by the following facts:

1. *He realised Jesus would rise from the grave;*
2. *He acknowledged that he would come again in kingly dignity;*
3. *He believed that he would then reward his saints;*
4. *He clearly saw his own failings and need for forgiveness;*
5. *He was humble, making no demand except that he be remembered in Jesus' coming day of glory.*

If we have the faith of that thief, and, acknowledging our need of Christ, seek him in truth and righteousness, we may hope to witness the thief elevated to kingly glory in the day of Christ's coming.

The Lord's Promise to the Repentant Thief

In the A.V. this is given thus: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." This statement is used by many to teach that the alleged immortal soul of the thief ascended with the Lord's into heaven.

But that cannot possibly be for several reasons.

Firstly, it is basic to the teaching of the Master that the faithful will be "recompensed" at the "resurrection of the just" (Lk. 14:14; Jn. 11:25). Notice that the thief spoke of Christ's coming, not of his going into heaven.

Secondly, Jesus could not have been specific as to when this would take place, for he then was in ignorance of the time of his glorification (see Mk. 13:32; Acts 1:7).

Thirdly, Jesus did not ascend into "paradise" that day, for, as Peter taught, "his soul" descended into "hell," the grave (Acts 2:27, 31).

The *Companion Bible* states that the construction of the Greek demands that Christ's words should be rendered: "I say unto thee today," thus marking the solemnity of the occasion. It points out that there is no inspired authority for the comma where it appears in the A.V. It comments: "Punctuation as we have it today, is entirely absent [from the Greek text of the N.T.]. The earliest two manuscripts have only an occasional dot, and this on the level of the top of the letters. The text reads on without any divisions between letters or words until the manuscripts of the ninth century, when there is seen for the first time a single point which separates each word. This dot is placed in the middle of the line, but is often omitted.

"None of our modern marks of punctuation are found until the ninth century, and then only in Latin versions and some cursives. From this it will be seen that the punctuation of all modern additions of the Greek text, and of all versions made from it, rests *entirely on human authority* and has no weight whatever in determining or even influencing the interpretation of a single passage. This also refers to the employment of capital letters, and to all modern literary refinements of the present day."

The Lord promised the thief a place "in paradise." This word is of Persian origin, and signifies a park, garden, or enclosed garden. It is used in the Greek Old Testament in such places as Neh. 2:8; Jer. 29:5; Ecc. 2:5; Song 4:13. It is used of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8); figuratively of Israel as a nation (Num. 24:6; Isa. 1:30; Eze. 31:8-9); and the future glory of Christ's earthly kingdom (Isa. 51:1-3).

In the Greek of Christ's statement to the thief, the word "paradise" has the definite article with it: "the paradise," and the reference is undoubtedly to the Land and Kingdom of Israel glorified in the future.

Chapter 2

JESUS PROVIDES FOR HIS MOTHER

BUT all who looked on the sad scene of Golgotha did not mock. Afar off there was a group of women, some of whom had ministered to the Master as he travelled from place to place in Galilee. Among this heart-broken group were his mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Salome the wife of Zebedee. These four, together with John the apostle, the Lord's cousin, had drawn nearer to the stake. The grief-stricken mother looked upon the shame and agony of her son. Did her mind go back to the joyful occasion, just a little more than thirty years earlier, when she had presented him as a babe in the temple, and the aged Simeon had blessed the family group, but then had solemnly warned her: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also!" (Lk. 2:35)?

Jesus Provides for His Mother (Jn. 19:25-27)

She had suffered much throughout his ministry. Her other children had influenced her to join them in urging upon the Lord the need of restraint, and so interfering in his labour. At the very beginning of his ministry, he had gently shown her that his earthly and filial relationships had to be transcended by those which are far higher and divine, in order that he might go about his Father's business. Yet he had never forgotten her; nor she him. And in this supreme hour of humiliation and pain, she was at his side whatever the rest of the family might think. His sorrow was her sorrow; his pain was felt by her; and she agonised for him as he hung helpless on the stake.

The women and John crept nearer to the stake, and the eyes of the Lord looked upon them. He saw his mother grief-stricken and anguished; distraught at his disgrace and sufferings. She had evidently been deserted of her other children, for they were not with her. The Lord took in the scene and understood what it meant. His mother, who had earlier tried to restrain him, was now at his side; evidently sacrificing the goodwill of her children to be there. There was no help for her from that quarter, and she must be assisted.

And so words of filial love came from the stricken figure on the stake. He saw John there, the disciple he loved, the one he felt he could trust above all the others at that time. Again his eyes glanced at his mother. He could not walk to her; he could not stretch out his hands to her; he could barely lift his head to look at her. But she, intent upon her firstborn, caught his glance. "**Woman,**" he said to her tenderly, "**Behold your son!**"

Then to John: "***Behold your mother!***"

John realised what was expected of him. In his tender feelings for his mother the Master would have taken her away from the scene of his sufferings, and cared for her, but he could not. John did it immediately. Quietly, he withdrew the weeping widow away from the shadow of the terrible stake, to a home adjacent to Jerusalem, to which he had access, and there he sought to comfort her; though

THE TIME OF THE CRUCIFIXION

Mark declares that they crucified the Lord "the third hour" (Mk. 15:25), whereas John records that it was "about the sixth hour" when Pilate was addressing the Jews, just prior to the crucifixion.

Who was right?

The usual explanation is that John was using Roman time, whereas Mark was recording the circumstances according to the Jewish divisions of the day. But such an explanation lacks conviction. There seems no reason for John to suddenly revert to Roman time here whereas elsewhere he is obviously giving Jewish methods of timing (chs. 1:39; 4:6). The sixth hour according to the latter, would be noon, and the third hour 9am.

Nine am. in the morning seems too early for the crucifixion, in view of the fact that the Sanhedrin had to meet after sunrise to officially condemn the Lord, and after he was sent to Pilate, to Herod, and back to Pilate again. This would occupy some time, and would hardly be completed soon enough for the crucifixion to take place at the time specified by Mark.

Did Mark make a mistake?

The answer is, No! Mark is supplying the time when the Jews "crucified" the Lord, not the Romans. The previous verse records how the Romans crucified the Lord, and stole his garments from him, and the next verse which repeats the fact of the crucifixion, doubtless has relation to the part played by the Jews in the matter. Some three hours before the Romans literally crucified the Lord on the stake, he was condemned by the Jewish Sanhedrin to die, and thus "crucified" him. The Romans were but the tools of the Jews in the matter, and the latter had the greater sin (Jn. 19:11).

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Jews are charged with crucifying the Lord (Acts 2:23, 36; 3:15; 4:10; 1Thes. 2:15). When did they do this? When they officially condemned him to death in their Sanhedrin council. This took place at 9am, the third hour, though it was not until just before the sixth hour, or noon, that the Lord was crucified by the Romans. Thus, the Jews crucified him with their tongues; the Romans did so with nails.

words were hard to find for that purpose. For even John did not understand why Jesus had to die. After a while, leaving Mary in the house, John returned to Golgotha.

Darkness Enshrouds the Land (Mat. 27:45; Mk. 15:33; Lk. 23:44-45) It was now after noon, when the sun is at its brightest. But instead of it shining brightly, its power began to wane until darkness enshrouded the land. The mocking voices of the Lord's tormentors were stilled as this

happened. Fear replaced their taunts so that an uneasy silence followed. They could not understand what was happening. This was not a normal eclipse, for such is not possible during the period of the full moon, nor would it last as long as this darkness did: three hours. It could have been caused by Yahweh sending heavy, black clouds to blot out the shining of the sun, and thus hide from the blasphemous eyes of those gathered about the stake, the final sufferings of His Son. Whatever the means Yahweh used, the natural sun was hidden from view, and as this happened, the darkness of death likewise stole upon the Sun of Righteousness.

The darkness continued until the ninth hour, 3pm. At about that time, a voice was heard amid the darkness from the stake: "*Eli Eli, lama sabachthani...*" The Lord would have cited the Hebrew words that form the opening line of Psalms 22. In English they read: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me..." We can accept Psalms 22, therefore, as the prayer of the Lord uttered as his life was ebbing away. It is a Psalm that takes us into the very shadow of the stake, that expresses the innermost feelings of Christ, and enables us to better understand his sufferings.

The opening line does not signify that Yahweh had forsaken His Son in the sense that we might use the term. The words in the Greek, translated "why hast Thou forsaken me" (Mat. 27:46), signify "unto what," or "with what intention," hast Thou done this? The term "forsaken" is from the Hebrew *azab*, to loosen, or leave. Yahweh was about to withdraw His spirit and leave the Lord Jesus to die upon the stake, though, at no stage, did He forsake him in the normal meaning of the English word.

Why was this necessary? The balance of the Psalm-prayer provides the answer. It acknowledges that God is righteous, for He delivered those who put their trust in Him (vv. 2-5), and then expresses the reason why Yahweh would not deliver His Son from death, but left him to suffer as he did: "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people" (Psalms 22:6).

The word "worm" is a translation of the Hebrew *tola* relating to the crimson coccus. This is a "worm" like the cochineal insect of Mexico, which was crushed to obtain the crimson dye so greatly

favoured in the East. This crimson found its way into the tabernacle (Exo. 25:4). It was used also for the purification ceremony of the leper, and, with the water of separation, in the cleansing of defilement caused by contact with the dead (Lev. 14:4; Num. 19:6).

How appropriate is this expression to describe the reason why Yahweh had to leave Jesus to die, whereas He saved others. Christ died to obtain salvation for the human race. This is the answer to the rhetorical question: "To what hast Thou forsaken me?" In his prayer, therefore, Jesus acknowledged that fact, and expressed his willingness to submit to his Father's will.

The Psalm predicts the mocking comments of the crowd at the foot of the stake, which, therefore, the Lord, in his prayer, mentioned to his Father. At the same time it expresses a prayer to Yahweh seeking His help to conquer the tribulations that overwhelmed him as a flood (vv. 7-11). It speaks of how his tormentors stood around the stake and gaped upon him (vv. 12-13); how that gradually, the pangs of death took hold of him, so that in his feverish condition he felt as though all moisture had been drained from his body, and he experienced agony in every bone. And as his heart beat heavily to pump the blood through his veins (v. 14), a terrible thirst overcame him (v. 15). Meanwhile, they took his very clothes from him, and parted them among his captors (v. 18). So he described his destitute and lonely state as life slowly ebbed away.

Yet that same prayer spoke of his confidence in a resurrection from the dead (v. 22), and of a time, yet future, when he will fulfil his vows before them that fear Yahweh (v. 25). It looked in hope to the time when "the meek shall eat and be satisfied," the proud will be suppressed, and, finally, "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto Yahweh" so that His kingdom shall be established throughout the earth (vv. 26-28).

So, this Psalm, this prayer of faith, which commenced on a note of darkest sorrow (like the darkness then enshrouding the land) concluded on one of greatest joy: the "joy set before him" (Heb. 12:2). It began with a sob, but it ended with a song: a song that one day shall reverberate around the world, and tell in thrilling tones the wonderful triumph of the Son who was crucified "by wicked hands" so long ago.

Out of suffering there came joy. That is the parable of Christ, of the ecclesia, of Israel, and of the world.

The token of this, was seen on Golgotha's hill, when the repentant thief was made joyful in hope, in spite of the pain of death that then afflicted him. In the drama then enacted, there is seen a cameo of the world about us. The central figure is Christ interceding for those who put their trust in Yahweh. Before him there is the mocking, indifferent world both religious (the priests and elders) and political (the Roman

soldiers). On either side there are those two to whom the reality of death had been made obvious. One railed upon the Lord in his misery; the other thoughtfully turned his eyes to the inscription above, and recalling the teaching of Jesus that he had already heard, besought his help when he shall come to establish his kingdom.

The Lord granted the petition.

All humanity fits into that picture. The political and religious world today is unheeding of Christ, and mocks at his appeal. Few only recognise the reality of death, and fewer still are prepared to humble themselves to seek the help of Christ.

Let us heed the example of the repentant thief, and fixing our eyes upon the inscription at the head of the crucified Lord, look beyond his shame and sorrow, to the joyful time when Psa. 22:28 will be fulfilled: "For the kingdom is Yahweh's; and He is the governor among the nations."

"It is Finished"
(Mat. 27:47-50;
Mk. 15:35-37;
Lk. 23:46;
Jn. 19:28-30)

The mocking shouts and cruel taunts of Christ's bitter enemies had gradually died away, and had been replaced by an uneasy fear, as events moved to their close. The people had noticed an unusual gloom of gathering darkness in the sky, that had gradually blotted out the sun from view and brought about night in the midst of noonday. It was a token fulfilment of Mic. 3:5-6, "Thus saith Yahweh concerning the prophets that make My people err, that bite with the teeth... Night shall be unto you, that you shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that you shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them."

Out of the literal gloom that darkened Golgotha, they heard Christ commence his prayer: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani.*" It made them feel even more uneasy. Particularly in view of the supernatural darkness. A feeling of awe came over them. They were not altogether sure whether the one on the stake, by some stupendous miracle of power, might not even yet come down and save himself. They knew that Elijah must first come, and when they heard the Lord commence: "My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me..." they thought that he was appealing to God to send the prophet to deliver him. The non-appearance of Elijah would mean that Jesus was not the Messiah.

"This man is calling for Elijah!" they declared.

A thrill of expectancy ran through the crowd. A momentary gleam of hope probably filled the hearts of those of the Lord's disciples who may have remained. Perhaps this would be the sign that would indicate the manifestation of power! Perhaps angels in gleaming light would stream down from heaven and deliver the Son of God from the

evil forces of darkness that seemed then in ascendancy. Perhaps by some awful theophany of glory, the one dying upon the stake would be saved and the kingdom established...

But if those were the expectations of some, they were disappointed. Nothing happened. He had to die. And meanwhile the sufferings of Jesus intensified. It seemed to him as though his heart would break, and as his body was stretched out on the cruel stake, and every nerve screamed with pain, he felt the agony in every bone of his body. Finally, a burning fever took possession from him and wrung from him the one sole word of physical suffering which he uttered in all the hours during which he had endured the extreme of all that men can afflict.

He cried aloud, "***I thirst!***" They are words that express the thought of Psa. 22:15:

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd;

My tongue cleaveth to my jaws;

Thou hast brought me into the dust of death."

The cry, "I thirst!" did not go unheeded. Perhaps a little earlier, before the darkness had blotted out the sun, and priests and people were mocking the crucified Saviour, the appeal might have been ignored, or used as the basis of some taunt. But now one of the bystanders, urged on by others (Jn. 19:29), took a sponge, and dipping it in a vessel containing vinegar,* placed it on a stalk of hyssop (about a foot [300mm] long), and held it to the parched lips of the dying Lord.

Others took exception to this simple act of pity. "***Stop!***" they ordered. "***Let us see if Elijah does come to save him!***"

The man did not stop to hold the stalk to the thirsty Lord, however, though after he had performed his act of mercy, he re-echoed the same uneasy words (Mk. 15:36).

But Elijah did not come, nor any other to comfort or help him. It was the will of God that he should be "perfected through sufferings," and though He would "save him out of death," he had first to go through the dread ordeal. He did so as an example to those who would follow afterwards (Gal. 5:24), revealing that the flesh must be put to death in service to Yahweh, even though it may involve both pain and shame.

And now the sad end approached. From the stake there came a further cry: "***It is finished!***"

* See note on page 395. The word translated vinegar in Mat. 27:48 is *oxos* in Greek, and signifies an acid vinegar. It should be distinguished from the word *oinos*, which signifies "wine," though translated "vinegar" in the same chapter (v. 34). Jesus refused the *oinos*, or "wine," but accepted the *oxos* or vinegar (Jn. 19:30), thus maintaining his vow not to drink again of the "fruit of the vine" until the Kingdom of God should come.

According to some, this epitomises the conclusion of Psa. 22, implying the whole of the Psalm was uttered from the stake.

One further prayer the Lord uttered, and, again, it was one expressed before by the sweet Psalmist of Israel (Psa. 31:5). ***“Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit!”***

His opening prayer had asked forgiveness for his murderers; his closing prayer committed himself to the Father. The term “spirit” is often used for the sentient element in man by which he acts (Mat. 5:3; 26:41), or for the man himself (Mk. 2:8), so that now, at the close of a life of complete obedience unto the Father, he presented his labours to him as a sacrifice on the altar which he himself provided. He is both altar (Heb. 13:10) and sacrifice; the perfect Lamb of God for the sin of the world. By this action of sacrifice the means of final redemption from sin’s flesh was possible.

Then he ***“gave up the spirit,”*** or “breathed his last,” as the RV renders it. The perfect example had been displayed for the edification of mankind; and the perfect sacrifice had been offered for sins. It is an example and a sacrifice that has inspired other faithful men since. The first Christian martyr, Stephen, modelled his conduct upon it. When he was brought before the same Sanhedrin and unrighteously and cruelly stoned to death, he borrowed both the first and last prayers of Christ upon the stake to express his feelings. He, too, prayed for the forgiveness of his persecutors; and he, too, offered his life to the Father as a sacrifice upon the Christ-altar (Acts 7:59-60).

Nature Shudders and People Tremble The final prayer of Christ on the stake was answered by a remarkable convulsion of nature. When Christ had commenced his prayer based upon Psa. 22, the darkness had dissipated, and the sun had shone forth again (cp. Mat. 27:45-46). Significantly, that prayer had expressed the Lord’s total dedication to his Father’s will.

When he concluded his prayers on the stake and breathed his last, the earth quaked and trembled; rocks were split, and the stone doors of tombs rolled away. And in the great temple, the heavy veil that separated the Holy from the Most Holy was torn asunder, unnaturally from top to bottom, as though by the mystical, powerful hands of heavenly angels, reaching down to split the veil.

It was an indication of what had been accomplished by the sacrifice of the Lord. Through it the key to unlock the grave and deliver from death would be given unto him (Rev. 1:18). This was indicated by the tombs opening at his death, and the way to the Most Holy (symbolic of immortality) being revealed.

It had been the ninth hour when the Lord had commenced his prayer, about three in the afternoon. This was the very time when the

Passover lambs would begin to be offered by the crowds that now thronged the temple courts.

It is obvious, therefore, that long before the Lord expired on the stake, the priests had left the scene to attend to matters in the temple. They left Golgotha with murderous hands figuratively dripping with blood, to hypocritically sprinkle the altar of Yahweh, with the blood of the Passover lambs that already had been superseded.

Thousands of people would congregate for that purpose, so that the Levites and priests would be busy attending to their requirements. Whilst it was incumbent upon the head of each house to slay the lamb, the priests sprinkled the altar with its blood. The Passover ritual finished at 6 pm, so that between 3 and 6 a long program of work had to be carried out. The lambs were slain "between the evenings" (Exo. 12:6, mg.), or between those times. The work to be undertaken has been described as follows:

"First the lamb for the daily evening sacrifice is slaughtered in the temple. Then the twenty-four senior members of the priestly order, who only appear altogether in the holy city for the three great pilgrimage feasts assemble, and the most sacred ritual of atonement begins as a preparation for the Passover. The innumerable Passover lambs are slaughtered, and the priests sprinkle the atoning paschal blood on the altar. Meanwhile, the temple trumpets announce the hours of prayer, and summon the whole city to the evening worship. The Passover slaughtering continues. The Levites strike their harps and sing the Hallel: 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of Yahweh' (Psa. 118:17); 'The stone that the builders rejected is become the head of the corner' (v. 22). Trumpet blasts and bugle calls can be heard far away, proclaiming the great event. At the blood-sprinkled altar, reconciliation and peace is being offered by God to His people. Then the festal crowd leaves the temple mount with the slaughtered lambs, and the paschal lambs are roasted in the houses. By 6pm the father of the house has inaugurated the Passover meal."

The noise of this would have been heard on Golgotha's hill as the true Passover Lamb was offered.

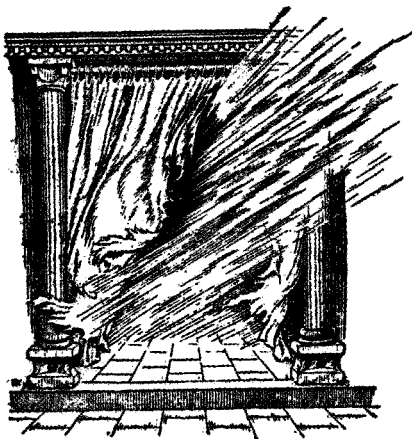
But there was consternation in the temple courts that day, which ruined the spirit of the festival. Firstly, the gathering crowds must have viewed the darkening of the sky with wonder and awe. But fortunately (as they may have viewed it), the sun shone again as the time came for the animals to be slain. But later in the day, as the celebrations were coming to their close, the earthquake rumbled through the city, and the ground quivered and shook underneath the thousands of worshippers gathered together. It was particularly felt at the temple area (Mat. 27:51 — "behold!") and to the consternation of the priests the veil that hid the Most Holy was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Until repairs were effected, the temple was put out

of use for divine service! According to Josephus, this veil was a Babylonian curtain (*Wars*, 5:5:4), some 60 feet (18 metres) high, and very heavy. Whilst it hung in place, it signified that the way to immortality was barred (Heb. 9:8; 10:19-20). But now, to the horrified gaze of the officiating priest, it was torn asunder, putting the temple out of commission.

Thus it was as though the very earth itself shuddered at the horror of the crime (cp. *Psa.* 18:6-7). Rocks were split, and the stones that closed the mouths of sepulchres were violently torn away, as a pledge of the ultimate victory over death (*Isa.* 25:8). They were the sepulchres of believers (called "saints" in *Mat.* 27:52) who had recently died. Their tombs remained open until after the resurrection of the Lord, when those imprisoned therein arose and appeared in the city before their startled relations. This was a token of the triumph of him who is the resurrection and the life (*Jn.* 11:25). Like Lazarus before them, they lived out the rest of their mortal lives, again to return to death until the more glorious resurrection of the future.

But meanwhile, at the site of Golgotha, the awe-inspiring incidents of the day had been viewed with wonder by the centurion in charge of the Roman guard. He had witnessed how completely illegal and unfair had been the trial of Jesus: he had seen that the Lord's accusers could not sustain the charges they levelled against him; he had observed the wonderful attitude of Christ on the stake. "***Certainly this man was innocent!***" he said to himself.

Now, as well as all that, there were these paroxysms of nature, indicating divine disapproval at the actions of man: the unusual darkness, the shattering earthquake. They caused this pagan Roman to utter words that shamed the Jews: "***Truly this was a* son of God,***" he declared.



* The Greek text does not have the definite article. This man was not a believer, but recognised the unusual nature of the circumstances, and expressed it as evidence of the work of the "gods."

THE INSCRIPTION ON THE STAKE

Recorded by each of the Gospel writers, they all vary. Matthew has: *"This is Jesus the King of the Jews."* Mark records: *"The King of the Jews."* Luke gives it as: *"This is the King of the Jews."* John has the longest title: *"Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."* The full title doubtless was: *"This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."* As it was recorded in three different languages, there may well have been some variation in each.

It was recorded in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Thus it was proclaimed to the religious, the cultured, and the political world that Jesus is King or Christ. Thus, in a sense, it can be said that they did "say among the heathen that Yahweh reigneth" (Psa. 96:10). They said it in mockery; the future will reveal it in fact.

John records the circumstances of its writing; Matthew and Mark describe it as the charge laid against the Lord; Luke places it in a context that shows that it called one of the thieves to the hope of the Gospel.

The title was the revenge of a weak man mocking at the hated Jews, deriding them through their king.



*John takes
Mary to his
own house*

Chapter 3

THE DAY OF HIS DEATH

THERE now took place a further act of hypocrisy on the part of the Jews, which John personally witnessed, for having taken the Lord's mother away to the shelter of a home, he returned to Golgotha to see the end (Jn. 19:35).

Meanwhile, despite the deliberate, judicial murder of which they were guilty, the Jews remained scrupulous about the ceremonial observances of the Law. Accordingly, as the day was coming to an end, and particularly as it was the Day of Preparation when the Passover was slain preparatory to eating it from 6pm onward, the Jewish priests sought audience with Pilate, and requested that the legs of the executed be broken, and that they be lifted down* from their respective stakes.

The Law specified that a criminal should not be left hanging on a tree after sundown (Deu. 21:22-23), and on those grounds they made their request to Pilate. The breaking of the thighbones, the *crurifragium* (thought to be the breaking of the femur), was customary. If for some reason or other one wished to remove those hung on the tree before they were dead, one had their legs broken. Thus they could not escape and death was certain. Instead of remaining pinned to the stake, they lay on the ground and slowly died.

The Jewish leaders doubtless had another reason for requesting this to be done to Jesus. They believed that a man for whom God allowed this to be done (the hanging on the stake by which he was "cursed" as shown in Deu. 21:22-23) was rejected by Him, and therefore could not possibly be the Messiah.

The Proof of His Death (Jn. 19:31-37)

However, events happened differently from the way they planned. Permission having been granted by Pilate, soldiers were despatched to effect the order. The legs of the two criminals were brutally snapped, and they were lifted from their stakes and dumped

* The Greek word *arthosin* rendered "to take away" (Jn. 19:31) signifies "to lift up" (J. Strong); i.e., from the stake, and not necessarily to remove from the site. The Roman guard would have taken Jesus down from the stake in accordance with the request of the Jews. What, then, are we to make of Mk. 15:46 which states that Joseph "took him down"? Here the word is *kathelein* and can signify "to take down." But Liddel and Scott have other meanings: "to depose," and as a synonym for *airen* (Jn. 19:38) "to take and carry off, to seize." The soldiers took Jesus down from the stake, and Joseph took him to his sepulchre.

on the ground. The soldiers then moved toward Jesus: but they found him already dead for he had willed himself to die when he “*gave up the spirit*” (Lk. 23:46), Yahweh mercifully shortening the time of agony he would otherwise have suffered.

How did the soldiers know that Jesus was dead? By the fact that blood was no longer flowing out of the wounded hands and feet. As soon as the flow of blood ceases, and blood oozes out drop by drop, it is obvious that the heart is no longer working, and that death has taken place. To make absolutely certain however, one of the soldiers thrust his spear into the side of the Lord’s body, and forthwith there came out blood and water. This is proof positive that death has taken place, for otherwise only blood would have gushed out of his side. Concerning this, it is claimed:

“Pathologists have established that the effusion would have taken place as a natural consequence of such a wound, and that it is under all circumstances decisive evidence of the actual death of Christ. Medical writers are indeed not agreed whether it meant the small portion of water found in the pericalium, called lymph, or (which is more probable) the sanguineous and aqueous liquid found in the cavities of the pleura after a mortal wound, or that follows a stab in the pleura, when the pericardium has been pierced, which is always fatal, consequently a proof that if Christ had not been already dead, this would certainly extinguish the last remains of life. He thus died in reality, and did not merely suffer a syncope or fainted.” Dr. Stroud claims that such might follow the piercing of the side if the Lord’s death had been caused by rupture of the heart, following his intense agony (see Psa. 22:14; 69:20).

Figuratively, the blood and water could represent the water of life following his sacrifice. So of the Lord we read: “This is he that came by *water and blood*, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by *water and blood*. And it is the spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth” (1Jn. 5:6). Here, of course, John is referring to the Lord’s baptism and sufferings unto death; not the water and blood that flowed from the spear-thrust — though it figuratively represents those principles.

The medical faculty states that after death the blood in the heart changes to *cruor*, a liquid which is watery and bloody. It further states that after a short time very little of this liquid will be left in the heart, in which a process of decomposition has already begun. If so, then John’s “forthwith” (after the thrust) indicates that Jesus had died only a little while before, and the words “came out” corroborate this. If Jesus had been dead a longer time, then the liquid would not have flowed out “forthwith,” but some remains of it would have “oozed out slowly in little drops.”

And now consider the importance of this record of John in the

light of what the Law of God required. Paul taught: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). The Law, however, knew nothing about living men hanging upon trees, but only dead men!

It was not only the Romans that practised crucifixion, but the Jews also, with this difference: the Romans crucified living men, the Jews only dead ones. When a crime was so severe that it had to be paid for by death, then the criminal according to the Law of Moses, had to be hung "on the tree" (Deu. 21:22-23), after he had been stoned to death. The hanging of the corpse on the tree signified that the curse of God rested upon the executed.

But the Law also specified that the body should not be left on the tree overnight, but be taken down and buried before dark. The Romans did not treat their criminals in that way. They left them nailed to the stake, to the prey of vultures and other birds, and after they had fallen from the stake in consequence of decay, for four-footed beasts to feed upon them, until finally the bones and skulls would become bleached at the place of execution.

That would have been the fate of Jesus, but for the scrupulosity of the Jews, and their insistence that the Law be carried out. So it was, that when the soldiers came to Jesus and found that he was dead already, they did not break his legs, so that the Scripture was fulfilled: "A bone of him shall not be broken" (Exo. 12:46; Num. 9:12). Again: "They shall look on [him] whom they pierced" (Zech. 12:10).

But furthermore, they found that he had been hanging dead upon the tree, fulfilling the requirements of Deu. 21:23, as is shown in Paul's comment recorded in Gal. 3:13.

The Day of Christ's Death

John is very specific that the trial and crucifixion of the Lord took place on the Day of Preparation before a sabbath (Jn. 19:31). But he also tells us that the sabbath was "a high day," and as such, a day other than the normal weekly sabbath. In earlier pages of *The Story of the Bible*, we have given reasons for believing that the Lord was put to death "in the midst of the week," being a Wednesday. A careful consideration of all the evidence indicates that this was so, and that it fits in perfectly with every allusion and every type.

The original Passover in Egypt was slain on a Wednesday, and the lamb eaten after 6pm that evening (when the next day commenced, according to Jewish reckoning), after which time Israel left Egypt (*The Story of the Bible*, vol. 1, pp. 272-273), and it seems very appropriate that the perfect Passover Lamb should be offered at a similar time to conform to the type.

If the sabbath of the crucifixion week was a high day, and not the

normal weekly sabbath, it could only have been held on one of the six days apart from the seventh. However, according to W. Brown in *Antiquities of the Jews*, vol. 2, p. 404, instructions were laid down by the Jewish Rabbis that “the Passover should not be observed Monday, Wednesday or Friday,” and therefore the month was adjusted accordingly. He quotes Maimonides, a celebrated Jewish commentator, as his authority. If this were correct, it would leave only Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday as the days upon which it could be celebrated.

The first two are impossible as far as the time of Christ is concerned, as the resurrection took place on the first day of the week, and the Lord was in the grave only three days and three nights.

This leaves Thursday: the day the original Passover was celebrated. If the Day of Preparation was on Wednesday, Thursday would constitute the “high day” or sabbath referred to by John. That would leave Friday as a common day of usual activity, followed by the normal weekly sabbath.

This falls in with every requirement of Scripture. It means that the true Passover Lamb was appropriately slain at the same time and on the same day of the week as the original Passover Lamb in Egypt. It reconciles the accounts in Mark and Luke, for the former (Mk. 16:1) records that certain women brought spices to anoint Jesus after the sabbath; whereas the latter states that they did so before the sabbath (Lk. 23:56). This means that there were two sabbaths, with a normal day of activity in between. As one sabbath was the normal day of rest on the seventh day (Saturday), the festive sabbath must have been on the fifth day of the week (the day of grace), being Thursday.

Further, this fulfils the Lord’s own prophecy that he would be in the “heart of the earth” three days and three nights. John’s account helps to show how this proved to be the case.

How does it do that?

By proving that Jesus died just before sundown, as the day of the crucifixion was coming to an end. It was at such a time that the Jews removed any who had been executed from the stakes on which they hung, and the fact that when the soldiers pierced the Lord’s side with the spear, out flowed blood and water, indicated that death had only just taken place!

The Lord was thus on the stake from the sixth hour to just before sundown at which time he died. He was buried as the day was drawing to its close. Therefore, he was in the “heart of the earth” for just three days and three nights, though he was dead a short time longer. The three nights were those of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; and the days were those of Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

We shall show later, that he rose from the dead at the conclusion of the sabbath, and the beginning of the first day of the week: that is, about 6pm Saturday evening.

The Burial of Jesus
(Mat. 27:57-61;
Mk. 15:42-47;
Lk. 23:50-54;
Jn. 19:38-42)

Though John had remained behind to view the sad sight of the Lord upon the stake, perhaps hoping that some miracle might take place to save him, and vindicate his claims of Messiahship, the other apostles had fled the scene, convinced that they had made a mistake, and Jesus was not the Christ, because of the law of Deu. 21:23, which thus “cursed him.” They were completely bewildered. There was no doubting the weight of his expositions of Scripture, and the amazing wonder of his miracles, and those evidences proved beyond doubt that he was a prophet, a man of God. But they could not conceive of the Messiah promised throughout Scripture, being put to death so ignominiously as had Jesus. To their understanding Yahweh would never have permitted that to happen to His Son and Messiah.

They “thought it had been he who would have delivered Israel” (Lk. 24:21), but they were convinced now that they had been wrong. To their minds, it was evident that Jesus was not Messiah on three accounts:

- 1. The curse of God rested upon anybody crucified; and therefore upon Jesus.*
- 2. The promised king was one who would “save himself,” and Jesus had failed to do that.*
- 3. Elijah had to appear as the forerunner of the Messiah’s kingdom, and despite the prayer of Jesus, he had not appeared.*

Their hopes of a kingdom to be restored immediately, their anticipations of a triumph and glory surpassing that of Solomon’s day were at an end. They hastened from the scene, wondering what they should do next.

That was not the case with two prominent Pharisees and members of the Sanhedrin, however. The very presence of the Lord upon the stake was to them an amazing revelation. It provided them with proof that he was, indeed, the Messiah!

The two Pharisees were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Joseph was a wealthy man, a respected member of the Sanhedrin, but also, though secretly, a disciple of Jesus, looking for the kingdom of God (see Mat. 27:57; Lk. 23:50-51). Until the day of crucifixion, Joseph had not openly declared himself for Jesus (Jn. 19:38), though events now forced him to do so. First of all there was the trial. He had sternly opposed the purpose and deed of the general council of the Sanhedrin in the plan it had devised to bring about the condemnation and execution of Jesus, and it evidently had been Joseph and Nicodemus who had frustrated the attempts of the false witnesses to sustain the charge of blasphemy against the Lord. Doubtless they had questioned the witnesses to such good effect as to completely destroy their evidence. The illegality of the trials that followed was clearly

apparent to them, so that step by step they could see how wrong was the charge and execution of Jesus.

Moreover, they knew of the plan for disposing of the body of Jesus. As we have noted above, it was the Roman custom to allow the bodies of criminals to remain on the stake, there to decay or to be eaten by birds and animals. On the other hand, the Jews took them down at the close of the day, and either buried them, or in extreme cases, flung them into the rubbish heap of Gehenna, where the fires that were always burning soon consumed them. In addition, of course, it would have been inappropriate for the bodies of the men to remain displayed during the impending Passover

Evidently, the Sanhedrin had purposed to dispose of the body of the Lord in the fires of Gehenna. This is suggested by the action of Joseph who hastened to Pilate as soon as the Lord was dead that he might claim the body, and on the declaration of Isa. 53:9, that "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." But this is not literally true. His grave was not "with" the wicked, though it was with the rich, for the Lord was buried in Joseph's tomb who was "a rich man and a counsellor." The Hebrew word *nathan*, translated "made" signifies "appointed" or "given over." The same passage of Scripture has been rendered:

*"His grave was appointed with the wicked;
But he was with a rich man in his death;
Although he had done no wrong,
Neither was there any guile in his mouth."*

Who appointed him his grave with the wicked? Obviously the Jewish Sanhedrin. They had planned, after Passover, to ignominiously fling the dead body of the Lord into Gehenna: that valley of burning fires.

But Yahweh overlooked the body of the Lord, and prevented this vile action being carried out. The Lord died long before the normal time that death was induced by crucifixion. It meant that he had to be buried immediately. Joseph, therefore, went to Pilate and asked that he might take the body of Jesus. Pilate marvelled that he was already dead. It is said that death by crucifixion normally took upwards of three days, and apart from heart failure, some 36 hours is the earliest when it would be brought about. Jesus, however, had only been on the stake some six hours.

Pilate might well think that Joseph's request was a plot to rescue the Lord. He sent for the centurion who had supervised the execution, and from him received confirmation that Jesus was already dead (Mk. 15:43-45).

Pilate then gave Joseph permission, and the counsellor, taking a linen shroud, returned to Golgotha to attend to this sad last duty.

Nicodemus went with him, taking a mixture of myrrh and aloes,

about a hundred pounds weight. They took the body of Jesus, and first dipping the linen shroud in the oil of myrrh so that it acted as a glue and caused the linen to adhere more closely together, they wrapped it around him. This was to protect and embalm the body. The surplus of spices was probably poured in over the body after it had been placed in the shallow, rock-hewn trough in the tomb.

Thus these two rich Pharisees took care of the Lord. The one gave the grave prepared for his own use, and the other the spices. Together they buried with royal honour the one cursed by being nailed to the stake of shame (2Chr. 16:14).

There is a fitness about what was done for the Lord at his death that links it with his birth, and shows that he was born to die (1Tim. 1:15).

At birth, he was wrapped in linen swaddling clothes and placed in a manger; at death he was wrapped in linen and placed in the shallow trough of the sepulchre.

- At birth there was a Joseph to care for the Lord when he could not look after himself: and at death there was one likewise.

- At birth wise rich men of the East brought gifts including myrrh and spices; and at death, rich men did likewise.

- At birth he was proclaimed as the one born "King of the Jews;" and at death this was proclaimed over his stake.

- All these are signs showing that Yahweh carefully looked after His Son both at birth and at death.

The Sepulchre

It is recorded of Joseph's sepulchre that it was in a garden, close to the place of execution, and that it was one "wherein was never man yet laid" (Jn. 19:41). Therefore, when the Lord was placed therein, he made no contact with corruption, nor did he ever experience it (Acts 2:31).

The sepulchre had never been defiled by death, and was ceremonially "a clean place" outside the walls of the city. In those facts, remarkable details of the Law of Moses were fulfilled.

Jesus was the antitypical sin offering who "suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:11-13). Now the Law specified that all that remained of this offering after it had been burnt should be carried forth "unto a clean place" where "the ashes are poured out" (Lev. 4:12). Is it not significant, that the remains of the Lord were laid in a sepulchre which was ceremonially clean, "wherein was never man yet laid?" The requirements of the Law were fulfilled to the very detail.

Today, just down from the west slope of the *Place of a Skull*, there is found a sepulchre in a place which was obviously once a garden. The garden, today, is a small level yard with a few fruit trees and plants. At the north end, the rock of the hill is cut perpendicular like a wall as high as a house. In this rock wall is an opening into the rock.

One must stoop to enter. A runway is cut there in front of the stone face of the rock wall, suitable for a large stone, in wheel-like form, to be rolled over so as to close the opening into the hillside. Within, there is a room some nine or ten feet square. On the east side there is a ledge or bench of rock as high as a seat, on which to lay the body of the dead. It is claimed that this is the sepulchre of the Lord.

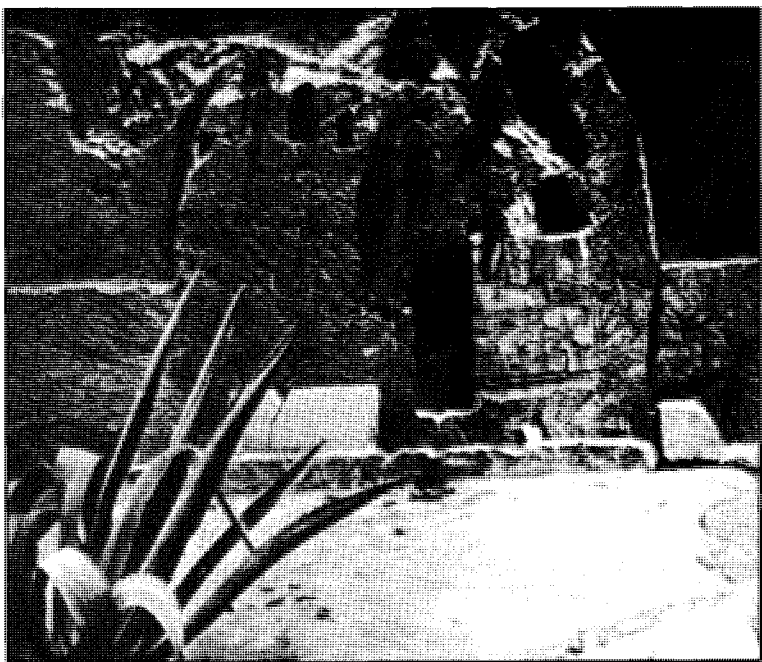
Certainly the site answers to all the requirements of Scripture.

It is today called the Garden-tomb.

There was a garden in Eden where the first Adam dwelt, and where sin first entered the world; and it is appropriate that the body of the second Adam, sacrificed to take away sin from the world, should likewise rest in a garden when that aspect of his labour was over.

The two Pharisees hurriedly laid him to rest in the tomb, for the Passover had now commenced (Lk. 23:54 — RSV). Their action was followed by a little company of women who had ministered to the Lord since he left Galilee. They observed the sepulchre, and hastened back to where they were staying until the sabbath would be over.

Among the women was Mary Magdalene. She had a tender love for the Lord because of his goodness to her; and she was determined never to forsake him, even in death.



Chapter 4

HISTORY'S SADDEST DAY COMES TO ITS END

THE courageous action of these two Pharisees must not be minimised. Not only did they stand up against the council of the Sanhedrin, and defy the Jewish Government, thus placing their lives in jeopardy, but they did so in recognition of his true status.

Why Joseph and Nicodemus Tended to the Lord

They saw him as the Messiah. Moreover, the fact that they had handled his dead body made them ceremonially defiled, and, according to the Law, unfit to partake of the Passover that evening! They doubtless saw in the crucified Jesus a greater Passover Lamb.

On what grounds can we allege that?

Because of the instruction of Jesus to Nicodemus when they first met. Jesus had declared: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:14-15).

Nicodemus was a highly intelligent man; one of the foremost teachers in Israel. He was a Pharisee who meditated deeply and at length upon those things brought to his notice. As we have already pointed out, during the course of the Lord's ministry, he was carefully observing Jesus, weighing up his words and actions, and this convinced him that he was an outstanding prophet, if not the Messiah.

He doubtless meditated long, and "searched the Scriptures" in regard to the saying of Jesus quoted above. This would take him to the events recorded in Num. 21. Israel murmured against Yahweh and Moses (the typical Messiah), in consequence of which, fiery serpents were sent among the people, and many died. The people cried unto Moses, who interceded on their behalf with Yahweh. Moses was told to make a serpent of brass and place it on a stake. He was instructed to tell the people that if they would look upon that serpent of brass in faith they would be saved from death. Moses obeyed the instructions, and the plague of death was stayed. Those who looked upon the serpent of brass in faith were saved.

Nicodemus must have pondered this incident at length. He could align the serpent with Genesis 3:15, and with human nature in which resides the motions of sin and death. He had heard Jesus indict the leaders of the nation as a "generation of vipers," who were as a seed of the serpent (the antitypical Cain; see Mat. 23:35), and who would bite the Seed of the woman on the heel.

But what was meant by the serpent on a stake?

The brazen serpent on the stake was similar in appearance to the death-dealing living snakes on the ground, but there the resemblance ended. There was no venom in the fangs of the serpent on the stake. Furthermore, the metal of which it was made, and which is used in the Old Testament as symbolic of flesh, had gone through the fire, and thus had been purified.

A serpent impaled on a stake!

What did it signify?

Human nature crucified, bringing life, not death, to humanity!

So Nicodemus may have reasoned.

Jesus was of the same nature as all humanity, yet was without sin in that he never transgressed. Nicodemus recalled him asking: "Who convicteth me of sin?" and nobody answered. The Lord brought eternal life within the reach of all. So far Nicodemus could have seen the application.

But not until this day of crucifixion could he really understand the allusion to Num. 21, and the serpent upon the stake. Now, at Golgotha, it was revealed. As Nicodemus pondered the matter, it seemed as though he had emerged from the shadows of night (in which he first sought Jesus; Jn. 3), to the glorious light of divine truth.

With Jesus on the stake, the type of Num. 21 was clear. There was the serpent — sinful human nature — crucified. As such, when viewed in faith, it could lead to life, eternal life.

Nicodemus at last understood the words of the Lord, and doubtless discussed them with Joseph. The one who died upon the stake would rise again. He was the true Lamb of God; the antitypical Passover. Why be concerned with ceremonial defilement, with being unable to partake of the Passover under the Law when it was now outmoded. Thus, possibly, in full understanding of the implications of the Lord's death, these two Pharisees went about their task. They understood, at a time when the apostles fled from the stake of shame convinced that Jesus was not the Messiah.

Darkness Enshrouds the Scene The Hill of Golgotha was deserted. Most people had long since left, to attend the

Passover service at the temple. Joseph and Nicodemus had completed their labour of love, as far as the body of the Lord was concerned. It was so late in the afternoon when they ministered unto him, that the sabbath was then beginning (see Lk. 23:54; RSV). They had placed the body of the Lord in Joseph's sepulchre in the garden, and had closed the entrance thereto by rolling a heavy stone in front of the opening. Then they left the site.

Their actions, however, had been observed by at least two of the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee: Mary Magdalene, who

loved the Lord with tender devotion, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, who had ministered to the Master (Mk. 15:46-47).

There were many others who had followed the Lord to Golgotha, but for one reason or other, most had left. The Lord's mother, of course, had been taken from the tragic spot that she might find refuge from her sorrow in the care of John; and doubtless, Salome, her cousin, would have gone with her to comfort her in her grief.

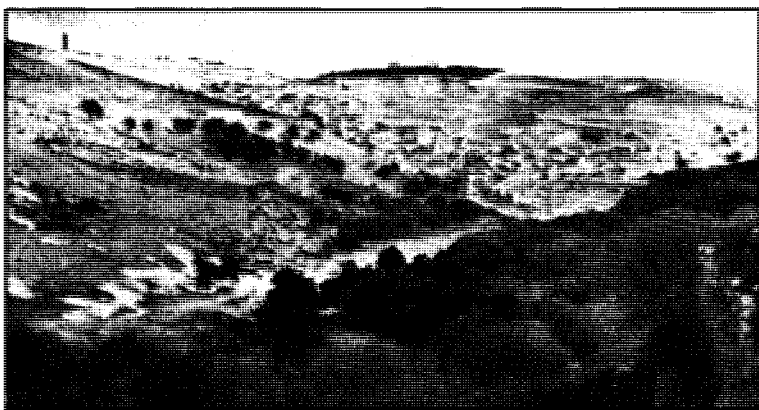
Where were Martha and Mary and Lazarus, for whom the Lord had such love, on that sad day? One would have imagined that they would have remained by his side, but there is no record of them so doing.

This was probably by the Lord's own instruction. When the disciples fled from the presence of the Lord's captors, they hid out of fear, for they could sense the hostile attitude manifested against them, because they were his associates (Jn. 11:8, 57). Mary, Martha and Lazarus came particularly under censure (see Jn. 12:10). In the bewildering turn of events it may have been that the disciples fled to their home with instructions, or advice, that those, who were so well known as the Lord's close friends, should keep hidden against possible attack from the multitude. This would explain why they were not present at the stake on that occasion.

The women who remained, watched Joseph and Nicodemus from a distance. The sun was setting in the west, and the sad day was coming to its end. As it did so, and the Passover sabbath commenced, silence fell upon the garden and the tomb where the body of the Lord had been laid to rest.

It was in a garden that sin made its first ugly appearance; and it is appropriate that the second Adam, who was to bear away sin by declaring God's righteousness, should also rest in a garden, awaiting the manifestation of a new life and a new creation three days hence.

So history's most tragic day came to its end.



Chapter 5

THURSDAY FIFTEENTH ABIB

On this day, the Jewish elders requested of Pilate that he arrange that the tomb be guarded against the possibility of the disciples stealing the body of the Lord. By so doing they proved the physical resurrection of Jesus beyond all doubt.

THE day following the crucifixion was a sabbath. The people were required to rest from their labours, and to ponder the significance of the feast of deliverance that they had celebrated. Thus, comparative silence fell upon the guilty city. But underneath this quietness, there was a feeling of uneasiness, a sense of dread foreboding and fear that something was wrong. The unusual darkness, the terrible earthquake, the disruption of the services in the temple due to the torn veil would induce this.

There was a further incident that troubled the leaders. When the high priests learned that Joseph had given burial to Jesus in his own new sepulchre, they were no doubt furious, and would have liked very much to have the dead body of the Lord removed and flung into the burning valley of Gehennah. But Pilate had made a present of the body to Joseph, and they could do nothing about it.

They were determined, however, to prove that Jesus was an impostor; this was particularly necessary in view of the remarkable events that had taken place the day before. If the body of Jesus were missing from the tomb, the people would instantly believe that he had risen from the dead.

Sealing the Sepulchre A deputation of priests and Pharisees, therefore, approached Pilate, and requested that the sepulchre be guarded. “Sir,” they said, *“we remember that when this impostor was alive, he said, ‘I will rise after three days.’ Now then, give orders for the tomb to be kept secure, till the third day, in case his disciples go and steal him and tell the people, ‘he is risen from the dead.’ The end of the fraud will then be worse than the beginning.”**

* The fact that the Jewish leaders requested that the guard should remain at the tomb for three days, and that the request was made on the day following the crucifixion (Mat. 27:62), proves beyond doubt that the so-called Friday crucifixion is incorrect. Otherwise, it would mean that the soldiers were posted outside the sepulchre on Saturday morning, and as Mat. 28:1 shows that the resurrection took place at the “end of the sabbath,” being about 6pm on

The statement, and the request, certainly show that the priests understood the significance of the Lord's teaching, even though the apostles did not.

Pilate granted them their request: *"Take a guard of soldiers, go make it as secure as you can,"* he ordered.

They did so. They placed a seal on the entrance stone of the sepulchre, and ordered the soldiers to stand guard around the tomb.

Saturday, they would have been there only one day. On what grounds could they then claim that "his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept" (Mat. 28:13)? If Matthew's chronology of the resurrection is accepted, and it is claimed that the Lord was crucified on a Friday, the soldiers would have been outside the tomb only during the hours of sunlight. The request of the Jewish leaders was that they should be there three days. Granted a Wednesday crucifixion, the soldiers were posted outside the tomb on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, at the conclusion of which the terms of their duty would have been completed. It is significant that at that time the women approached the tomb, so they must have understood that the guard would have then been removed. The remarkable events that then took place drove the soldiers in fear from the site without the need of their captain to order them back to their barracks!



Chapter 6

FRIDAY SIXTEENTH ABIB

The only incident recorded concerning this day is the purchase and preparation of spices on the part of the women, in order to anoint the body of the Lord. The Passover sabbath was now over, and it would have been possible for them to visit the sepulchre for this purpose. But, as Matthew alone records, this was made impossible because of the presence of the Roman guard and the sealed sepulchre.

CERTAIN of the women had seen Joseph and Nicodemus convey the body of the Lord to the tomb of Joseph, but evidently they were in ignorance of the extent of preparations made by these two Pharisees on behalf of Jesus.

For example, they did not realise that the men had prepared spices for the embalming of the body, as was normal, particularly as the burial was hurried, being conducted very late in the evening. So, the women determined that they would do this for their Lord at the first opportunity. Thus, after the Passover sabbath had been completed, they set out and purchased spices for this purpose, and returning home, they made every preparation for a proper anointing. They realised that it was impossible for them to do this on that day, because of the presence of the Roman guard; and therefore they determined that they would undertake this labour of love as soon as the normal weekly sabbath was over.

It was common knowledge, in Jerusalem, that the guard would be there for three days, and the women realised that they would have to wait until the completion of that time.

The Women Prepare Spices (Mk. 16:1; Lk. 23:56) Both Mark and Luke record the action of these women, but with a significant difference. Mark declares that certain of the women purchased the spices *after* the sabbath was past (Mk. 16:1; Diaglott) whereas Luke states that they prepared the spices *before* the sabbath commenced (Lk. 23:56).

Some have imagined that there is confliction in these two records, but that is not the case.

There were two sabbaths celebrated that week, with an ordinary day in between. John explains that the first sabbath was a "high day," not the normal sabbath (Jn. 19:31); the second sabbath was the normal one kept on the seventh day. We have earlier strongly sugges-

ted that Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday, and was buried at 6pm at which time the Jewish Thursday commenced. That Thursday, therefore, would be a sabbath, the "high day" referred to by John. Our suggestion fits in perfectly with the requirements of Mark and Luke. If Thursday were a sabbath, and Saturday were a sabbath, Friday would have been the day on which the women purchased and prepared the spices.

Every chronological suggestion of the gospels fits in with that requirement. It not only reconciles the accounts of Mark and Luke, but also shows that the Lord was literally three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, as he predicted he would be.

The three days would be Thursday, Friday and Saturday; the nights would be what we call Wednesday night, Thursday night and Friday night. The Lord was in the grave, therefore, for two sabbaths; and, as we shall show, he rose from the dead at the completion of the second sabbath, approximately at 6pm on what we would call Saturday.

Matthew records that Jesus rose from the dead "in the end of the sabbath" (Mat. 28:1). In the Greek, however, the word for "sabbath" is in the plural: "sabbaths." The sabbaths in question were the "high day" and the normal weekly sabbath and, as the record in Mark and Luke shows, another day was interspersed on which the women purchased and prepared the spices.

It is because Scripture teaches that Christ was crucified on a day before a sabbath that most people assume that he was crucified on a Friday which they called Good Friday. If that were the case, however, he would have been only one sabbath in the tomb, and Matthew's use of the plural form of the word would be wrong. It was because of these preconceived ideas that the translators rendered the word in the singular number instead of the plural as they should have done. On the day after the "high day" sabbath and before the weekly sabbath therefore, the women engaged in the said preparations.

They then awaited the time when the Roman guard would be removed from outside the sepulchre, and they would be free to perform their labour of love.



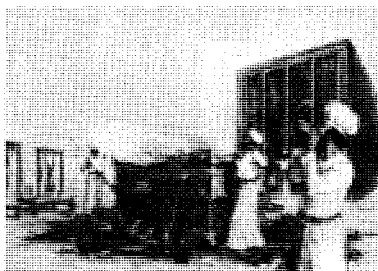
Chapter 7

SATURDAY SEVENTEENTH ABIB

As far as visiting the sepulchre of the Lord was concerned, nothing could be done on this day for two reasons; firstly, to approach a tomb on the sabbath was contrary to the Law of Moses; secondly, the presence of the Roman guard on that particular sabbath made it impossible in any case.

THIS was a day of rest, the normal weekly sabbath (Lk. 23:56). Both the Lord and his disciples rested on that sabbath, but both did so on a different basis.

Because of his faith, uttered so courageously even from the stake of shame before he died, the flesh of the Lord "rested in hope" (Acts 2:26). The disciples, however, "rested according to the commandment" (Lk. 23:56), dominated by disappointment and fear.



A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospel

SIMEON: WHO DIED HAPPY

Simeon, whose name means *To Hear and Obey* was a devout student of the Word of God, and received a revelation that he would not die before he had seen the Christ of Yahweh (Lk. 2:25-26). The prophecy was known, and as Simeon advanced in age, it must have become apparent to those who believed it, that the manifestation of the Messiah was at hand.

He was moved by the Spirit to enter the temple at the very moment that Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus there to present him to Yahweh. Simeon thus saw in this infant the realisation of his hopes, and the manifestation of the consolation, light and peace that had been promised Israel (vv. 25-35). To the amazement of Mary, he took the child in his arms, and thanking God, he prayed: "Yahweh, let Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people." Simeon then spoke of the future work of the Lord and its influence upon others. His prophecy predicted: consolation for Israel (v. 25); the

future coming of Messiah (v. 26); his own personal death and resurrection (vv. 29-30); the manifestation of salvation, and the proclamation of Truth to both Jew and Gentile (vv. 30-32); the crucifixion of Christ (v. 35); the future restoration of Israel (v. 34); and the future judgment of believers (v. 35).

He thus had a comprehensive understanding of the Truth, and died happy in the confidence that he will stand again to receive life eternal in the Age to come.

SIMON: THE ZEALOT

He is called Simon the Canaanite in Mat. 10:4, but Simon Zelotes in Lk. 6:15. The word translated "Canaanite" is *kananaïos* in Greek, and signifies a member of the nationalist party known as Zealots. Members of this party were dedicated to the principle of an independent Jewish State, so that they looked upon foreign domination as hateful. Their zeal for their principles took extreme action at times, so that the party was often embroiled with the Roman authorities.

Simon was, therefore, a lover of freedom, but recognised that Jesus could offer him freedom from the dominion of sin and death, which was far greater than the national aspirations of his party. He joined the ranks of the apostles, but still retained his title of Zealot. But now his zeal was channelled into service for Christ, and a warfare against the flesh. He who chafed at the yoke of Rome, willingly accepted that of Christ. The zealous follower of the Lord is an inspiration to his fellows, and a warming influence in the things of the Truth.

SIMON: THE LEPER

It was in the house of Simon the leper that the Lord was anointed by Mary. The references imply that he was husband to Martha, but had apparently died. See notes on Martha, and Mat. 26:6; Mk. 14:3-9; Jn. 12:1-8.

SIMON: THE BEARER OF THE STAKE

See Mat. 27:32. He was a Cyrenian Jew who was in Jerusalem at the time Jesus was crucified, and was impressed by the Roman guard to carry the heavy wooden stake for the Lord when it was seen that he was physically unable to do so at that moment. Evidently the experience had a lasting effect upon Simon, causing him to look more deeply into these matters, for his sons (and doubtless Simon also) embraced the Truth. Their names are given as Alexander and Rufus (Mk. 15:21).

The Joyful Day of Resurrection



LIKE the joyful rays of the new day dissipate the darkness of the night, the day of resurrection arrived, and the confusion and disbelief of the apostles and followers of the Lord were removed. But even as the events transpired, the apostles remained full of doubts as they heard reports from others of the appearance of a resurrected Christ. In the inscrutable ways of Yahweh, He permitted His Son to appear to wondering women before he should be declared to the apostles. It was a time of the humiliation of flesh, and the elevation of the means of redemption. Similarly, today, the truth of Christ's glory and power is understood only by a humble woman: the espoused Bride of Christ.

But the final scene is glorious. The apostles gathered on the Mount of Olives, where the Olivet Prophecy had been given a few weeks previously. There they witnessed the risen Christ received by the clouds of heaven representing the glorious heavenly host, so that both at his birth, and at his ascension there were present the ministering spirits associated with the Son of Yahweh in glory. We remain to wonder at the scene depicted in the Word, and to await the coming of the Son of God in power and great glory!

Chapter 1

SUNDAY EIGHTEENTH ABIB

This was a day of surprise, of tremendous joy and bewildering activity. On this day, the Lord rose from the dead, and began to show himself to his disciples. By now, however, they were so convinced that Jesus did not fulfil their expectations of Messiah, that they refused to believe. They were completely confused by the fact of the resurrection. Though they received reports that claimed he had appeared, each one of them required personal and tangible proof. Once that was given, of course, nothing could ever again shake the faith of the Lord's close associates in the fact of his Messiahship, and they were prepared to go through persecution and death to witness to its truth. But before full conviction came, they even doubted the evidence of their own eyes. On one occasion, though the Lord stood before them and they could see the marks in his hands, he had to eat some fish and honeycomb, before they would believe (Lk. 24:42-44). If it was so hard for the disciples to comprehend that the Lord had risen, who can find fault with the women for being taken off their guard and completely confused by the staggering events of the day, so that they too, doubted the evidence of their own eyes.

THE story of the resurrection and appearance of Jesus is short, simple and perfectly harmonious. A careful study of this wonderful event will show that up to Sunday evening, the conclusion of the first day of the week, the Bible records but three appearances of the risen Christ, and these were made to five persons: two women and three men. The women were "Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary" (Mat. 28:1), and the three men were the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and Peter, to whom the Lord appeared privately.

The Resurrection (Mat. 28:1-8)

The evidence shows that Jesus rose from the dead at the conclusion of the normal sabbath, about 6pm, as the seventh day of the week came to its end. It is generally assumed that he rose from the dead early in the morning of the first day of the week, but a careful examination of the evidence will show that there is no justification for the theory.

The only passage of Scripture which gives indication of the time of the resurrection is Mat. 28:1, and as we shall show, this requires

the Lord to be raised at the commencement of the first day of the week, which, in Jewish terms commenced at 6pm at the conclusion of the seventh day!

It is true that Mark records: "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week; he appeared first to Mary Magdalene" (ch. 16:9); but that does not say that he "rose" early the first day of the week, but that he "*was risen*," and appeared to Mary early that morning. The punctuation should be changed: "Now when Jesus was risen, early the first day of the week he appeared first to Mary Magdalene." To interpret Mark as teaching that Jesus rose early in the morning is to place him in hopeless conflict with Matthew, and to require the Lord to be in the tomb more than three days and three nights.

Matthew records: "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn [*Gr. "draw on"*] toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre" (Mat. 28:1). The "end of the sabbath" would be about 6pm. The Greek word translated "end" is *opse*, which, according to Bullinger, signifies "late in the day at even." The same word has been rendered "even" in Mk. 11:19; 13:35, and obviously, in those places, relates to the close of the Jewish day, about 6pm at night.

Matthew's statement has been variously translated, as follows:

"About the end of the sabbath"—Lange.

"The sabbath at even"—Tyndale.

"Upon the evening"—Cloverdale.

"Late in the Sabbath"—Bible Union.

"In the evening of the sabbath"—Luther.

All these renditions suggest about 6pm in the evening. But what are we to make of Matthew's next statement: "As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week?"

Notice that it does not indicate the dawning of the sun, but the approaching of the day. The Greek word, *epiphoskouse*, signifies "at the dusking," and the statement has been so rendered by Darby: "Now late on the sabbath, as it was the dusk of the next day after sabbath." This still relates to 6pm as the light is fading, and the day turns to dusk. The same word, though in the imperfect tense, *epephosken* is translated "drew on" in Lk. 23:54, or "was beginning" as rendered in the RSV. This, obviously, was just after 6pm on the day in question.

Mat. 28, therefore, gives the time of the resurrection as just after 6pm. According to Jewish reckoning, this was just as the first day of the new week was beginning.

This is the only reference in the Gospel accounts to the time factor of this important event. It reveals, with exact precision, that the Lord left the tomb exactly three days and three nights after he had been laid there. Every detail is perfectly and wonderfully adjusted.

**The Two Marys
Visit the Tomb
(Mat. 28:1)**

About 6pm at the close of the sabbath (Mat. 28:1) and as the first day of the week was commencing, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, left the premises where they were staying, and made their way to the northern outskirts of the city, toward Golgotha, to the place where the Lord's body had been placed in the sepulchre within its garden enclosure.

Soon darkness would enshroud the city, and the women realised that there was little they could do at this particular time. What, then, was their objective? Matthew declares that they came "to see the sepulchre" (Mat. 28:1). But what, particularly, would they desire to see in relation to it?

Doubtless they hoped to witness the removal of the Roman guard, for they knew it had been placed there for but three days. That time being up, the women went to see it removed that the way might be cleared for them to return and embalm the body as soon as the morning light permitted. As they approached, they were filled with fear, for they felt a quaking of the ground under their feet.

Then, as they came in sight of the sepulchre itself, they realised the cause of this tremendous earthquake.

**Roman Guardsmen
in a Dead Faint**

The sepulchre of the Lord was in a valley not far from Golgotha. Surrounding it was a garden that Joseph evidently maintained in preparation for the time when he himself would have an honoured burial. However, at this time, the soldiers had taken over the Garden to guard the tomb. No one could approach it whilst they were there. Since early Thursday, all through Friday and Saturday, they had maintained their monotonous vigil. They would have been heartily tired of the commission. It would have seemed rather like an unsoldierly task to stand around guarding a dead body in a tomb!

They would be glad when the required period of time had lapsed and they could march back to the congenial company of the barracks at the Tower of Antonia. They had not much longer to wait for, once the Jewish sabbath was over, they could be ordered back to headquarters. Thus, they viewed the approaching conclusion of the Jewish Sabbath with the greatest satisfaction.

But, to their astonishment, instead of the night growing darker, they suddenly found the garden illuminated by a most unusual light. Then they saw a sight that made those rough, bold soldiers break out into a sweat of fear, caused them to stagger back in amazement, and finally to fall to the ground in a dead faint. For they saw the Roman seal on the heavy stone in front of the tomb suddenly snapped, and the stone itself rolled back by angelic power, that the one inside might emerge as a living man.

God Intervenes

As the Jewish Sabbath came to its end, the garden was visited by an angel from heaven. It was the appearance of this angel that had brought fear to the soldiers. His coming synchronised with an earthquake that violently shook the guilty city. The Roman seal upon the stone that shut the entrance of the sepulchre was broken. No longer could it hold the stone in position. The huge stone rolled back upon its track until the tomb stood wide open. And from the open sepulchre there emerged the Lord, attended by angels. The suffering over, the glory was his now to inherit; the cross was past, the crown now awaited him. But, for the moment, he was led away from the scene of suffering.

Meanwhile, the chief of the angels sat upon the stone that had been rolled away from the sepulchre, so emphasising the triumphal words of the Apocalypse that were to be proclaimed later: "I have the keys of the grave and of death" (Rev. 1:18).

The raiment of this angel glistened like crystals of snow reflecting the glory of the sun; but it was his countenance that was most awe-inspiring. It shone forth like lightning — and how could mortal man stand before that radiant glory!

These Roman soldiers had fought a hundred battles, whilst human wrath and anger were familiar sights to them. But never had they witnessed anything so calculated to instil fear in them than the sight from which they now vainly sought to hide. It was this manifestation of divine glory that caused them to tremble violently and fall to the ground in a faint, as they attempted to escape its penetrating vision.

Comfort for the Women

When the two women arrived, they found the tough, unfearing Roman guard powerless, and unconscious, on the ground. More frightening even than that unusual sight, however, was the presence and appearance of the angel. Like the soldiers, the women were filled with fear, but to these two frail women the messenger from heaven addressed words of comfort: "*Do not fear,*" he declared, "*for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he will go before you as a shepherd unto Galilee, and there shall you see him; as I have told you*" (Mat. 28:5-7).

The amazing apocalypse of glory, the declaration concerning the resurrection of the Lord, must have brought home with stunning force, his followers' lack of understanding and faith in the very things that he had taught them.

No wonder the women feared.

But they were told to "fear not," because they came seeking Jesus to help him, whereas the soldiers were only there to hinder him!

Meanwhile, it was useless for them seeking the living among the dead. The angel declared that Jesus lived! He directed their attention to the open tomb as evidence of that. He instructed the women to return to the disciples (not merely to the apostles) and proclaim the glorious news of a living Messiah. They were told to remind the disciples of a promise that the Lord had made before his death, and which he now intended to fulfil. He had declared: ***“After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee”*** (Mat. 26:32).

The women were told to deliver this message to all the disciples, and not merely to the apostles. All believers were expected to make their way to Galilee for a general convention with the Lord before he ascended into heaven. This meeting ultimately took place some time later. Paul referred to it when he declared that the Lord “appeared to five hundred brethren at once” (1Cor. 15:6).

The Women Meet Jesus

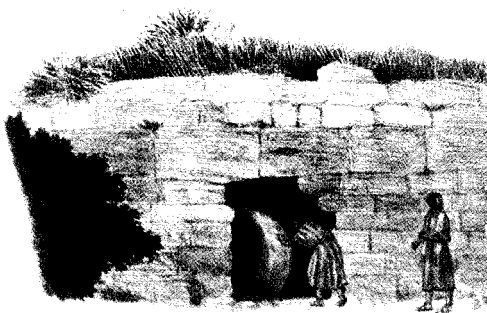
The two women quickly recovered from their awe. They recognised that this, indeed, was a divine visitation. Yahweh had sent His messengers to raise His Son from the dead, and the momentous news had been first given to them to joyfully bear it unto the disciples.

Mary Magdalene was particularly excited. She had an enduring love for the Lord and looked forward to seeing him alive. Without further delay they turned from the sepulchre to bear the news to the disciples.

But then, surprise upon surprise, the two women were met by Jesus who addressed them: ***“All hail!”*** Once again they looked into the beloved face of the Lord, now risen from the dead. In an ecstasy of emotion they bowed down before him and took him by the feet to pay him reverence.

From the lips of that “altogether lovely One” there came the gentle greeting: ***“Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me!”*** With that he detached himself from them and was gone.

“Tell my brethren,” he had said to the women. The Lord realised how terribly ashamed the apostles would be of their conduct when they realised that they had all denied their Lord and Messiah! Doubtless, like Judas, they would each feel like committing suicide; but the compassionate Lord, having been “touched with the feeling of infirmity” incidental to human nature (Heb. 4:15), desired the apostles to know that he had forgiven their previous doubts and desertions and



was pleased to receive them as “his brethren” (Heb. 2:11).

The Bribed Soldiers (Mat. 28:11-15) About the time that the two women hastened away on their joyful mission to the disciples, the Roman soldiers, having recovered from their shock, also returned into the city and reported what had occurred (Mat. 28:11). Some of the watch told the high priests Annas and Caiaphas, what had taken place. It was an amazing story which they told, and one that caused fear and consternation to the priests who listened to it. They heard of the great earthquake which they also must have felt. Then the soldiers told of the appearance of the man whose countenance was as lightning, and whose raiment was white like the snow, before whom the sealed vault opened and whom they saw sitting on the stone that had been rolled away from the opening of the tomb.

The high priests recognized the seriousness of these events and called an emergency meeting of the Sanhedrin, to take counsel as to what should be done. They realised that under no circumstances must the factual report of the soldiers get through to the people of Jerusalem, for then it would be confidently believed that Jesus had been raised from the dead and had left the tomb. The council again decided to try the effect of a bribe. This time, unlike in the case of Judas, a large sum was required to silence the witnesses. The watch was told that, should they be questioned on the opened tomb, they had to claim that the disciples came and stole the body while the guard slept. *“You say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept’,”* the Sanhedrin urged. *“And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you!”*

As the high priests, and many of the Sanhedrin, were Sadducees, they rejected the doctrine of the resurrection. They doubtless deluded themselves into believing a lie (2Thes. 2:10-11), and though they could not understand the circumstances as explained by the soldiers, they persistently and obstinately refused to acknowledge the fact of the resurrection. Thus their suggestion to the soldiers quoted above.

Normally, death was the penalty paid a Roman soldier if found asleep whilst on duty; but in this case, by substantial bribing both of the soldiers and of the governor, the Jewish leaders undertook to overcome this problem. Actually, it was a palpably clumsy lie that they put in the mouths of the soldiers! How would they know what had happened if they were asleep!

Still, the story was the best that could be thought up for the moment, and in view of the opened and empty tomb, some explanation had to be given. So the report was circulated among the Jews, and became the stock answer to the believers’ doctrine of a risen Christ.

Yet, if people wanted to search out the truth, the inconsistency of the story was apparent. If the soldiers were asleep on duty, why were they not punished? And the fact that they were on guard to protect the site, proved beyond all doubt that some superhuman Power had opened the tomb; in other words, that Yahweh had intervened to raise His Son from the dead. Those who desired to believe, saw the sophistry in the concocted story of the high priests, and enthusiastically accepted the risen Christ as the Lord of life and of hope.

Since then, the suggestion has been foolishly, though seriously, advanced, that Jesus did not really die upon the stake, but that he fainted, and in the cool temperature of the grave he recovered and subsequently appeared to the disciples. But if that had been the case, how would he have removed the shroud that had been so tightly wound around him, and hardened in position by the spices prepared by Nicodemus and Joseph? Moreover, as one writer in his book: *Who Moved the Stone?* has said:

“The suggestion ignores the deadly character of the wounds inflicted upon Jesus, the frightful laceration of the hands and feet, the loss of strength through the ebbing away of blood, the hopelessness of human aid during the critical moments when it would be most needed, the tight-drawn bandages of the grave, the heavy stone. To try even to think of what would happen to an utterly collapsed constitution, bleeding from five torn and untended wounds, lying on the cold slab of a tomb in April without human succour of any kind, is to realise at once the unreason of the argument.”

But surely it is impossible that a human being who had wandered half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment and strengthening, could have given his disciples the impression that he was a conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life: a conviction that formed the basis of their future ministry, and for which they were prepared to die! The recovery of a man in a faint could only have weakened the impression that he had made upon them in life and in death. It would have confirmed their belief that he was not the Messiah, for not only did the curse of the stake still rest upon him, not only had he failed to “save himself” as Zech. 9:9 declared the coming king would do, not only had Elijah omitted to make his promised appearance according to Mal. 4, but the defilement of the grave would rest upon him, and his absence from the Passover feast would tell against him.

The suggestion that Jesus fainted on the stake, and was revived by the coolness of the tomb, is the weakest of natural explanations of the phenomenon of the resurrection, and one which no person of faith would desire to hear seriously argued. It is obviously and palpably wrong.

The Rumour Persists to This Day Unfortunately, many who should know better, take their stand with the Jewish

leaders and Roman soldiers, and continue to assert that the body of Jesus that went into the grave never came out alive. Some religious communities, for example, claim that he arose in a different form — as an intangible spirit-being. When it is pointed out that Scripture teaches that “his flesh did not see corruption” (Acts 2:31), such are forced to assert that the body that was crucified was miraculously preserved by God and kept in a certain undefined place. When it is pointed out further that Thomas saw the very imprints in his hands, and that others saw and handled him and witnessed him eating before them, they claim that on such occasions the Lord appeared “in a different form.”

If these theories were true, however, they would require that the Lord possess several bodies. For example, he would be able to display his dead body that went into the tomb, now in its preserved state! Further, by a pious fraud, he would be able to assume a material body that possesses nail imprints though no nail had ever been hammered into this new body! Finally, it is claimed that he possesses a spiritual body, his true resurrection body, which is invisible to mortal eyes!

In short, this false theory implies that the Lord has at least three bodies! In 1Cor. 15, Paul clearly reveals the fallacy of such reasoning. He claims that those who deny the physical resurrection of the body of the Lord that entered the tomb are found to be “false witnesses of God.” Paul declared: “If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1Cor. 15:16-17). In teaching that the dead body of the Lord that was placed in the tomb never came to life, those who so teach are placing themselves in the category of those referred to above by Paul.

Scripture clearly shows that the body that rose from the tomb was the actual one placed therein. On the day of Pentecost, Peter taught: “David... being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of the loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell [the grave]; neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:30-32).

“The fruit of David’s loins, according to the flesh” describes the natural body of the Lord that went into the tomb. According to Peter, it was “this Jesus” that was raised again to sit upon David’s throne. The fact is that the Jesus who died on the stake and rested in the grave, rose physically from the dead, and the rolled back stone, and empty tomb testify to divine intervention to that end.

Chapter 2

THE WOMEN AT THE EMPTY TOMB

The resurrection story as recorded in the four Gospel accounts, presents a picture of confusion and contradiction. Disbelief in the face of tangible evidence characterised the attitude of all concerned. They simply would not believe in the risen Christ. The evidence of the two Marys on the evening following the conclusion of the weekly sabbath, was rejected by the disciples possibly claiming that it represented the imagination of overwrought minds (Mk. 16:11); the combined statement of the women concerning the empty tomb on the following morning, seemed to the apostles "as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Lk. 24:10-11). Even when the Lord showed himself openly before the eleven, they discounted the evidence of their eyes, and were convinced that they saw a phantom (Lk. 24:36-39). Thomas, who had been absent at the earlier meeting, rejected the statement of his fellow apostles that the Lord had risen from the dead as merely fantastic, and declared that he would not believe unless he placed his finger in the wounds in the hands of the Lord (Jn. 20:24-25); and even at a meeting in Galilee, where all the disciples were gathered together, some doubted (Mat. 28:17).

These facts must be constantly brought to mind as the circumstances are considered. They explain the inconsistent, contradictory actions of some of the disciples — both men and women — on the resurrection morn. But finally, all doubts were swept aside and replaced by a firm conviction in a risen Christ who will return again to establish on earth Yahweh's kingdom. Thus as Moses and Israel sang the Song of Victory on the other side of the Red Sea on a first day of the week, so also believers rejoiced at the resurrection of the Lord.

MARY Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, had hastened back from the sepulchre on the evening after the sabbath (the first day of the week according to Jewish reckoning) to excitedly tell the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead, that they had met him personally and had held him by the feet, and that there was to be a general meeting of believers in Galilee where the Lord would meet with them all, as he had promised before his death. They naturally felt that their wonderful news would be accepted with the greatest joy, so that the previous depression of the disciples would be swallowed up in wonder and hope.

**The Disciples Reject
the Evidence of
the Two Marys**

But when they burst into the company of the disciples to tell them the news, they were met coldly and disbelievingly by a group of men who no longer wanted to believe. Their general attitude was expressed by the two on the way to Emmaus: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Lk. 24:21).

This trust and hope were no longer in evidence. In their opinion, Jesus had failed to manifest the necessary qualifications of the Messiah. For example, the crucifixion had called down the curse of God upon him according to the Law (Gal. 3:13), and surely the Messiah was not one accursed of God! Again, he had failed to "save himself" as Zech. 9:9 (marg.) had predicted that the promised king would do. Finally, Elijah had not appeared to turn the hearts of the people, as Mal. 4 required. In view of those and other failures, it was impossible to claim that he were the Messiah, even though they were prepared to concede that he was a man of God, a prophet, and a teacher of righteousness.

The story of the two Marys, therefore, was received with complete incredulity and scorn. The claim that they had held the Lord by the feet was swept aside as the fantasy of overwrought minds.

In the face of this barrage of unbelief, even the women began to doubt whether these things actually happened, or whether they had imagined them!

After all, Mary Magdalene was the one "out of whom had been cast seven devils" (Lk. 8:2; Mk. 16:9*), and who once had suffered from extreme mental aberration and insanity. Obviously, the tension of the last few days had affected her so that she had evidently suffered a relapse. So the disciples to whom she excitedly poured out her story may have believed.

But what of the evidence of the other Mary who had likewise seen Jesus? This, again, could be the result of hallucination of the mind induced by the excitable Mary Magdalene. They may have met somebody adjacent to the garden tomb, but were they sure it was Jesus? Was it not dark when they supposedly had met him? It could have been just an imagination!

Finally and conclusively: if the Lord were really alive, would he not have appeared to the apostles first? Perhaps to Peter, or John, or one of the others who had been close to him in his ministry. Was it

* It is significant that the mental condition of Mary Magdalene is only mentioned twice in the Scriptures. The reference in Lk. 8:2 recorded the incident when it occurred; whilst that of Mk. 16:9 is added to the circumstances of her meeting the Lord after his resurrection — perhaps to indicate that her companions implied that she had again become mentally ill through her distresses of the trials and crucifixion of the Master.

logical that he should allow himself to be discovered by two obscure women? Such an idea was preposterous!

The disciples ridiculed the story of the two Marys so much that eventually the women themselves began to do what the apostles did later — doubt the evidence of their own senses. They were induced to believe that they must have made a mistake!

Thus, for the moment, fleshly reasoning triumphed over faith.

The Women Again Visit the Tomb

It was too late to do anything about confirming or rejecting the story of the open tomb and risen Christ that evening. Mary Magdalene, however, determined that as soon as the sun rose, she would return to the sepulchre to see what really had happened. Arrangements had been made by the women to anoint the body of the Lord this day with the spices they had previously bought and prepared, and by agreement they decided to go in two groups: the first to get everything ready at the tomb itself; and the second to bring the spices for the actual anointing.

Early in the morning, therefore, while it was still dark (Jn. 20:1), Mary Magdalene left the place of her temporary abode adjacent to Jerusalem, and made her lonely and thoughtful way toward the sepulchre. She wondered what she might find when she arrived there. The incidents of the previous evening: the open tomb, the presence of the angel, the soldiers in a faint on the ground, and, later, on claiming to be the risen Christ, all seemed now like a dream, completely unreal. Surely she must have imagined it!

Soon she met up with the other Mary and Salome, and as the dawn was rising, they arrived at the northern part of the city, not far from Golgotha.

One of them, probably Salome, voiced her thoughts as they neared the sepulchre: ***“Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”*** This seems a strange statement in view of what the two Marys had seen on the previous evening, but their story was not believed (Mk. 16:9; Lk. 24:22-24). Even they, themselves, were now doubtful of the reality of that which they had seen and heard. In the light of day, all that they had seen in the gloom of the night seemed fantastic, and they needed confirmation of it.*

* Most commentators endeavour to blend the accounts of Matthew and Mark as one, conveniently omitting the statement of Mat. 28:1 in so doing. That gives the time as “the end of the sabbath,” which must be 6pm in spite of many attempts to make it otherwise. The differences in the two accounts show that they relate to two distinct incidents. Thus in Mat. 28, the two Marys approach the tomb and...[1] see an angel outside sitting on the stone; [2] observe the soldiers in a dead faint; [3] do not enter the tomb; [4] both meet Jesus and hold him by the feet; [5] return to the city at the same time as the guard likewise

They soon received it.

As they came into view of the sepulchre they found that the huge stone was already rolled away, and that the entrance to it was open. Mary Magdalene looked at it in wonder. Part of the so-called dream of the night before was vindicated. True, there was no welcoming angel on the huge stone with countenance like lightning and garment glistening like snow; there were no Roman soldiers in a dead faint on the ground; but at least the sepulchre was open and the stone rolled aside. It was enough for her. Leaving the other women she hurried back to tell Peter and John what she had seen (Jn. 20:2).

Meanwhile, the other Mary and Salome entered the sepulchre. It was dark inside, and it took a little time for their eyes to get used to the gloom. Then they received a shock. They saw a young man, clothed in a white garment, seated at the right hand of the trough grave in which the Lord had been laid.

But there was no body in the sepulchre!

They looked at the young man in complete bewilderment. They did not recognise him as an angel, and wondered what he was doing in the tomb, and what had happened to the body of the Lord.

Then he addressed them: ***“Do not be bewildered,”*** he said. ***“You are looking for Jesus, that Nazarene who was crucified! He has risen, he is not here. There is the place where he was laid. Go and tell his disciples and Peter, that he will go before you into Galilee, as he told you; you will see him there!”***

The two women made no answer. They looked at the young man and the empty tomb in amazement. Slowly they backed out of the sepulchre, and when they reached the outside, they fled from the place trembling with fear and astonishment, unable to understand what had really happened.

Nor did they convey the message of the angel to anybody, for they

returns to Jerusalem; [6] bear the news to the disciples. In Mark [1] the three women at least visit the tomb; [2] they see the sepulchre open, but do not see any angel outside; [3] Mary Magdalene runs back to tell Peter and John (Jn. 20); [4] the other two women enter the tomb, and there see an angel who addresses them; [5] they flee in fear from the sepulchre but tell nobody what they had seen (Mk. 16:8); [6] a little later Joanna's party enters the tomb, are addressed by two angels, and tell the eleven apostles; then [7] later Mary Magdalene again sees Jesus on her own, but is this time instructed not to hold him.

Obviously there is discrepancy in the two accounts if they record the same incident. We do not believe they do so, however. We believe that both the time and the circumstances are different, and that Matthew and Mark record two distinct incidents. It is obvious that the two Marys, in view of the confusion incidental to the events of the night before, and in the face of the ridicule and unbeliefs of the apostles and others, doubted the reality of what they had seen. In view of the fact, as we have stated before, that the apostles also doubted, even though Christ was present before them, surely makes it far from strange that these emotional, highly-strung women would do likewise.

were afraid (Mk. 16:8). They remembered the ridicule that had been heaped upon Mary Magdalene the night before when she had burst her way into the company of the disciples with the story that Jesus lived. They did not want a repetition of that! All they had seen on this occasion was an open sepulchre, a young man that claimed Jesus had risen, and an empty tomb.

And when they returned to the city, they possibly heard the first of the rumours circulated by the Jewish leaders that some people had broken into the tomb whilst the soldiers slept and stole the body of Jesus. In the face of this rumour, and the assured ridicule they knew they would receive from the disciples, the women remained silent regarding their experiences.

Joanna's Party Visits the Tomb (Lk. 24:1-11)

The two Marys and Salome had evidently gone to the sepulchre to get everything ready for the anointing, leaving it to Joanna and the other women to bring the spices a little later. Therefore, shortly after Mary and Salome had hastened away from the sepulchre in fear, the women arrived bearing the spices. They, too, saw the sepulchre open, but this did not cause them any wonderment because they had expected those who had arrived earlier to arrange this.

Therefore, they boldly entered the tomb, expecting to see the other women therein. But it was empty. They looked for the body of Jesus, and could not find it. They stood by the trough grave in perplexity, wondering what had happened.

Then, suddenly, the sepulchre was illuminated. Two men stood by them in shining garments, and made them afraid. They recognised that they were angels, and bowed before them in reverence though in fear; and in that attitude they heard them speak: ***"Why search among the dead for him who is alive? He is not here, he has risen. Remember how he told you, when he was still in Galilee, that the Son of man had to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and rise on the third day?"***

They recalled the saying distinctly. Of course, he had told them that! Everything now fitted into place. Their fear turned to awe and joy. Jesus was risen from the dead! He was indeed the Messiah! The two Marys were right in claiming to have seen what they had the night before.

The women hastened out of the sepulchre, and fleet of foot ran back to where the eleven were staying, that they might tell them the good news. Like the two Marys the night before, Joanna and the women with her, excitedly told their story.

But again it was received coldly. The apostles refused to believe. Perhaps they had heard the rumour circulated by the high priests that

the body of the Lord was stolen, and therefore were inclined to believe that it was some trick. Perhaps they believed that if the Lord had really risen from the dead, he would have appeared to them first, and so discounted the story they heard. "The story of the women sounded to them like nonsense; and they would not believe it" (Lk. 24:11, Moffatt).

**Peter and John
Visit the Tomb
(Jn. 20:2-10;
Lk. 24:12)**

When Mary Magdalene saw that the sepulchre was open, she did not enter like the other women, but instantly hurried back to the apostles, that she might tell them the staggering news that if Christ had not risen from the dead, the tomb had been tampered with.

Finding Peter and John, she told them her story. "*They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him!*" she declared.

This was enough for Peter! He was determined to find out what was going on. Although the seven days' feast of Passover was still in progress, and would not be completed until the following Wednesday, and although the Law prohibited a male to have contact with a sepulchre during that period, his natural impetuosity got the better of him, and he decided to visit the sepulchre.

He went out for that purpose, and John followed him.

They ran to the sepulchre, for they were excited at the repeated stories of Mary Magdalene. But John, being a younger, more virile man, outran Peter, and came first to the tomb. He saw that it was open as Mary had said; and stooping down he looked into the dark interior. He saw the linen bandages lying on the ground, but he did not go in.

But Simon Peter did. Arriving at the tomb shortly after John, he boldly entered. He saw the curious way in which the grave clothes were lying. He saw that the bandages were lying on the ground in a neat heap on their own, and that the napkin that had been round the head of the Lord was folded up by itself, and not placed with the bandages.

John likewise entered the tomb and saw the same things; but there was no body. The fact that the linen bandages and head-gear were found neatly set in their places proved beyond all doubt that the body had not been stolen. Would a grave-robber have gone to the trouble of removing the bandages and headgear! And would he have neatly folded them up and left them there?

John was convinced. He was sure that Mary Magdalene was right. He now believed her, although he did not understand the scriptural import of what had happened, for, as he himself later wrote: "He saw and believed [i.e. Mary]. For as yet they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead."

But Peter still obstinately refused to believe! There was some mistake somewhere, though he could not place it for the moment.

So the two apostles returned to their dwelling in Jerusalem.

**Mary Magdalene
Again Meets Christ
(Mk. 16:9, 11;
Jn. 20:11-18)**

Meanwhile, Mary had likewise returned to the tomb. She was completely bewildered. Her story of the risen Christ had been ridiculed; the fact of the open sepulchre had been explained away; there was a rumour circulating throughout the city that the body of Jesus had been stolen.

She did not know what to believe.

She stood outside the sepulchre weeping as though her heart would break. She had such an intense love for her Lord. She remembered with deep affection all that he had done for her. She knew, too, what would be the fate of his body if it were taken by the Jewish leaders; they would fling it in the burning valley of Gehennah.

So she wept.

Then something made her stoop down and look into the dark interior of the tomb. She saw that it was inhabited, but by living beings. Two men in white apparel were sitting, one at the head, and the other at the feet, of where the body of Jesus had lain. They looked at her, and said: "**Woman, why are you sobbing?**"

"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," she replied. She doubtless did not realise that it was to angels she was speaking, and thought she was addressing ordinary men. Then she heard somebody approaching, and turned around to meet him. It was Jesus whom she now saw, but her eyes and ears were "holden" that she did not perceive who it was.

"Woman," enquired the man, **"why do you weep? Who do you seek?"** With her eyes still flowing with tears, she thought that the speaker was the caretaker of the garden.

"Oh, sir," she said through her tears, **"if you have carried him away, tell me where you put him, and I will remove him!"**

The man looked down upon the woman before him. Her head was bowed, her eyes were swollen with tears, and compassionately, and full of tender pathos, he uttered one word: **"Mary!"**

The familiar voice, the tender tones of the man she loved, penetrated instantly to her heart. She knew him! This was Jesus! The experience of the night before had been no fantasy of the mind! She had really seen him! He had risen from the dead! In one heartfelt word of tender affection, as she lifted her face to his, she said in Hebrew: **"Rabboni!"**

"My teacher!" All that she was both in mind and in body, she owed to him. He had cured her of a terrible mental affliction; but more than that, he had made her whole by teaching her spiritual

truths. Few could match the love that Mary had for Jesus, and which she was prepared to manifest by performing the most menial tasks in his service. Never could she forget her gratitude for him, and though she had failed to comprehend the doctrine of the resurrection, she had never wavered in her adoration of him. Now she had him back, and she would not let him go. She recalled how that she and the other Mary had held him by the feet the night before, but he had detached himself from them, and departed, causing them many hours of anxiety and doubt. So she wanted to remain with him; his very presence was a guarantee of her sanity, that she had not imagined all these extra-ordinary events that had occurred.



Again she moved to catch hold of him, but he forestalled her:

"Touch me not," he declared, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God!"

What did the Lord mean?

The word "touch" is a translation of *haptou* which signifies, to "lay hold of," to "cling to" for prolonged possession and enjoyment. Mary was about to take hold of the Lord, so as to never let him go, but the Lord restrained her with words that signify: "Do not cling to me as though you would possess me thus for ever."

And why did he so restrain her?

To impress her, and later the apostles, that his time on earth was very limited, and he must ascend to the right hand of the Father. Mary was given a work to do. She must return to the apostles, and not only tell them that Jesus had risen from the dead, but that his time on earth was limited, in that he must ascend into heaven. In so doing, she would pin-point the root cause of their failure to perceive his true mission. They had imagined that he would immediately set up his power in Jerusalem, proclaim himself as king, and establish the glory of Israel's reign once more. They did not understand his heavenly mission, though he had explained it to them. He had told them that he must ascend into heaven "to prepare a place for them" (Jn. 14:1-3). Thomas had replied: "Lord, we know not whither you are going; and how can we know the way!" (Jn. 14:5).

The apostles had failed to comprehend his mission in heaven as advocate and mediator; and now Mary is instructed to return to them, and to remind them of his word to them. His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven were all necessary to "prepare a place for

them." So, it was useless Mary trying to hold him so as to never let him go. She, and the others, must come to recognise that if his purpose was to come to fruition, he must leave them and ascend to the Father. This would be for their development and ultimate salvation. He had declared: "Truly, truly, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (Jn. 14:12). "You have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I" (v. 28).

The Lord's words to Mary, therefore, provided a key which could unlock for the apostles the significance of his earlier teaching, and give them a full assurance of understanding and hope.

Mary Magdalene hurried away to convey the message of the Lord to the disciples (Jn. 20:18). She told them all that the Lord had told her; but even so they failed to understand and refused to believe (Mk. 16:9-11).

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

At the moment when Christ died, nothing could have seemed more abjectly weak, more pitifully hopeless, more absolutely doomed to scorn, and extinction, and despair, than the ecclesia that he claimed would be founded on the rock of Peter's declaration: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," or, as the statement signifies: "Thou art the Anointed, God manifest in flesh."

It numbered, at that stage, but a handful of weak followers, of whom the boldest had denied his Lord with blasphemy, and the most devoted had forsaken him and fled. They were poor, they were ignorant, they were helpless. They could not claim a single synagogue, or a single convert. If they spoke their own Galilean language, it betrayed them by its mixed dialect; their ignorance and their unlearnedness was apparent to all. So feeble were they and insignificant, that it would have looked like foolish partiality to prophesy for them the limited existence of a Galilean sect. How was it that these dull and ignorant men, with their story of a crucified Messiah, triumphed over the deadly fascinations of false religion, sensual mythologies, conquered kings, and influenced the whole world?

What was it that thus caused strength to be made perfect out of abject weakness? That turned cowards into courageous advocates for Christ, ready to risk death in the proclamation of his Truth? There is but one answer: the resurrection of Jesus from the dead!

All this vast revelation was due to the power of that stupendous fact. If Christ did not rise, we have not only to explain how the belief in his resurrection came to be received without any previous hopes which could lead to its reception, but also how it came to be received with that intensity of personal conviction which brought men to martyrdom rather than deny it. Men like Peter, John, Paul, were men who absolutely refused to accept the fact until it was paraded before their eyes in a way they could no longer deny it.

The personal witness of these men constituted the most telling exposition of the Gospel. There was no refuting the evidence they advanced, and it silenced their enemies. "When they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Today we can place absolute confidence in the fact of the resurrection. It can be attested without doubt. A man like Paul, dedicated to destroying the hated sect of the Nazarenes does not become their greatest advocate without good reason. He sacrificed everything that men hold precious to proclaim the power of the resurrection; he endured the mocking taunts of enemies to set the facts before the people; he died at the hands of a tyrant in witnessing his faith in it. Men of intelligence do not do that without sound reason.

Today, the accomplishments of science are paraded before humanity as the greatest attainments of man since creation. But the inventors and discoverers of these wonders all end in the grave. The astronauts who tread triumphantly upon the face of the moon will one day corrupt in mother earth. Their attainments are so limited; their knowledge so finite. Christ alone can say: "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of the grave!"

His work is not yet finished. The pitiful, divided, fear-stricken group of apostles that formed the nucleus of his ecclesia 2,000 years ago, will yet see the completion of the stupendous work when, through the Living One, "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh" (Num. 14:21). Meanwhile, Yahweh's "strength is made perfect in weakness" still (2Cor. 12:9), for by the sanctifying influence of the Truth (Jn. 17:17), we can build into our lives the same divine qualities as were exhibited in the character of the Lord Jesus, and so ensure for ourselves, through the mercy manifested through him, a resurrection unto glory and honour at his appearance.

Chapter 3

ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS (Mk. 16:12-13; Lk. 24:13-35)

The most delightful of all the incidents surrounding the resurrection is surely the record of the two disciples walking to Emmaus who were met by the Lord Jesus. There is a vividness about the description of it that would suggest that it is recorded by an actual participant, and that Luke was one of the two. There is a simplicity and naturalness about the two who failed to understand the Scriptures thoroughly, and whose hearts burned within them when they were opened out for them by this stranger, that touches a sympathetic cord in those who seek to understand the Word. And one can enter fully into the feelings of joy that pervaded them when they realised that not only did the Scriptures teach that the Messiah must suffer, die, and rise again, but that the very stranger before them was he. The conversation of these two illustrate the doubts that beset the apostles at that time of crisis and misunderstanding.

DURING the same morning, two of the disciples journeyed from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a village which signifies *Hot Baths*, and lay about seven miles (11 kilometres) distant from the capital. The name of one of the disciples was Cleopas. It is a Greek name signifying *Of a renowned father*. The fact that he had a Gentile name could signify that he was one of those Gentiles who had been attracted to the teaching of the Lord Jesus, or was a proselyte who had been converted to Christ.

Who was his companion? His name is not given, and this is strange seeing that the other is identified. The circumstances would point to Luke as being the other disciple. He was the writer of the gospel record that records the details of this incident, and in his records concerning Paul in Acts, he preserves an anonymity as far as he himself is concerned, identifying himself in the activities by the use of the personal pronoun "we." Though it seems that Luke was a Gentile, it could have been that he had been attracted to Christ and followed him to Jerusalem, or that he was a proselyte who had been converted.

Cleopas and Luke (if indeed he was the nameless disciple) could have been among the seventy selected by Christ and sent out from Jerusalem to preach in the area round about.

Be that as it may, these two men set out through the hilly roads that lead from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

The Argument on the Way

The topic of conversation that dominated them as they walked thoughtfully along were the things that had happened in Jerusalem during the past few days. They “communed and reasoned” on these things (Lk. 24:15). The Greek words signify to question and dispute. There were certain matters that troubled them, and they went over all the events that had taken place, disputing with each other as to the meaning of them all. If Luke were one of the two, his scientific knowledge of medicine would equip him for such a discussion. One could imagine how he would reject the concept of a resurrection, and argue the fact of death from a physician’s point of view.

There was the saying of Christ, that he would rise after three days; there were the stories that the overwrought women brought back concerning an open tomb, a vision of angels, and a risen Christ; there was the fact that none of the apostles had seen him, and surely if he had risen he would appear unto them first; there was the curse of the Law that rested upon any one who hung upon a stake, the failure of Jesus to measure up to the requirements of the prophetic Scriptures, the uselessness of a dead Messiah, the story circulating throughout Jerusalem that the body had been stolen, and other confusing reports that were coming in from all directions.

Their communing led to questioning and disputing, and this paved the way for heated argument* as each pressed his point of view regarding what had happened.

The Stranger on the Road

As is normal with people who become absorbed with a subject and argue it out one with the other, the two disciples did not walk very fast, and soon they were overtaken by a stranger who attached himself to their company.

It was the Lord Jesus, but their eyes were holden so that they did not recognise him.

He engaged them in conversation: “*What is this subject upon which you are arguing as you walk?*” he enquired.

They stopped and looked at him with downcast eyes. Then Cleopas addressed him in surprise: “*Have you been lodging alone in Jerusalem, that you are unacquainted with the things which have come to pass there in these days?*” he asked.

“*What things?*” enquired the stranger to draw them out.

“*Concerning Jesus of Nazareth,*” they replied. “*To God and all the people he was a prophet strong in action and in utterance, but*

* The words “have one to another” (Lk. 24:17) are translated from the Greek *antiballete*, signifying “to throw at.” They were throwing words violently at one another, arguing, almost quarrelling between themselves. Rotherham renders it as “debating.”

the high priests and our rulers delivered him up to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope was that he would be the Redeemer of Israel; but he is dead, and that is three days ago! Nevertheless, some women of our number gave us a surprise; for they were at the tomb early in the morning and could not find his body, but they came to tell us they had actually seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our company did go to the tomb and found things exactly as the women had said, but they did not see him."

The words of the two disciples poured out like a flood as they unburdened their hearts to the strange travelling companion who had joined himself to their company. To them Jesus was a prophet before God and the people, and martyred prophets in Israel were far from strange. They had hoped that he would have been the Redeemer, but they were convinced that they had made a mistake. Three days had passed since the crucifixion, and the disciples had not seen the Lord.

Their mention of three days is significant. Perhaps they recalled the frequent references of the Lord to that period of time. But it was over, and he had not appeared before them. As for the story of the women, it was discounted by these disciples as the ravings of emotional females of overwrought minds.

The Exposition on the Way

The stranger then addressed them in a way that must have startled them: "*O foolish men, with hearts so slow to believe, after all that the prophets have declared!*" he said. "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*"

They looked at the stranger in amazement!

Suffering leading to glory! These were the keys that would open the door to the kingdom of God! Jesus had explained this to the apostles on the day of the great Confession on the part of Peter (Mat. 16:16) when he had spoken of the "keys of the kingdom," and proclaimed his imminent sufferings and death, and then, in the vision of the transfiguration, revealed to them the ultimate glory (Mat. 16:19, 21, 28).

The two disciples looked steadily at the stranger, with dawning realisation of the truth of his words.

He then began a long exposition, commencing at Moses, and drawing upon all the prophets, to show that the promised Messiah would first suffer and afterwards enter into his glory. What a key to the Law and the Prophets that exposition provided!

The hearts of the two disciples burned within them as they listened to the golden words of truth, and recognised in what was predicted the very things that had happened to their Lord and friend.

What a coverage of Scripture! Christ doubtless revealed the things

concerning himself in relation to:

The seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15);
The offered seed of Abraham (Gen. 22);
The paschal lamb (Exo. 12);
The scapegoat (Lev. 16:1-34);
The smitten rock (Num. 20:11);
The impaled serpent (Num. 21:9);
The greater prophet (Deu. 18:15);
The star and sceptre (Num. 24:17);
The Davidic seed chastened with the rod of men (2Sam. 7:14);
The seed of David pierced with the spear (2Sam. 23:7);
The Psalm predicting the piercing of hands and feet (Psa. 22:16);
Immanuel (Isa. 7:14);
The Son promised (Isa. 9:6);
The suffering Servant (Isa. 49:3-9);
The sheep to the slaughter (Isa. 53);
The righteous branch (Jer. 23:5);
The shepherd prince (Eze. 34:23);
The Messiah cut off (Dan. 9:26);
The rejected king (Hos. 3:4);
The teacher of righteousness (Joel 2:23);
The darkened sun at noonday (Amos 8:9);
The saviour who shall judge Edom (Obad. 21);
The sign of Jonah (Jonah);
The smitten ruler of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:1-2);
The herald of the gospel (Nah. 1:15);
The avenger of Teman (Hab. 3);
The supporter of the afflicted (Zeph. 3);
The glory of the restored temple (Hag. 2:6-9);
The pierced firstborn (Zech. 12:10);
The messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1).

He might have taken them to a prophecy such as the Immanuel Prophecy of Isa. 8:13 to 9:7, and shown how the whole scope of the Divine purpose has been revealed in sequence. Thus:

The Message of John Baptist: "Sanctify Yahweh of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread" (Isa. 8:13).

The Mission of Christ: "He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (v. 14).

The Jewish Rejection of Christ: "Many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken" (v. 15).

The Call to the Disciples: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples" (v. 16).

The Rejection of Jewry: "I will wait upon Yahweh, that hideth His

face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him" (v. 17).

The Establishment of Ecclesias: "Behold I and the children whom Yahweh hath given me" (v. 18; cp. Heb. 2:13).

Controversy With the Apostasy: "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? should the living seek the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (vv. 19-20).

Jewry in Dispersion Curse Their King: "They shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry; and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. They shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven into darkness" (vv. 21-22).

Hope Only From Christ: "There shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the later time he hath made it glorious by way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isa. 9:1-2).

The Restoration of Israel: "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and to him increased the joy: they joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil" (v. 3).

The Subjugation of the Nations: "For Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. Surely every boot of one tramping in tumult, and the war-cloak rolled in blood, shall then serve for burning fuel for fire" (vv. 4-5).

The Establishment and Extension of the Kingdom: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The warrior of God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will perform this" (vv. 6-7).

In these verses, there is thus set forth the correct chronological sequence, the development of the divine purpose, from the proclamation of John the Baptist to the future establishment of the kingdom: the ministry of Christ, the call of the disciples, the establishment of the ecclesias, the rise of the apostasy, the wandering of Israel, the restoration of Jewry, the outpouring of Armageddon, and

the restoration of the kingdom of God.

In prophecies such as these, the stranger on the way to Emmaus could have opened the understanding of Cleopas and his companion as they walked along deep in thought. They thrilled to the message. All doubts regarding Jesus were swept aside. They clearly saw that everything that had happened was in accordance with the divine purpose, and the teaching of the prophets. They now recognised how blind they had been, and realised that what the women had said to them served to emphasise the truth in the risen Christ.

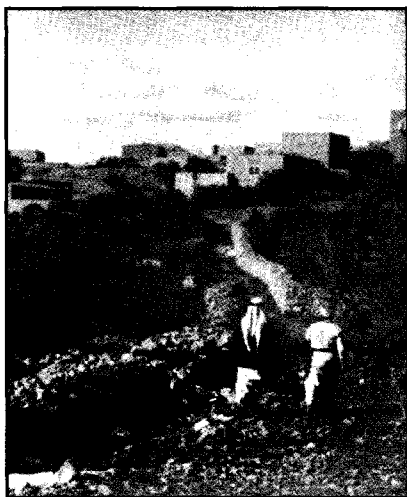
The Revelation at Emmaus

So they made their way slowly to Emmaus, revelling in the glorious message, and the wondrous exposition of the Word they were

hearing. At this little village they stopped, but the stranger made as though he would have gone further. There was no dissimulation in this. He did not want to thrust his presence on them if they had had enough, but at the same time, he gave them opportunity to invite him to stay.

And this they did. They eagerly begged him to remain with them a little longer: *"Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent,"* they urged. In Jewish reckoning there was an early (3pm) and latter (6pm) evening, and it seems as though reference here is to the former. The Diaglott renders "the day is far spent" as "the day has already declined." Evidently afternoon had commenced, and it was moving on toward the early evening. As they had been dawdling on the road, and had missed the midday meal, they invited the stranger to stay with them, and partake it with them.

The midday meal was but a



light repast, the evening meal being the main repast for the day. The stranger, therefore, went in with them to enjoy the light refreshments that were offered. There was unleavened bread upon the table, and as though it was his right, he took some of it in his hands, and having offered thanks to God for it, he passed it to his companions.

Their eyes were fixed upon him in wonderment. The familiar action, the assumption of natural authority, recalled the position assumed by the Lord. Suddenly their eyes were opened, and they recognised him. It was the Lord Jesus, indeed! But not as they saw him last: disfigured with suffering, haggard with tiredness, bruised and weakened with the pummelling and the scourging he had received, pain-wracked, and with life ebbing from him on the cruel stake.

The one before them was vibrant with life; there were no marks of suffering or premature ageing on that noble face. They stared at him in wonderment; but even as they did so, and before they could utter a word, he disappeared from their sight.

They looked at one another in amazement. ***"Did not your heart glow with excitement, whilst he talked with us on the road, opening up the Scriptures for us?"*** they said one to the other.

All thoughts of tiredness, or of hunger, had been driven from them. Such news could not be kept private. They determined that they must carry the wonderful and exciting information back to the apostles and the disciples. Rising immediately from the table, they began the seven-mile (11 kms) walk back to Jerusalem, anxious to tell the others the stupendous news, and show from the Scriptures how that the death, burial and resurrection of Christ was in accordance with its predictions.

**The Lord Appears
to Peter (Lk. 24:34;
1Cor. 15:5)**

After the Lord left the two disciples in Emmaus, he made his way to where Peter was staying, that he might reveal himself unto that impetuous apostle. Peter had left the empty tomb still disbelieving, but wondering in himself at that which had come to pass (Lk. 24:12). The time had come when he should learn of the power of the resurrection. And so this most intimate interview took place.

Paul later wrote: "Christ was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve" (1Cor. 15:5), and Luke likewise recorded: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (Lk. 24:34). The circumstances are not revealed; they were too personal for the curious gaze of others. But what an occasion it must have been, and what conversation must have ensued! How Peter would have been filled with remorse, not only because he had so wantonly denied his Lord, but also because of the faithlessness that he had manifested in his resurrection!

We may be sure that the Lord would treat him with understanding and gentleness, recognising the basic qualities of this great man, and knowing how he would profit by his mistakes, and by his influence, help others to worship Yahweh in truth. It was a very chastened Peter who left the Lord after that interview, and made his way back to the apostles, to tell them of his experience, and confirm the report of Mary Magdalene that the Lord had risen indeed.

**The Lord Appears
to the Apostles
(Lk. 24:36-48;
Jn. 20:19-23)**

Whilst the Lord was conversing with Peter, the two disciples were hurrying back from Emmaus along the hilly road that leads to Jerusalem, that they might report their remarkable experience to the apostles.* They found them assembled together in a house in Jerusalem with the doors shut because of their fear of the Jews (Jn. 20:19). With them was also a company of disciples, and Peter had just told them all of his experience.

Thus as the two from Emmaus made their way excitedly into the room to tell their story, their news was forestalled by the joyful ejaculation from the others: ***"The Lord is risen indeed,"*** they declared, ***"and has appeared to Simon!"*** (Lk. 24:34).

The two disciples then related their experiences. They told how the Lord had appeared on the road to Emmaus, how that he had expounded unto them the Scriptures, and then how they finally recognised him when he had offered thanks and broken the bread at the meal table.

But, suddenly, as they exchanged and discussed their happy intelligence, they were disturbed by what they thought was an apparition. Jesus, himself, stood in the midst of them, with the words: ***"Peace be with you!"*** Now the very ones, who had been so happily discussing the joyous news of his resurrection, were startled and terrified by his presence. They thought it was an optical illusion, a phantom. Some were troubled, bearing in mind their lack of faith. Others were filled with doubts, and thoughts arose in their hearts advancing reasons to prove it were not he.

So the Lord addressed the silent, terrified group: ***"Why are you upset?"*** he asked them. ***"Why do doubts invade your mind? Look at my hands and feet. It is I! Feel me and see; a phantom has not flesh and bones as you see I have."*** He stretched out his hands to them,

* In Lk. 24:33 the apostles are called "the eleven," but in 1Cor. 15:5 they are called "the twelve" because of the appointment of Matthias who doubtless was in the room with the apostles when Jesus made his entrance. Actually, only ten were present on this occasion, for Thomas was absent. The terms "the eleven" and later "the twelve" were used to describe official gatherings of the apostles, even though some were absent.

that they might see the imprints of the nails therein, and to observe that he had a corporeal body, though changed into spirit-nature, and therefore independent of blood and energised by spirit (1Cor. 15:50). He showed them his side, that they might see the spear-scar (Jn. 20:20).

Incredulity, wonder and amazement struggled for supremacy. The Lord sympathetically observed their predicament, and tried to help them. ***"Have you any food here?"*** he asked.

They handed him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb, and he ate it before them. This common, everyday action, made a great impression on them. Years later, when Peter preached concerning the risen Christ, he declared: "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:40-41).

Meanwhile, the Lord addressed those in the room, instructing them as he had the two on the way to Emmaus: ***"When I was still with you, this is what I told you, that whatever is written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled."*** He then opened their understanding of these things, quoting extensively from the Old Testament prophecies relating to himself; showing how that the law, the prophets and the psalms were fulfilled in the things that had happened to him. ***"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day,"*** he declared. ***"Moreover repentance and remission of sins must be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, and you are witnesses of these things"*** (Lk. 24:46-48).

He paused, and then continued: ***"Peace be with you!"*** he said. ***"Just as my Father has sent me forth, so I am now sending you."***

With that he breathed on them, and then continued: ***"Receive the Holy Spirit!"*** he said. ***"Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them; but those whose sins you retain, they will remain retained!"***

The forgiveness of sins is obtained through accepting the terms of the Gospel. The extent to which the apostles did this, and brought people under its power, would cause sins to be remitted or forgiven; but if they neglected this, sins would be retained. So the Lord impressed upon them that a tremendous responsibility now rested upon them to take the message of redemption to mankind throughout all the world; proclaiming to people the story of his death, resurrection and ascension into heaven as the grounds of the forgiveness of their sins.

With this message he again withdrew from their presence. He left the apostles convinced concerning the resurrection, and filled with joy at the new understanding they had received.

Chapter 4

DOUBTING THOMAS IS CONVINCED

The early disbelief of the apostles in the resurrection of Jesus was highlighted by the stubborn attitude of Thomas who remained unconvinced in spite of the accumulated evidence of others. His attitude, however, proves that the followers of the Lord were not gullible men, easily persuaded against their better judgment, but such as required sound, personal proof of the miracle. Once convinced, nothing could undermine their confidence, and in faith and confidence they went forth to preach the Gospel. In the world they found a repetition of their own obstinate refusal to accept facts that were not verified by the sight of their eyes. Thus the experience of their own unbelief became a valuable preparation for their subsequent labours.

THOMAS, whose name was also called Didymus, or *The Twin*, was not with the other apostles when the Lord appeared unto them, and refused to believe in the risen Christ. ***“We have seen the Lord,”*** the others declared.

Thomas the Doubter (Jn. 20:24-29) But he remained unconvinced. ***“Unless I see his hands with the mark of the nails, and put my fingers where the nails were, and put my hand in his side, I refuse to believe it!”*** he obstinately rejoined. His attitude seemed completely unreasonable to the others who doubtless overlooked their own earlier misgivings. We can imagine how they would tell him of their experience. They had seen Jesus with their own eyes, had heard him speak with their own ears, and had handled him with their own hands (1Jn. 1:1). But it was all in vain, Thomas refused to accept their evidence. Their very enthusiasm irritated him. He had not seen the Lord himself! Why had not the Lord appeared to him? What about the empty sepulchre, and the evidence of other believers who had seen the Lord!

Thomas remained adamant; only one thing would satisfy him!

If Jesus were risen, why was he not with the apostles?

There was no answer to that. Yet in the stubbornness of doubting Thomas, the apostles had a foretaste of the resistance to the Gospel message they would afterward receive from the world when they went forth to preach it. The Gospel is based upon a resurrected Saviour, and this has ever been a stumbling block to the flesh (1Cor. 1:23-24; Acts 17:32).

The Lord Appears to Thomas

A further week went by without the Lord appearing, and Thomas became more and more entrenched in his attitude of disbelief.

It was a week of frustration for him. Doubtless the discussions continued, as his fellow-apostles insisted on the physical resurrection of the Lord, and Thomas resisted their reasoning, he would become more and more irritated and hardened in his attitude. And until he was convinced, the witness of the apostles as a group, was incomplete.

The first day of the week again came around, and once more the apostles assembled together, carefully closing the doors of the house against possible attack by the Jews.

Thomas was with them on this occasion. The presence of the doubter in their midst was embarrassing to the others; it was disturbing to them as well as to him.

Then, suddenly, unexpectedly, the Lord appeared in their midst.

Clothed with divine nature, it was no difficulty for him to move through the barrier of closed doors. How he did so with a body of corporeal substance as he had (see Lk. 24:36-39), we do not know. It could have been that he opened the doors without the apostles detecting it as later the prison doors swung open for Peter; or else he may have obtained entrance by the use of other laws not known to us, in our present state of mortality. The laws of matter and physics are controlled by Almighty God, and can easily be accommodated to what might be required.

We do not know how the Lord entered the room; we can but accept the fact. Nor did the apostles concern themselves with such issues. The important fact, as far as they were concerned, was that the Lord was in their midst. They turned to him joyfully, to again hear the well-loved, reassuring voice: ***"Peace be unto you!"*** he exclaimed.

He knew of their contentions, their confusions, and their divided state due to the doubting of Thomas. He had appeared to confirm their faith. Turning to the doubter, he declared: ***"Look at my hands, put your fingers here! and put your hand here into my side! And be no more unbelieving, but believe!"***

What could Thomas say in the face of this invitation? He was already convinced. He did not need physical contact with the scars of the stake to bring home to him the reality of the risen Christ. With wonder and joy he gazed into the face of his friend, his saviour, and his Lord. Instantly he felt the impact of many of the sayings of Jesus, and the power of the prophetic Word, to which the others had doubtless been directing his attention during the past week. More, for the first time since he had sojourned with the Lord, he really felt that he knew him. In answer to the words of Jesus, he gave expression to this new belief.

"My Lord and my God!" he fervently exclaimed.

Then came a note of warning from the Lord: ***“You believe because you have seen me,”*** he declared, ***“Blessed be those who believe though they have never seen me.”***

His words proclaim a benediction upon all who accept him in faith. They are as a sequel to the prayer that he offered as he left the city for the crucifixion. Referring to the apostles, he had prayed: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, 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” (Jn. 17:20-21).

How important it is that we should believe on the Lord with the fulness of faith, and so obtain the blessing promised.



What Did Thomas Mean?

The expressions that Thomas used on this occasion have been wrongly understood by countless millions of people since. Many believe that in calling Jesus “God,” Thomas confirmed the church doctrine of the Trinity, and proclaimed that the Lord is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, and existed as God long before he was born as a child in Bethlehem. It is not our intention to spend time in refuting the error of Trinitarianism in this place,* but merely to explain the significance of Thomas’ words.

He called Jesus both “Lord” and “God;” what did he mean?

To obtain our answer we must go back in thought to the time when the apostles were with the Lord in the Upper Room, prior to the crucifixion, listening to his words. They did not understand them at that time. Among other things of deep significance that he spoke to

* There are a number of *Herald* booklets that discuss this subject in detail, and these can be obtained from the Logos Office (see page 2). Please write for a free copy.

them on that occasion, were these words: "If you had known me, you should have known my Father also; and from henceforth you know Him and have seen Him" (Jn. 14:7).

By this Jesus meant that in him they should have seen God manifest in the flesh (1Tim. 3:16), or *Emmanuel*, God with us (Mat. 1:23). In character, thought, word and deed he reflected the attributes of Yahweh in the fullest sense, so that in every way, with the exception of his nature which was identical with all mankind, there was found in him the impress of God.

He was the Son of Man whom Yahweh "made strong" for Himself (Psa. 80:17). He was the promised Judge of quick understanding in the things of God because of the outpouring of spirit upon him (Isa. 11:1-2). He was the "prophet like unto Moses," who spoke the words that Yahweh put in him (Deu. 18). He was the dwelling place of the Father, so that "God was in him reconciling the world unto Himself" (2Cor. 5:19).

Prior to the resurrection of the Lord, the apostles did not understand this. They looked upon him as Christ, and Son of God, without fully recognising that he was the fulness of the manifestation of God (1Tim. 3:16). Thus, when Jesus spoke these words unto them in the Upper Room, Philip, in puzzled amazement, replied: "Lord, show us the Father, and it will satisfy us!" (Jn. 14:8).

To that the Lord replied: "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; why then say, 'Show us the Father'?" (Jn. 14:9).

The word "seen" in this statement signifies more than merely to view. It is translated from the Greek, *heorakos*, and means to closely observe, to properly discern, and then, by extension, to attend to. If the apostles had viewed the Lord in that way, they would have comprehended more properly who he was. But the fact that they asked, "Show us the Father?" revealed that they had not done this.

They did not properly comprehend the relationship of the Father to the Son.

The resurrection changed that. Once Jesus rose from the dead and stood among them expounding the Word to them in the light of that wonderful event, the scales were drawn from their eyes. They then looked into the countenance of one who possessed divine nature, and came to understand the principle of God manifest in the flesh, which afterwards became such an important element of their preaching.

However, until the dramatic moment when the glorified Jesus suddenly appeared unto the apostles in the closed room, Thomas had refused to believe. With Jesus before him, however, he could no longer withstand the evidence of the others.

He acknowledged that in the risen, glorified Jesus, he saw the Father in manifestation, as the Lord declared they should, in the

reference quoted above. Thus he exclaimed: "My Lord and my God."

He had frequently called Jesus "Lord" before, but never "God." He now realised that he was more than Lord: he was Yahweh in manifestation.

The title "God" used in relation to Jesus does not constitute him as the second person in a Trinity nor "very God of very God" as is claimed by Christendom, for the same word is applied to angels or even mortal men who have a special relationship with Yahweh.

Jesus, himself, made reference to that fact when explaining why he used the title in relation to himself. After the Jews had accused him of blasphemy because of his claims concerning his relationship with the Father, in which he had applied the title of "God" to himself, he declared: "Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If He (i.e., Yahweh) called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken (i.e., Christ endorsed it); why say you of him, whom the Father has sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" It is true that the word "gods" is printed without a capital initial, but that is merely a translator's gloss. In the original Scriptures, the letters are all in one form, without discrimination of initials and lower case.

Jesus was quoting from Psa. 82:6-7 where Yahweh is represented as saying to the rulers of Israel, who administered His Word: "I have said, You are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men..."

The word in the Hebrew translated "gods" is *Elohim*, exactly the same as that translated "God" in hundreds of other places. The title of "God" is applied to mortal men by Yahweh; proving conclusively that its use in regard to a person does not signify that he is part of the Godhead.

In Exo. 7:1; 4:16, Moses is likewise given the title of God because of the authority conferred upon him by Yahweh; and in Exo. 23:20-21, he was told concerning the angel placed over the affairs of Israel, that Yahweh's name was "in him."

If the title of God can be applied to mortal men and angels, how much more to the "only begotten Son of God!" But a terrible mistake is made if it is imagined that such a title presumes that the one bearing it is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. Eternal life will be granted only to those who acknowledge the truth of this matter (Jn. 17:3).

The Relationship of Jesus to His Followers In Rom. 8:17, mortal believers are described as being "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." In other words, what he is now, they can become! As he possesses the glory, nature and name of God, so also can they!

Consider the evidence of Scripture:

The glory of God is promised believers.

"We rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2).

Divine Nature is promised believers.

"There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Pet. 1:4).

The Name of God is promised believers.

"Him that overcometh, upon him will I write the name of my God" (Rev. 3:12).

If mortal believers can attain unto the glory, nature and name of God without being considered as co-equal and co-eternal with Yahweh, the same titles can surely be applied to the Lord Jesus without ascribing to him a status that he, himself, repudiated (Jn. 5:19, 30). Paul taught that at the epoch when every enemy is crushed beneath the feet of the Lord, and he is triumphant over all creation, he will still be in subjection to the Father in heaven. He wrote: "When all things shall be subdued unto him [the Lord Jesus], then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1Cor. 15:28).

It is possible for every one to attain to the same glorious unity with the Father that is enjoyed by the Son, for God in multiplicity is the Bible truth, not God as trinity. Jesus prayed for all believers: "That they may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee; that they may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me" (Jn. 17:21).

Therefore, when Thomas exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!" he proclaimed his servitude to the anointed Jesus (his Lord) by virtue of his status as God manifest in flesh.

This exclamation of joyous belief, uttered by one who had obstinately refused to accept the testimony of the other apostles, provides the climax of the ministry of the Lord, in John's record. Whereas Eve had tried to grasp at equality with God (Gen. 3:5), but had failed because she sought it unlawfully, Jesus had succeeded because he had completely submitted to the will of his Father. He thought it not a thing to be grasped at, but a privilege to be granted by humble submission, and so God highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, even the name of Yahweh (Phil. 2:6-11, R.V.).

John's Summary

After recording the conversion of Thomas, John summarised the work of the Lord Jesus in the following terms: "*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But*

these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name."

John wrote that we might have life through believing on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This requires that we comprehend his status as God manifest in the flesh. Every chapter of John's Gospel emphasises this, as the following epitome shows. The chapters can be summarised:

Chapter 1: The Logos, the Light, the Sent, the Lamb, the Messiah, the King.

Chapter 2: The first sign; and the manifestation of glory.

Chapter 3: As born from Above, the Giver of light, the Witness of John.

Chapter 4: The witness at the well, the Christ, the second sign.

Chapter 5: The third sign, the Son, the Sent of God, the Prince of Life, the Lord of the sabbath, the Son promised in Isa. 9:6.

Chapter 6: The fourth and fifth signs, the bread from heaven.

Chapter 7: The Apostle of Yahweh.

Chapter 8: The light of the world.

Chapter 9: The sixth sign.

Chapter 10: The good shepherd.

Chapter 11: The seventh sign.

Chapter 12: The paschal lamb.

Chapter 13: The suffering servant.

Chapter 14: The heavenly advocate.

Chapter 15: The vine.

Chapter 16: The victor.

Chapter 17: The intercessor.

Chapter 18, 19: The sacrifice.

Chapter 20: The Lord and God.

Chapter 21: The eighth sign.

In all the titles thus indicated, and in the eight signs thus presented, there is revealed the theme of John's gospel: the work of Yahweh in Christ. His help was necessary to provide the Logos, the Light, the Glory, the Sacrifices, or any other of the various manifestations of God. It is all summed up in the words of the Lord: "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (Jn. 6:63).

Chapter 5

THE INCREASED HARVEST

(Jn. 21)

The Gospel of John records eight outstanding “miracles” which the apostle selected as signs (cp. Jn. 20:30) setting in sequence the purpose of Yahweh in His Son. A close analysis will reveal that each builds upon the preceding one, so that combined they set forth a consecutive story. The miracles of Christ were “signs” designed to teach important spiritual truths, and not merely to demonstrate his power. The eight signs recorded by John are as follows:

1. **WATER INTO WINE** (Jn. 2:1-11) — *Teaching that there is joy in the service of the Lord incidental to the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7).*

2. **THE RULER’S SON CURED** (Jn. 4:46-54) — *Showing that Christ alone is competent to restore those spiritually dead.*

3. **THE IMPOTENT MAN MADE STRONG** (Jn. 5:1-15) — *Revealing that Christ will strengthen those who recognise their helplessness and accept his offer to help.*

4. **FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND** (Jn. 6:1-14) — *Demonstrating the Lord’s ability and willingness to nourish his followers with spiritual food.*

5. **CALMING THE STORMY SEA** (Jn. 6:15-21) — *Emphasising the need of faith to surmount the storms of life.*

6. **CURING THE MAN BORN BLIND** (Jn. 9) — *Pointing to the way in which our eyes can open to the richness of the inheritance.*

7. **THE RAISING OF LAZARUS** (Jn. 11) — *The newness of life to which we will be raised.*

8. **THE INCREASED HARVEST** (Jn. 21) — *Parabolic of the increased harvest after the resurrection.*

THE apostles had been instructed to make their way to Galilee (Mat. 28:10; Mk. 16:7), where the Lord would meet with a general convocation of believers. After the completion of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, therefore, they made their several ways to the appointed meeting place on a mountain in the northern districts of the land (Mat. 28:16).

On the Way to Galilee A group of seven of the apostles journeyed from Jerusalem, up toward the sea of Tiberias, led by Simon Peter. Seven is a significant number; for in its spiritual sense, it represents completeness, seen in the covenant.

In these seven, therefore, there is figuratively represented the complete number of the redeemed. Moreover, this group was made up of five named, and two unnamed. Five is the number of grace, whilst the two unnamed suggests the great multitude of Jews and Gentiles whose names and number are unknown, but who will make up the completed ecclesia in the Age to come (Rev. 7).

The names are significant. There was Simon Peter (*The hearing Rock*), Thomas called Didymus (Hebrew and Gentile names for *The Twin*), Nathanael (*Gift of God*), the sons of Zebedee (*Yahweh is the Gift*). These names placed in conjunction proclaim: ***From the hearing rock is developed the two-fold witness: and to them, even the great unnamed, is granted the gift of God and the name of Yahweh.***

“I Go A-Fishing” Reaching the Sea of Galilee, hunger claimed them. And so, instead of moving straight on to the place where the Lord said he would meet them, Peter decided to satisfy his hunger. ***“I am going fishing,”*** he announced, reverting to his previous occupation. ***“We will go with you as well!”*** responded the others. There was a boat close handy, which probably belonged to Zebedee. Entering it, they pushed out from the shore, and commenced to fish.

But they caught nothing.

They persisted all through the night, but were unsuccessful. It was a most frustrating experience; very much like the results often attending the preaching of the Truth in these last days of the Gentiles.

The Lord Appears The long, fruitless night passed away, and gradually the light of a new dawn appeared. On the still waters of the lake, the seven apostles continued to fish, but in vain; they caught nothing. Then, on the shore, there appeared a solitary figure. In the shadows of the early dawn they could not discern who it was, and, in any case, intent upon their fishing, they ignored it.

The man in the shadows hailed them: ***“Children,”*** he called, ***“have you any meat?”*** The apostles had been invited to Galilee as “brethren” (Mat. 28:10), but their action in turning aside to fish, suggested the immaturity of children. They had yet to learn to carry out the Lord’s instructions to the letter, if they were to successfully assume the responsibilities he desired them to carry.

“No!” they answered rather shortly.

He called to them again and ordered them: ***“Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find.”***

They did so, and instantly were successful. Now the harvest of fish was so great that they had extreme difficulty in drawing the large net to the boat.



Immediately the disciples realised that the one on the shore was Christ. "*It is the Lord,*" declared John to Peter.

Peter was clad in his undergarments, having taken off his coat to help in the fishing. When he realised that the figure on the shore was Christ, he put on his outer garment, and leaving the other apostles to care for the fish he impetuously leapt into the sea, and made his way to the Lord.

With difficulty, the other apostles dragged the heavily laden net behind the boat, Peter ultimately lending them a hand, to find it full of great fish, numbering in all one hundred and fifty-three. Yet, in contrast with a similar miracle on an earlier occasion, the net did not break (cf. Lk. 5:4-7).



Arriving at the shore, they found the Lord presiding over a fire on which was a fish cooking, and bread ready for a meal. The fish was a small one, as the word in the Greek signifies, and yet it miraculously provided them all with sufficient food (v. 13).

The lessons were obvious. First, the best results will accrue when Christ's instructions are properly applied, even though they seem to be trifling, such as throwing the net on the other side of the boat. Second, God can and will supply the needs of His servants if they do His will, as seen by the provision of food by the Lord even though he had not gone fishing!

What is the significance of the number of fish caught: one hundred and fifty-three? It is said that the numerical value of the title: *Son of Man*, is one hundred and fifty-three, and this could refer to him who made the harvest possible. In type, the harvest points to the multitudinous Christ, the extension of the Son of Man.

The numerical value of the word *Simon* is 118, and that of *Jona*, 35. Combined, they make up the name *Simon Jona* (Peter's name) with a total of 153. The harvest could thus point to Peter, the leader of the apostles, who was constituted a fisher of men (Mat. 4:18-20), and who was called to devote his life to such "fishing" (Mat. 16:16-18). Similarly, the numerical value of the Greek letters that make up the sentence, *Brethren of Christ*, total 153. Moreover the total is divisible by three, which, according to the spiritual significance of numbers in the Bible, represents the principle of completeness and resurrection, of life out of death. Thus the harvest represented the complete number

of the redeemed; all the accepted, so that the net did not break.

The harvest gathered in, the Lord now turned to the shamefaced disciples, and invited them to partake food with him.

"Come and dine," he invited them.

They sat down in silence, pondering the incident and wondering what the significance of it might be. Yet none dared to question him about it.

It was the third time that he had appeared unto the apostles (Jn. 21:14), though the seventh time that he had manifested himself (see p. 138).

Instructing Peter in Shepherding

It was a silent meal. Each of the apostles felt that he had been caught out in neglecting his duty. Christ had commanded them to go to Galilee, but they had departed from those instructions in order to fish. So as they ate no one spoke a word.

At last the Lord Jesus broke the silence. Turning to Peter, he asked: ***"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"***

It was an awkward question to be asked in front of the other apostles. Not many days before Peter had boasted that though all should desert the Lord, he would not! But then had followed the tragic, sordid moment in the palace of the high priest, when three times he had denied the Lord, each succeeding time more vehemently than the last.

The word for "love" in the Lord's question to Peter (Jn. 21:15) was *agapao*,* and signifies to love intellectually, supremely, sacrificially. It is the highest form of love, such an affection as would cause the one manifesting it to completely deny himself in every way to reveal it.

Peter was an honest man, and in view of the circumstances over the past week, he felt that he could not claim to have revealed such

* The Greek word *agape* has been defined as a: "Love that is self-denying and compassionately devoted to its object. The highest word among Greeks was *philanthropia*, but this does not denote love to man as such, but rather justice, giving him who was entitled to it, his full rights. It even falls short of the New Testament word *philadelphia* [brotherly love]. Agape therefore signifies a love unknown to writers outside of the Scriptures." It was designed by the translators of the Septuagint Greek version of the Old Testament to describe the special quality of love found in the Song of Solomon. Thus it is a self-sacrificing desire to render the greatest good to the object of the love, not because being attracted to that object, but having become intellectually enlightened to manifest that good. It is the demonstration of godliness, and is shown in 1Jn. 3:16, as (eliminating the italics, which indicate that there is no comparable word in the original): "Hereby perceive we the love [agape], because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Thus it is a sacrifice for the benefit of another. It was this quality of love that the Master urged upon Peter.

love as that. Yet he did have an intense affection for the Lord. So he affirmed that he loved the Lord, but in doing so, used a different word to define his love. **"Yes, Lord,"** he replied, **"You know that I love you!"**

He used the word *phileo*, a word that signifies liking, tender affection, regard, but which falls short of the *agape* love. But notice that Peter does not now claim to love the Lord "more than these" other apostles! He had been humbled by experience.

Back came the comment of the Lord: **"Feed my lambs!"**

The word for "feed" is *bosko*, and signifies to "pasture," or "feed." To feed the lambs of the flock was a work for which the Lord had trained Peter, and, perhaps, the apostle felt that he was competent of doing it.

An uneasy silence again fell upon the little group, seated on the ground by the Sea of Galilee, as each one thought upon the words of the Lord to Peter, and wondered at their full significance. Once more the Lord spoke: **"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"**

This time he omitted the words "more than these," and it must have hurt Peter to hear his Lord narrow the question down in this way, and query his very love for him. But once again the Lord had used the verb *agapao*, and Peter was quite honest in his belief that he was not worthy of such love. **"Yes, Lord,"** he again replied. **"You know that I love [philo] you!"**

The answer this time was: **"Feed my sheep!"**

Here was an extension of the work set for Peter. He must care for both the lambs and the sheep, and this time the Lord used a different word for "feed." It is the Greek word *poimaino*, to shepherd, rule, guide, guard. Peter was instructed to rule, guide, guard, the older members of the flock, so that they would walk in a way pleasing to Christ. But what had he done the previous evening? He had led the sheep in the wrong direction by setting a bad example. He had boldly proclaimed: "I go a fishing," whereas the Lord had said to go to the mountain in Galilee! A shepherd does not please himself but leads the sheep to good pastures, and protects them from wild animals. That was the task the Lord was setting Peter.

In other words, he must no longer please himself, but guide the sheep at the sacrifice of his own convenience.

Peter made no comment. Doubtless his mind recalled the tragic events of the past few days, and the inglorious example he had set. He had denied his Lord, he had fled from his presence, he had doubted the evidence of others that Jesus had risen from the dead, he had since led these other apostles to go fishing, whereas they should have proceeded to the meeting place.

Peter hung his head in shame.

After a pause, the Lord again addressed the apostle. He had an

intense love for him, and did not want to hurt him. At the same time, he realised that Peter must learn his lesson if he were to become an efficient shepherd.

On this occasion, the barb was more stinging: "*Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?*" asked the Lord.

This deeply grieved Peter, not only because the question had been asked now three times (recalling his threefold denial), but, also, because of the term that the Lord now used. For in this question he reverted to the word for love that Peter had used: *phileo*.

It was as though the Lord was questioning as to whether Peter's claim to love him in that fashion was genuine.

So Peter burst out in a passionate asseveration of his love: "*Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you!*"

Again came the answer: "*Feed [bosko: pasture] my sheep!*"

First he was called upon to pasture the lambs, then to rule the sheep, and now to pasture the whole flock. The Lord was emphasising to Peter, that love, whether *agapao* or *phileo*, must be manifested in action, and not merely in word. As John taught later, we are to love "not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1Jn. 3:18); for "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1Jn. 5:3).

Peter had to learn his lesson, and as his subsequent history shows, he did so.

Christ Predicts the Future of Peter and John

The Lord had asked Peter whether he still considered that he loved him more than the other apostles, using the term *agapas* to indicate the kind of "love" that he had in mind. Peter, with the memory of his denial of the Lord still fresh in mind, had not dared to claim such quality of love, but did affirm that he loved the Lord, using the word *phileo*.

Now, at the conclusion of this exchange, the Lord predicted that despite earlier failings, Peter would yet manifest the *agape* love. He declared: "*Truly, truly, I say unto you, When you were young, you girded yourself, and walked where you wanted to go; but when you are old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you where you will not want to go.*"

Peter would terminate a life of service by being crucified. Like his Lord, his hands would be stretched forth upon the stake and nailed to it, so that he might be lifted up upon it. Only one manifesting the fulness of "agape" love would be capable of glorifying God by such a death. Then, to show what this required, the Lord delivered an exhortation condensed into two words: "*Follow me!*"

Probably, the Lord commenced walking, as he spoke those words. He led the way to the place of meeting on one of the mountains of

Galilee, and Peter went with him. The others followed, most likely leaving the harvest of fish in the charge of some of Zebedee's men whom they could direct to the nets, and whom they probably met as they passed along.

As they walked, Peter pondered the words of the Master, and the death that the Lord had predicted. What would happen to the other apostles? What of John, the one to whom the Lord had manifested many special marks of favour. John was walking behind Christ and Peter at that time. Turning around, and indicating John, Peter enquired: "**Lord, and what shall this man do?**"

Christ replied: "**If I will that he tarry until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!**"

Peter had to keep his eyes upon his Lord, not upon the other apostles. We need to do the same. So often, Christ's followers are found concerning themselves with what others are doing, and so are straying out of the way in which the Lord would have them walk. The only safe way is to fix our eyes on that set before us, and aim to attain unto it (Phil. 3:12-14). We must try to follow Christ as he told Peter to do.

What did Jesus mean by his comment concerning John? It is obvious, that in some way, John would see a coming of the Lord. That is clear by the general understanding of the comment by the other apostles. They thought that Jesus meant he would not die, but John himself, in recording this conversation, declares that Jesus did not intend to imply that. John added the comment: "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true."

How do we know that the Lord's testimony is true? Because, stated John, the things that Jesus spoke in regard to him came to pass.

In what way did they come to pass? The writings of the apostles reveal that the judgment that came upon guilty Jerusalem in AD70, was administered under the supervision and direction of the Lord Jesus (Mat. 22:7). In that sense, it constituted a "coming" of the Lord, and is so treated in Scripture.* John continued in life until after that time. He recorded the Book of Revelation, better called The Apocalypse, for the benefit of ecclesias, and it was written in AD96, over a quarter of a century after the destruction of Jerusalem. The Gospel that he wrote is also considered to have been written after AD70, when Jerusalem was overwhelmed.*

Thus John continued his witness until after the Lord "came" in the sense mentioned above; and this fact testifies that the words of Jesus are true.

* This is explained in the article *The Last Days of Judah's Commonwealth*, by J. Thomas, reproduced in the volume *Contending for the Faith*, which is available from the Logos Office, Box 220, Findon, South Australia 5023.

The Eighth Sign Epitomised

Now let us gather together the various aspects of this miracle of the harvest of fish, and see how they fit into the pattern of the future. The miracle occurred after the resurrection of the Lord, and as a “sign,” it points to events that will take place after the resurrection of the future.

Even the number is significant. Circumcision was administered on the eighth day, a cutting off of flesh that was appointed as the token of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:10). Thus the sign points to the time when, as far as accepted saints are concerned, flesh, as it is now constituted, will be changed to spirit nature.

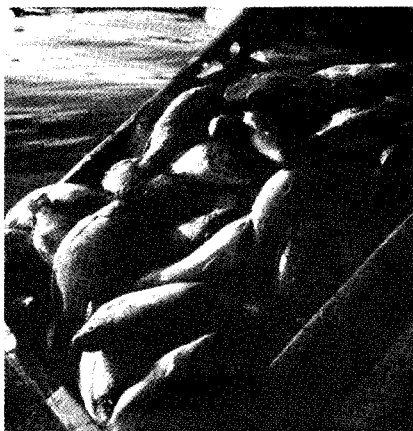
During the night, the apostles fished, but saw no results for their labour. This, however, was changed in the early morning of a new day; for then Christ appeared, and a large harvest was gathered in. So the poverty of current labours in the Truth during this night of Gentile times (see Jn. 9:4) will be transformed into a large harvest, when the present hidden results of labour for God will be made evident in the future. However, the fruitless labour was made profitable only by following Christ’s instructions (Jn. 21:6).

The “sign” also points forward to an extension of labour in the future Age, when in addition to the multitude of the redeemed, a harvest will be gathered in from Israel (Amos 9:9), and the nations (Isa. 25:7).

Peter was humbled by the Lord’s searching questions. This will be the case at the Judgment Seat, when all will be humbled, the righteous to be fitted for a glorious destiny of dedicated labour in the Kingdom.

The “sign” also indicated that eternal life will be bestowed upon those whom Christ loves (Jn. 21:20-22), and in them will be manifested the Grace of Yahweh (the meaning of “John”).

In recording this glorious, hopeful “sign,” John closed his Gospel.



Haul of “musht” fish (called St. Peter’s Fish) from the Lake of Galilee.

* Notice that John’s Gospel does not include the Olivet prophecy which predicts the events leading to AD70, for by the time he wrote, much of it was history.

Chapter 6

THE MEETING IN GALILEE (Mat. 28:16-17; 1Cor. 15:6)

Following the resurrection of the Lord, believers, and particularly the apostles, were told to make their way to Galilee where he would meet them. This was in fulfilment of his promise before he died (Mk. 14:28). It was as some of them had been making their way to this place that Peter had led them to go on the fishing expedition recorded in Jn. 21. Meanwhile, disciples were converging on the place so that, ultimately, over five hundred were gathered there, as Paul relates (1Cor. 15:6).

WHEN the two Marys had visited the tomb, to find the Roman soldiers in a faint, and the angel guarding the entrance of the sepulchre, they were sent on an important mission to the disciples. The angel declared: "Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall you see him!" (Mat. 28:7).

Later, when the other women made their way to the sepulchre, and, in the absence of Mary Magdalene, entered the tomb itself, they were told that the Lord was risen, and they, likewise, were given a similar commission: "Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall you see him, as he said unto you" (Mk. 16:7).

At that time Peter's name was particularly singled out because he was proving most obstinate in his refusal to believe that Christ had risen from the dead.

The expression, "he goeth before you," is most significant because it describes the action of a shepherd regathering the scattered sheep, and organising them again into a flock. Before his death, the Lord had warned that this would become a need. He told the apostles: "All you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I



will go before you into Galilee" (Mat. 26:31-32).

The Purpose of the Meeting

Now the time had come to organise the flock and place it in the charge of under-shepherds whom he provided. Hence the importance of the Lord's conversation with Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, in which he impressed him with the need of feeding and ruling the flock.

Christ is the "chief shepherd," and Peter was anointed, with others, to be a shepherd under his direction (1Pet. 5:1-4).

The Place of the Meeting

We do not know the particular mountain to which the believers were directed, but it could have been the one upon which Christ gave his initial policy speech, the Discourse on the Mount, when he went upon a mount on the northern edge of the Lake of Galilee.

Nor are we told of the particular instruction that he delivered unto the assembled believers at this time. Paul records that there were over five hundred gathered together at the meeting, but records nothing of the proceedings (1Cor. 15:6). It could be that the apostles were publicly appointed to their positions of authority on this occasion.

Those present at the gathering recognised Christ's divine Sonship and made obeisance before him. Doubtless, many questions were asked, and explanations given. Most were convinced beyond all doubt that he was the Son of God risen from the dead, but, strangely, even with this evidence before their eyes "some doubted" (Mat. 28:17).

From this statement, we can appreciate how deep-seated was the refusal to believe that one who had died upon the stake, upon whom the curse of the Law rested, could possibly be the risen Christ. No wonder that even Mary Magdalene became so confused in mind, that after she had seen the Lord on the evening that he rose from the dead, she doubted the reality of it all on the morrow when the sun shone brightly, and others discounted her story.



Chapter 7

LAST DAYS WITH THE APOSTLES

(Mat. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-18; Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:6-8)

The Lord remained on the earth forty days before ascending into heaven. This gave opportunity for constant communion with his apostles, and for careful instruction in the truths of God's Word and their labours for the future. What a wonderful exposition of the Word that must have been! Little of it is recorded for us, though we have the fruits of it in the labours of the apostles, and the epistles that make up part of the New Testament.

THROUGHOUT Jerusalem, and doubtless throughout all Palestine, rumours of the risen Christ were heard. The bribing of the soldiers was well known, and whilst the Jewish leaders claimed that the disciples had stolen the body of the Lord, there were some who must have been deeply concerned as to the true facts of the matter.

Jesus Appears to James (1Cor. 15:7)

Among such was James, half-brother to Jesus, and eldest son of Joseph and Mary.

The family had bitterly opposed the Lord toward the latter part of his ministry, and only six months previous, at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Lord's brethren had expressed their doubt of the genuineness of his attitude (Jn. 7:4-5).

Subsequently, they heard of the trial and execution of Jesus, and must have deeply mourned the hopeless death of this misguided brother, as they probably viewed it.

They possibly assembled to comfort Mary, their mother, though they would have found it extremely difficult to find words to help her. But even their presence would assist, and for three days she would find solace in her sons and her daughters.

But on the fourth day, they found a change in Mary. Joyfully she would have told them that she had seen Jesus; and when they would have wondered what she meant, she would have explained that he had risen from the dead, and as Yahweh's Messiah had been given divine nature. But her joy was not shared by them. They refused to believe her. They would possibly point to the curse of the Law that rested upon any crucified, and declare that the Messiah would never be cursed by God! Simeon had told her that "a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Lk. 2:35), and the conflict within the family of the Lord must have been most distressing to her. She had ultimately thrown in her lot with Jesus, knowing the circumstances of

his birth, but her sorrow must have been acute in that she did not have the support of James and the others. At the death of Jesus, she had to rely upon her nephew John for assistance in her sorrow (Jn. 19:26-27).

Mary would have been among the five hundred who gathered around the Lord on the mountain in Galilee, and doubtless she sorrowed that the other members of the family were not with her.

Now the time had come for the conversion of James and the others. Jesus appeared to him. That is all we are told. There is eloquence in the silence. James was austere, but faithful; he was a man who was anxious to serve his God in truth, and opposed Jesus only because he could not believe in him. But now, in the risen Christ, there was evidence beyond all argument. James was compelled to believe in spite of his prejudice and Judaistic beliefs. Thence afterwards the family of the Lord associated with the ecclesia occupying a position of eminence therein (Acts 1:14; 1Cor. 9:5). How encouraging for Mary to have her family united in the bonds of the Truth, and to be buoyed up with the hope that they shall be associated as one in the glory yet to flood the earth. What a priceless heritage is the Truth in such circumstances!

Instructing the Shepherds

To the apostles, the Lord gave "many infallible proofs" of his true identity, so that they might go forth with full confidence to proclaim the truth concerning the risen Christ. For forty days Jesus remained on the earth, associating with the apostles. They returned to Jerusalem from Galilee, and there he met with them to expound unto them the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. He answered their questions, explained the Old Testament prophecies, revealed what was required on the part of believers for salvation.

He assured them that they could go forth preaching with every confidence: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me,*" he declared. "*Go therefore into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. He who believes and is baptised shall be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover. And lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age. But tarry in Jerusalem, and wait for the promise of the Father; for John baptised with water, but before many days you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit*" (Mat. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-18; Acts 1:4-5).

The command to go into all the world and preach the gospel was delivered only to the apostles, not to general believers. The former were expected to spread the Gospel message throughout the whole world; the latter were called upon to preach it in the sphere of activity where they were called. For that purpose, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to the apostles in their fulness, but only individual gifts were given to other believers.

Apart from those specially prepared individuals such as Timothy and Titus, Paul nowhere suggests that believers leave their ecclesias to evangelise as did the apostles, though they were instructed to make known the Truth (Eph. 3:10). On the contrary, he advocated that "every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called" (1Cor. 7:20). The command being limited to the apostles, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit was likewise limited to that age, as Jesus made clear.

The apostles were expected to teach, make disciples, and baptise. They were to baptise in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. What Name is that? The Name of the Father is *Yahweh*, and it is into that Name that believers are baptised (Acts 15:14; 1Thes. 1:1). That Name was manifested in the Son (Jn. 17:6) by the power of the Holy Spirit that rested on Mary, causing her to conceive, and afterwards was bestowed upon Christ "without measure." The result was that the Name of the Father was manifested in the Son by the Holy Spirit. The Son exhibited it, and believers are baptised into it.

The Final Meeting
(Mk. 16:19-20;
Lk. 24:50-53;
Acts 1:6-11;
1Cor. 15:7)

The time came for a final meeting with the Lord (1Cor. 15:7). He joined the apostles in Jerusalem, and led them out to Bethany, to the mount of Olives (Lk. 24:50). As they traversed the busy road that leads from Jerusalem to Bethany and on to Jericho, no doubt the attention of many people would be drawn to the little company of men following their distinguished leader, and earnestly engrossed in conversation.

On this occasion, the apostles sensed that something extraordinary was about to happen. For forty days they had engaged in discussion, concerning the doctrines of the Truth, and particularly those relating to the kingdom of God. They had been told that the time would come when the kingdom would again be incorporated in Israel, at which time he would reign upon the throne of David in Jerusalem.

Was he about to proclaim himself king? Did he mean that he would set up his power in Jerusalem, and it would become a centre of preaching preparatory to a new form of monarchy that would be established there? If not, how long would it be before the kingdom in its glory would be set up?

They put the question to him.

“Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

They knew he must ascend into heaven, but would he be away long? That seemed to be the purport of the question. But it was one he could not answer at that time, though the revelation of this was later given him in heaven (Rev. 1:1). Therefore, he replied: ***“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has placed in His own power. But you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”***

It was a tremendous work he was leaving with them. Commencing from the capital of the future kingdom of God (the Jewish city), it would extend to the immediate vicinity, then to Samaria (half-Jewish, half-Gentile), finally, in ever widening circles, to the ends of the then-known world (to all the Gentiles). In that, it would be like the extension of the kingdom when Christ returns.

They had to labour in faith, leaving the consummation of things in the care of Yahweh.

Meanwhile, they reached the summit of the Mount of Olives, and there they rested, as the apostles pondered the words of their Lord. But he knew the time of departure had come. Solemnly, lovingly, he lifted up his hands and blessed them; thus dedicating them to the work before them. Then, as they looked into the majestic countenance of their Saviour and Friend, he was suddenly parted from them, to ascend into heaven.

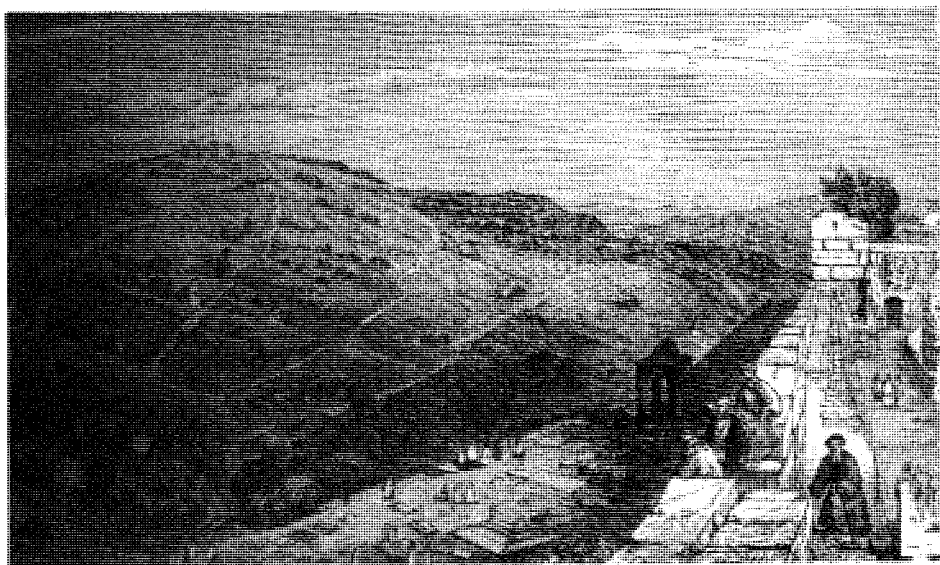
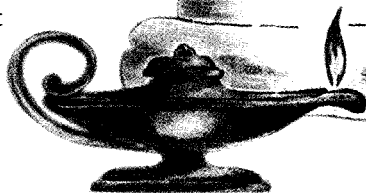
Startled and dismayed, they saw him disappear into a cloud that hid him from sight. But still they stood gazing! Were they to be left on their own? They felt lost without his presence! Their eyes were fixed upon heaven, when suddenly they were conscious of two men standing with them in white apparel. They knew instantly that they were angels. ***“Ye men of Galilee,”*** declared angelic voices unto them, ***“why stand ye gazing into heaven? 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!”***

Those words of encouragement and hope relieved the sense of loss that they had felt. They shook themselves out of their lethargy. Of course he will return! They must not show unbelief as they had in regard to his death and resurrection. There was work to be done, and had not he promised that he would remain with them in spirit to see it accomplished? Immediately they took heart. They recalled that he had instructed them to return to Jerusalem and await the bestowal of the Holy Spirit.

They therefore returned to the city. The conversation with the

Lord, the assurance of the angels, had encouraged them, and they now rejoiced with great joy. Before them was a noble work to be performed, and beyond that a kingdom to be inherited. Meanwhile, strength was promised them from above; their Saviour and Friend was at the right hand of Yahweh, ready to intercede on their behalf; he had all authority in heaven and in earth. They returned to await the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, and to gather strength to become his effective witnesses throughout the earth.

*"This same
Jesus, which is
taken up from
you into heaven,
shall so come in
like manner as
ye see him go
into heaven..."*



Sketch of the Mount of Olives from which the Lord ascended into heaven

A Dictionary of Personalities of the Gospels

SIMON: THE LORD'S BROTHER

He is directly referred to in Mat. 13:55; Mk. 6:3, and indirectly in Jn. 7:5. Jesus' brethren were with him in his early ministry (Jn. 2:12), but as it gathered momentum, they became ashamed of him. His dedicated ministry, his burning zeal (Psa. 69:9), was misunderstood by them, and they tried to place him under constraint (Mk. 3:21). Their familiarity with him bred a contempt of his mission, and at times, when enthusiasm was greatest, they attempted an unwarranted interference (Mat. 12:46; Mk. 3:31; Lk. 8:19), only to receive a well-merited rebuke. They had apparently prevailed upon the Lord's mother to join with them on these occasions. John records that they no longer believed in him (Jn. 7:5), so that they fulfilled the prophecy of Psa. 69:8 which predicted that "his mother's children" (not, however, his Father's!) would turn against him.

They were ultimately converted by his resurrection (1Cor. 15:7), and from thence onward associated with the apostles (Acts 1:14; 12:17; 15:13; 1Cor. 9:5). There seems to have been a certain strong opinionativeness, a Judaistic obstinacy about them which may have accounted for their opposition as they observed the Lord seemingly defy convention in the matter of sabbath-keeping, and other such traditions.

SIMON: THE HYPOCRITE

He was a Pharisee who had invited Jesus to dine with him, but had made it perfectly obvious to the other guests that the Lord was on trial. He greeted the Lord with indifference. When Jesus permitted a woman, the sinner who had entered the house, to wash his feet with her scalding tears, wipe them with her hair, and anoint them with the ointment she had brought, his indifference turned to harsh condemnation of Christ. How surprised he must have been when he learned that Jesus had read his thoughts, and that he was self-condemned by his own actions and words.

Simon the Pharisee thought he was conferring an honour on Christ by supplying him with a morsel of bread; the woman felt herself unworthy of making the Lord the most costly acknowledgment. She had sinned, but now she had a warm love for Christ that would be reflected in a genuine reformation; and so her sins were forgiven. Simon had scrupulously observed the letter of the law, but was cold toward Christ and therefore toward God. His sins remained. In the parable of the two debtors, Jesus clearly showed the need of Simon to seek the forgiveness that is offered all if they

will seek it aright.

THADDAEUS: THE APOSTLE

His name is only found in the lists of the apostles. In Mat. 10:3, he is referred to as "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus," but in the Revised Version the former words are missing.

THEOPHILUS: THE MOST EXCELLENT

His name means *Lover of God*. He was a believer of high rank for whose benefit Luke wrote his gospel and the Acts of the Apostles (Lk. 1:3; Acts 1:1). The term "most excellent," used also of Felix and Festus (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25) suggests that he was an official of some kind, even though he was on terms of close fraternal association with him. Evidently Luke had educated him in the basic truths of the Gospel, but felt that he required this additional instruction (Lk. 1:3). We can be grateful that this was the case.

THOMAS: THE PESSIMIST

Thomas is also called Didymus, these being the Hebrew and Greek names for "the twin." References to him are found in Mat. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15; Jn. 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-29; 21:2; Acts 1:13.

He was pessimistic, but courageous, inquisitive and incredulous, yet zealous. When he saw what he ought to do, he had the courage to do it even in the face of what looked like certain death (Jn. 11:16). He had the determination to do what Christ required if shown how to do it (Jn. 14:5); but he demanded proof. Thus he was not prepared to believe in the Lord's resurrection except on terms that he clearly defined, and which indicated that, at that time, he lacked faith (Jn. 20:28). Until the moment when faith destroyed doubt and pessimism, Thomas had questioned things, but was driven to follow Christ only by sheer determination and courage. It was the will-power of the flesh, and that is never enough, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). Once convinced, however, Thomas went forward resolutely. Courage and determination were now harnessed to faith, and the apostle was equipped to valiantly work for his Lord.

Thomas was rebuked for his doubts, through the Lord commending those who in faith believe without the evidence of their eyes (Jn. 20:29). Thomas wanted to do what was right in the sight of God, and the three incidents in which he is particularly brought to our attention, reveal that characteristic. He was prepared to die with Christ (Jn. 11:16), he wanted to know the way (Jn. 14:5); he wanted to know the Truth (Jn. 20:28).

TIBERIUS: THE TYRANT

Tiberius Caesar is referred to by name only in Lk. 3:1. His full name was Tiberius Claudius Nero Caesar, and he was the second Roman emperor, successor to Augustus. He commenced to reign in AD14, and continued until AD37, dying at the age of seventy-eight, after a reign of twenty-three years.

He became emperor in his fifty-fifth year, having distinguished himself as a commander in various wars, and evincing outstanding talents as an orator and administrator of civil affairs. On being raised to the throne, however, his character changed. His life became one of inactivity, sloth, and self-indulgence. He was despotic in his government, cruel and vindictive in his disposition. He was followed by Caius Caligula, another notorious ruler.

When Jesus asked: "Whose is this image and superscription?" receiving the answer was: "Caesar's," the reference was to Tiberius.

ZACCHAEUS: THE LITTLE MAN IN THE TREE

Reference to Zacchaeus is only found in Luke's gospel (ch. 19:1-10), and yet the story of his experience with the Lord is among the most well-known incidents of the Gospels.

He was a wealthy man of Jericho, "chief among the publicans," and consequently, disliked by such as the Pharisees. He was a man who could appreciate value, and recognised in Jesus something of outstanding worth.

He became dominated by the desire to see Jesus, who he was (Lk. 19:3), but four obstacles prevented him doing so: [1] he was chief among publicans, and would thus be treated as a heathen by the Jews (Mat. 18:17); [2] he was rich, which normally would have the effect of minimising the value of spiritual wealth in Christ; [3] the great crowds that thronged Jesus prevented Zacchaeus getting near him; [4] he was little of stature, and thus could not see over the heads of the others. These obstacles would have been sufficient to deter most people; but not Zacchaeus. His desire to see Jesus was combined with a determination to do so. He ran ahead of the crowd, climbed up into the leafy shelter of a sycamore tree, and so overcame the obstacles.

Jesus did not spare Zacchaeus certain embarrassment. When he arrived under the tree, he looked up and addressed him. This drew the attention of the crowds to the little tax-gatherer, and doubtless caused him to be subjected to ridicule. We can imagine the great laugh that would go up as the people (who disliked him anyway) saw him literally and figuratively "up a tree!" But Jesus called for

him, and dined with him. This caused murmuring among the people, but drew a confession of faith from Zacchaeus. Faith wrought with works in the case of the converted tax-gatherer, causing Jesus to state that "salvation had come to his house" for he was a true son of Abraham — i.e., he did the works of Abraham (cp. Jn. 8:39). The incident of Zacchaeus was used to point the lesson of the need for action in the things of the Kingdom, as taught in the parable of the nobleman and the pounds recorded in Lk. 19:11-27.

Zacchaeus provides a wonderful example of determination and dedication; let us look beyond our difficulties and obstacles, and with faith and courage, seek to "see Jesus, who he is."

His name signifies *Pure, Righteous, to Make Clean*, and this became the caption of his changed character.

ZACHARIAS: THE MAN STRUCK DUMB

His name means *Memorial of Yahweh*, and he was the father of John Baptist. He was one of whom it was said that "he walked in all the commandments and ordinances of Yahweh blameless" (Lk. 1:6). He was meticulously devoted to the temple worship, undertaking all the requirements of the Law, and blameless to the extent that he fulfilled all its enactments (Phil. 3:6). He was a priest of the eighth course of Abia, and he is introduced to us as he ministered in the temple.

Zacharias was a man of faith, and prayed both for a son and for the coming of Messiah. But when Gabriel told him that he would have a son, who would be forerunner to Messiah, he refused to believe it, and in consequence was struck dumb. How true to human nature! We pour out our prayers unto Yahweh, but refuse to believe! However, we can appreciate the doubts of Zacharias. Not only was he and Elisabeth old, but to have a son who would be the forerunner of the Messiah, was beyond what they had thought possible.

The dramatic reappearance of Zacharias to the waiting, praying people, his gestures, as he tried to make them understand the drama of the revelation, must have excited the interest and comment of the people of Jerusalem. He had been instructed to call the child John, and this he did in opposition to the suggestions of his relatives.

On the birth of his son, speech was restored to Zacharias, and he used it to proclaim a glorious prophecy of the goodness of Yahweh, expressive of the work of his son, and of the Messiah that would follow. The tongue of unbelief was thus replaced by one of wondrous hope. Let us learn to exercise belief and faith, and to use

our tongues accordingly.

The names of this family group are significant. Zacharias was married to Elisabeth, signifying, *The Oath of My God*, through whom was born John, meaning the *Grace of Yahweh*. Thus, when the memorial name is combined with the oath it brings forth grace.

Zacharias was old when John was born, and evidently died long before his public ministry commenced. Nothing further of him is recorded in the Bible.

Zebedee: The Man in the Shadows

See Story of the Bible, volume 5, page 390.

Epilogue:

CONSIDER CHRIST

The New Testament gives us Christ as it were in four parts. We have the fourfold exhibition of his own personal ministry in conjunction with a larger public work in the hands of the twelve and the seventy, carried on under his own superintendence. Then, following upon this, in the Acts of the Apostles, we have the leading features of a still more extended public effort afterwards carried on by his appointed ambassadors in his absence. Then next to this, we have in the Epistles the application of the results obtained in Christ's crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation, to the case of the brethren in course of development by the ministry of the apostles. And finally, in the Apocalypse, we have Christ's personal verdict upon the entire situation developed by the apostolic labours, concurrently with a graphic exhibition of the vicissitudes incident to the future of his work amongst men, and to the preparation of the political crisis which will bring him back to the earth. So in a sense we have Christ four times over, and under as many different aspects and circumstances. In this way we get a fulness and a furnishing that would not otherwise be ours. In this first department of Christ we have to do with the Son of God as the mortal seed of David according to the flesh; in the other departments we are in the company of the same Son of God and David, raised from the dead, and clothed with power and immortal life... In both these orders of experience he is the example of our

own future, and the pattern of our present service. Though the Son of the most honourable ancestry on the side of the flesh it was possible for man to have, he did not pride himself in this after any carnal manner, but rather repudiated it, saying, "The flesh profiteth nothing."

And although he was the Son of God yet he made himself of no reputation, but willingly humbling himself, he entered earnestly and lovingly upon the appointed path of suffering by which his obedience was to be both proved and perfected. He is a model brother — the most complete model of the divine will that God has given us. His brief life in the flesh contains a world of lessons in loving service and faithful work. In his daily effort amongst men, we have the best practical illustration of his own precepts. For as true as the needle to the pole, so true is the practice of Christ to his preaching. In him we have the very character of God reflected as in a mirror, for "as face in water answereth to face," so did the heart of the Son to the Spirit-indwelling Father. Note his all absorbing interest in the "Father's business" even at twelve years of age. Dwell a moment on the self-consecration and humility of the act by which he publicly identified himself with John's preparatory work of righteousness. Next follow him into the wilderness, and witness the overcoming principles he so successfully wielded against the strongest temptation that ever assailed poor, weak human nature. Again, follow him into the synagogues, and from place to place, as he heralds the glad tidings of the Kingdom of the Father's purpose, accompanied by healing and beneficent miracle on behalf of suffering and need wherever he went. Again, accompany him on to the Mount, and listen to his incomparable precepts, his wonderful outpour on law and life, and his gracious advances to men, in words laden with comfort, rich with wisdom, and gilded with light and love. Listen to the verdict of the astonished multitude that thronged his steps, "He hath done all things well," "We never saw it on this fashion before." Dwell awhile on his mother's rapturous song at the prospect of his birth; then stand again within the hearing of the little Jewish children who are shouting their glad hosannas to the Son of David. Then follow him to Bethany where he often lodged for the night (for he had no house of his own), and open your ears and hearts to the picture of his sweetest love, which who can see without melting into conditions of "wonder, love and praise?" Mark throughout his steady, unflinching and zealous exhibition of the true light of

eternal life, and the enthusiastic walk therein, by which alone it is to be reached, as a matter of physical realisation.

In Christ's bright presence darkness flees away, as before the rising sun. His whole life is an inspiration; his very words are chapters of love, and his actions are loud as thunder in their testimony to his supreme devotion to those higher objects of existence, to which he invited men's attention in the gospel. The Christ of our "holy faith" is a fountain running over with both the blessings of this life and the life to come. Even the darkest hour of his suffering in the interests of human redemption, was vocal with the sound of prayer on behalf of his crucifying enemies. Altogether he was a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief — sorrow in its highest form, and grief in a sense to which all but his friends in the Truth's holy warfare are utter strangers. The work of his life was to plant God in the human recognition, and himself as the great power of God, for their enfranchisement from the slavery of this life's cares, from the vanity of worldly ambitions, and equally from the self-devotions of both a pharisaic and parsimonious service. In a word, his object was to manufacture "men of God," "good men," as well as "righteous men;" men prepared to devote their blood and bones to his interests. Men, in fact, taken up with nothing else, but the "one thing needful," and the "better part," which he both commended and illustrated in his speech and life.

Two things stand boldly out in Christ's case, among a thousand others — the crucifixion of the flesh with all its train of present life vanities and the exaltation of God and Truth, within and without; enshrined in the service of abounding and heart-enriching love, and conceived in the sweetest and most touching sympathy, and pity, for our forlorn and dying estate. Oh, the depth of the riches that is embraced in this one gift of Christ. Oh, for the blessedness of comprehending its "breadth, and length, and depth, and height;" for it surpasses all other knowledge that is known to man.

Its full apprehension requires that a man be "filled with all the fulness of God." If a man would realise this to any appreciable degree, let him cease from his own works, and let him give himself to Christ after the type that Christ has given himself to us. Study the living model, and if you feel any real deep love for the man whose sufferings have paved the way for you to eternal glory, get on to the altar of sacrifice forthwith, for only they who suffer with him can reign with him.