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COMMENTARY

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

MATTHEW

Commentary by **DAVID BROWN**

INTRODUCTION

THE *author* of this Gospel was a publican or tax gatherer, residing at Capernaum, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. As to his identity with the “Levi” of the second and third Gospels, and other particulars, see on ~~4000~~ Matthew 9:9. Hardly anything is known of his apostolic labors. That, after preaching to his countrymen in Palestine, he went to the East, is the general testimony of antiquity; but the precise scene or scenes of his ministry cannot be determined. That he died a natural death may be concluded from the belief of the best-informed of the Fathers — that of the apostles only three, James the Greater, Peter, and Paul, suffered martyrdom. That the first Gospel was written by this apostle is the testimony of all antiquity.

For the *date* of this Gospel we have only internal evidence, and that far from decisive. Accordingly, opinion is much divided. That it was the first issued of all the Gospels was universally believed. Hence, although in the order of the Gospels, those by the two apostles were placed first in the oldest manuscripts of the *Old Latin* version, while in all the *Greek* manuscripts, with scarcely an exception, the order is the same as in our Bibles, the Gospel according to Matthew is “in every case” placed first. And as this Gospel is of all the four the one which bears the most evident marks of having been prepared and constructed with a special view to the Jews — who certainly first required a written Gospel, and would be the first to make use of it — there can be no doubt that it was issued before any of the others. That it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem is equally certain; for as HUG observes [*Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 316, FOSDICK’S translation], when he reports our Lord’s prophecy of that awful event, on coming to the warning about “the abomination of desolation” which they should “see standing in the holy place,” he interposes (contrary to his invariable practice, which is to *relate* without *remark*) a call to his readers to read intelligently — “Whoso readeth, let

him understand” (⁴⁰⁴⁵Matthew 24:15) — a call to attend to the divine signal for flight which could be intended only for those who lived before the event. But how long before that event this Gospel was written is not so clear. Some internal evidences seem to imply a very early date. Since the Jewish Christians were, for five or six years, exposed to persecution from their own countrymen — until the Jews, being persecuted by the Romans, had to look to themselves — it is not likely (it is argued) that they should be left so long without some written Gospel to reassure and sustain them, and Matthew’s Gospel was eminently fitted for that purpose. But the digests to which Luke refers in his Introduction (see on ⁴⁰⁰¹Luke 1:1) would be sufficient for a time, especially as the living voice of the “eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word” was yet sounding abroad. Other considerations in favor of a very early date — such as the tender way in which the author seems studiously to speak of Herod Antipas, as if still reigning, and his writing of Pilate apparently as if still in power — seem to have no foundation in fact, and cannot therefore be made the ground of reasoning as to the date of this Gospel. Its Hebraic structure and hue, though they prove, as we think, that this Gospel must have been published at a period considerably anterior to the destruction of Jerusalem, are no evidence in favor of so early a date as A.D. 37 or 38 — according to some of the Fathers, and, of the moderns, TILLEMONT, TOWNSON, OWEN, BIRKS, TREGELLES. On the other hand, the date suggested by the statement of IRENAEUS [*Against Heresies*, 3.1], that Matthew put forth his Gospel while Peter and Paul were at Rome preaching and founding the Church — or after A.D. 60 — though probably the majority of critics are in favor of it, would seem rather too late, especially as the second and third Gospels, which were doubtless published, as well as this one, before the destruction of Jerusalem, had still to be issued. Certainly, such statements as the following, “Wherefore that field is called the field of blood *unto this day*” (⁴²¹⁸Matthew 27:8); “And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews *until this day*” (⁴⁰¹⁵Matthew 28:15), bespeak a date considerably later than the events recorded. We incline, therefore, to a date intermediate between the earlier and the later dates assigned to this Gospel, without pretending to greater precision.

We have adverted to the strikingly Jewish character and coloring of this Gospel. The facts which it selects, the points to which it gives prominence, the cast of thought and phraseology, all bespeak the Jewish point of view *from* which it was written and *to* which it was directed. This has been noticed from the beginning, and is universally acknowledged. It is of the greatest consequence to the right interpretation of it; but the tendency among some even of the best of the Germans to infer, from this special design of

the first Gospel, a certain laxity on the part of the Evangelist in the treatment of his facts, must be guarded against.

But by far the most interesting and important point connected with this Gospel is the *language* in which it was written. It is believed by a formidable number of critics that this Gospel was originally written in what is loosely called *Hebrew*, but more correctly *Aramaic*, or *Syro-Chaldaic*, the native tongue of the country at the time of our Lord; and that the *Greek* Matthew which we now possess is a translation of that work, either by the Evangelist himself or some unknown hand. The evidence on which this opinion is grounded is wholly external, but it has been deemed conclusive by GROTIUS, MICHAELIS (and his translator), MARSH, TOWNSON, CAMPBELL, OLSHAUSEN, CRESWELL, MEYER, EBRARD, LANGE, DAVIDSON, CURETON, TREGELLES, WEBSTER and WILKINSON, etc. The evidence referred to cannot be given here, but will be found, with remarks on its unsatisfactory character, in the *Introduction to the Gospels* prefixed to our larger *Commentary*, pp. 28-31.

But how stand the facts as to our *Greek* Gospel? We have not a tittle of historical evidence that it is a *translation*, either by Matthew himself or anyone else. All antiquity refers to it as the work of Matthew the publican and apostle, just as the other Gospels are ascribed to their respective authors. This *Greek* Gospel was from the first received by the Church as an integral part of the one quadriform *Gospel*. And while the Fathers often advert to the two Gospels which we have from apostles, and the two which we have from men not apostles — in order to show that as that of Mark leans so entirely on Peter, and that of Luke on Paul, these are really no less apostolical than the other two — though we attach less weight to this circumstance than they did, we cannot but think it striking that, in thus speaking, they never drop a hint that the full apostolic authority of the *Greek* Matthew had ever been questioned on the ground of its not being the *original*. Further, not a trace can be discovered in this Gospel itself of its being a translation. MICHAELIS tried to detect, and fancied that he had succeeded in detecting, one or two such. Other Germans since, and DAVIDSON and CURETON among ourselves, have made the same attempt. But the entire failure of all such attempts is now generally admitted, and candid advocates of a *Hebrew* original are quite ready to own that none such are to be found, and that but for external testimony no one would have imagined that the *Greek* was not the original. This they regard as showing how perfectly the translation has been executed; but those who know best what translating from one language into another is will be the readiest to own that this is tantamount to giving up the question. This Gospel proclaims its own originality in a number of striking points; such as its

manner of quoting from the Old Testament, and its phraseology in some peculiar cases. But the close *verbal coincidences* of our *Greek Matthew* with the next two Gospels must not be quite passed over. There are but two possible ways of explaining this. Either the translator, sacrificing verbal fidelity in his version, intentionally conformed certain parts of his author's work to the second and third Gospels — in which case it can hardly be called Matthew's Gospel at all — or our *Greek Matthew* is itself the original.

Moved by these considerations, some advocates of a *Hebrew* original have adopted the theory of a *double original*; the external testimony, they think, requiring us to believe in a *Hebrew* original, while internal evidence is decisive in favor of the originality of the *Greek*. This theory is espoused by GUERICKS, OLSHAUSEN, THIERSCH, TOWNSON, TREGELLES, etc. But, besides that this looks too like an artificial theory, invented to solve a difficulty, it is utterly void of historical support. There is not a vestige of testimony to support it in Christian antiquity. This ought to be decisive against it.

It remains, then, that our *Greek Matthew* is the original of that Gospel, and that no other original ever existed. It is greatly to the credit of DEAN ALFORD, that after maintaining, in the first edition of his *Greek Testament* the theory of a *Hebrew* original, he thus expresses himself in the second and subsequent editions: "On the whole, then, I find myself constrained to abandon the view maintained in my first edition, and to adopt that of a Greek original."

One argument has been adduced on the other side, on which not a little reliance has been placed; but the determination of the main question does not, in our opinion, depend upon the point which it raises. It has been very confidently affirmed that the *Greek* language was not sufficiently understood by the Jews of Palestine when Matthew published his Gospel to make it at all probable that he would write a Gospel, for their benefit in the first instance, in that language. Now, as this merely alleges the improbability of a *Greek* original, it is enough to place against it the evidence already adduced, which is positive, in favor of the sole originality of our *Greek Matthew*. It is indeed a question how far the *Greek* language was understood in Palestine at the time referred to. But we advise the reader not to be drawn into that question as essential to the settlement of the other one. It is an element in it, no doubt, but not an essential element. There are extremes on both sides of it. The old idea, that our Lord hardly ever spoke anything but *Syro-Chaldaic*, is now pretty nearly exploded. Many, however, will not go the length, on the other side, of HUG (in his *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 326, etc.) and ROBERTS ("Discussions of the Gospels," etc. pp. 25, etc.). For ourselves, though we

believe that our Lord, in all the more public scenes of His ministry, spoke in *Greek*, all we think it necessary here to say is that there is no ground to believe that *Greek* was so little understood in Palestine as to make it improbable that Matthew would write his Gospel exclusively in that language — so improbable as to outweigh the evidence that he did so. And when we think of the number of digests or short narratives of the principal facts of our Lord's history which we know from Luke (~~from~~ Luke 1:1-4) were floating about for some time before he wrote his Gospel, of which he speaks by no means disrespectfully, and nearly all of which would be in the mother tongue, we can have no doubt that the Jewish Christians and the Jews of Palestine generally would have from the first reliable written matter sufficient to supply every necessary requirement until the publican-apostle should leisurely draw up the first of the four Gospels in a language to them not a strange tongue, while to the rest of the world it was *the* language in which the entire quadriform Gospel was to be for all time enshrined. The following among others hold to this view of the sole originality of the *Greek* Matthew: ERASMUS, CALVIN, BEZA, LIGHTFOOT, WETSTEIN, LARDNER, HUG, FRITZSCHE, CREDNER, DE WETTE, STUART, DA COSTA, FAIRBAIRN, ROBERTS.

On two other questions regarding this Gospel it would have been desirable to say something, had not our available space been already exhausted: The *characteristics*, both in language and matter, by which it is distinguished from the other three, and its *relation to the second and third Gospels*. On the latter of these topics — whether one or more of the Evangelists made use of the materials of the other Gospels, and, if so, which of the Evangelists drew from which — the opinions are just as numerous as the possibilities of the case, every conceivable way of it having one or more who plead for it. The most popular opinion until recently — and perhaps the most popular still — is that the second Evangelist availed himself more or less of the materials of the first Gospel, and the third of the materials of both the first and second Gospels. Here we can but state our own belief, that each of the first three Evangelists wrote independently of both the others; while the fourth, familiar with the first three, wrote to supplement them, and, even where he travels along the same line, wrote quite independently of them. This judgment we express, with all deference for those who think otherwise, as the result of a close study of each of the Gospels in immediate juxtaposition and comparison with the others. On the former of the two topics noticed, the linguistic peculiarities of each of the Gospels have been handled most closely and ably by CREDNER [*Einleitung (Introduction to the New Testament)*], of whose results a good summary will be found in DAVIDSON'S *Introduction to the New Testament*. The other peculiarities of the Gospels have been most felicitously and beautifully

brought out by DA COSTA in his *Four Witnesses*, to which we must simply refer the reader, though it contains a few things in which we cannot concur.

CHAPTER 1

Ⓜ MATTHEW 1:1-17.

GENEALOGY OF CHRIST. (Ⓛ LUKE 3:23-38).

1. The book of the generation — an expression purely Jewish; meaning, “table of the genealogy.” In Ⓜ Genesis 5:1 the same expression occurs in this sense. We have here, then, the title, not of this whole Gospel of Matthew, but only of the first seventeen verses.

of Jesus Christ — For the meaning of these glorious words, see on Ⓜ Matthew 1:16; Ⓜ Matthew 1:21. “Jesus,” the name given to our Lord at His circumcision (Ⓛ Luke 2:21), was that by which He was familiarly known while on earth. The word “Christ” — though applied to Him as a proper name by the angel who announced His birth to the shepherds (Ⓛ Luke 2:11), and once or twice used in this sense by our Lord Himself (Ⓜ Matthew 23:8,10 Ⓜ Mark 9:41) — only began to be so used by others about the very close of His earthly career (Ⓜ Matthew 26:68 Ⓛ 27:17). The full form, “Jesus Christ,” though once used by Himself in His Intercessory Prayer (Ⓜ John 17:3), was never used by others till after His ascension and the formation of churches in His name. Its use, then, in the opening words of this Gospel (and in Ⓜ Matthew 1:17,18) is in the style of the late period when our Evangelist wrote, rather than of the events he was going to record.

the son of David, the son of Abraham — As Abraham was the *first* from whose family it was predicted that Messiah should spring (Ⓜ Genesis 22:18), so David was the *last*. To a Jewish reader, accordingly, these behoved to be the two great starting-points of any true genealogy of the promised Messiah; and thus this opening verse, as it stamps the first Gospel as one peculiarly Jewish, would at once tend to conciliate the writer’s people. From the nearest of those two fathers came that familiar name of the promised Messiah, “the son of David” (Ⓛ Luke 20:41), which was applied to Jesus, either in devout acknowledgment of His rightful claim to it (Ⓜ Matthew 9:27 Ⓜ 20:31), or in the way of insinuating inquiry whether such were the case (see on Ⓜ John 4:29; Ⓜ Matthew 12:23).

2. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren — Only the fourth son of Jacob is here named, as it was from his loins that Messiah was to spring (^{<490>}Genesis 49:10).

3-6. And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; 4. And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; 5. And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; 6. And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her of Urias — Four women are here introduced; two of them Gentiles by birth — *Rachab* and *Ruth*; and three of them with a blot at their names in the Old Testament — *Thamar*, *Rachab*, and *Bathsheba*. This feature in the present genealogy — herein differing from that given by Luke — comes well from him who styles himself in his list of the Twelve, what none of the other lists do, “Matthew *the publican*”; as if thereby to hold forth, at the very outset, the unsearchable riches of that grace which could not only fetch in “them that are afar off,” but teach down even to “publicans and harlots,” and raise them to “sit with the princes of his people.” David is here twice emphatically styled “David the king,” as not only the first of that royal line from which Messiah was to descend, but the one king of all that line from which the throne that Messiah was to occupy took its name — “the throne of David.” The angel Gabriel, in announcing Him to His virgin-mother, calls it “the throne of David His father,” sinking all the intermediate kings of that line, as having no importance save as links to connect the first and the last king of Israel as father and son. It will be observed that Rachab is here represented as the great-grandmother of David (see ^{<400>}Ruth 4:20-22 ^{<321>}1 Chronicles 2:11-15) — a thing not beyond possibility indeed, but extremely improbable, there being about four centuries between them. There can hardly be a doubt that one or two intermediate links are omitted.

7-8. And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; 8. And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias — or Uzziah. Three kings are here omitted — *Ahaziah*, *Joash*, and *Amaziah* (^{<321>}1 Chronicles 3:11,12). Some omissions behoved to be made, to compress the whole into three fourteens (^{<4017>}Matthew 1:17). The reason why these, rather than other names, are omitted, must be sought in *religious* considerations — either in the connection of those kings with the house of Ahab (as LIGHTFOOT, EBRARD, and ALFORD view it); in their slender right to be regarded as true links in the theocratic chain (as LANGE takes it); or in some similar disqualification.

11. And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren — Jechonias was Josiah’s grandson, being the son of Jehoiakim, Josiah’s second son (^{<3315>}

Chronicles 3:15); but Jehoiakim might well be sunk in such a catalogue, being a mere puppet in the hands of the king of Egypt (^{<4404>}2 Chronicles 36:4). The “brethren” of Jechonias here evidently mean his uncles — the chief of whom, Mattaniah or Zedekiah, who came to the throne (^{<4247>}2 Kings 24:17), is, in ^{<4630>}2 Chronicles 36:10, as well as here, called “his brother.”

about the time they were carried away to Babylon — literally, “of their migration,” for the Jews avoided the word “captivity” as too bitter a recollection, and our Evangelist studiously respects the national feeling.

12. And after they were brought to Babylon — after the migration of Babylon.

Jechonias begat Salathiel — So ^{<4387>}1 Chronicles 3:17. Nor does this contradict ^{<4020>}Jeremiah 22:30, “Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man (Coniah, or Jeconiah) childless”; for what follows explains in what sense this was meant — “for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David.” He *was* to have seed, but no *reigning* child.

and Salathiel — or Shealtiel.

begat Zorobabel — So ^{<4582>}Ezra 3:2 ^{<4620>}Nehemiah 12:1 ^{<3004>}Haggai 1:1. But it would appear from ^{<4389>}1 Chronicles 3:19 that Zerubbabel was Salathiel’s grandson, being the son of Pedaiah, whose name, for some reason unknown, is omitted.

13-15. And Zorobabel begat Abiud, etc. — None of these names are found in the Old Testament; but they were doubtless taken from the public or family registers, which the Jews carefully kept, and their accuracy was never challenged.

16. And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus — From this it is clear that the genealogy here given is not that of Mary, but of Joseph; nor has this ever been questioned. And yet it is here studiously proclaimed that Joseph was not the natural, but only the legal father of our Lord. His birth of a virgin was known only to a few; but the acknowledged descent of his legal father from David secured that the descent of Jesus Himself from David should never be questioned. See on ^{<4020>}Matthew 1:20.

who is called Christ — signifying “anointed.” It is applied in the Old Testament to the *kings* (^{<4916>}1 Samuel 24:6,10); to the *priests* (^{<4045>}Leviticus 4:5,16, etc.); and to the *prophets* (^{<4196>}1 Kings 19:16) — these all being anointed with oil, the symbol of the needful spiritual gifts to consecrate them to their respective offices; and it was applied, in its most sublime and comprehensive sense, to the promised Deliverer, inasmuch as He was to be

consecrated to an office embracing all three by the immeasurable anointing of the Holy Ghost (^{<2300E>}Isaiah 61:1; compare ^{<4834>}John 3:34).

17. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away — or migration.

into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon — the migration of Babylon.

unto Christ are fourteen generations — that is, the whole may be conveniently divided into three fourteens, each embracing one marked era, and each ending with a notable event, in the Israelitish annals. Such artificial aids to memory were familiar to the Jews, and much larger gaps than those here are found in some of the Old Testament genealogies. In ^{<4500E>}Ezra 7:1-5 no fewer than six generations of the priesthood are omitted, as will appear by comparing it with ^{<4300E>}1 Chronicles 6:3-15. It will be observed that the last of the three divisions of fourteen appears to contain only thirteen distinct names, including Jesus as the last. LANGE thinks that this was meant as a tacit hint that *Mary* was to be supplied, as the thirteenth link of the last chain, as it is impossible to conceive that the Evangelist could have made any mistake in the matter. But there is a simpler way of accounting for it. As the Evangelist himself (^{<4017>}Matthew 1:17) reckons David twice — as the last of the first fourteen and the first of the second — so, if we reckon the second fourteen to end with Josiah, who was coeval with the “carrying away into captivity” (^{<4011>}Matthew 1:11), and third to begin with Jeconiah, it will be found that the last division, as well as the other two, embraces fourteen names, including that of our Lord.

^{<4018>}MATTHEW 1:18-25.

BIRTH OF CHRIST.

18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise — or, “thus.”

When as his mother Mary was espoused — rather, “betrothed.”

to Joseph, before they came together, she was found — discovered to be.

with child of the Holy Ghost — It was, of course, the fact only that was discovered; the explanation of the fact here given is the Evangelist’s own. That the Holy Ghost is a living conscious Person is plainly implied here, and is elsewhere clearly taught (^{<448E>}Acts 5:3,4, etc.): and that, in the unity of the Godhead, He is distinct both from the Father and the Son, is taught with

equal distinctness (^{<41819}Matthew 28:19 ^{<47344}2 Corinthians 13:14). On the miraculous conception of our Lord, see on ^{<40135}Luke 1:35.

19. Then Joseph her husband — Compare ^{<40121}Matthew 1:20, “Mary, thy wife.” Betrothal was, in Jewish law, valid marriage. In giving Mary up, therefore, Joseph had to take legal steps to effect the separation.

being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example — to expose her (see ^{<46223}Deuteronomy 22:23,24)

was minded to put her away privily — that is, privately by giving her the required writing of divorcement (^{<46241}Deuteronomy 24:1), in presence of only two or three witnesses, and without cause assigned, instead of having her before a magistrate. That some communication had passed between him and his betrothed, directly or indirectly, on the subject, after she returned from her three months’ visit to Elizabeth, can hardly be doubted. Nor does the purpose to divorce her necessarily imply disbelief, on Joseph’s part, of the explanation given him. Even supposing him to have yielded to it some reverential assent — and the Evangelist seems to convey as much, by ascribing the proposal to screen her to the *justice* of his character — he might think it altogether unsuitable and incongruous in such circumstances to follow out the marriage.

20. But while he thought on these things — Who would not feel for him after receiving such intelligence, and before receiving any light from above? As he brooded over the matter alone, in the stillness of the night, his domestic prospects darkened and his happiness blasted for life, his mind slowly making itself up to the painful step, yet planning how to do it in the way least offensive — at the last extremity the Lord Himself interposes.

behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph thou son of David — This style of address was doubtless advisedly chosen to remind him of what all the families of David’s line so early coveted, and thus it would prepare him for the marvellous announcement which was to follow.

fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost — Though a dark cloud now overhangs this relationship, it is unsullied still.

21. And she shall bring forth a son — Observe, it is not said, “she shall bear *thee* a son,” as was said to Zacharias of his wife Elizabeth (^{<40113}Luke 1:13).

and thou — as his legal father.

shalt call his name JESUS — from the *Hebrew* meaning “Jehovah the Savior”; in *Greek* JESUS — to the awakened and anxious sinner sweetest and most fragrant of all names, expressing so melodiously and briefly His whole saving office and work!

for he shall save — The “He” is here emphatic — He it is that shall save; He personally, and by personal acts (as WEBSTER and WILKINSON express it).

his people — the lost sheep of the house of Israel, in the first instance; for they were the only people He then had. But, on the breaking down of the middle wall of partition, the saved people embraced the “redeemed unto God by His blood out of every kindred and people and tongue and nation.”

from their sins — in the most comprehensive sense of salvation from sin (^{400F}Revelation 1:5 ^{405S}Ephesians 5:25-27).

22. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet — (^{237H}Isaiah 7:14).

saying — as follows.

23. Behold, a virgin — It should be “*the* virgin” meaning that particular virgin destined to this unparalleled distinction.

shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us — Not that He was to have this for a proper name (like “Jesus”), but that He should come to be known *in this character*, as God manifested in the flesh, and the living bond of holy and most intimate fellowship between God and men from henceforth and for ever.

24. Then Joseph, being raised from sleep — and all his difficulties now removed.

did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife — With what deep and reverential joy would this now be done on his part; and what balm would this minister to his betrothed one, who had till now lain under suspicions of all others the most trying to a chaste and holy woman — suspicions, too, arising from what, though to her an honor unparalleled, was to all around her wholly unknown!

25. And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name JESUS — The word “till” does not necessarily imply that they lived on a different footing afterwards (as will be evident from the use of the same word in ^{405S1}1 Samuel 15:35 ^{406S2}2 Samuel 6:23

⁴¹²⁰Matthew 12:20); nor does the word “first-born” decide the much-disputed question, whether Mary had any children to Joseph after the birth of Christ; for, as LIGHTFOOT says, “The law, in speaking of the first-born, regarded not whether any were born *after* or no, but only that none were born before.” (See on ⁴¹³⁵Matthew 13:55,56).

CHAPTER 2

Ⓜ MATTHEW 2:1-12.

VISIT OF THE MAGI TO JERUSALEM AND BETHLEHEM.

The Wise Men Reach Jerusalem — The Sanhedrim, on Herod's Demand, Pronounce Bethlehem to Be Messiah's Predicted Birthplace (Ⓜ Matthew 2:1-6).

1. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea — so called to distinguish it from another Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulun, near the Sea of Galilee (Ⓜ Joshua 19:15); called also *Beth-lehem-judah*, as being in that tribe (Ⓜ Judges 17:7); and *Ephrath* (Ⓜ Genesis 35:16); and combining both, *Beth-lehem Ephratah* (Ⓜ Micah 5:2). It lay about six miles southwest of Jerusalem. But how came Joseph and Mary to remove thither from Nazareth, the place of their residence? Not of their own accord, and certainly not with the view of fulfilling the prophecy regarding Messiah's birthplace; nay, they stayed at Nazareth till it was almost too late for Mary to travel with safety; nor would they have stirred from it at all, had not an order which left them no choice forced them to the appointed place. A high hand was in all these movements. (See on Ⓜ Luke 2:1-6).

in the days of Herod the king — styled the Great; son of Antipater, an Edomite, made king by the Romans. Thus was “the scepter departing from Judah” (Ⓜ Genesis 49:10), a sign that Messiah was now at hand. As Herod is known to have died in the year of Rome 750, in the fourth year before the commencement of our Christian era, the birth of Christ must be dated four years before the date usually assigned to it, even if He was born within the year of Herod's death, as it is next to certain that He was.

there came wise men — literally, “Magi” or “Magians,” probably of the learned class who cultivated astrology and kindred sciences. Balaam's prophecy (Ⓜ Numbers 24:17), and perhaps Daniel's (Ⓜ Daniel 9:24, etc.), might have come down to them by tradition; but nothing definite is known of them.

from the east — but whether from Arabia, Persia, or Mesopotamia is uncertain.

to Jerusalem — as the Jewish metropolis.

2. Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? — From this it would seem they were not themselves Jews. (Compare the language of the Roman governor, ^{<1729>}John 18:33, and of the Roman soldiers, ^{<1729>}Matthew 27:29, with the very different language of the Jews themselves, ^{<1729>}Matthew 27:42, etc.). The Roman historians, SÜETONIUS and TACITUS, bear witness to an expectation, prevalent in the East, that out of Judea should arise a sovereign of the world.

for we have seen his star in the east — Much has been written on the subject of this star; but from all that is here said it is perhaps safest to regard it as simply a luminous meteor, which appeared under special laws and for a special purpose.

and are come to worship him — to do Him homage, as the word signifies; the nature of that homage depending on the circumstances of the case. That not civil but religious homage is meant here is plain from the whole strain of the narrative, and particularly ^{<1721>}Matthew 2:11. Doubtless these simple strangers expected all Jerusalem to be full of its new-born King, and the time, place, and circumstances of His birth to be familiar to every one. Little would they think that the first announcement of His birth would come from themselves, and still less could they anticipate the startling, instead of transporting, effect which it would produce — else they would probably have sought their information regarding His birthplace in some other quarter. But God overruled it to draw forth a noble testimony to the predicted birthplace of Messiah from the highest ecclesiastical authority in the nation.

3. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled — viewing this as a danger to his own throne: perhaps his guilty conscience also suggested other grounds of fear.

and all Jerusalem with him — from a dread of revolutionary commotions, and perhaps also of Herod's rage.

4. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together — The class of the “chief priests” included the high priest for the time being, together with all who had previously filled this office; for though the then head of the Aaronic family was the only rightful high priest, the Romans removed them at pleasure, to make way for creatures of their own. In this class probably were included also the heads of the four and twenty courses of the priests. The “scribes” were at first merely transcribers of the law and synagogue readers; afterwards interpreters of the law, both civil and religious, and so both lawyers and divines. The first of these classes, a proportion of the second, and “the elders” — that is, as LIGHTFOOT thinks, “those elders of the laity that were not of the Levitical

tribe” — constituted the supreme council of the nation, called the *Sanhedrim*, the members of which, at their full complement, numbered seventy-two. That this was the council which Herod now convened is most probable, from the solemnity of the occasion; for though the elders are not mentioned, we find a similar omission where all three were certainly meant (compare ^{<189>}Matthew 26:59 ^{<20>}27:1). As MEYER says, it was all the theologians of the nation whom Herod convened, because it was a theological response that he wanted.

he demanded of them — as the authorized interpreters of Scripture.

where Christ — the Messiah.

should be born — according to prophecy.

5. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea — a prompt and involuntary testimony from the highest tribunal; which yet at length condemned Him to die.

for thus it is written by the prophet — (^{<30>}Micah 5:2).

6. And thou, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda — the “in” being familiarly left out, as we say, “London, Middlesex.”

art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, etc. — This quotation, though differing verbally, agrees substantially with the *Hebrew* and the *Septuagint*. For says the prophet, “Though thou be little, yet out of thee shall come the Ruler” — this honor more than compensating for its natural insignificance; while our Evangelist, by a lively turn, makes him say, “Thou art *not the least*: for out of thee shall come a Governor” — this distinction lifting it from the lowest to the highest rank. The “thousands of Juda,” in the prophet, mean the subordinate divisions of the tribe: our Evangelist, instead of these, merely names the “princes” or heads of these families, including the districts which they occupied

that shall rule — or “feed,” as in the *Margin*.

my people Israel — In the Old Testament, kings are, by a beautiful figure, styled “shepherds” (^{<50>}Ezekiel 34:1-10, etc.). The classical writers use the same figure. The pastoral rule of Jehovah and Messiah over His people is a representation pervading all Scripture, and rich in import. (See ^{<20>}Psalms 23:1-6 ^{<30>}Isaiah 40:11 ^{<57>}Ezekiel 37:24 ^{<80>}John 10:11 ^{<67>}Revelation 7:17). That this prophecy of Micah referred to the Messiah, was admitted by the ancient Rabbins.

The Wise Men Despatched to Bethlehem by Herod to See the Babe, and Bring Him Word, Make a Religious Offering to the Infant King, but Divinely Warned, Return Home by Another Way (~~4117~~ Matthew 2:7-12).

7. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men — Herod has so far succeeded in his murderous design: he has tracked the spot where lies his victim, an unconscious babe. But he has another point to fix — the date of His birth — without which he might still miss his mark. The one he had got from the Sanhedrim; the other he will have from the sages; but secretly, lest his object should be suspected and defeated. So he

inquired of them diligently — rather, “precisely.”

what time the star appeared — presuming that this would be the best clue to the age of the child. The unsuspecting strangers tell him all. And now he thinks he is succeeding to a wish, and shall speedily clutch his victim; for at so early an age as they indicate, He would not likely have been removed from the place of His birth. Yet he is wary. He sends them as messengers from himself, and bids them come to *him*, that he may follow their pious example.

8. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently — “Search out carefully.”

for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also — The cunning and bloody hypocrite! Yet this royal mandate would meantime serve as a safe conduct to the strangers.

9. When they had heard the king, they departed — But where were ye, O Jewish ecclesiastics, ye chief priests and scribes of the people? Ye could tell Herod where Christ should be born, and could hear of these strangers from the far East that the Desire of all nations had actually come; but I do not see you trooping to Bethlehem — I find these devout strangers journeying thither all alone. Yet God ordered this too, lest the news should be blabbed, and reach the tyrant’s ears, before the Babe could be placed beyond his reach. Thus are the very errors and crimes and cold indifferences of men all overruled.

and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east — implying apparently that it had disappeared in the interval.

went before them, and stood over where the young child was — Surely this could hardly be but by a luminous meteor, and not very high.

10. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy — The language is very strong, expressing exuberant transport.

11. And when they were come into the house — not the stable; for as soon as Bethlehem was emptied of its strangers, they would have no difficulty in finding a dwelling-house.

they saw — The received text has “found”; but here our translators rightly depart from it, for it has no authority.

the young child with Mary his mother — The blessed Babe is naturally mentioned first, then the mother; but Joseph, though doubtless present, is not noticed, as being but the head of the house.

and fell down and worshipped him — Clearly this was no civil homage to a petty Jewish king, whom these star-guided strangers came so far, and inquired so eagerly, and rejoiced with such exceeding joy, to pay, but a lofty spiritual homage. The next clause confirms this.

and when they had opened their treasures they presented — rather, “offered.”

unto him gifts — This expression, used frequently in the Old Testament of the oblations presented to God, is in the New Testament employed seven times, and always in a *religious* sense of *offerings to God*. Beyond doubt, therefore, we are to understand the presentation of these gifts by the Magi as a *religious offering*.

gold, frankincense, and myrrh — Visits were seldom paid to sovereigns without a present (¹⁰⁰¹1 Kings 10:2, etc.; compare ¹⁷²⁰Psalm 72:10,11,15 ²⁰⁰³Isaiah 60:3,6). “Frankincense” was an aromatic used in sacrificial offerings: “myrrh” was used in perfuming ointments. These, with the “gold” which they presented, seem to show that the offerers were persons in affluent circumstances. That the gold was presented to the infant King in token of His royalty; the frankincense in token of His divinity, and the myrrh, of His sufferings; or that they were designed to express His divine and human natures; or that the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices of Christ are to be seen in these gifts; or that they were the offerings of three individuals respectively, each of them kings, the very names of whom tradition has handed down — all these are, at the best, precarious suppositions. But that the feelings of these devout givers are to be seen in the richness of their gifts, and that the gold, at least, would be highly serviceable to the parents of the blessed Babe in their unexpected journey to Egypt and stay there — that much at least admits of no dispute.

12. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed — or, “withdrew.”

to their own country another way — What a surprise would this vision be to the sages, just as they were preparing to carry the glad news of what they had seen to the *pious* king! But the Lord knew the bloody old tyrant better than to let him see their face again.

◀1123 MATTHEW 2:13-25.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT — THE MASSACRE AT BETHLEHEM — THE RETURN OF JOSEPH AND MARY WITH THE BABE, AFTER HEROD’S DEATH, AND THEIR SETTLEMENT AT NAZARETH. (◀1124 LUKE 2:39).

The Flight into Egypt (◀1123 Matthew 2:13-15).

13. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother — Observe this form of expression, repeated in ◀1124 Matthew 2:14 — another indirect hint that Joseph was no more than the Child’s *guardian*. Indeed, personally considered, Joseph has no spiritual significance, and very little place at all, in the Gospel history.

and flee into Egypt — which, being near, as ALFORD says, and a Roman province independent of Herod, and much inhabited by Jews, was an easy and convenient refuge. Ah! blessed Savior, on what a checkered career hast Thou entered here below! At Thy birth there was no room for Thee in the inn; and now all Judea is too hot for Thee. How soon has the sword begun to pierce through the Virgin’s soul (◀1125 Luke 2:35)! How early does she taste the reception which this mysterious Child of hers is to meet with in the world! And whither is He sent? To “the house of bondage?” Well, it once was that. But Egypt was a house of refuge before it was a house of bondage, and now it has but returned to its first use.

and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him — Herod’s murderous purpose was formed before the Magi had reached Bethlehem.

14. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt — doubtless the same night.

15. And was there until the death of Herod — which took place not very long after this of a horrible disease; the details of which will be found in JOSEPHUS [*Antiquities*, 17.6.1,5,7,8].

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying — (²³¹⁰¹Hosea 11:1).

Out of Egypt have I called my son — Our Evangelist here quotes directly from the *Hebrew*, warily departing from the *Septuagint*, which renders the words, “From Egypt have I recalled his children,” meaning Israel’s children. The prophet is reminding his people how dear Israel was to God in the days of his youth; how Moses was bidden to say to Pharaoh, “Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My *son*, My first-born; and I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me; and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay *thy* son, even thy first-born” (⁴¹⁰⁴²Exodus 4:22,23); how, when Pharaoh refused, God having slain all *his* first-born, “called His own son out of Egypt,” by a stroke of high-handed power and love. Viewing the words in this light, even if our Evangelist had not applied them to the recall from Egypt of God’s own beloved, Only-begotten Son, the application would have been irresistibly made by all who have learnt to pierce beneath the surface to the deeper relations which Christ bears to His people, and both to God; and who are accustomed to trace the analogy of God’s treatment of each respectively.

16. Then Herod, etc. — As Deborah sang of the mother of Sisera: “She looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Have they not sped?” so Herod wonders that his messengers, with pious zeal, are not hastening with the news that all is ready to receive him as a worshipper. What can be keeping them? Have they missed their way? Has any disaster befallen them? At length his patience is exhausted. He makes his inquiries and finds they are already far beyond his reach on their way home.

when he saw that he was mocked — was trifled with.

of the wise men — No, Herod, thou art not mocked of the wise men, but of a Higher than they. He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh at thee; the Lord hath thee in derision. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong (³¹¹¹¹Psalm 2:4 ⁴⁸⁶²Job 5:12,13). That blessed Babe shall die indeed, but not by thy hand. As He afterwards told that son of thine — as cunning and as unscrupulous as thyself — when the Pharisees warned Him to depart, for *Herod would seek to kill Him* — “Go ye, and tell that *fox*, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem” (^{<2132>}Luke 13:32,33).
Bitter satire!

was exceeding wrath — To be made a fool of is what none like, and proud kings cannot stand. Herod burns with rage and is like a wild bull in a net. So he

sent forth — a band of hired murderers.

and slew all the children — male children.

that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof — environs.

from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently — carefully.

inquired of the wise men — In this ferocious step Herod was like himself — as crafty as cruel. He takes a large sweep, not to miss his mark. He thinks this will surely embrace his victim. And so it had, if He had been there. But He is gone. Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than thou shalt have that Babe into thy hands. Therefore, Herod, thou must be content to want Him: to fill up the cup of thy bitter mortifications, already full enough — until thou die not less of a broken heart than of a loathsome and excruciating disease. Why, ask skeptics and skeptical critics, is not this massacre, if it really occurred, recorded by JOSEPHUS, who is minute enough in detailing the cruelties of Herod? To this the answer is not difficult. If we consider how small a town Bethlehem was, it is not likely there would be many male children in it from two years old and under; and when we think of the number of fouler atrocities which JOSEPHUS has recorded of him, it is unreasonable to make anything of his silence on this.

17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying — (^{<2615>}Jeremiah 31:15, from which the quotation differs but verbally).

18. In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not — These words, as they stand in Jeremiah, undoubtedly relate to the Babylonish captivity. Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, was buried in the neighborhood of Bethlehem (^{<0359>}Genesis 35:19), where her sepulcher is still shown. She is figuratively represented as rising from the tomb and uttering a double lament for the loss of her children — first, by a bitter captivity, and now by a bloody death. And a foul deed it was. O ye mothers of Bethlehem! methinks I hear you asking why your innocent babes should be the ram

caught in the thicket, while Isaac escapes. I cannot tell you, but one thing I know, that ye shall, some of you, live to see a day when that Babe of Bethlehem shall be Himself the Ram, caught in another sort of thicket, in order that your babes may escape a worse doom than they now endure. And if these babes of yours be now in glory, through the dear might of that blessed Babe, will they not deem it their honor that the tyrant's rage was exhausted upon themselves instead of their infant Lord?

19. But when Herod was dead — Miserable Herod! Thou thoughtest thyself safe from a dreaded Rival; but it was He only that was safe from thee; and thou hast not long enjoyed even this fancied security. See on ^{<1025>}Matthew 2:15.

behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt — Our translators, somewhat capriciously, render the same expression “*the* angel of the Lord,” ^{<1023>}Matthew 1:20 ^{<1023>}2:13; and “*an* angel of the Lord,” as here. As the same angel appears to have been employed on all these high occasions — and most likely he to whom in Luke is given the name of “Gabriel,” ^{<1019>}Luke 1:19,26 — perhaps it should in every instance except the first, be rendered “*the* angel.”

20. Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel — not to the land of Judea, for he was afterward expressly warned not to settle there, nor to Galilee, for he only went thither when he found it unsafe to settle in Judea but to “the land of Israel,” in its most general sense; meaning the Holy Land at large — the particular province being not as yet indicated. So Joseph and the Virgin had, like Abraham, to “go out, not knowing whither they went,” till they should receive further direction.

for they are dead which sought the young child's life — a common expression in most languages where only one is meant, who here is Herod. But the words are taken from the strikingly analogous case in ^{<1019>}Exodus 4:19, which probably suggested the plural here; and where the command is given to Moses to return *to* Egypt for the same reason that the greater than Moses was now ordered to be brought back *from* it — the death of him who sought his life. Herod died in the seventieth year of his age, and thirty-seventh of his reign.

21. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel — intending, as is plain from what follows, to return to Bethlehem of Judea, there, no doubt, to rear the Infant King, as at His own royal city, until the time should come when they would expect Him to occupy Jerusalem, “the city of the Great King.”

22. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod — Archelaus succeeded to Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; but Augustus refused him the title of *king* till it should be seen how he conducted himself; giving him only the title of *ethnarch* [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 17.11,4]. Above this, however, he never rose. The people, indeed, recognized him as his father's successor; and so it is here said that he "*reigned* in the room of his father Herod." But, after ten years' defiance of the Jewish law and cruel tyranny, the people lodged heavy complaints against him, and the emperor banished him to Vienne in Gaul, reducing Judea again to a Roman province. Then the "scepter" clean "departed from Judah."

he was afraid to go thither — and no wonder, for the reason just mentioned.

notwithstanding — or more simply, "but."

being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside — withdrew.

into the parts of Galilee — or the Galilean parts. The whole country west of the Jordan was at this time, as is well known, divided into three provinces — GALILEE being the northern, JUDEA the southern, and SAMARIA the central province. The province of Galilee was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, the brother of Archelaus, his father having left him that and Perea, on the east side of the Jordan, as his share of the kingdom, with the title of *tetrarch*, which Augustus confirmed. Though crafty and licentious, according to JOSEPHUS — precisely what the Gospel history shows him to be (see on ^{<1064>}Mark 6:14-30; ^{<1031>}Luke 13:31-35) — he was of a less cruel disposition than Archelaus; and Nazareth being a good way off from the seat of government, and considerably secluded, it was safer to settle there.

23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth — a small town in Lower Galilee, lying in the territory of the tribe of Zebulun, and about equally distant from the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Sea of Galilee on the east. Note — If, from ^{<1029>}Luke 2:39, one would conclude that the parents of Jesus brought Him straight back to Nazareth after His presentation in the temple — as if there had been no visit of the Magi, no flight to Egypt, no stay there, and no purpose on returning to settle again at Bethlehem — one might, from our Evangelist's way of speaking here, equally conclude that the parents of our Lord had never been at Nazareth until now. Did we know exactly the sources from which the matter of each of the Gospels was drawn up, or the mode in which these were used, this apparent discrepancy would probably disappear at once. In neither case is there any inaccuracy. At the same time it is difficult, with these facts before us, to conceive that either of these two Evangelists wrote his Gospel with

that of the other before him — though many think this a precarious inference.

that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene — better, perhaps, “Nazarene.” The best explanation of the origin of this name appears to be that which traces it to the word *netzer* in ^{<2100>}Isaiah 11:1 — the small *twig, sprout*, or sucker, which the prophet there says, “shall come forth from the stem (or rather, ‘stump’) of Jesse, the branch which should fructify from his roots.” The little town of Nazareth, mentioned neither in the Old Testament nor in JOSEPHUS, was probably so called from its insignificance: a weak twig in contrast to a stately tree; and a special contempt seemed to rest upon it — “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (^{<4046>}John 1:46) — over and above the general contempt in which all Galilee was held, from the number of Gentiles that settled in the upper territories of it, and, in the estimation of the Jews, debased it. Thus, in the providential arrangement by which our Lord was brought up at the insignificant and opprobrious town called *Nazareth*, there was involved, first, a local humiliation; next, an allusion to Isaiah’s prediction of His lowly, twig-like upspringing from the branchless, dried-up stump of Jesse; and yet further, a standing memorial of that humiliation which “the prophets,” in a number of the most striking predictions, had attached to the Messiah.

CHAPTER 3

◀◀◀ MATTHEW 3:1-12.

PREACHING AND MINISTRY OF JOHN. (◀◀◀ MARK 1:1-8 ◀◀◀ LUKE 3:1-18).

For the proper introduction to this section, we must go to ◀◀◀ Luke 3:1,2. Here, as BENGEL well observes, the curtain of the New Testament is, as it were, drawn up, and the greatest of all epochs of the Church commences. Even our Lord's own age is determined by it (◀◀◀ Luke 3:23). No such elaborate chronological precision is to be found elsewhere in the New Testament, and it comes fitly from him who claims it as the peculiar recommendation of his Gospel, that "he had traced down all things with precision from the very first" (◀◀◀ Matthew 1:3). Here evidently commences his proper narrative.

◀◀◀ LUKE 3:1:

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar — not the fifteenth from his full accession on the death of Augustus, but from the period when he was associated with him in the government of the empire, three years earlier, about the end of the year of Rome 779, or about four years before the usual reckoning.

Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea — His proper title was *procurator*, but with more than the usual powers of that office. After holding it for about ten years, he was summoned to Rome to answer to charges brought against him; but ere he arrived, Tiberius died (A.D. 35), and soon after miserable Pilate committed suicide.

And Herod being tetrarch of Galilee — (See on ◀◀◀ Mark 6:14).

and his brother Philip — a very different and very superior Philip to the one whose name was *Herod Philip*, and whose wife, Herodias, went to live with Herod Antipas (see on ◀◀◀ Mark 6:17).

tetrarch of Ituraea — lying to the northeast of Palestine, and so called from *Itur* or *Jetur*, Ishmael's son (◀◀◀ 1 Chronicles 1:31), and anciently belonging to the half-tribe of Manasseh.

and of the region of Trachonitis — lying farther to the northeast, between Iturea and Damascus; a rocky district infested by robbers, and committed by Augustus to Herod the Great to keep in order.

and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene — still more to the northeast; so called, says ROBINSON, from *Abila*, eighteen miles from Damascus.

LUKE 3:2:

Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests — The former, though deposed, retained much of his influence, and, probably, as *sagan* or deputy, exercised much of the power of the high priesthood along with Caiaphas, his son-in-law (⁴⁸⁸³John 18:13 ⁴⁰⁰⁶Acts 4:6). In David's time both Zadok and Abiathar acted as high priests (⁴⁰⁵⁵2 Samuel 15:35), and it seems to have been the fixed practice to have two (⁴²⁵⁸2 Kings 25:18).

the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness — Such a way of speaking is never once used when speaking of Jesus, because He was Himself *The Living Word*; whereas to all merely creature-messengers of God, the word they spoke was a foreign element. See on ⁴⁸⁸³John 3:31. We are now prepared for the opening words of Matthew.

1. In those days — of Christ's secluded life at Nazareth, where the last chapter left Him.

came John the Baptist, preaching — about six months before his Master.

in the wilderness of Judea — the desert valley of the Jordan, thinly peopled and bare in pasture, a little north of Jerusalem.

2. And saying, Repent ye — Though the word strictly denotes a *change of mind*, it has respect here (and wherever it is used in connection with salvation) primarily to that *sense of sin* which leads the sinner to flee from the wrath to come, to look for relief only from above, and eagerly to fall in with the provided remedy.

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand — This sublime phrase, used in none of the other Gospels, occurs in this peculiarly Jewish Gospel nearly thirty times; and being suggested by Daniel's grand vision of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days, to receive His investiture in a world-wide kingdom (²⁰⁷³Daniel 7:13,14), it was fitted at once both to meet the national expectations and to turn them into the right channel. A kingdom for which *repentance* was the proper preparation behooved to be essentially spiritual. Deliverance from sin, the great blessing of Christ's kingdom (⁴⁰²¹Matthew 1:21), can be valued by those only to

whom sin is a burden (^{<4092>}Matthew 9:12). John's great work, accordingly, was to awaken this feeling and hold out the hope of a speedy and precious remedy.

3. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying — (^{<4118>}Matthew 11:3).

The voice of one crying in the wilderness — (See on ^{<4182>}Luke 3:2); the scene of his ministry corresponding to its rough nature.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight — This prediction is quoted in all the four Gospels, showing that it was regarded as a great outstanding one, and the predicted forerunner as the connecting link between the old and the new economies. Like the great ones of the earth, the Prince of peace was to have His immediate approach proclaimed and His way prepared; and the call here — taking it generally — is a call to put out of the way whatever would obstruct His progress and hinder His complete triumph, whether those hindrances were public or personal, outward or inward. In Luke (^{<4185>}Luke 3:5,6) the quotation is thus continued: "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Levelling and smoothing are here the obvious figures whose sense is conveyed in the first words of the proclamation — "*Prepare ye the way of the Lord.*" The idea is that every obstruction shall be so removed as to reveal to the whole world the salvation of God in Him whose name is the "Savior." (Compare ^{<4988>}Psalms 98:3 ^{<2311>}Isaiah 11:10 ^{<2346>}49:6 ^{<2520>}52:10 ^{<4123>}Luke 2:31,32 ^{<4437>}Acts 13:47).

4. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair — woven of it.

and a leathern girdle about his loins — the prophetic dress of Elijah (^{<1008>}2 Kings 1:8; and see ^{<3304>}Zechariah 13:4).

and his meat was locusts — the great, well-known Eastern locust, a food of the poor (^{<4812>}Leviticus 11:22).

and wild honey — made by wild bees (^{<0945>}1 Samuel 14:25,26). This dress and diet, with the shrill cry in the wilderness, would recall the stern days of Elijah.

5. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan — From the metropolitan center to the extremities of the Judean province the cry of this great preacher of repentance and herald of the approaching Messiah brought trooping penitents and eager expectants.

6. And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins — probably confessing aloud. This baptism was at once a public seal of their felt need of deliverance from sin, of their expectation of the coming Deliverer, and of their readiness to welcome Him when He appeared. The baptism itself startled, and was intended to startle, them. They were familiar enough with the *baptism of proselytes* from heathenism; but this *baptism of Jews* themselves was quite new and strange to them.

7. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them — astonished at such a spectacle.

O generation of vipers — “Viper brood,” expressing the deadly influence of both sects alike upon the community. Mutually and entirely antagonistic as were their religious principles and spirit, the stem prophet charges both alike with being the poisoners of the nation’s religious principles. In ^{<1023>}Matthew 12:34 ^{<1033>}23:33, this strong language of the Baptist is anew applied by the faithful and true Witness to the Pharisees specifically — the only party that had zeal enough actively to diffuse this poison.

who hath warned you — given you the hint, as the idea is.

to flee from the wrath to come? — “What can have brought *you* hither?” John more than suspected it was not so much their own spiritual anxieties as the popularity of his movement that had drawn them thither. What an expression is this, “The wrath to come!” God’s “wrath,” in Scripture, is His righteous displeasure against sin, and consequently against all in whose skirts sin is found, arising out of the essential and eternal opposition of His nature to all moral evil. This is called “the *coming* wrath,” not as being wholly future — for as a merited sentence it lies on the sinner already, and its effects, both inward and outward, are to some extent experienced even now — but because the impenitent sinner will not, until “the judgment of the great day,” be concluded under it, will not have sentence publicly and irrevocably passed upon him, will not have it discharged upon him and experience its effects without mixture and without hope. In this view of it, it is a wrath *wholly* to come, as is implied in the noticeably different form of the expression employed by the apostle in ^{<310>}1 Thessalonians 1:10. Not that even true penitents came to John’s baptism with all these views of “the wrath to come.” But what he says is that this was the *real import of the step itself*. In this view of it, how striking is the word he employs to express that step — *fleeing* from it — as of one who, beholding a tide of fiery wrath rolling rapidly towards him, sees in instant flight his only escape!

8. Bring forth therefore fruits — the true reading clearly is “fruit”;

meet for repentance — that is, such fruit as *befits* a true penitent. John now being gifted with a knowledge of the human heart, like a true minister of righteousness and lover of souls here directs them how to evidence and carry out their repentance, supposing it genuine; and in the following verses warns them of their danger in case it were not.

9. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father — that pillow on which the nation so fatally reposed, that rock on which at length it splinterally

for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham — that is, “Flatter not yourselves with the fond delusion that God stands in need of you, to make good His promise of a seed to Abraham; for I tell you that, though you were all to perish, God is as able to raise up a seed to Abraham out of those stones as He was to take Abraham himself out of the rock whence he was hewn, out of the hole of the pit whence he was digged” (^{<2300>}Isaiah 51:1). Though the stem speaker may have pointed as he spoke to the pebbles of the bare clay hills that lay around (so STANLEY’S *Sinai and Palestine*), it was clearly the calling of the *Gentiles* at that time stone-dead in their sins, and quite as unconscious of it — into the room of unbelieving and disinherited Israel that he meant thus to indicate (see ^{<4246>}Matthew 21:43 ^{<6111>}Romans 11:20,30).

10. And now also — And even already.

the axe is laid unto — “lieth at.”

the root of the trees — as it were ready to strike: an expressive figure of impending judgment, only to be averted in the way next described.

therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire — Language so personal and individual as this can scarcely be understood of any national judgment like the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, with the breaking up of the Jewish polity and the extrusion of the chosen people from their peculiar privileges which followed it; though this would serve as the dark shadow, cast before, of a more terrible retribution to come. The “fire,” which in another verse is called “unquenchable,” can be no other than that future “torment” of the impenitent whose “smoke ascendeth up for ever and ever,” and which by the Judge Himself is styled “everlasting punishment” (^{<4256>}Matthew 25:46). What a strength, too, of just indignation is in that word “cast” or “flung into the fire!”

The third Gospel here adds the following important particulars in ^{<4301>}Luke 3:10-16.

LUKE 3:10:

And the people — the multitudes.

asked him, saying, What shall we do then? — that is, to show the sincerity of our repentance.

LUKE 3:11:

He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat — provisions, victuals.

let him do likewise — This is directed against the reigning avarice and selfishness. (Compare the corresponding precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, ⁴¹⁵⁰Matthew 5:40-42).

LUKE 3:12:

Then came also the publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master — Teacher.

what shall we do? — In what special way is the genuineness of our repentance to be manifested?

LUKE 3:13:

And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you — This is directed against that extortion which made the publicans a byword. (See on ⁴¹⁵⁶Matthew 5:46; ⁴²⁵¹Luke 15:1).

LUKE 3:14:

And the soldiers — rather, “And soldiers” — the word means “soldiers on active duty.”

likewise demanded — asked.

of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man — Intimidate. The word signifies to “shake thoroughly,” and refers probably to the extorting of money or other property.

neither accuse any falsely — by acting as informers vexatiously on frivolous or false pretexs.

and be content with your wages — or “rations.” We may take this, say WEBSTER and WILKINSON, as a warning against mutiny, which the officers attempted to suppress by largesses and donations. And thus the “fruits”

which would evidence their repentance were just resistance to the reigning sins — particularly of the *class* to which the penitent belonged — and the manifestation of an opposite spirit.

LUKE 3:15:

And as the people were in expectation — in a state of excitement, looking for something new

and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not — rather, “whether he himself might be the Christ.” The structure of this clause implies that they could hardly think it, but yet could not help asking themselves whether it might not be; showing both how successful he had been in awakening the expectation of Messiah’s immediate appearing, and the high estimation and even reverence, which his own character commanded.

LUKE 3:16:

John answered — either to that deputation from Jerusalem, of which we read in **John 1:19**, etc., or on some other occasion, to remove impressions derogatory to his blessed Master, which he knew to be taking hold of the popular mind.

saying unto them all — in solemn protestation.

(We now return to the first Gospel.)

11. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance — (See on **Matthew 3:6**);

but he that cometh after me is mightier than I — In Mark and Luke this is more emphatic — “But there cometh the Mightier than I” (**Mark 1:7** **Luke 3:16**).

whose shoes — sandals.

I am not worthy to bear — The sandals were tied and untied, and borne about by the meanest servants.

he shall baptize you — the emphatic “He”: “He it is,” to the exclusion of all others, “that shall baptize you.”

with the Holy Ghost — “So far from entertaining such a thought as laying claim to the honors of Messiahship, the meanest services I can render to that “Mightier than I that is coming after me” are too high an honor for me; I am but the servant, but the Master is coming; I administer

but the outward symbol of purification; His it is, as His sole prerogative, to dispense the inward reality. Beautiful spirit, distinguishing this servant of Christ throughout!

and with fire — To take this as a distinct baptism from that of the Spirit — a baptism of the impenitent with hell-fire — is exceedingly unnatural. Yet this was the view of ORIGEN among the Fathers; and among moderns, of NEANDER, MEYER, DE WETTE, and LANGE. Nor is it much better to refer it to the fire of the great day, by which the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Clearly, as we think, it is but the *fiery* character of the Spirit's operations upon the soul-searching, consuming, refining, sublimating — as nearly all good interpreters understand the words. And thus, in two successive clauses, the two most familiar emblems — *water* and *fire* — are employed to set forth the same purifying operations of the Holy Ghost upon the soul.

12. Whose fan — winnowing fan.

is in his hand — ready for use. This is no other than the preaching of the Gospel, even now beginning, the effect of which would be to separate the solid from the spiritually worthless, as wheat, by the winnowing fan, from the chaff. (Compare the similar representation in ^{<300>}Malachi 3:1-3).

and he will thoroughly purge his floor — threshing-floor; that is, the visible Church.

and gather his wheat — His true-hearted saints; so called for their solid worth (compare ^{<300>}Amos 9:9 ^{<223>}Luke 22:31).

into the garner — “the kingdom of their Father,” as this “garner” or “barn” is beautifully explained by our Lord in the parable of the wheat and the tares (^{<433>}Matthew 13:30,43).

but he will burn up the chaff — empty, worthless professors of religion, void of all solid religious principle and character (see ^{<500>}Psalms 1:4).

with unquenchable fire — Singular is the strength of this apparent contradiction of figures: — to be burnt up, but with a fire that is unquenchable; the one expressing the *utter destruction* of all that constitutes one's true life, the other the *continued consciousness of existence* in that awful condition.

Luke adds the following important particulars (^{<088>}Luke 3:18-20):

◀183▶ **LUKE 3:18:**

And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people — showing that we have here but an abstract of his teaching. Besides what we read in ▶102▶ John 1:29,33,34 ▶182▶3:27-36, the incidental allusion to his having taught his disciples to pray (▶210▶ Luke 11:1) — of which not a word is said elsewhere — shows how varied his teaching was.

◀183▶ **LUKE 3:19:**

But Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done — In this last clause we have an important fact, here only mentioned, showing how thoroughgoing was the fidelity of the Baptist to his royal hearer, and how strong must have been the workings of conscience in that slave of passion when, notwithstanding such plainness, he “did many things, and heard John gladly” (▶103▶ Mark 6:20).

◀183▶ **LUKE 3:20:**

Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison — This imprisonment of John, however, did not take place for some time after this; and it is here recorded merely because the Evangelist did not intend to recur to his history till he had occasion to relate the message which he sent to Christ from his prison at Machaerus (▶178▶ Luke 7:18, etc.).

◀183▶ **MATTHEW 3:13-17.**

BAPTISM OF CHRIST AND DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT UPON HIM IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER. (▶100▶ MARK 1:9-11
▶182▶ LUKE 3:21,22 ▶183▶ JOHN 1:31-34).

Baptism of Christ (▶183▶ Matthew 3:13-15).

13. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him — Moses rashly anticipated the divine call to deliver his people, and for this was fain to flee the house of bondage, and wait in obscurity for forty years more (▶181▶ Exodus 2:11, etc.). Not so this greater than Moses. All but thirty years had He now spent in privacy at Nazareth, gradually ripening for His public work, and calmly awaiting the time appointed of the Father. Now it had arrived; and this movement from Galilee to Jordan is the step, doubtless, of deepest interest to all heaven since that first one which brought Him into the world. Luke (▶182▶ Luke 3:21)

has this important addition — “Now *when all the people were baptized*, it came to pass, that Jesus being baptized,” etc. — implying that Jesus waited till all other applicants for baptism that day had been disposed of, ere He stepped forward, that He might not seem to be merely one of the crowd. Thus, as He rode into Jerusalem upon an ass “whereon yet never man sat” (^{ Luke 19:30}), and lay in a sepulcher “wherein was never man yet laid” (^{ John 19:41}), so in His baptism, too. He would be “separate from sinners.”

14. But John forbade him — rather, “was (in the act of) hindering him,” or “attempting to hinder him.”

saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? — (How John came to recognize Him, when he says he knew Him not, see ^{ John 1:31-34}). The emphasis of this most remarkable speech lies all in the pronouns: “What! Shall the Master come for baptism to the servant — the sinless Savior to a sinner?” That thus much is in the Baptist’s words will be clearly seen if it be observed that he evidently regarded Jesus as *Himself needing no purification* but rather *qualified to impart it to those who did*. And do not all his other testimonies to Christ fully bear out this sense of the words? But it were a pity if, in the glory of this testimony to Christ, we should miss the beautiful spirit in which it was borne — “Lord, must *I* baptize *Thee*? Can I bring myself to do such a thing?” — reminding us of Peter’s exclamation at the supper table, “Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?” while it has nothing of the false humility and presumption which dictated Peter’s next speech. “Thou shall never wash my feet” (^{ John 13:6,8}).

15. And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now — “Let it pass for the present”; that is, “Thou recoilest, and no wonder, for the seeming incongruity is startling; but in the present case do as thou art bidden.”

for thus it becometh us — “us,” not in the sense of me and thee,” or “men in general,” but as in ^{ John 3:11}.

to fulfill all righteousness — If this be rendered, with SCRIVENER, “every ordinance,” or, with CAMPBELL, “every institution,” the meaning is obvious enough; and the same sense is brought out by “all righteousness,” or compliance with everything enjoined, baptism included. Indeed, if this be the meaning, our version perhaps best brings out the force of the opening word “Thus.” But we incline to think that our Lord meant more than this. The import of circumcision and of baptism seems to be radically the same. And if our remarks on the circumcision of our Lord (see on ^{ Luke 2:21-24}) are well founded, He would seem to have said, “Thus do I impledge

Myself to the whole righteousness of the Law — thus symbolically do enter on and engage to fulfill it all.” Let the thoughtful reader weigh this.

Then he suffered him — with true humility, yielding to higher authority than his own impressions of propriety.

Descent of the Spirit upon the Baptized Redeemer
(^{<41816>}Matthew 3:16,17).

16. And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water — rather, “from the water.” Mark has “out of the water” (^{<41010>}Mark 1:10). “and” — adds Luke (^{<41821>}Luke 3:21), “while He was praying”; a grand piece of information. Can there be a doubt about the burden of that prayer; a prayer sent up, probably, while yet in the water — His blessed head suffused with the baptismal element; a prayer continued likely as He stepped out of the stream, and again stood upon the dry ground; the work before Him, the needed and expected Spirit to rest upon Him for it, and the glory He would then put upon the Father that sent Him — would not these fill His breast, and find silent vent in such form as this? — “Lo, I come; I delight to do Thy will, O God. Father, glorify Thy name. Show Me a token for good. Let the Spirit of the Lord God come upon Me, and I will preach the Gospel to the poor, and heal the broken-hearted, and send forth judgment unto victory.” While He was yet speaking —

lo, the heavens were opened — Mark says, sublimely, “He saw the heavens cleaving” (^{<41010>}Mark 1:10).

and he saw the Spirit of God descending — that is, He only, with the exception of His honored servant, as he tells us himself (^{<41832-34>}John 1:32-34); the by-standers apparently seeing nothing.

like a dove, and lighting upon him — Luke says, “in a bodily shape” (^{<41822>}Luke 3:22); that is, the blessed Spirit, assuming the corporeal form of a dove, descended thus upon His sacred head. But why in this form? The Scripture use of this emblem will be our best guide here. “My dove, *my undefiled* is one,” says the Song of Solomon (^{<2109>}Song of Solomon 6:9). This is chaste purity. Again, “Be ye *harmless* as doves,” says Christ Himself (^{<41016>}Matthew 10:16). This is the same thing, in the form of inoffensiveness towards men. “A conscience void of offense toward God and toward men” (^{<41816>}Acts 24:16) expresses both. Further, when we read in the Song of Solomon (^{<2114>}Song of Solomon 2:14), “O my dove, that art in the *clefts* of the rocks, in the *secret places* of the stairs (see ^{<2108>}Isaiah 60:8), let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely” — it is shrinking modesty, meekness, gentleness, that is thus charmingly depicted. In a word — not to allude to

the historical emblem of the dove that flew back to the ark, bearing in its mouth the olive leaf of *peace* (^{<0081>}Genesis 8:11) — when we read (^{<0083>}Psalms 68:13), “Ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold,” it is *beauteousness* that is thus held forth. And was not such that “holy, harmless, undefiled One,” the “separate from sinners?” “Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into Thy lips; therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever!” But the fourth Gospel gives us one more piece of information here, on the authority of one who saw and testified of it: “John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and IT ABODE UPON HIM.” And lest we should think that this was an accidental thing, he adds that this last particular was expressly given him as part of the sign by which he was to recognize and identify Him as the Son of God: “And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending AND REMAINING ON HIM, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God” (^{<013>}John 1:32-34). And when with this we compare the predicted descent of the Spirit upon Messiah (^{<210>}Isaiah 11:2), “And *the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him*,” we cannot doubt that it was this permanent and perfect resting of the Holy Ghost upon the Son of God — now and henceforward in His *official* capacity — that was here visibly manifested.

17. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is — Mark and Luke give it in the direct form, “Thou art.” (^{<011>}Mark 1:11 ^{<012>}Luke 3:22).

my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased — The verb is put in the aorist to express absolute complacency, once and for ever felt towards Him. The English here, at least to modern ears, is scarcely strong enough. “I delight” comes the nearest, perhaps, to that ineffable *complacency* which is manifestly intended; and this is the rather to be preferred, as it would immediately carry the thoughts back to that august Messianic prophecy to which the voice from heaven plainly alluded (^{<210>}Isaiah 42:1), “Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, IN WHOM MY SOUL DELIGHTETH.” Nor are the words which follow to be overlooked, “I have put My Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” (The *Septuagint* perverts this, as it does most of the Messianic predictions, interpolating the word “Jacob,” and applying it to the Jews). Was this voice heard by the bystanders? From Matthew’s form of it, one might suppose it so designed; but it would appear that it was not, and probably John only heard and saw anything peculiar about that great baptism. Accordingly, the words, “Hear ye Him,” are not added, as at the Transfiguration.

CHAPTER 4

◀401E MATTHEW 4:1-11.

TEMPTATION OF CHRIST. (◀401Z MARK 1:12,13 ◀401E LUKE 4:1-13).

1. Then — an indefinite note of sequence. But Mark’s word (◀401Z Mark 1:12) fixes what we should have presumed was meant, that it was “immediately” after His baptism; and with this agrees the statement of Luke (◀401E Luke 4:1).

was Jesus led up — that is, from the low Jordan valley to some more elevated spot.

of the Spirit — that blessed Spirit immediately before spoken of as descending upon Him at His baptism, and abiding upon Him. Luke, connecting these two scenes, as if the one were but the sequel of the other, says, “Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led,” etc. Mark’s expression has a startling sharpness about it — “Immediately the Spirit driveth Him” (◀401Z Mark 1:12), “putteth,” or “hurrieth Him forth,” or “impelleth Him.” (See the same word in ◀404B Mark 1:43 ◀416D 5:40 ◀402S Matthew 9:25 ◀416S 13:52 ◀404A John 10:4). The thought thus strongly expressed is the mighty constraining impulse of the Spirit under which He went; while Matthew’s more gentle expression, “was led up,” intimates how purely voluntary on His own part this action was.

into the wilderness — probably the wild Judean desert. The particular spot which tradition has fixed upon has hence got the name of *Quarantana* or *Quarantaria*, from the forty days — “an almost perpendicular wall of rock twelve or fifteen hundred feet above the plain” [ROBINSON, *Palestine*]. The supposition of those who incline to place the temptation amongst the mountains of Moab is, we think, very improbable.

to be tempted — The *Greek* word (*peirazein*) means simply to *try* or make proof of; and when ascribed to God in His dealings with men, it means, and can mean no more than this. Thus, ◀402I Genesis 22:1, “It came to pass that God did tempt Abraham,” or put his faith to a severe proof. (See ◀418E Deuteronomy 8:2). But for the most part in Scripture the word is used in a bad sense, and means to entice, solicit, or provoke to sin. Hence the name here given to the wicked one — “the tempter” (◀404B Matthew 4:3). Accordingly “to be tempted” here is to be understood both ways. The Spirit

conducted Him into the wilderness simply to have His faith *tried*; but as the agent in this trial was to be the wicked one, whose whole object would be to seduce Him from His allegiance to God, it was a *temptation* in the bad sense of the term. The unworthy inference which some would draw from this is energetically repelled by an apostle (⁵⁰¹³James 1:13-17).

of the devil. The word signifies a slanderer — one who casts imputations upon another. Hence that other name given him (⁶²⁰Revelation 12:10), “The accuser of the brethren, who accuseth them before our God day and night.” Mark (⁴⁰¹³Mark 1:13) says, “He was forty days tempted of *Satan*,” a word signifying an *adversary*, one who lies in wait for, or sets himself in opposition to another. These and other names of the same fallen spirit point to different features in his character or operations. What was the high design of this? First, as we judge, to give our Lord a taste of what lay before Him in the work He had undertaken; next, to make trial of the glorious equipment for it which He had just received; further, to give Him encouragement, by the victory now to be won, to go forward spoiling principalities and powers, until at length He should make a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His cross: that the tempter, too, might get a taste, at the very outset, of the new kind of material in *man* which he would find he had here to deal with; finally, that He might acquire experimental ability “to succor them that are tempted” (⁵⁰¹⁸Hebrews 2:18). The temptation evidently embraced two stages: the one continuing throughout the forty days’ fast; the other, at the conclusion of that period.

FIRST STAGE:

2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights — Luke says “When they were quite ended” (⁴⁰⁰²Luke 4:2).

he was afterward an hungered — evidently implying that the sensation of hunger was unfelt during all the forty days; coming on only at their close. So it was apparently with Moses (⁴³²⁸Exodus 34:28) and Elijah (⁴¹⁰⁸1 Kings 19:8) for the same period. A supernatural power of endurance was of course imparted to the body, but this probably operated through a natural law — the absorption of the Redeemer’s Spirit in the dread conflict with the tempter. (See on ⁴⁰⁰⁹Acts 9:9). Had we only this Gospel, we should suppose the temptation did not begin till after this. But it is clear, from Mark’s statement, that “He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan” (⁴⁰¹³Mark 1:13), and Luke’s, “being forty days tempted of the devil” (⁴⁰⁰²Luke 4:2), that there was a forty days’ temptation *before* the three specific temptations afterwards recorded. And this is what we have called the First Stage. What the precise nature and object of the forty days’ temptation were is not recorded. But two things seem plain enough. First,

the tempter had utterly failed of his object, else it had not been renewed; and the terms in which he opens his second attack imply as much. But further, the tempter's whole object during the forty days evidently was to get Him to distrust the heavenly testimony borne to Him at His baptism as THE SON OF GOD — to persuade Him to regard it as but a splendid illusion — and, generally, to dislodge from His breast the consciousness of His Sonship. With what plausibility the events of His previous history from the beginning would be urged upon Him in support of this temptation it is easy to imagine. And it makes much in support of this view of the forty days' temptation that the particulars of it are not recorded; for how the details of such a purely internal struggle could be recorded it is hard to see. If this be correct, how naturally does the SECOND STAGE of the temptation open! In Mark's brief notice of the temptation there is one expressive particular not given either by Matthew or by Luke — that "He was with the wild beasts" (^(~~MARK~~)Mark 1:12), no doubt to add terror to solitude, and aggravate the horrors of the whole scene.

3. And when the tempter came to him — Evidently we have here a new scene.

he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread — rather, "loaves," answering to "stones" in the plural; whereas Luke, having said, "Command this stone," in the singular, adds, "that it be made bread," in the singular (^(~~MARK~~)Luke 4:3). The sensation of hunger, unfelt during all the forty days, seems now to have come on in all its keenness — no doubt to open a door to the tempter, of which he is not slow to avail himself; "Thou still clingest to that vainglorious confidence that Thou art the Son of God, carried away by those illusory scenes at the Jordan. Thou wast born in a stable; but Thou art the Son of God! hurried off to Egypt for fear of Herod's wrath; but Thou art the Son of God! a carpenter's roof supplied Thee with a home, and in the obscurity of a despicable town of Galilee Thou hast spent thirty years, yet still Thou art the Son of God! and a voice from heaven, it seems, proclaimed it in Thine ears at the Jordan! Be it so; but after *that*, surely Thy days of obscurity and trial should have an end. Why linger for weeks in this desert, wandering among the wild beasts and craggy rocks, unhonored, unattended, unpitied, ready to starve for want of the necessaries of life? Is this befitting "the Son of God?" At the bidding of "the Son of God" surely those stones shall all be turned into loaves, and in a moment present an abundant repast."

4. But he answered and said, It is written — (^(~~MARK~~)Deuteronomy 8:3).

Man shall not live by bread alone — more emphatically, as in the *Greek*, "Not by bread alone shall man live."

but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God — Of all passages in Old Testament Scripture, none could have been pitched upon more apposite, perhaps not one so apposite, to our Lord's purpose. "The Lord ... led thee (said Moses to Israel, at the close of their journeyings) these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only," etc., "Now, if Israel spent, not forty days, but forty years in a waste, howling wilderness, where there were no means of human subsistence, not starving, but divinely provided for, on purpose to prove to every age that human support depends not upon bread, but upon God's unailing word of promise and pledge of all needful providential care, am I, distrusting this word of God, and despairing of relief, to take the law into My own hand? True, the Son of God is able enough to turn stones into bread: but what the Son of God is able to do is not the present question, but what is *man's duty* under want of the necessaries of life. And as Israel's condition in the wilderness did not justify their unbelieving murmurings and frequent desperation, so neither would Mine warrant the exercise of the power of the Son of God in snatching despairingly at unwarranted relief. As man, therefore, I will await divine supply, nothing doubting that at the fitting time it will arrive." The *second* temptation in this Gospel is in Luke's the *third*. That Matthew's order is the right one will appear, we think, quite clearly in the sequel.

5. Then the devil taketh him up — rather, "conducteth Him."

into the holy city — so called (as in ²⁸⁸²Isaiah 48:2 ⁴¹⁰⁰Nehemiah 11:1) from its being "the city of the Great King," the seat of the temple, the metropolis of all Jewish worship.

and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple — rather, "the pinnacle" — a certain well-known projection. Whether this refers to the highest summit of the temple, which bristled with golden spikes [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 5.5,6]; or whether it refers to another peak, on Herod's royal portico, overhanging the ravine of Kedron, at the valley of Hinnom — an immense tower built on the very edge of this precipice, from the top of which dizzy height JOSEPHUS says one could not look to the bottom [*Antiquities*, 15.11,5] — is not certain; but the latter is probably meant.

6. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God — As this temptation starts with the same point as the first — our Lord's determination not to be disputed out of His Sonship — it seems to us clear that the one came

directly after the other; and as the remaining temptation shows that the hope of carrying that point was abandoned, and all was staked upon a desperate venture, we think that remaining temptation is thus shown to be the last; as will appear still more when we come to it.

cast thyself down — “from hence” (^{<4009>}Luke 4:9).

for it is written — (^{<3911>}Psalm 91:11,12). “But what is this I see?” exclaims stately BISHOP HALL. “Satan himself with a Bible under his arm and a text in his mouth!” Doubtless the tempter, having felt the power of God’s Word in the former temptation, was eager to try the effect of it from his own mouth (^{<4714>}2 Corinthians 11:14).

He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands — rather, “on their hands.”

they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone — The quotation is, precisely as it stands in the *Hebrew* and the *Septuagint*, save that after the first clause the words, “to keep thee in all thy ways,” are here omitted. Not a few good expositors have thought that this omission was intentional, to conceal the fact that this would *not* have been one of “His ways,” that is, of duty. But as our Lord’s reply makes no allusion to this, but seizes on the great principle involved in the promise quoted, so when we look at the promise itself, it is plain that the sense of it is precisely the same whether the clause in question be inserted or not.

7. Jesus said unto him, It is written again — (^{<4186>}Deuteronomy 6:16), as if he should say, “True, it is so written, and on that promise I implicitly rely; but in using it there is another Scripture which must not be forgotten.”

Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God — “Preservation in danger is divinely pledged: shall I then *create* danger, either to put the promised security skeptically to the proof, or wantonly to demand a display of it? That were ‘to tempt the Lord my God,’ which, being expressly forbidden, would forfeit the right to expect preservation.”

8. Again, the devil taketh him up — “conducteth him,” as before.

into — or “unto”

an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them — Luke (^{<4045>}Luke 4:5) adds the important clause, “in a moment of time”; a clause which seems to furnish a key to the true meaning. That a scene was presented to our Lord’s natural eye seems plainly expressed. But to limit this to the most extensive scene which the natural eye could take in, is to give a sense to the expression, “all the

kingdoms of the world,” quite violent. It remains, then, to gather from the expression, “in a moment of time” — which manifestly is intended to intimate some supernatural operation — that it was permitted to the tempter to extend preternaturally for a moment our Lord’s range of vision, and throw a “glory” or glitter over the scene of vision: a thing not inconsistent with the analogy of other scriptural statements regarding the permitted operations of the wicked one. In this case, the “exceeding height” of the “mountain” from which this sight was beheld would favor the effect to be produced.

9. And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee — “and the glory of them,” adds Luke (^{<0006>}Luke 4:6). But Matthew having already said that this was “showed Him,” did not need to repeat it here. Luke (^{<0006>}Luke 4:6) adds these other very important clauses, here omitted — “for that is,” or “has been,” “delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it.” Was this wholly false? That were not like Satan’s unusual policy, which is to insinuate his lies under cover of some truth. What truth, then, is there here? We answer, Is not Satan thrice called by our Lord Himself, “the prince of this world” (^{<0231>}John 12:31 ^{<0430>}14:30 ^{<0611>}16:11)? Does not the apostle call him “the god of this world” (^{<0004>}2 Corinthians 4:4)? And still further, is it not said that Christ came to destroy by His death “him that *hath the power of death*, that is, the devil” (^{<0014>}Hebrews 2:14)? No doubt these passages only express men’s voluntary subjection to the rule of the wicked one while they live, and his power to surround death to them, when it comes, with all the terrors of the wages of sin. But as this is a real and terrible sway, so all Scripture represents men as righteously sold under it. In this sense he speaks what is not devoid of truth, when he says, “All this is delivered unto me.” But how does he deliver this “to whomsoever he will?” As employing whomsoever he pleases of his willing subjects in keeping men under his power. In this case his offer to our Lord was that of a *deputed* supremacy commensurate with his own, though as *his gift* and for *his ends*.

if thou wilt fall down and worship me — This was the sole but monstrous condition. No Scripture, it will be observed, is quoted now, because none could be found to support so blasphemous a claim. In fact, he has ceased now to present his temptations under the mask of piety, and he stands out unblushingly as the rival of God Himself in his claims on the homage of men. Despairing of success as an angel of light, he throws off all disguise, and with a splendid bribe solicits divine honor. This again shows that we are now at the last of the temptations, and that Matthew’s order is the true one.

10. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan — Since the tempter has now thrown off the mask, and stands forth in his true character, our Lord no longer deals with him as a pretended friend and pious counsellor, but calls him by his right name — His knowledge of which from the outset He had carefully concealed till now — and orders him off. This is the final and conclusive evidence, as we think, that Matthew's must be the right order of the temptations. For who can well conceive of the tempter's returning to the assault after this, in the pious character again, and hoping still to dislodge the consciousness of His Sonship, while our Lord must in that case be supposed to quote Scripture to one He had called the devil to his face — thus throwing His pearls before worse than swine?

for it is written — (^{<0613>}Deuteronomy 6:13). Thus does our Lord part with Satan on the rock of Scripture.

Thou shalt worship — In the *Hebrew* and the *Septuagint* it is, “Thou shalt *fear*”; but as the sense is the same, so “worship” is here used to show emphatically that what the tempter claimed was precisely what God had forbidden.

the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve — The word “serve” in the second clause, is one never used by the *Septuagint* of any but *religious* service; and in this sense exclusively is it used in the New Testament, as we find it here. Once more the word “only,” in the second clause — not expressed in the *Hebrew* and the *Septuagint* — is here added to bring out emphatically the *negative* and *prohibitory* feature of the command. (See ^{<0810>}Galatians 3:10 for a similar supplement of the word “all” in a quotation from ^{<0329>}Deuteronomy 27:26).

11. Then the devil leaveth him — Luke says, “And when the devil had exhausted” — or “quite ended,” as in ^{<0412>}Luke 4:2 — “every (mode of) temptation, he departed from him till a season.” The definite “season” here indicated is expressly referred to by our Lord in ^{<0430>}John 14:30 ^{<0252>}Luke 22:52,53.

and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him — or supplied Him with food, as the same expression means in ^{<0131>}Mark 1:31 ^{<0813>}Luke 8:3. Thus did angels to Elijah (^{<1915>}1 Kings 19:5-8). Excellent critics think that they ministered, not food only, but supernatural support and cheer also. But this would be the natural *effect* rather than the direct *object* of the visit, which was plainly what we have expressed. And after having refused to claim the *illegitimate* ministration of angels in His behalf, oh, with what deep joy would He accept their services when sent, unasked, at the close of all this temptation, direct from Him whom He had so gloriously honored! What “angels’ food” would this repast be to Him! and as He partook of it,

might not a Voice from heaven be heard again, by any who could read the Father's mind, "Said I not well, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?"

✠MATTHEW 4:12-25.

CHRIST BEGINS HIS GALILEAN MINISTRY — CALLING OF PETER AND ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN — HIS FIRST GALILEAN CIRCUIT. (✠MARK 1:14-20,35-39 ✠LUKE 4:14,15).

*There is here a notable gap in the history, which but for the fourth Gospel we should never have discovered. From the former Gospels we should have been apt to draw three inferences, which from the fourth one we know to be erroneous: First, that our Lord awaited the close of John's ministry, by his arrest and imprisonment, before beginning His own; next, that there was but a brief interval between the baptism of our Lord and the imprisonment of John; and further, that our Lord not only opened His work in Galilee, but never ministered out of it, and never visited Jerusalem at all nor kept a passover till He went thither to become "our Passover, sacrificed for us." The fourth Gospel alone gives the true succession of events; not only recording those important openings of our Lord's public work which preceded the Baptist's imprisonment — extending to the end of the third chapter — but so specifying the passover which occurred during our Lord's ministry as to enable us to line off, with a large measure of certainty, the events of the first three Gospels according to the successive passover which they embraced. EUSEBIUS, the ecclesiastical historian, who, early in the fourth century, gave much attention to this subject, in noticing these features of the Evangelical Records, says [*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.24] that John wrote his Gospel at the entreaty of those who knew the important materials he possessed, and filled up what is wanting in the first three Gospels. Why it was reserved for the fourth Gospel, published at so late a period, to supply such important particulars in the life of Christ, it is not easy to conjecture with any probability. It may be, that though not unacquainted with the general facts, they were not furnished with reliable details. But one thing may be affirmed with tolerable certainty, that as our Lord's teaching at Jerusalem was of a depth and grandeur scarcely so well adapted to the prevailing character of the first three Gospels, but altogether congenial to the fourth; and as the bare mention of the successive passovers, without any account of the transactions and discourses they gave rise to, would have served little purpose in the first three Gospels, there may have been no way of preserving the unity and consistency of each Gospel, so as to furnish by*

means of them all the precious information we get from them, save by the plan on which they are actually constructed.

Entry into Galilee (<4042>Matthew 4:12-17).

12. Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison — more simply, “was delivered up,” as recorded in <4148>Matthew 14:3-5 <4167>Mark 6:17-20 <4189>Luke 3:19,20.

he departed — rather, “withdrew.”

into Galilee — as recorded, in its proper place, in <4101>John 4:1-3.

13. And leaving Nazareth — The prevalent opinion is that this refers to a *first* visit to Nazareth after His baptism, whose details are given by Luke (<4046>Luke 4:16, etc.); a *second* visit being that detailed by our Evangelist (<4154>Matthew 13:54-58), and by Mark (<4100>Mark 6:1-6). But to us there seem all but insuperable difficulties in the supposition of two visits to Nazareth after His baptism; and on the grounds stated in <4046>Luke 4:16, etc., we think that the *one only visit* to Nazareth is that recorded by Matthew (<4153>Matthew 13:53-58), Mark (<4100>Mark 6:1-6), and Luke (<4044>Luke 4:14-30). But how, in that case, are we to take the word “*leaving Nazareth*” here? We answer, just as the same word is used in <4018>Acts 21:3, “Now when we had sighted Cyprus, and *left* it on the left, we sailed into Syria,” — that is, without entering Cyprus at all, but merely “sighting” it, as the nautical phrase is, they steered southeast of it, leaving it on the northwest. So here, what we understand the Evangelist to say is, that Jesus, on His return to Galilee, did not, as might have been expected, make Nazareth the place of His stated residence, but, “leaving for passing by Nazareth,”

he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the seacoast — maritime Capernaum, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee; but the precise spot is unknown. (See on <4123>Matthew 11:23). Our Lord seems to have chosen it for several reasons. Four or five of the Twelve lived there; it had a considerable and mixed population, securing some freedom from that intense bigotry which even to this day characterizes all places where Jews in large numbers dwell nearly alone; it was central, so that not only on the approach of the annual festivals did large numbers pass through it or near it, but on any occasion multitudes could easily be collected about it; and for crossing and recrossing the lake, which our Lord had so often occasion to do, no place could be more convenient. But one other high reason for the choice of Capernaum remains to be mentioned, the only one specified by our Evangelist.

in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim — the one lying to the west of the Sea of Galilee, the other to the north of it; but the precise boundaries cannot now be traced out.

14. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet — (^{201F}Isaiah 9:1,2 or, as in *Hebrew*, ^{201F}Isaiah 8:23 9:1).

saying — as follows:

15. The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by the way of the sea* — the coast skirting the Sea of Galilee westward — beyond Jordan — a phrase commonly meaning eastward of Jordan; but here and in several places it means westward of the Jordan. The word seems to have got the general meaning of “the other side”; the nature of the case determining which side that was.

Galilee of the Gentiles — so called from its position, which made it the frontier between the Holy Land and the external world. While Ephraim and Judah, as STANLEY says, were separated from the world by the Jordan valley on one side and the hostile Philistines on another, the northern tribes were in the direct highway of all the invaders from the north, in unbroken communication with the promiscuous races who have always occupied the heights of Lebanon, and in close and peaceful alliance with the most commercial nation of the ancient world, the Phoenicians. Twenty of the cities of Galilee were actually annexed by Solomon to the adjacent kingdom of Tyre, and formed, with their territory, the “boundary” or “offscouring” (*Gebul* or *Cabul*) of the two dominions — at a later time still known by the general name of “the boundaries (coasts or borders) of Tyre and Sidon.” In the first great transportation of the Jewish population, Naphtali and Galilee suffered the same fate as the trans-jordanic tribes before Ephraim or Judah had been molested (^{125D}2 Kings 15:29). In the time of the Christian era this original disadvantage of their position was still felt; the speech of the Galileans “betrayed them” by its uncouth pronunciation (^{117B}Matthew 26:73); and their distance from the seats of government and civilization at Jerusalem and Caesarea gave them their character for turbulence or independence, according as it was viewed by their friends or their enemies.

16. The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up — The prophetic strain to which these words belong commences with the seventh chapter of Isaiah, to which the sixth chapter is introductory, and goes down to the end of the twelfth chapter, which hymns the spirit of that whole strain of prophecy. It belongs to the reign of Ahaz and turns upon the combined efforts of the two neighboring kingdoms of Syria and Israel to crush Judah. In these critical circumstances Judah and her king were, by their

ungodliness, provoking the Lord to sell them into the hands of their enemies. What, then, is the burden of this prophetic strain, on to the passage here quoted? First, Judah shall not, cannot perish, because IMMANUEL, the Virgin's Son, is to come forth from his loins. Next, one of the invaders shall soon perish, and the kingdoms of neither be enlarged. Further, while the Lord will be the Sanctuary of such as confide in these promises and await their fulfillment, He will drive to confusion, darkness, and despair the vast multitude of the nation who despised His oracles, and, in their anxiety and distress, betook themselves to the lying oracles of the heathen. This carries us down to the end of the eighth chapter. At the opening of the ninth chapter a sudden light is seen breaking in upon one particular part of the country, the part which was to suffer most in these wars and devastations — “the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee and the Gentiles.” The rest of the prophecy stretches over both the Assyrian and the Chaldean captivities and terminates in the glorious Messianic prophecy of the eleventh chapter and the choral hymn of the twelfth chapter. Well, this is the point seized on by our Evangelist. By Messiah's taking up His abode in those very regions of Galilee, and shedding His glorious light upon them, this prediction, He says, of the Evangelical prophet was now fulfilled; and if it was not thus fulfilled, we may confidently affirm it was not fulfilled in any age of the Jewish ceremony, and has received no fulfillment at all. Even the most rationalistic critics have difficulty in explaining it in any other way.

17. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand — Thus did our Lord not only take up the strain, but give forth the identical summons of His honored forerunner. Our Lord sometimes speaks of the new kingdom as already come — in His own Person and ministry; but the *economy* of it was only “at hand” until the blood of the cross was shed, and the Spirit on the day of Pentecost opened the fountain for sin and for uncleanness to the world at large.

Calling of Peter and Andrew James and John (⁴⁰⁸Matthew 4:18-22).

18. And Jesus, walking — The word “Jesus” here appears not to belong to the text, but to have been introduced from those portions of it which were transcribed to be used as church lessons; where it was naturally introduced as a connecting word at the commencement of a lesson.

by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers — “called Peter” for the reason mentioned in ⁴⁰⁸Matthew 16:18.

19. And he saith unto them, Follow me — rather, as the same expression is rendered in Mark, “Come ye after Me” (^{<4017>}Mark 1:17).

and I will make you fishers of men — raising them from a lower to a higher *fishing*, as David was from a lower to a higher *feeding* (^{<4980>}Psalms 78:70-72).

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

21. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship — rather, “in the ship,” their fishing boat.

with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and he called them.

22. And they immediately left the ship and their father — Mark adds an important clause: “They left their father Zebedee in the ship with the *hired servants*” (^{<4023>}Mark 1:20); showing that the family were in easy circumstances.

and followed him — Two harmonistic questions here arise: *First*, Was this the same calling as that recorded in ^{<4035>}John 1:35-42? Clearly not. For,

(1) That call was given while Jesus was yet in Judea: this, after His return to Galilee.

(2) Here, Christ calls Andrew: there, Andrew solicits an interview with Christ.

(3) Here, Andrew and Peter are called together: there, Andrew having been called, with an unnamed disciple, who was clearly the beloved disciple (see on ^{<4040>}John 1:40), goes and fetches Peter his brother to Christ, who then calls him.

(4) Here, John is called along with James his brother: there, John is called along with Andrew, after having at their own request had an interview with Jesus; no mention being made of James, whose call, if it then took place, would not likely have been passed over by his own brother.

Thus far nearly all are agreed. But on the *next* question opinion is divided: Was this the same calling as that recorded in ^{<4031>}Luke 5:1-11? Many able critics think so. But the following considerations are to us decisive against it. First here, the four are called separately, in pairs: in Luke, all together. Next, in Luke, after a glorious miracle: here, the one pair are casting their net, the other are mending theirs. Further, here, our Lord had made no public appearance in Galilee, and so had gathered none around Him; He is

walking solitary by the shores of the lake when He accosts the two pairs of fishermen: in Luke, the multitude are pressing upon Him, and hearing the word of God, as He stands by the Lake of Gennesaret — a state of things implying a somewhat advanced stage of His early ministry, and some popular enthusiasm. Regarding these successive callings, see on ^{1871} Luke 5:1.

First Galilean Circuit (^{1872} Matthew 4:23-25).

23. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues — These were houses of local worship. It cannot be proved that they existed before the Babylonish captivity; but as they began to be erected soon after it, probably the idea was suggested by the religious inconveniences to which the captives had been subjected. In our Lord's time, the rule was to have one wherever ten learned men or professed students of the law resided; and they extended to Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and most places of the dispersion. The larger towns had several, and in Jerusalem the number approached five hundred. In point of officers and mode of worship, the Christian congregations are modelled after the synagogue.

and preaching the gospel of the kingdom — proclaiming the glad tidings of the kingdom,

and healing all manner of sickness — every disease.

and all manner of disease among the people — every complaint. The word means any incipient malady causing "softness."

24. And his fame went throughout all Syria — reaching first to the part of it adjacent to Galilee, called Syro-Phoenicia (^{1873} Mark 7:26), and thence extending far and wide.

and they brought unto him all sick people — all that were ailing or unwell. Those

that were taken — for this is a distinct class, not an explanation of the "unwell" class, as our translators understood it.

with divers diseases and torments — that is, acute disorders.

and those which were possessed with devils — that were demonized or possessed with demons.

and those which were lunatic — moon-struck.

and those that had the palsy — paralytics, a word not naturalized when our version was made.

and he healed them — These healings were at once His credentials and illustrations of “the glad tidings” which He proclaimed. After reading this account of our Lord’s first preaching tour, can we wonder at what follows?

25. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis — a region lying to the east of the Jordan, so called as containing ten cities, founded and chiefly inhabited by Greek settlers.

and from Jerusalem, and from beyond Jordan — meaning from Perea. Thus not only was all Palestine upheaved, but all the adjacent regions. But the more immediate object for which this is here mentioned is, to give the reader some idea both of the vast concourse and of the varied complexion of eager attendants upon the great Preacher, to whom the astonishing discourse of the next three chapters was addressed. On the importance which our Lord Himself attached to this first preaching circuit, and the preparation which He made for it, see on ⁴⁰⁶⁵Mark 1:35-39.

CHAPTERS 5-8

SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

That this is the *same Discourse* as that in ⁴¹⁶⁷Luke 6:17-49 — only reported more fully by Matthew, and less fully, as well as with considerable variation, by Luke — is the opinion of many very able critics (of the Greek commentators; of CALVIN, GROTIUS, MALDONATUS — Who stands almost alone among Romish commentators; and of most moderns, as THOLUCK, MEYER, DE WETTE, TISCHENDORF, STIER, WIESELER, ROBINSON). The prevailing opinion of these critics is that Luke's is the original form of the discourse, to which Matthew has added a number of sayings, uttered on other occasions, in order to give at one view the great outlines of our Lord's ethical teaching. But that they are *two distinct discourses* — the one delivered about the close of His first missionary tour, and the other after a second such tour and the solemn choice of the Twelve — is the judgment of others who have given much attention to such matters (of most Romish commentators, including ERASMUS; and among the moderns, of LANGE, GRESWELL, BIRKS, WEBSTER and WILKINSON. The question is left undecided by ALFORD). AUGUSTINE's opinion — that they were both delivered on one occasion, Matthew's on the mountain, and to the disciples; Luke's in the plain, and to the promiscuous multitude — is so clumsy and artificial as hardly to deserve notice. To us the weight of argument appears to lie with those who think them two separate discourses. It seems hard to conceive that Matthew should have put this discourse before his own calling, if it was not uttered till long after, and was spoken in his own hearing as one of the newly chosen Twelve. Add to this, that Matthew introduces his discourse amidst very definite markings of time, which fix it to our Lord's first preaching tour; while that of Luke, which is expressly said to have been delivered immediately after the choice of the Twelve, could not have been spoken till long after the time noted by Matthew. It is hard, too, to see how either discourse can well be regarded as the expansion or contraction of the other. And as it is beyond dispute that our Lord repeated some of His weightier sayings in different forms, and with varied applications, it ought not to surprise us that, after the lapse of perhaps a year — when, having spent a whole night on the hill in prayer to God, and set the Twelve apart, He found Himself surrounded by crowds of people, few of whom probably had heard the Sermon on the Mount, and fewer still remembered much of it — He should go over its principal points again,

with just as much sameness as to show their enduring gravity, but at the same time with that difference which shows His exhaustless fertility as the great Prophet of the Church.

CHAPTER 5

THE BEATITUDES, AND THEIR BEARING UPON THE WORLD.

THE BEATITUDES, AND THEIR BEARING UPON THE WORLD.

1. And seeing the multitudes — those mentioned in ^{<4025>}Matthew 4:25.

he went up into a mountain — one of the dozen mountains which ROBINSON says there are in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee, any one of them answering about equally well to the occasion. So charming is the whole landscape that the descriptions of it, from JOSEPHUS downwards [*Wars of the Jews*, 4.10,8], are apt to be thought a little colored.

and when he was set — had sat or seated Himself.

his disciples came unto him — already a large circle, more or less attracted and subdued by His preaching and miracles, in addition to the smaller band of devoted adherents. Though the latter only answered to the subjects of His kingdom, described in this discourse, there were drawn from time to time into this inner circle souls from the outer one, who, by the power of His matchless word, were constrained to forsake their all for the Lord Jesus.

2. And he opened his mouth — a solemn way of arousing the reader's attention, and preparing him for something weighty. (^{<800>}Job 9:1 ^{<485>}Acts 8:35 10:34).

and taught them, saying — as follows.

3. Blessed — Of the two words which our translators render “blessed,” the one here used points more to what is *inward*, and so might be rendered “happy,” in a lofty sense; while the other denotes rather what comes to us *from without* (as ^{<4254>}Matthew 25:34). But the distinction is not always clearly carried out. One *Hebrew* word expresses both. On these precious Beatitudes, observe that though eight in number, there are here but *seven* distinct features of character. The eighth one — the “persecuted for righteousness’ sake” — denotes merely the possessors of the seven preceding features, on account of which it is that they are persecuted (^{<802>}2 Timothy 3:12). Accordingly, instead of any distinct promise to this class,

we have merely a repetition of the first promise. This has been noticed by several critics, who by the *sevenfold* character thus set forth have rightly observed that a *complete* character is meant to be depicted, and by the *sevenfold* blessedness attached to it, a *perfect* blessedness is intended. Observe, again, that the language in which these Beatitudes are couched is purposely fetched from the Old Testament, to show that the new kingdom is but the old in a new form; while the characters described are but the varied forms of that *spirituality* which was the essence of real religion all along, but had well-nigh disappeared under corrupt teaching. Further, the things here promised, far from being mere arbitrary rewards, will be found in each case to grow out of the characters to which they are attached, and in their completed form are but the appropriate coronation of them. Once more, as “the kingdom of heaven,” which is the first and the last thing here promised, has two stages — a present and a future, an initial and a consummate stage — so the fulfillment of each of these promises has two stages — a present and a future, a partial and a perfect stage.

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit — All familiar with Old Testament phraseology know how frequently God’s true people are styled “the poor” (the “oppressed,” “afflicted,” “miserable”) or “the needy” — or both together (as in ⁹⁰⁷Psalm 40:17 ²³⁴¹⁷Isaiah 41:17). The explanation of this lies in the fact that it is generally “the poor of this world” who are “rich in faith” (³⁰¹⁸James 2:5; compare ⁶¹⁰2 Corinthians 6:10 ⁶¹³Revelation 2:9); while it is often “the ungodly” who “prosper in the world” (⁹⁷³²Psalm 73:12). Accordingly, in ⁶¹⁰Luke 6:20,21, it seems to be this class — the literally “poor” and “hungry” — that are specially addressed. But since God’s people are in so many places styled “the poor” and “the needy,” with no evident reference to their temporal circumstances (as in ⁹⁸⁰Psalm 68:10 ⁹⁹²69:29-33 ^{132:15} ²³⁰⁰Isaiah 61:1 66:2), it is plainly a *frame of mind* which those terms are meant to express. Accordingly, our translators sometimes render such words “the humble” (⁹⁰²Psalm 10:12,17), “the meek” (⁹²²Psalm 22:26), “the lowly” (³⁰⁸Proverbs 3:34), as having no reference to outward circumstances. But here the explanatory words, “in spirit,” fix the sense to “those who in their deepest consciousness realize their entire need” (compare the *Greek* of ²⁰²¹Luke 10:21 ⁶¹³³John 11:33 ^{13:21} ⁴⁰²Acts 20:22 ⁶²¹Romans 12:11 ⁶¹³1 Corinthians 5:3 ³⁰⁸Philippians 3:3). This self-emptying conviction, that “before God we are void of everything,” lies at the foundation of all spiritual excellence, according to the teaching of Scripture. Without it we are inaccessible to the riches of Christ; with it we are in the fitting state for receiving all spiritual supplies (⁶⁸⁷Revelation 3:17,18 ⁴⁰²Matthew 9:12,13).

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven — (See on ^{<1870>}Matthew 3:2). The poor in spirit not only shall have — they already have — the kingdom. The very sense of their poverty is begun riches. While others “walk in a vain show” — “in a shadow,” “an image” — in an unreal world, taking a false view of themselves and all around them — the poor in spirit are rich in the knowledge of their real case. Having courage to look this in the face, and own it guilelessly, they feel strong in the assurance that “unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness” (^{<1870>}Psalms 112:4); and soon it breaks forth as the morning. God wants nothing from us as the price of His saving gifts; we have but to feel our universal destitution, and cast ourselves upon His compassion (^{<1870>}Job 33:27,28 ^{<1870>}1 John 1:9). So the poor in spirit are enriched with the fullness of Christ, which is the kingdom in substance; and when He shall say to them from His great white throne, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you*,” He will invite them merely to the full enjoyment of an already possessed inheritance.

4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted — This “mourning” must not be taken loosely for that feeling which is wrung from men under pressure of the ills of life, nor yet strictly for sorrow on account of committed sins. Evidently it is that entire feeling which the sense of our spiritual poverty begets; and so the second beatitude is but the complement of the first. The one is the intellectual, the other the emotional aspect of the same thing. It is poverty of spirit that says, “I am undone”; and it is the mourning which this causes that makes it break forth in the form of a lamentation — “Woe is me! for I am undone.” Hence this class are termed “mourners *in Zion*,” or, as we might express it, religious mourners, in sharp contrast with all other sorts (^{<2301>}Isaiah 61:1-3 ^{<2301>}66:2). Religion, according to the Bible, is neither a set of intellectual convictions nor a bundle of emotional feelings, but a compound of both, the former giving birth to the latter. Thus closely do the first two beatitudes cohere. The mourners shall be “comforted.” Even now they get beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Sowing in tears, they reap even here in joy. Still, all present comfort, even the best, is partial, interrupted, short-lived. But the days of our mourning shall soon be ended, and then God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Then, in the fullest sense, shall the mourners be “comforted.”

5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth — This promise to the meek is but a repetition of ^{<1871>}Psalms 37:11; only the word which our Evangelist renders “the meek,” after the *Septuagint*, is the same which we have found so often translated “the poor,” showing how closely allied these two features of character are. It is impossible, indeed, that “the poor in spirit” and “the mourners” in Zion should not at the same time be “meek”;

that is to say, persons of a lowly and gentle carriage. How fitting, at least, it is that they should be so, may be seen by the following touching appeal: “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men*: FOR WE OURSELVES WERE ONCE FOOLISH, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures ... But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared ... : according to His mercy He saved us,” etc. (Titus 3:1-7). But He who had no such affecting reasons for manifesting this beautiful carriage, said, nevertheless, of Himself, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29); and the apostle besought one of the churches by “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:1). In what esteem this is held by Him who seeth not as man seeth, we may learn from 1 Peter 3:4, where the true adorning is said to be that of “a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.” Towards men this disposition is the opposite of high-mindedness, and a quarrelsome and revengeful spirit; it “rather takes wrong, and suffers itself to be defrauded” (1 Corinthians 6:7); it “avenges not itself, but rather gives place unto wrath” (Romans 12:19); like the meek One, “when reviled, it reviles not again; when it suffers, it threatens not: but commits itself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:19-22). “The earth” which the meek are to inherit might be rendered “the land” — bringing out the more immediate reference to Canaan as the promised land, the secure possession of which was to the Old Testament saints the evidence and manifestation of God’s favor resting on them, and the ideal of all true and abiding blessedness. Even in the Psalm from which these words are taken the promise to the meek is not held forth as an arbitrary reward, but as having a kind of natural fulfillment. When they delight themselves in the Lord, He gives them the desires of their heart: when they commit their way to Him, He brings it to pass; bringing forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noonday: the little that they have, even when despoiled of their rights, is better than the riches of many wicked (Psalm 37:1-24). All things, in short, are theirs — in the possession of that favor which is life, and of those rights which belong to them as the children of God — whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are theirs (1 Corinthians 3:21,22); and at length, overcoming, they “inherit all things” (Revelation 21:7). Thus are the meek the only rightful occupants of a foot of ground or a crust of bread here, and heirs of all coming things.

6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled — “shall be saturated.” “From this verse,” says

THOLUCK, “the reference to the Old Testament background ceases.” Surprising! On the contrary, none of these beatitudes is more manifestly dug out of the rich mine of the Old Testament. Indeed, how could any one who found in the Old Testament “the poor in spirit,” and “the mourners in Zion,” doubt that he would also find those same characters also *craving* that righteousness which they feel and mourn their want of? But what is the precise meaning of “righteousness” here? Lutheran expositors, and some of our own, seem to have a hankering after that more restricted sense of the term in which it is used with reference to the sinner’s justification before God. (See ²²¹⁶Jeremiah 23:6 ²³⁵³Isaiah 45:24 ⁴¹⁰⁶Romans 4:6 ⁴⁷²¹2 Corinthians 5:21). But, in so comprehensive a saying as this, it is clearly to be taken — as in ⁴¹⁵⁰Matthew 5:10 also — in a much wider sense, as denoting that spiritual and entire conformity to the law of God, under the want of which the saints groan, and the possession of which constitutes the only true saintship. The Old Testament dwells much on this righteousness, as that which alone God regards with approbation (⁴⁹¹⁷Psalms 11:7 23:3 106:3 ⁴¹²⁸Proverbs 12:28 16:31 ²³⁴⁷Isaiah 64:5, etc.). As hunger and thirst are the keenest of our appetites, our Lord, by employing this figure here, plainly means “those whose deepest cravings are after spiritual blessings.” And in the Old Testament we find this craving variously expressed: “Hearken unto Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord” (²⁵¹⁰Isaiah 51:1); “I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord,” exclaimed dying Jacob (⁴¹⁴⁸Genesis 49:18); “My soul,” says the sweet Psalmist, “breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times” (⁴³⁰⁰Psalms 119:20): and in similar breathings does he give vent to his deepest longings in that and other Psalms. Well, our Lord just takes up here — this blessed frame of mind, representing it as — the surest pledge of the coveted supplies, as it is the best preparative, and indeed itself the beginning of them. “They shall be saturated,” He says; they shall not only have what they so highly value and long to possess, but they shall have their fill of it. Not here, however. Even in the Old Testament this was well understood. “Deliver me,” says the Psalmist, in language which, beyond all doubt, stretches beyond the present scene, “from men of the world, which have their portion in this life: as for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (⁴⁹⁷³Psalms 17:13-15). The foregoing beatitudes — the first four — represent the saints rather as *conscious of their need of salvation*, and acting suitably to that character, than as possessed of it. The next three are of a different kind — representing the saints as *having now found salvation*, and conducting themselves accordingly.

7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy — Beautiful is the connection between this and the preceding beatitude. The one has a

natural tendency to beget the other. As for the words, they seem directly fetched from ^{<1825>}Psalm 18:25, “With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful.” Not that our mercifulness comes absolutely first. On the contrary, our Lord Himself expressly teaches us that God’s method is to awaken in us compassion towards our fellow men by His own exercise of it, in so stupendous a way and measure, towards ourselves. In the parable of the unmerciful debtor, the servant to whom his lord forgave ten thousand talents was naturally expected to exercise the small measure of the same compassion required for forgiving his fellow servant’s debt of a hundred pence; and it is only when, instead of this, he relentlessly imprisoned him till he should pay it up, that his lord’s indignation was roused, and he who was designed for a vessel of mercy is treated as a vessel of wrath (^{<1823>}Matthew 18:23-35; and see ^{<1823>}Matthew 5:23,24 6:15 ^{<1823>}James 2:13). “According to the view given in Scripture,” says TRENCH most justly, “the Christian stands in a middle point, between a mercy received and a mercy yet needed.” Sometimes the first is urged upon him as an argument for showing mercy — “forgiving one another, as Christ forgave you” (^{<1823>}Colossians 3:13 ^{<1823>}Ephesians 4:32): sometimes the last — “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy”; “Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven” (^{<1823>}Luke 6:37 ^{<1823>}James 5:9). And thus, while he is ever to look back on the mercy received as the source and motive of the mercy which he shows, he also looks forward to the mercy which he yet needs, and which he is assured that the merciful — according to what BENGEL beautifully calls the *benigna talio* (“the gracious requital”) of the kingdom of God — shall receive, as a new provocation to its abundant exercise. The foretastes and beginnings of this judicial recompense are richly experienced here below: its perfection is reserved for that day when, from His great white throne, the King shall say, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and thirsty, and a stranger, and naked, and sick, and in prison, and ye ministered unto Me.” Yes, thus He acted towards us while on earth, even laying down His life for us; and He will not, He cannot disown, in the merciful, the image of Himself.

8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God — Here, too, we are on Old Testament ground. There the difference between outward and inward purity, and the acceptableness of the latter only in the sight of God, are everywhere taught. Nor is the “vision of God” strange to the Old Testament; and though it was an understood thing that this was not possible in the present life (^{<1823>}Exodus 33:20; and compare ^{<1823>}Job 19:26,27 ^{<1823>}Isaiah 6:5), yet spiritually it was known and felt to be the privilege of the saints even here (^{<1823>}Genesis 5:24 6:9 17:1 48:15 ^{<1823>}Psalm 27:4 36:9 63:2 ^{<1823>}Isaiah 38:3,11, etc.). But oh, with what grand simplicity, brevity, and

power is this great fundamental truth here expressed! And in what striking contrast would such teaching appear to that which was then current, in which exclusive attention was paid to ceremonial purification and external morality! This heart purity begins in a “heart sprinkled from an evil conscience,” or a “conscience purged from dead works” (^{-S802}Hebrews 10:22 9:14; and see ^{-A859}Acts 15:9); and this also is taught in the Old Testament (^{-P831}Psalm 32:1,2; compare ^{-R846}Romans 4:5-8 ^{-I806}Isaiah 6:5-8). The conscience thus purged — the heart thus sprinkled — there is light within wherewith to see God. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with the other” — He with us and we with Him — “and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us” — us who have this fellowship, and who, without such continual cleansing, would soon lose it again — “from all sin” (^{-J806}1 John 1:6,7). “Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him” (^{-J806}1 John 3:6); “He that doeth evil hath not seen God” (^{-J801}3 John 1:11). The inward vision thus clarified, and the whole inner man in sympathy with God, each looks upon the other with complacency and joy, and we are “changed into the same image from glory to glory.” But the full and beatific vision of God is reserved for that time to which the Psalmist stretches his views — “As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (^{-P875}Psalm 17:15). Then shall His servants serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads (^{-R828}Revelation 22:3,4). They shall see Him as He is (^{-J806}1 John 3:2). But, says the apostle, expressing the converse of this beatitude — “Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (^{-S824}Hebrews 12:14).

9. Blessed are the peacemakers — who not only study peace, but diffuse it.

for they shall be called the children of God — shall be called sons of God. Of all these beatitudes this is the only one which could hardly be expected to find its definite ground in the Old Testament; for that most glorious character of God, the likeness of which appears in the peacemakers, had yet to be revealed. His glorious name, indeed — as “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” — had been proclaimed in a very imposing manner (^{-E836}Exodus 34:6), and manifested in action with affecting frequency and variety in the long course of the ancient economy. And we have undeniable evidence that the saints of that economy felt its transforming and ennobling influence on their own character. But it was not till Christ “made peace by the blood of the cross”

that God could manifest Himself as “the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (^{<8130>} Hebrews 13:20) — could reveal Himself as “in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,” and hold Himself forth in the astonishing attitude of beseeching men to be “reconciled to Himself” (^{<4759>} 2 Corinthians 5:19,20). When this reconciliation actually takes place, and one has “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” — even “the peace of God which passeth all understanding” — the peace-receivers become transformed into peace-diffusers. God is thus seen reflected in them; and by the family likeness these peacemakers are recognized as the children of God. In now coming to the eighth, or supplementary beatitude, it will be seen that all that the saints are *in themselves* has been already described, in seven features of character; that number indicating *completeness* of delineation. The last feature, accordingly, is a passive one, representing the treatment that the characters already described may expect from the world. He who shall one day fix the destiny of all men here pronounces certain characters “blessed”; but He ends by forewarning them that the world’s estimation and treatment of them will be the reserve of His.

10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, etc. — How entirely this final beatitude has its ground in the Old Testament, is evident from the concluding words, where the encouragement held out to endure such persecutions consists in its being but a continuation of what was experienced by the Old Testament servants of God. But how, it may be asked, could such beautiful features of character provoke persecution? To this the following answers should suffice: “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.” “The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.” “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” “There is yet one man (said wicked Ahab to good Jehoshaphat) by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil” (^{<4760>} John 3:20 7:7 15:19 ^{<4761>} 2 Chronicles 18:7). But more particularly, the seven characters here described are all in the teeth of the spirit of the world, insomuch that such hearers of this discourse as breathed that spirit must have been startled, and had their whole system of thought and action rudely dashed. Poverty of spirit runs counter to the pride of men’s heart; a pensive disposition, in the view of one’s universal deficiencies before God, is ill relished by the callous, indifferent, laughing, self-satisfied world; a meek and quiet spirit, taking wrong, is regarded as pusillanimous, and rasps against the proud, resentful spirit of the world; that craving after spiritual

blessings rebukes but too unpleasantly the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; so does a merciful spirit the hard-heartedness of the world; purity of heart contrasts painfully with painted hypocrisy; and the peacemaker cannot easily be endured by the contentious, quarrelsome world. Thus does “righteousness” come to be “persecuted.” But blessed are they who, in spite of this, dare to be righteous.

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven — As this was the reward promised to the poor in spirit — the leading one of these seven beatitudes — of course it is the proper portion of such as are persecuted for exemplifying them.

11. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you — or abuse you to your face, in opposition to backbiting. (See ^{415B}Mark 15:32).

and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake — Observe this. He had before said, “for righteousness’ sake.” Here He identifies Himself and His cause with that of righteousness, binding up the cause of righteousness in the world with the reception of Himself. Would Moses, or David, or Isaiah, or Paul have so expressed themselves? Never. Doubtless they suffered for righteousness’ sake. But to have called this “their sake,” would, as every one feels, have been very unbecoming. Whereas He that speaks, being Righteousness incarnate (see ^{402B}Mark 1:24 ^{484A}Acts 3:14 ^{413B}Revelation 3:7), when He so speaks, speaks only like Himself.

12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad — “exult.” In the corresponding passage of Luke (^{412B}Luke 6:22,23), where every indignity trying to flesh and blood is held forth as the probable lot of such as were faithful to Him, the word is even stronger than here: “leap,” as if He would have their inward transport to overpower and absorb the sense of all these affronts and sufferings; nor will anything else do it.

for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you: — that is, “You do but serve yourselves heirs to their character and sufferings, and the reward will be common.”

13-16. We have here the practical application of the foregoing principles to those disciples who sat listening to them, and to their successors in all time. Our Lord, though He began by pronouncing certain *characters* to be blessed — without express reference to any of His hearers — does not close the beatitudes without intimating that such characters were in existence, and that already they were before Him. Accordingly, from characters He comes to *persons* possessing them, saying, “Blessed are ye

when men shall revile you,” etc. (^{<0511>}Matthew 5:11). And now, continuing this mode of direct personal address, He startles those humble, unknown men by pronouncing them the exalted benefactors of their whole species.

Ye are the salt of the earth — to preserve it from corruption, to season its insipidity, to freshen and sweeten it. The value of salt for these purposes is abundantly referred to by classical writers as well as in Scripture; and hence its symbolical significance in the religious offerings as well of those without as of those within the pale of revealed religion. In Scripture, mankind, under the unrestrained workings of their own evil nature, are represented as entirely corrupt. Thus, before the flood (^{<0051>}Genesis 6:11,12); after the flood (^{<0021>}Genesis 8:21); in the days of David (^{<0442>}Psalms 14:2,3); in the days of Isaiah (^{<2005>}Isaiah 1:5,6); and in the days of Paul (^{<0002>}Ephesians 2:1-3; see also ^{<8404>}Job 14:4 15:15,16 ^{<0016>}John 3:6; compared with ^{<0008>}Romans 8:8 ^{<0023>}Titus 3:2,3). The remedy for this, says our Lord here, is the active presence of His disciples among their fellows. The character and principles of Christians, brought into close contact with it, are designed to arrest the festering corruption of humanity and season its insipidity. But how, it may be asked, are Christians to do this office for their fellow men, if their righteousness only exasperate them, and recoil, in every form of persecution, upon themselves? The answer is: That is but the first and partial effect of their Christianity upon the world: though the great proportion would dislike and reject the truth, a small but noble band would receive and hold it fast; and in the struggle that would ensue, one and another even of the opposing party would come over to His ranks, and at length the Gospel would carry all before it.

but if the salt have lost his savor — “become unsavory” or “insipid”; losing its saline or salting property. The meaning is: If that Christianity on which the health of the world depends, does in any age, region, or individual, exist only in *name*, or if it contain not those *saving elements* for want of which the world languishes,

wherewith shall it be salted? — How shall the salting qualities be restored it? (Compare ^{<0050>}Mark 9:50). Whether salt ever does lose its saline property — about which there is a difference of opinion — is a question of no moment here. The point of the case lies in the supposition — that *if it should lose it*, the consequence would be as here described. So with Christians. The question is not: Can, or do, the saints ever totally lose that grace which makes them a blessing to their fellow men? But, What is to be the issue of that Christianity which is found wanting in those elements which can alone stay the corruption and season the tastelessness of an all — pervading carnality? The restoration or non-restoration of *grace*, or true living Christianity, to those who have lost it, has, in our judgment, nothing

at all to do here. The question is not, If a man lose his grace, how shall *that* grace be restored to him? but, Since living Christianity is the only “salt of the earth,” if men lose that, *what else* can supply its place? What follows is the appalling answer to this question.

it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out — a figurative expression of indignant exclusion from the kingdom of God (compare ^{<4182>}Matthew 8:12 22:13 ^{<4165>}John 6:37 9:34).

and to be trodden under foot of men — expressive of contempt and scorn. It is not the mere want of a certain character, but the want of it in those whose *profession* and *appearance* were fitted to beget expectation of finding it.

14. Ye are the light of the world — This being the distinctive title which our Lord appropriates to Himself (^{<4182>}John 8:12 9:5; and see ^{<4104>}John 1:4,9 3:19 12:35,36) — a title expressly said to be unsuitable even to the highest of all the prophets (^{<4108>}John 1:8) — it must be applied here by our Lord to His disciples only as they shine with His light upon the world, in virtue of His Spirit dwelling in them, and the same mind being in them which was also in Christ Jesus. Nor are Christians anywhere else so called. Nay, as if to avoid the august title which the Master has appropriated to Himself, Christians are said to “shine” — not as “lights,” as our translators render it, but — “as *luminaries* in the world” (^{<4145>}Philippians 2:15); and the Baptist is said to have been “the burning and shining” — not “light,” as in our translation, but “*lamp*” of his day (^{<4155>}John 5:35). Let it be observed, too, that while the two figures of salt and sunlight both express the same function of Christians — their blessed influence on their fellow men — they each set this forth under a different aspect. Salt operates *internally*, in the mass with which it comes in contact; the sunlight operates *externally*, irradiating all that it reaches. Hence Christians are warily styled “the salt of the *earth*” — with reference to the masses of mankind with whom they are expected to mix; but “the light of the *world*” — with reference to the vast and variegated surface which feels its fructifying and gladdening radiance. The same distinction is observable in the second pair of those seven parables which our Lord spoke from the Galilean Lake — that of the “mustard seed,” which grew to be a great overshadowing tree, answering to the sunlight which invests the world, and that of the “leaven,” which a woman took and, like the salt, *hid* in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened (^{<4131>}Matthew 13:31-33).

A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid — nor can it be supposed to have been so built except to be seen by many eyes.

15. Neither do men light a candle — or, lamp.

and put it under a bushel — a dry measure.

but on a candlestick — rather, “under the bushel, but on the lampstand.” The article is inserted in both cases to express the familiarity of everyone with those household utensils.

and it giveth light — shineth “unto all that are in the house.”

16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven — As nobody lights a lamp only to cover it up, but places it so conspicuously as to give light to all who need light, so Christians, being the light of the world, instead of hiding their light, are so to hold it forth before men that they may see what a life the disciples of Christ lead, and seeing this, may glorify their Father for so redeeming, transforming, and ennobling earth’s sinful children, and opening to themselves the way to like redemption and transformation.

MATTHEW 5:17-48.

IDENTITY OF THESE PRINCIPLES WITH THOSE OF THE ANCIENT ECONOMY; IN CONTRAST WITH THE REIGNING TRADITIONAL TEACHING.

Exposition of Principles (Matthew 5:17-20).

17. Think not that I am come — that I came.

to destroy the law, or the prophets — that is, “the authority and principles of the Old Testament.” (On the phrase, see Matthew 7:12 22:40 Luke 16:16 Acts 13:15). This general way of taking the phrase is much better than understanding “the law” and “the prophets” separately, and inquiring, as many good critics do, in what sense our Lord could be supposed to meditate the subversion of each. To the various classes of His hearers, who might view such supposed abrogation of the law and the prophets with very different feelings, our Lord’s announcement would, in effect, be such as this — “Ye who tremble at the word of the Lord, *fear* not that I am going to sweep the foundation from under your feet: Ye restless and revolutionary spirits, *hope* not that I am going to head any revolutionary movement: And ye who hypocritically affect great reverence for the law and the prophets, *pretend* not to find anything in My teaching derogatory to God’s living oracles.”

I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill — Not to subvert, abrogate, or annul, but to establish the law and the prophets — to unfold them, to

embody them in living form, and to enshrine them in the reverence, affection, and character of men, am I come.

18. For verily I say unto you — Here, for the first time, does that august expression occur in our Lord’s recorded teaching, with which we have grown so familiar as hardly to reflect on its full import. It is the expression manifestly, of *supreme legislative authority*; and as the subject in connection with which it is uttered is the Moral Law, no higher claim to an authority *strictly divine* could be advanced. For when we observe how jealously Jehovah asserts it as His exclusive prerogative to give law to men (⁴⁸⁸⁰Leviticus 18:1-5 19:37 26:1-4 13-16, etc.), such language as this of our Lord will appear totally unsuitable, and indeed abhorrent, from any creature lips. When the Baptist’s words — “I say unto you” (⁴⁰⁸⁸Matthew 3:9) — are compared with those of his Master here, the difference of the two cases will be at once apparent.

Till heaven and earth pass — Though even the Old Testament announces the ultimate “perdition of the heavens and the earth,” in contrast with the immutability of Jehovah (⁴⁹⁴²Psalm 102:24-27), the prevalent representation of the heavens and the earth in Scripture, when employed as a popular figure, is that of their *stability* (⁴⁸⁸⁸Psalm 119:89-91 ²⁰⁰⁴Ecclesiastes 1:4 ⁴⁶³⁵Jeremiah 33:25,26). It is the enduring stability, then, of the great truths and principles, moral and spiritual, of the Old Testament revelation which our Lord thus expresses.

one jot — the smallest of the *Hebrew* letters.

one tittle — one of those little strokes by which alone some of the *Hebrew* letters are distinguished from others like them.

shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled — The meaning is that “not so much as the smallest loss of authority or vitality shall ever come over the law.” The expression, “till all be fulfilled,” is much the same in meaning as “it *shall* be had in undiminished and enduring honor, from its greatest to its least requirements.” Again, this general way of viewing our Lord’s words here seems far preferable to that *doctrinal* understanding of them which would require us to determine the different kinds of “fulfillment” which the *moral* and the *ceremonial* parts of it were to have.

19. Whosoever therefore shall break — rather, “dissolve,” “annul,” or make “invalid.”

one of these least commandments — an expression equivalent to “one of the least of these commandments.”

and shall teach men so — referring to the Pharisees and their teaching, as is plain from ^{<165>}Matthew 5:20, but of course embracing all similar schools and teaching in the Christian Church.

he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven — As the thing spoken of is not the practical breaking, or disobeying, of the law, but annulling or enervating its obligation by a vicious system of interpretation, and teaching others to do the same; so the thing threatened is not exclusion from heaven, and still less the lowest place in it, but a degraded and contemptuous position in the present stage of the kingdom of God. In other words, they shall be reduced by the retributive providence that overtakes them, to the same condition of dishonor to which, by their system and their teaching, they have brought down those eternal principles of God's law.

but whosoever shall do and teach them — whose principles and teaching go to exalt the authority and honor of God's law, in its lowest as well as highest requirements.

the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven — shall, by that providence which watches over the honor of God's moral administration, be raised to the same position of authority and honor to which they exalt the law.

20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees — The superiority to the Pharisaic righteousness here required is plainly in *kind*, not *degree*; for all Scripture teaches that entrance into God's kingdom, whether in its present or future stage, depends, not on the degree of our excellence in anything, but solely on our having the character itself which God demands. Our righteousness, then — if it is to contrast with the *outward* and *formal* righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees — must be *inward*, *vital*, *spiritual*. Some, indeed, of the scribes and Pharisees themselves might have the very righteousness here demanded; but our Lord is speaking, not of persons, but of the *system* they represented and taught.

ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven — If this refer, as in ^{<169>}Matthew 5:19, rather to the earthly stage of this kingdom, the meaning is that without a righteousness exceeding that of the Pharisees, we cannot be members of it at all, save in name. This was no new doctrine (^{<173>}Romans 2:28,29 9:6 ^{<178>}Philippians 3:3). But our Lord's teaching here stretches beyond the present scene, to that everlasting stage of the kingdom, where without "purity of heart" none "shall see God."

*The Spirituality of the True Righteousness in Contrast with That of
the Scribes and Pharisees, Illustrated from the Sixth
Commandment. (^{<102>}Matthew 5:21-26).*

21. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time — or, as in the *Margin*, “to them of old time.” Which of these translations is the right one has been much controverted. Either of them is grammatically defensible, though the latter — “to the ancients” — is more consistent with New Testament usage (see the *Greek* of ^{<8102>}Romans 9:12,26 ^{<1011>}Revelation 6:11 9:4); and most critics decide in favor of it. But it is not a question of *Greek* only. Nearly all who would translate “to the ancients” take the speaker of the words quoted to be *Moses in the law*; “the ancients” to be *the people* to whom Moses gave the law; and the intention of our Lord here to be to contrast His own teaching, more or less, with that of Moses; either as opposed to it — as some go the length of affirming — or at least as modifying, enlarging, elevating it. But who can reasonably imagine such a thing, just after the most solemn and emphatic proclamation of the perpetuity of the law, and the honor and glory in which it was to be held under the new economy? To us it seems as plain as possible that our Lord’s one object is to contrast the traditional perversions of the law with the true sense of it as expounded by Himself. A few of those who assent to this still think that “to the ancients” is the only legitimate translation of the words; understanding that our Lord is reporting what had been said to the ancients, not by Moses, but by the perverters of his law. We do not object to this; but we incline to think (with BEZA, and after him with FRITZSCHE, OLSHAUSEN, STIER, and BLOOMFIELD) that “by the ancients” must have been what our Lord meant here, referring to the corrupt teachers rather than the perverted people.

Thou shall not kill: — that is, This being all that the law requires, whosoever has imbrued his hands in his brother’s blood, but he only, is guilty of a breach of this commandment.

and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment — liable to the judgment; that is, of the sentence of those inferior courts of judicature which were established in all the principal towns, in compliance with ^{<5106>}Deuteronomy 16:16. Thus was this commandment reduced, from a holy law of the heart-searching God, to a mere criminal statute, taking cognizance only of outward actions, such as that which we read in ^{<1212>}Exodus 21:12 ^{<1347>}Leviticus 24:17.

22. But I say unto you — Mark the authoritative tone in which — as Himself the Lawgiver and Judge — Christ now gives the true sense, and explains the deep reach, of the commandment.

That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca! shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool! shall be in danger of hell-fire — It is unreasonable to deny, as

ALEXANDER does, that three degrees of punishment are here meant to be expressed, and to say that it is but a threefold expression of one and the same thing. But Romish expositors greatly err in taking the first two — “the judgment” and “the council” — to refer to degrees of *temporal* punishment with which lesser sins were to be visited under the Gospel, and only the last — “hell-fire” — to refer to the future life. All three clearly refer to *divine retribution*, and that alone, for breaches of this commandment; though this is expressed by an *allusion* to Jewish tribunals. The “judgment,” as already explained, was the lowest of these; the “council,” or “Sanhedrim,” which sat at Jerusalem — was the highest; while the word used for “hell-fire” contains an allusion to the “valley of the son of Hinnom” (⁽⁴⁰⁸¹⁶⁾Joshua 18:16). In this valley the Jews, when steeped in idolatry, went the length of burning their children to Molech “on the high places of Tophet” — in consequence of which good Josiah defiled it, to prevent the repetition of such abominations (⁽⁴²²³⁰⁾2 Kings 23:10); and from that time forward, if we may believe the Jewish writers, a fire was kept burning in it to consume the carrion and all kinds of impurities that collected about the capital. Certain it is, that while the final punishment of the wicked is described in the Old Testament by allusions to this valley of Tophet or Hinnom (⁽⁴²³⁸³⁾Isaiah 30:33 66:24), our Lord Himself describes the same by merely quoting these terrific descriptions of the evangelical prophet (⁽⁴⁴⁰⁸³⁾Mark 9:43-48). What precise degrees of unholy feeling towards our brothers are indicated by the words “Raca” and “fool” it would be as useless as it is vain to inquire. Every age and every country has its modes of expressing such things; and no doubt our Lord seized on the then current phraseology of unholy disrespect and contempt, merely to express and condemn the different degrees of such feeling when brought out in words, as He had immediately before condemned the feeling itself. In fact, so little are we to make of mere *words*, apart from the feeling which they express, that as *anger* is expressly said to have been borne by our Lord towards His enemies though mixed with “grief for the hardness of their hearts” (⁽⁴⁴⁰⁸⁵⁾Mark 3:5), and as the apostle teaches us that there is an anger which is not sinful (⁽⁴⁴⁰⁸³⁾Ephesians 4:26); so in the Epistle of James (⁽⁴⁹²⁰³⁾James 2:20) we find the words, “O vain (or, empty) man”; and our Lord Himself applies the very word “fools” twice in one breath to the blind guides of the people (⁽⁴¹²³⁷⁾Matthew 23:17,19) — although, in both cases, it is to *false reasoners* rather than persons that such words are applied. The spirit, then, of the whole statement may be thus given: “For ages ye have been taught that the sixth commandment, for example, is broken only by the murderer,

to pass sentence upon whom is the proper business of the recognized tribunals. But I say unto you that it is broken even by causeless anger, which is but hatred in the bud, as hatred is incipient murder (⁴¹⁸⁵1 John 3:15); and if by the feelings, much more by those *words* in which all ill feeling, from the slightest to the most envenomed, are wont to be cast upon a brother: and just as there are gradations in human courts of judicature, and in the sentences which they pronounce according to the degrees of criminality, so will the judicial treatment of all the breakers of this commandment at the divine tribunal be according to their real criminality before the heart-searching Judge.” Oh, what holy teaching is this!

23. Therefore — to apply the foregoing, and show its paramount importance.

if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught — of just complaint “against thee.”

24. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother — The meaning evidently is — not, “dismiss from thine own breast all ill feeling, “but” get thy brother to dismiss from his mind all grudge against thee.”

and then come and offer thy gift — “The picture,” says THOLUCK,” is drawn from life. It transports us to the moment when the Israelite, having brought his sacrifice to the court of the Israelites, awaited the instant when the priest would approach to receive it at his hands. He waits with his gift at the rails which separate the place where he stands from the court of the priests, into which his offering will presently be taken, there to be slain by the priest, and by him presented upon the altar of sacrifice.” It is at this solemn moment, when about to cast himself upon divine mercy, and seek in his offering a seal of divine forgiveness, that the offerer is supposed, all at once, to remember that some brother has a just cause of complaint against him through breach of this commandment in one or other of the ways just indicated. What then? Is he to say, As soon as I have offered this gift I will go straight to my brother, and make it up with him? Nay; but before another step is taken — even before the offering is presented — this reconciliation is to be sought, though the gift have to be left unoffered before the altar. The converse of the truth here taught is very strikingly expressed in ⁴¹¹²⁵Mark 11:25,26: “And *when ye stand praying* (in the very act), forgive, if ye have aught (of just complaint) against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you,” etc. Hence the beautiful practice of the early Church, to see that all differences amongst brethren and sisters in Christ were made up, in the

spirit of love, before going to the Holy Communion; and the Church of England has a rubrical direction to this effect in her Communion service. Certainly, if this be the highest act of worship on earth, such reconciliation though obligatory on all other occasions of worship — must be peculiarly so then.

25. Agree with thine adversary — thine opponent in a matter cognizable by law.

quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him — “to the magistrate,” as in  Luke 12:58.

lest at any time — here, rather, “lest at all,” or simply “lest.”

the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge — having pronounced thee in the wrong.

deliver thee to the officer — the official whose business it is to see the sentence carried into effect.

26. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, fill thou hast paid the uttermost farthing — a fractional Roman coin, worth about half a cent. That our Lord meant here merely to give a piece of prudential advice to his hearers, to keep out of the hands of the law and its officials by settling all disputes with one another privately, is not for a moment to be supposed, though there are critics of a school low enough to suggest this. The concluding words — “Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out,” etc. — manifestly show that though the *language* is drawn from human disputes and legal procedure, He is dealing with a higher than any human quarrel, a higher than any human tribunal, a higher than any human and temporal sentence. In this view of the words — in which nearly all critics worthy of the name agree — the spirit of them may be thus expressed: “In expounding the sixth commandment, I have spoken of offenses between man and man; reminding you that the offender has another party to deal with besides him whom he has wronged on earth, and assuring you that all worship offered to the Searcher of hearts by one who knows that a brother has just cause of complaint against him, and yet takes no steps to remove it, is vain: But I cannot pass from this subject without reminding you of One whose cause of complaint against you is far more deadly than any that man can have against man: and since with that Adversary you are already on the way to judgment, it will be your wisdom to make up the quarrel without delay, lest sentence of condemnation be pronounced upon you, and then will execution straightway follow, from the effects of which you shall never escape as long as any remnant of the offense remains unexpiated.” It will be observed that as the *principle* on

which we are to “agree” with this “Adversary” is not here specified, and the precise *nature* of the retribution that is to light upon the despisers of this warning is not to be gathered from the mere use of the word “prison”; so, the *remedilessness* of the punishment is not in so many words expressed, and still less is its actual *cessation* taught. The language on all these points is designedly general; but it may safely be said that the *unending duration* of future punishment — elsewhere so clearly and awfully expressed by our Lord Himself, as in ^{<4169>}Matthew 5:29,30, and ^{<4196>}Mark 9:43,48 — is the only doctrine with which His language here quite naturally and fully accords. (Compare ^{<4183>}Matthew 18:30,34).

The Same Subject Illustrated from the Seventh Commandment (^{<4167>}Matthew 5:27-32).

27. Ye have heard that it was said — The words “by,” or “to them of old time,” in this verse are insufficiently supported, and probably were not in the original text.

Thou shalt not commit adultery — Interpreting this seventh, as they did the sixth commandment, the traditional perverters of the law restricted the breach of it to *acts* of criminal intercourse between, or with, married persons exclusively. Our Lord now dissipates such delusions.

28. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her — with the intent to do so, as the same expression is used in ^{<4161>}Matthew 6:1; or, with the full consent of his will, to feed thereby his unholy desires.

hath committed adultery with her already in his heart — We are not to suppose, from the word here used — “adultery” — that our Lord means to restrict the breach of this commandment to married persons, or to criminal intercourse with such. The expressions, “*whosoever* looketh,” and “looketh upon a *woman*,” seem clearly to extend the range of this commandment to all forms of impurity, and the counsels which follow — as they most certainly were intended for all, whether married or unmarried — seem to confirm this. As in dealing with the sixth commandment our Lord first expounds it, and then in the four following verses applies His exposition (^{<4161>}Matthew 5:21-25), so here He first expounds the seventh commandment, and then in the four following verses applies His exposition (^{<4163>}Matthew 5:28-32).

29. And if thy right eye — the readier and the dearer of the two.

offend thee — be a “trap spring,” or as in the New Testament, be “an occasion of stumbling” to thee.

pluck it out and cast it from thee — implying a certain indignant promptitude, heedless of whatever cost to feeling the act may involve. Of course, it is not *the eye simply* of which our Lord speaks — as if execution were to be done upon the bodily organ — though there have been fanatical ascetics who have both advocated and practiced this, showing a very low apprehension of spiritual things — but *the offending eye*, or the eye considered as the occasion of sin; and consequently, only the *sinful exercise* of the organ which is meant. For as one might put out his eyes without in the least quenching the lust to which they ministered, so, “if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light,” and, when directed by a holy mind, becomes an “instrument of righteousness unto God.” At the same time, just as by cutting off a hand, or plucking out an eye, the *power* of acting and of seeing would be destroyed, our Lord certainly means that we are to *strike at the root* of such unholy dispositions, as well as cut off the occasions which tend to stimulate them.

for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell — He who despises the warning to cast from him, with indignant promptitude, an offending member, will find his whole body “cast,” with a retributive promptitude of indignation, “into hell.” Sharp language, this, from the lips of Love incarnate!

30. And if thy right hand — the organ of *action*, to which the eye excites.

offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable, etc. — See on ⁴¹⁸²Matthew 5:29. The repetition, in identical terms, of such stern truths and awful lessons seems characteristic of our Lord’s manner of teaching. Compare ⁴¹⁸³Mark 9:43-48.

31. It hath been said — This shortened form was perhaps intentional, to mark a transition from the commandments of the Decalogue to a civil enactment on the subject of divorce, quoted from ⁴¹⁸⁴Deuteronomy 24:1. The law of divorce — according to its strictness or laxity — has so intimate a bearing upon purity in the married life, that nothing could be more natural than to pass from the seventh commandment to the loose views on that subject then current.

Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement — a legal check upon reckless and tyrannical separation. The one legitimate ground of divorce allowed by the enactment just quoted was “some uncleanness” — in other words, conjugal infidelity. But while one school of interpreters (that of Shammai) explained this quite correctly, as prohibiting divorce in every case save that of adultery, another school (that of HILLEL) stretched the expression so far as to include everything in the

wife offensive or disagreeable to the husband — a view of the law too well fitted to minister to caprice and depraved inclination not to find extensive favor. And, indeed, to this day the Jews allow divorces on the most frivolous pretexts. It was to meet this that our Lord uttered what follows:

32. But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery — that is, drives her into it in case she marries again.

and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced — for anything short of conjugal infidelity.

committeth adultery — for if the commandment is broken by the one party, it must be by the other also. But see on ^{<D901>}Matthew 19:4-9. Whether the innocent party, after a just divorce, may lawfully marry again, is not treated of here. The Church of Rome says, No; but the Greek and Protestant Churches allow it.

Same Subject Illustrated from the Third Commandment
(^{<A153>}Matthew 5:33-37).

33. Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself — These are not the precise words of ^{<Q210>}Exodus 20:7; but they express all that it was currently understood to condemn, namely, false swearing (^{<B912>}Leviticus 19:12, etc.). This is plain from what follows.

But I say unto you, Swear not at all — That this was meant to condemn swearing of every kind and on every occasion — as the Society of Friends and some other ultra-moralists allege — is not for a moment to be thought. For even Jehovah is said once and again to have sworn by Himself; and our Lord certainly answered upon oath to a question put to Him by the high priest; and the apostle several times, and in the most solemn language, takes God to witness that he spoke and wrote the truth; and it is inconceivable that our Lord should here have quoted the precept about not forswearing ourselves, but performing to the Lord our oaths, only to give a precept of His own directly in the teeth of it. Evidently, it is swearing in common intercourse and on frivolous occasions that is here meant. Frivolous oaths were indeed severely condemned in the teaching of the times. But so narrow was the circle of them that a man might swear, says LIGHTFOOT, a hundred thousand times and yet not be guilty of vain swearing. Hardly anything was regarded as an oath if only the name of God were not in it; just as among ourselves, as TRENCH well remarks, a certain lingering reverence for the name of God leads to cutting off portions of His name, or uttering sounds nearly resembling it, or substituting the name of some

heathen deity, in profane exclamations or asseverations. Against all this our Lord now speaks decisively; teaching His audience that every oath carries an appeal to God, whether named or not.

neither by heaven; for it is God's throne — (quoting ^{<266E>}Isaiah 66:1);

35. Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool — (quoting ^{<266E>}Isaiah 66:1);

neither by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great King — (quoting ^{<498E>}Psalms 48:2).

36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black — In the other oaths specified, God's name was profaned quite as really as if His name had been uttered, because it was instantly *suggested* by the mention of His "throne," His "footstool," His "city." But in swearing by our own *head* and the like, the objection lies in their being "beyond our control," and therefore profanely assumed to have a stability which they have not.

37. But let your communication — "your word," in ordinary intercourse, be,

Yea, yea; Nay, nay — Let a simple *Yes* and *No* suffice in affirming the truth or the untruth of anything. (See ^{<348E>}James 5:12 ^{<401E>}2 Corinthians 1:17,18).

for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil — not "of the evil one"; though an equally correct rendering of the words, and one which some expositors prefer. It is true that all evil in our world is originally of the devil, that it forms a kingdom at the head of which he sits, and that, in every manifestation of it he has an active part. But any reference to this here seems unnatural, and the allusion to this passage in the Epistle of James (^{<348E>}James 5:12) seems to show that this is not the sense of it: "Let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; *lest ye fall into condemnation.*" The untruthfulness of our corrupt nature shows itself not only in the tendency to deviate from the strict truth, but in the disposition to suspect others of doing the same; and as this is not diminished, but rather aggravated, by the habit of confirming what we say by an oath, we thus run the risk of having all reverence for God's holy name, and even for strict truth, destroyed in our hearts, and so "fall into condemnation." The practice of going beyond Yes and No in affirmations and denials — as if our word for it were not enough, and we expected others to question it — springs from that vicious root of untruthfulness which is only aggravated by the very effort to clear ourselves of the suspicion of it. And just as swearing to the truth of what we say begets the disposition it is designed to remove, so the love and reign

of truth in the breasts of Christ's disciples reveals itself so plainly even to those who themselves cannot be trusted, that their simple Yes and No come soon to be more relied on than the most solemn asseverations of others. Thus does the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, like a tree cast into the bitter waters of human corruption, heal and sweeten them.

Same Subject — Retaliation (^{<4158>}Matthew 5:38-42).

We have here the converse of the preceding lessons. They were *negative*: these are *positive*.

38. Ye have heard that it hath been said — (^{<4023>}Exodus 21:23-25 ^{<4349>}Leviticus 24:19,20 ^{<4521>}Deuteronomy 19:21).

An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth — that is, whatever penalty was regarded as a proper equivalent for these. This law of retribution — designed to take vengeance out of the hands of private persons, and commit it to the magistrate — was abused in the opposite way to the commandments of the Decalogue. While they were reduced to the level of civil enactments, this judicial regulation was held to be a warrant for taking redress into their own hands, contrary to the injunctions of the Old Testament itself (^{<4112>}Proverbs 20:22 24:29).

39. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right check, turn to him the other also — Our Lord's own meek, yet dignified bearing, when smitten rudely on the cheek (^{<4882>}John 18:22,23), and *not* literally presenting the other, is the best comment on these words. It is the preparedness, after one indignity, not to invite but to submit meekly to another, without retaliation, which this strong language is meant to convey.

40. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take way thy coat — the inner garment; in pledge for a debt (^{<4226>}Exodus 22:26,27).

let him have thy cloak also — the outer and more costly garment. This overcoat was not allowed to be retained over night as a pledge from the poor because they used it for a bed covering.

41. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain — an allusion, probably, to the practice of the Romans and some Eastern nations, who, when government despatches had to be forwarded, obliged the people not only to furnish horses and carriage.s, but to give personal attendance, often at great inconvenience, when required. But the thing here demanded is a readiness to submit to unreasonable demands of whatever kind, rather than raise quarrels, with all the evils resulting from them. What follows is a beautiful extension of this precept.

42. Give to him that asketh thee — The sense of *unreasonable* asking is here implied (compare ^{<4163>}Luke 6:30).

and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away — Though the word signifies classically “to have money lent to one on security,” or “with interest,” yet as this was not the original sense of the word, and as usury was forbidden among the Jews (^{<4225>}Exodus 22:25, etc.), it is doubtless simple borrowing which our Lord here means, as indeed the whole strain of the exhortation implies. This shows that such counsels as “Owe no man anything” (^{<5138>}Romans 13:8), are not to be taken absolutely; else the Scripture commendations of the righteous for “lending” to his necessitous brother (^{<4536>}Psalms 37:36 112:5 ^{<4167>}Luke 6:37) would have no application.

turn not thou away — a graphic expression of unfeeling refusal to relieve a brother in extremity.

Same Subject — Love to Enemies (^{<4168>}Matthew 5:43-48).

43. Ye have heard that it hath been said — (^{<4695>}Leviticus 19:18).

Thou shalt love thy neighbor — To this the corrupt teachers added,

and hate thine enemy — as if the one were a legitimate inference from the other, instead of being a detestable gloss, as BENGEL indignantly calls it. LIGHTFOOT quotes some of the cursed maxims inculcated by those traditionists regarding the proper treatment of all Gentiles. No wonder that the Romans charged the Jews with hatred of the human race.

44. But I say unto you, Love your enemies — The word here used denotes *moral* love, as distinguished from the other word, which expresses *personal* affection. Usually, the former denotes “complacency in the character” of the person loved; but here it denotes the benignant, compassionate outgoings of desire for another’s good.

bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you — The best commentary on these matchless counsels is the bright example of Him who gave them. (See ^{<4012>}1 Peter 2:21-24; and compare ^{<5121>}Romans 12:20,21 ^{<4012>}1 Corinthians 4:12 ^{<4189>}1 Peter 3:9). But though such precepts were never before expressed — perhaps not even conceived — with such breadth, precision, and sharpness as here, our Lord is here only the incomparable Interpreter of the law in force from the beginning; and this is the only satisfactory view of the entire strain of this discourse.

45. That ye may be the children — sons.

of your Father which is in heaven — The meaning is, “that ye may show yourselves to be such by *resembling Him*” (compare ^{<40B>}Matthew 5:9 ^{<40E>}Ephesians 5:1).

for he maketh his sun — “your Father’s sun.” Well might BENGEL exclaim, “Magnificent appellation!”

to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust — rather, (without the article) “on evil and good, and on just and unjust.” When we find God’s own procedure held up for imitation in the law, and much more in the prophets (^{<40B>}Leviticus 19:2 20:26; and compare ^{<40E>}1 Peter 1:15,16), we may see that the principle of this surprising verse was nothing new: but the form of it certainly is that of One who spake as never man spake.

46. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? — The publicans, as collectors of taxes due to the Roman government, were ever on this account obnoxious to the Jews, who sat uneasy under a foreign yoke, and disliked whatever brought this unpleasantly before them. But the extortion practiced by this class made them hateful to the community, who in their current speech ranked them with “harlots.” Nor does our Lord scruple to speak of them as others did, which we may be sure He never would have done if it had been calumnious. The meaning, then, is, “In loving those who love you, there is no evidence of superior principle; the worst of men will do this: even a publican will go that length.”

47. And if ye salute your brethren only — of the same nation and religion with yourselves.

what do ye more *than others*? — what do ye uncommon or extraordinary? that is, wherein do ye *excel*?

do not even the publicans so? — The true reading here appears to be, “Do not even the heathens the same?” Compare ^{<40E>}Matthew 18:17, where the excommunicated person is said to be “as an heathen man and a publican.”

48. Be ye therefore — rather, “Ye shall therefore be,” or “Ye are therefore to be,” as My disciples and in My kingdom.

perfect — or complete. Manifestly, our Lord here speaks, not of *degrees* of excellence, but of the *kind* of excellence which was to distinguish His disciples and characterize His kingdom. When therefore He adds,

even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect — He refers to that fullorbed glorious completeness which is in the great Divine Model, “their Father which is in heaven.”

CHAPTER 6

SERMON ON THE MOUNT — *CONTINUED.*

~~106~~MATTHEW 6:1-18.

FURTHER ILLUSTRATION OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM — ITS UNOSTENTATIOUSNESS.

General Caution against Ostentation in Religious Duties (~~106~~Matthew 6:1).

1. Take heed that ye do not your alms — But the true reading seems clearly to be “your righteousness.” The external authority for both readings is pretty nearly equal; but internal evidence is decidedly in favor of “righteousness.” The subject of the second verse being “almsgiving” that word — so like the other in *Greek* — might easily be substituted for it by the copyist: whereas the opposite would not be so likely. But it is still more in favor of “righteousness,” that if we so read the first verse, it then becomes a general heading for this whole section of the discourse, inculcating unostentatiousness in *all* deeds of righteousness — Almsgiving, Prayer, and Fasting being, in that case, but selected examples of this righteousness; whereas, if we read, “Do not your *alms*,” etc., this first verse will have no reference but to that one point. By “righteousness,” in this case, we are to understand that same righteousness of the kingdom of heaven, whose leading features — in opposition to traditional perversions of it — it is the great object of this discourse to open up: that righteousness of which the Lord says, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (~~105~~Matthew 5:20). To “do” this righteousness, was an old and well-understood expression. Thus, “Blessed is he that doeth righteousness at all times” (~~94~~Psalm 106:3). It refers to the *actings* of righteousness in the life — the outgoings of the gracious nature — of which our Lord afterwards said to His disciples, “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples” (~~105~~John 15:8).

before men, to be seen of them — with the view or intention of being beheld of them. See the same expression in ~~105~~Matthew 5:28. True, He had required them to let their light so shine before men that they might see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven (~~105~~Matthew 5:16). But this is quite consistent with not making a display of our righteousness

for self-glorification. In fact, the doing of the former necessarily implies our *not* doing the latter.

otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven — When all duty is done to God — as primarily enjoining and finally judging of it — He will take care that it be duly recognized; but when done purely for ostentation, God cannot own it, nor is His judgment of it even thought of — God accepts only what is done to Himself. So much for the general principle. Now follow three illustrations of it.

Almsgiving (^{<4012>}Matthew 6:2-4).

2. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee — The expression is to be taken figuratively for *blazoning* it. Hence our expression to “trumpet.”

as the hypocrites do — This word — of such frequent occurrence in Scripture, signifying primarily “one who acts a part” — denotes one who either *pretends* to be what he is not (as here), or *dissembles* what he really is (as in ^{<4011>}Luke 12:1,2).

in the synagogues and in the streets — the places of religious and secular resort.

that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you — In such august expressions, it is the Lawgiver and Judge Himself that we hear speaking to us.

They have their reward — All they wanted was human applause, and they have it — and with it, all they will ever get.

3. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth — So far from making a display of it, dwell not on it even in thine own thoughts, lest it minister to spiritual pride.

4. That thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly — The word “Himself” appears to be an unauthorized addition to the text, which the sense no doubt suggested. (See ^{<5025>}1 Timothy 5:25 ^{<8116>}Romans 2:16 ^{<4015>}1 Corinthians 4:5).

Prayer (^{<4015>}Matthew 6:5,6).

5. And when thou prayest, thou shalt — or, preferably, “when ye pray ye shall.”

not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets — (See on ^{<small>400E}Matthew 6:2).

that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have, etc. — The *standing* posture in prayer was the ancient practice, alike in the Jewish and in the early Christian Church. But of course this conspicuous posture opened the way for the ostentatious.

6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet — a place of retirement.

and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly — Of course, it is not the simple publicity of prayer which is here condemned. It may be offered in any circumstances, however open, if not prompted by the spirit of ostentation, but dictated by the great ends of prayer itself. It is the *retiring* character of true prayer which is here taught.

Supplementary Directions and Model Prayer (^{<small>400E}Matthew 6:7-15).

7. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions — “Babble not” would be a better rendering, both for the form of the word — which in both languages is intended to imitate the sound — and for the sense, which expresses not so much the repetition of the same words as a senseless multiplication of them; as appears from what follows.

as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking — This method of heathen devotion is still observed by Hindu and Mohammedan devotees. With the Jews, says LIGHTFOOT, it was a maxim, that “Every one who multiplies prayer is heard.” In the Church of Rome, not only is it carried to a shameless extent, but, as THOLUCK justly observes, the very prayer which our Lord gave as an antidote to vain repetitions is the most abused to this superstitious end; the number of times it is repeated counting for so much more merit. Is not this just that characteristic feature of heathen devotion which our Lord here condemns? But praying much, and using at times the same words, is *not* here condemned, and has the example of our Lord Himself in its favor.

8. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him — and so needs not to be *informed* of our wants, any more than to be *roused* to attend to them by our incessant speaking. What a view of God is here given, in sharp contrast with the gods of the heathen! But let it be carefully noted that it is not as *the general Father of mankind* that our Lord says, “Your Father” knoweth

what ye need before ye ask it; for it is not men, as such, that He is addressing in this discourse, but His own disciples — the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, hungry and thirsty souls, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, who allow themselves to have all manner of evil said against them for the Son of man's sake — in short, the new-born children of God, who, making their Father's interests their own, are here assured that their Father, in return, makes their interests His, and needs neither to be told nor to be reminded of their wants. Yet He will have His children pray to Him, and links all His promised supplies to their petitions for them; thus encouraging us to draw near and keep near to Him, to talk and walk with Him, to open our every case to Him, and assure ourselves that thus asking we shall receive — thus seeking we shall find — thus knocking it shall be opened to us.

9. After this manner — more simply “Thus.”

therefore pray ye — The “ye” is emphatic here, in contrast with the heathen prayers. That this matchless prayer was given not only as a *model*, but as a *form*, might be concluded from its very nature. Did it consist only of hints or directions for prayer, it could only be used as a directory; but seeing it is an actual prayer — designed, indeed, to show how much real prayer could be compressed into the fewest words, but still, as a prayer, only the more incomparable for that — it is strange that there should be a doubt whether we ought to pray that very prayer. Surely the words with which it is introduced, in the second utterance and varied form of it which we have in ^{<1169>}Luke 11:2, ought to set this at rest: “When ye pray, *say*, Our Father.” Nevertheless, since the second form of it varies considerably from the first, and since no example of its actual use, or express quotation of its phraseology, occurs in the sequel of the New Testament, we are to guard against a superstitious use of it. How early this began to appear in the church services, and to what extent it was afterwards carried, is known to every one versed in Church History. Nor has the spirit which bred this abuse quite departed from some branches of the Protestant Church, though the opposite and equally condemnable extreme is to be found in other branches of it.

Model Prayer (^{<1169>}Matthew 6:9-13).

According to the Latin fathers and the Lutheran Church, the petitions of the Lord's Prayer are *seven* in number; according to the Greek fathers, the Reformed Church and the Westminster divines, they are only *six*; the two last being regarded — we think, less correctly — as one. The first three petitions have to do exclusively with God: “*Thy* name be hallowed” — “*Thy* kingdom come” — “*Thy* will be done.” And they occur in a

descending scale — from Himself down to the manifestation of Himself in His kingdom; and from His kingdom to the entire subjection of its subjects, or the complete doing of His will. The remaining four petitions have to do with OURSELVES: “Give *us* our daily bread” — “Forgive *us* our debts” — “Lead *us* not into temptation” — “Deliver *us* from evil.” But these latter petitions occur in an *ascending* scale — from the bodily wants of every day up to our final deliverance from all evil.

Invocation:

Our Father which art in heaven — In the former clause we express His nearness to us; in the latter, His distance from us. (See ^{<2012>}Ecclesiastes 5:2 ^{<3016>}Isaiah 66:1). Holy, loving familiarity suggests the one; awful reverence the other. In calling Him “Father” we express a relationship we have all known and felt surrounding us even from our infancy; but in calling Him our Father “who art in heaven,” we contrast Him with the fathers we all have here below, and so raise our souls to that “heaven” where He dwells, and that Majesty and Glory which are there as in their proper home. These first words of the Lord’s Prayer — this invocation with which it opens — what a brightness and warmth does it throw over the whole prayer, and into what a serene region does it introduce the praying believer, the child of God, as he thus approaches Him! It is true that the paternal relationship of God to His people is by no means strange to the Old Testament. (See ^{<1516>}Deuteronomy 32:6 ^{<1913>}Psalms 103:13 ^{<2016>}Isaiah 63:16 ^{<2018>}Jeremiah 3:4,19 ^{<3016>}Malachi 1:6 2:10). But these are only glimpses — the “back parts” (^{<1233>}Exodus 33:23), if we may so say, in comparison with the “open face” of our Father revealed in Jesus. (See on ^{<4018>}2 Corinthians 3:18). Nor is it too much to say, that the view which our Lord gives, throughout this His very first lengthened discourse, of “our Father in heaven,” beggars all that was ever taught, even in God’s own Word, or conceived before by His saints, on this subject.

FIRST PETITION:

Hallowed be — that is, “Be held in reverence”; *regarded* and *treated* as holy.

thy name — God’s name means “Himself as revealed and manifested.” Everywhere in Scripture God defines and marks off the faith and love and reverence and obedience He will have from men by the disclosures which He makes to them of what He is; both to shut out false conceptions of Him, and to make all their devotion take the shape and hue of His own teaching. Too much attention cannot be paid to this.

SECOND PETITION:

10. Thy kingdom come — The kingdom of God is that moral and spiritual kingdom which the God of grace is setting up in this fallen world, whose subjects consist of as many as have been brought into hearty subjection to His gracious scepter, and of which His Son Jesus is the glorious Head. In the inward reality of it, this kingdom existed ever since there were men who “walked with God” (^{<01724>}Genesis 5:24), and “waited for His salvation” (^{<01418>}Genesis 49:18); who were “continually with Him, holden by His right hand” (^{<01723>}Psalms 73:23), and who, even in the valley of the shadow of death, feared no evil when He was with them (^{<0234>}Psalms 23:4). When Messiah Himself appeared, it was, as a visible kingdom, “at hand.” His death laid the deep foundations of it. His ascension on high, “leading captivity captive and receiving gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them,” and the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit, by which those gifts for men descended upon the rebellious, and the Lord God was beheld, in the persons of thousands upon thousands, “dwelling” among men — was a glorious “coming” of this kingdom. But it is still to come, and this petition, “Thy kingdom come,” must not cease to ascend so long as one subject of it remains to be brought in. But does not this prayer stretch further forward — to “the glory to be revealed,” or that stage of the kingdom called “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (^{<00111>}2 Peter 1:11)? Not directly, perhaps, since the petition that follows this — “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” — would then bring us back to this present state of imperfection. Still, the mind refuses to be so bounded by stages and degrees, and in the act of praying, “Thy kingdom come,” it irresistibly stretches the wings of its faith, and longing, and joyous expectation out to the final and glorious consummation of the kingdom of God.

THIRD PETITION:

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven — or, as the same words are rendered in Luke, “as in heaven, so upon earth” (^{<01102>}Luke 11:2) — as *cheerfully*, as *constantly*, as *perfectly*. But some will ask, Will this ever be? We answer, If the “new heavens and new earth” are to be just our present material system purified by fire and transfigured, of course it will. But we incline to think that the aspiration which we are taught in this beautiful petition to breathe forth has no direct reference to any such *organic* fulfillment, and is only the spontaneous and resistless longing of the renewed soul — put into words — to see the whole inhabited earth in entire conformity to the will of God. It asks not if ever it shall be — or if ever it can be — in order to pray this prayer. It *must* have its holy yearnings

breathed forth, and this is just the bold yet simple expression of them. Nor is the Old Testament without prayers which come very near to this (~~407B~~ Psalm 7:9 67:1-7 72:19, etc.).

FOURTH PETITION:

11. Give us this day our daily bread — The compound word here rendered “daily” occurs nowhere else, either in classical or sacred *Greek*, and so must be interpreted by the analogy of its component parts. But on this critics are divided. To those who would understand it to mean, “Give us this day the bread of to-morrow” — as if the sense thus slid into that of Luke “Give us *day by day*” (~~410E~~ Luke 11:2, as BENGEL, MEYER, etc.) it may be answered that the sense thus brought out is scarcely intelligible, if not something less; that the expression “bread of to-morrow” is not at all the same as bread “from day to day,” and that, so understood, it would seem to contradict ~~416B~~ Matthew 6:34. The great majority of the best critics (taking the word to be compounded of *ousia*, “*substance*,” or “*being*”) understand by it the “*staff of life*,” the bread of *subsistence*, and so the sense will be, “Give us this day the bread which this day’s necessities require.” In this case, the rendering of our authorized version (after the *Vulgate*, LUTHER and some of the best modern critics) — “our daily bread” — is, in sense, accurate enough. (See ~~410B~~ Proverbs 30:8). Among commentators, there was early shown an inclination to understand this as a prayer for the heavenly bread, or spiritual nourishment; and in this they have been followed by many superior expositors, even down to our own times. But as this is quite unnatural, so it deprives the Christian of one of the sweetest of his privileges — to cast his bodily wants in this short prayer, by one simple petition, upon his heavenly Father. No doubt the spiritual mind will, from “the meat that perisheth,” naturally rise in thought to “that meat which endureth to everlasting life.” But let it be enough that the petition about bodily wants irresistibly *suggests* a higher petition; and let us not rob ourselves — out of a morbid spirituality — of our one petition in this prayer for that bodily provision which the immediate sequel of this discourse shows that our heavenly Father has so much at heart. In limiting our petitions, however, to provision for the day, what a spirit of childlike dependence does the Lord both demand and beget!

FIFTH PETITION:

12. And forgive us our debts — A vitally important view of sin, this — as an offense against God demanding reparation to His dishonored claims upon our absolute subjection. As the debtor in the creditor’s hand, so is the sinner in the hands of God. This idea of sin had indeed come up before in

this discourse — in the warning to agree with our adversary quickly, in case of sentence being passed upon us, adjudging us to payment of the last farthing, and to imprisonment till then (^{<4125>}Matthew 5:25,26). And it comes up once and again in our Lord's subsequent teaching — as in the parable of the creditor and his two debtors (^{<4174>}Luke 7:41, etc.), and in the parable of the unmerciful debtor (^{<4123>}Matthew 18:23, etc.). But by embodying it in this brief model of acceptable prayer, and as the first of three petitions more or less bearing upon sin, our Lord teaches us, in the most emphatic manner conceivable, to regard this view of sin as the primary and fundamental one. Answering to this is the “forgiveness” which it directs us to seek — not the removal from our own hearts of the stain of sin, nor yet the removal of our just dread of God's anger, or of unworthy suspicions of His love, which is all that some tell us we have to care about — but the removal from God's own mind of His displeasure against us on account of sin, or, to retain the figure, the wiping or crossing out from His “book of remembrance” of all entries against us on this account.

as we forgive our debtors — the same view of sin as before; only now transferred to the region of offenses given and received between man and man. After what has been said on ^{<4127>}Matthew 5:7, it will not be thought that our Lord here teaches that our exercise of forgiveness towards our offending fellow men absolutely precedes and is the proper ground of God's forgiveness of us. His whole teaching, indeed — as of all Scripture — is the reverse of this. But as no one can reasonably imagine himself to be the object of divine forgiveness who is deliberately and habitually unforgiving towards his fellow men, so it is a beautiful provision to make our right to ask and expect daily forgiveness of our daily shortcomings and our final absolution and acquittal at the great day of admission into the kingdom, dependent upon our conscientiousness of a forgiving disposition towards our fellows, and our preparedness to protest before the Searcher of hearts that we do actually forgive them. (See ^{<4125>}Mark 11:25,26). God sees His own image reflected in His forgiving children; but to ask God for what we ourselves refuse to men, is to insult Him. So much stress does our Lord put upon this, that immediately after the close of this prayer, it is the one point in it which He comes back upon (^{<4134>}Matthew 6:14,15), for the purpose of solemnly assuring us that the divine procedure in this matter of forgiveness will be exactly what our own is.

SIXTH PETITION:

13. And lead us not into temptation — He who honestly seeks and has the assurance of, forgiveness for past sin, will strive to avoid committing it for the future. But conscious that “when we would do good evil is present

with us,” we are taught to offer this sixth petition, which comes naturally close upon the preceding, and flows, indeed, instinctively from it in the hearts of all earnest Christians. There is some difficulty in the form of the petition, as it is certain that God does bring His people — as He did Abraham, and Christ Himself — into circumstances both fitted and designed to try them, or test the strength of their faith. Some meet this by regarding the petition as simply an humble expression of self-distrust and instinctive shrinking from danger; but this seems too weak. Others take it as a prayer against yielding to temptation, and so equivalent to a prayer for support and deliverance when we are tempted; but this seems to go beyond the precise thing intended. We incline to take it as a prayer against being *drawn* or sucked, of *our own will*, into temptation, to which the word here used seems to lend some countenance — “Introduce us not.” This view, while it does not put into our mouths a prayer against being tempted — which is more than the divine procedure would seem to warrant — does not, on the other hand, change the sense of the petition into one for support *under* temptation, which the words will hardly bear; but it gives us a subject for prayer, in regard to temptation, most *definite*, and of all others most *needful*. It was precisely this which Peter needed to ask, but did not ask, when — of his own accord, and in spite of difficulties — he pressed for entrance into the palace hall of the high priest, and where, once sucked into the scene and atmosphere of temptation, he fell so foully. And if so, does it not seem pretty clear that this was exactly what our Lord meant His disciples to pray against when He said in the garden — “Watch and pray, that ye *enter not into temptation*”? (⁴⁰⁸⁴Matthew 26:41).

SEVENTH PETITION:

But deliver us from evil — We can see no good reason for regarding this as but the second half of the sixth petition. With far better ground might the second and third petitions be regarded as one. The “but” connecting the two petitions is an insufficient reason for regarding them as one, though enough to show that the one thought naturally follows close upon the other. As the expression “from evil” may be equally well rendered “from the evil one,” a number or superior critics think the devil is intended, especially from its following close upon the subject of “temptation.” But the comprehensive character of these brief petitions, and the place which this one occupies, as that on which all our desires die away, seems to us against so contracted a view of it. Nor can there be a reasonable doubt that the apostle, in some of the last sentences which he penned before he was brought forth to suffer for his Lord, alludes to this very petition in the language of calm assurance — “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work (compare the *Greek* of the two passages), and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom”

(^{<10482}2 Timothy 4:18). The final petition, then, is only rightly grasped when regarded as a prayer for deliverance from all evil of whatever kind — not only from sin, but from all its consequences — fully and finally. Fitly, then, are our prayers ended with this. For what can we desire which this does not carry with it?

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen — If any reliance is to be placed on external evidence, this doxology, we think, can hardly be considered part of the original text. It is wanting in all the most ancient manuscripts; it is wanting in the *Old Latin* version and in the *Vulgate*: the former mounting up to about the middle of the second century, and the latter being a revision of it in the fourth century by JEROME, a most reverential and conservative as well as able and impartial critic. As might be expected from this, it is passed by in silence by the earliest Latin fathers; but even the Greek commentators, when expounding this prayer, pass by the doxology. On the other hand, it is found in a majority of manuscripts, though not the oldest; it is found in all the *Syriac* versions, even the *Peschito* — dating probably as early as the second century — although this version lacks the “Amen,” which the doxology, if genuine, could hardly have wanted; it is found in the *Sahidic* or *Thebaic* version made for the Christians of Upper Egypt, possibly as early as the *Old Latin*; and it is found in perhaps most of the later versions. On a review of the evidence, the strong probability, we think, is that it was no part of the original text.

14. For if ye forgive men, etc. — See on ^{<1062}Matthew 6:12.

15. But if ye forgive not, etc. — See on ^{<1062}Matthew 6:12.

Fasting (^{<1066}Matthew 6:16-18).

Having concluded His supplementary directions on the subject of prayer with this Divine Pattern, our Lord now returns to the subject of *Unostentatiousness* in our deeds of righteousness, in order to give one more illustration of it, in the matter of fasting.

16. Moreover, when ye fast — referring, probably, to private and voluntary fasting, which was to be regulated by each individual for himself; though in spirit it would apply to any fast.

be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces — literally, “make unseen”; very well rendered “disfigure.” They went about with a slovenly appearance, and ashes sprinkled on their head.

that they may appear unto men to fast — It was not the *deed*, but *reputation* for the deed which they sought; and with this view those

hypocrites multiplied their fasts. And are the exhausting fasts of the Church of Rome, and of Romanizing Protestants, free from this taint?

Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

17. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face — as the Jews did, except when mourning (^{<270B>}Daniel 10:3); so that the meaning is, “Appear as usual” — appear so as to attract no notice.

18. That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee *openly* — The “openly” seems evidently a later addition to the text of this verse from ^{<106F>}Matthew 6:4,7, though of course the idea is implied.

^{<106F>}MATTHEW 6:19-34.

CONCLUDING ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM — HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS AND FILIAL CONFIDENCE.

19. Lay not up for ourselves treasures upon earth — hoard not.

where moth — a “clothes-moth.” Eastern treasures, consisting partly in costly dresses stored up (^{<827G>}Job 27:16), were liable to be consumed by moths (^{<813B>}Job 13:28 ^{<2810F>}Isaiah 50:9 51:8). In ^{<510D>}James 5:2 there is an evident reference to our Lord’s words here.

and rust — any “eating into” or “consuming”; here, probably, “wear and tear.”

doth corrupt — cause to disappear. By this reference to moth and rust our Lord would teach how *perishable* are such earthly treasures.

and where thieves break through and steal — Treasures these, how *precarious!*

20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven — The language in Luke (^{<272B>}Luke 12:33) is very bold — “Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not,” etc.

where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal — Treasures these, *imperishable* and *unassailable!* (Compare ^{<510D>}Colossians 3:2).

21. For where your treasure is — that which ye value most.

there will your heart be also — “Thy treasure — thy heart” is probably the true reading here: “your,” in ^{<0234>}Luke 12:34, from which it seems to have come in here. Obvious though this maxim be, by what multitudes who profess to bow to the teaching of Christ is it practically disregarded! “What a man loves,” says LUTHER, quoted by THOLUCK, “that is his God. For he carries it in his heart, he goes about with it night and day, he sleeps and wakes with it; be it what it may — wealth or pelf, pleasure or renown.” But because “laying up” is not in itself sinful, nay, in some cases enjoined (^{<4724>}2 Corinthians 12:14), and honest industry and sagacious enterprise are usually rewarded with prosperity, many flatter themselves that all is right between them and God, while their closest attention, anxiety, zeal, and time are exhausted upon these earthly pursuits. To put this right, our Lord adds what follows, in which there is profound practical wisdom.

22. The light — the lamp.

of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single — simple, clear. As applied to the outward eye, this means general soundness; particularly, not looking two ways. Here, as also in classical Greek, it is used figuratively to denote the simplicity of the mind’s eye, singleness of purpose, looking right at its object, as opposed to having two ends in view. (See ^{<1025>}Proverbs 4:25-27).

thy whole body shall be full of light — illuminated. As with the bodily vision, the man who looks with a good, sound eye, walks in light, seeing every object clear; so a simple and persistent purpose to serve and please God in everything will make the whole character consistent and bright.

23. But if thine eye be evil — distempered, or, as we should say, If we have got a *bad* eye.

thy whole body shall be full of darkness — darkened. As a vitiated eye, or an eye that looks not straight and full at its object, sees nothing as it is, so a mind and heart divided between heaven and earth is all dark.

If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! — As the conscience is the regulative faculty, and a man’s inward purpose, scope, aim in life, determines his character — if these be not simple and heavenward, but distorted and double, what must all the other faculties and principles of our nature be which take their direction and character from these, and what must the whole man and the whole life be but a mass of darkness? In Luke (^{<0187>}Luke 11:36) the converse of this statement very strikingly expresses what pure, beautiful, broad perceptions

the *clarity of the inward eye* imparts: “If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.” But now for the application of this.

24. No man can serve — The word means to “belong wholly and be entirely under command to.”

two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other — Even if the two masters be of one character and have but one object, the servant must *take law* from one or the other: though he may do what is agreeable to both, he cannot, in the nature of the thing, be *servant* to more than one. Much less if, as in the present case, their interests are quite different, and even conflicting. In this case, if our affections be in the service of the one — if we “love the one” — we must of necessity “hate the other”; if we determine resolutely to “hold to the one,” we must at the same time disregard, and (if he insist on his claims upon us) even “despise the other.”

Ye cannot serve God and mammon — The word “*mamon*” — better written with one *m* — is a foreign one, whose precise derivation cannot certainly be determined, though the most probable one gives it the sense of “what one trusts in.” Here, there can be no doubt it is used for *riches*, considered as an idol master, or god of the heart. The service of this god and the true God together is here, with a kind of indignant curtness, pronounced impossible. But since the teaching of the preceding verses might seem to endanger our falling short of what is requisite for the present life, and so being left destitute, our Lord now comes to speak to that point.

25. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought — “Be not solicitous.” The English word “thought,” when our version was made, expressed this idea of “solicitude,” “anxious concern” — as may be seen in any old English classic; and in the same sense it is used in ^{<1015>}1 Samuel 9:5, etc. But this sense of the word has now nearly gone out, and so the mere English reader is apt to be perplexed. *Thought* or forethought, for temporal things — in the sense of reflection, consideration — is required alike by Scripture and common sense. It is that anxious solicitude, that oppressive care, which springs from unbelieving doubts and misgivings, which alone is here condemned. (See ^{<1016>}Philippians 4:6).

for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on — In Luke (^{<1029>}Luke 12:29) our Lord adds, “neither be ye unsettled” — not “of doubtful mind,” as in our version. When “careful (or ‘full of care’) about nothing,” but committing all in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving unto God, the apostle assures us that “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our

hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (³¹⁰⁰Philippians 4:6,7); that is, shall guard both our feelings and our thoughts from undue agitation, and keep them in a holy calm. But when we commit our whole temporal condition to the wit of our own minds, we get into that “unsettled” state against which our Lord exhorts His disciples.

Is not the life more than meat — food.

and the body than raiment? — If God, then, gives and keeps up the greater — the life, the body — will He withhold the less, food to sustain life and raiment to clothe the body?

26. Behold the fowls of the air — in ⁴⁰³⁸Matthew 6:28, “observe well,” and in ⁴⁰²³Luke 12:24, “consider” — so as to learn wisdom from them.

for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? — nobler in yourselves and dearer to God. The argument here is from the greater to the less; but how rich in detail! The brute creation — void of reason — are incapable of sowing, reaping, and storing: yet your heavenly Father suffers them not helplessly to perish, but sustains them without any of those processes. Will He see, then, His own children using all the means which reason dictates for procuring the things needful for the body — looking up to Himself at every step — and yet leave them to starve?

27. Which of you, by taking thought — anxious solicitude.

can add one cubit unto his stature? — “Stature” can hardly be the thing intended here: first, because the subject is the *prolongation of life*, by the supply of its necessities of food and clothing; and next, because no one would dream of adding a cubit — or a foot and a half — to his stature, while in the corresponding passage in Luke (⁴⁰²⁵Luke 12:25,26) the thing intended is represented as “that thing which is *least*.” But if we take the word in its primary sense of “*age*” (for “stature” is but a secondary sense) the idea will be this, “Which of you, however anxiously you vex yourselves about it, can add so much as a step to the length of your life’s journey?” To compare the length of life to measures of this nature is not foreign to the language of Scripture (compare ⁴⁸⁹⁵Psalms 39:5 ⁴⁸⁹²2 Timothy 4:7, etc.). So understood, the meaning is clear and the connection natural. In this the best critics now agree.

28. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider — observe well.

the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not — as men, planting and preparing the flax.

neither do they spin — as women.

29. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these — What incomparable teaching! — best left in its own transparent clearness and rich simplicity.

30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass — the “herbage.”

of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven — wild flowers cut with the grass, withering by the heat, and used for fuel. (See ^{<5011>}James 1:11).

shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? — The argument here is something fresh. Gorgeous as is the array of the flowers that deck the fields, surpassing all artificial human grandeur, it is for but a brief moment; you are ravished with it to-day, and to-morrow it is gone; your own hands have seized and cast it into the oven: Shall, then, God’s children, so dear to Him, and instinct with a life that cannot die, be left naked? He does not say, Shall they not be more beautifully arrayed? but, Shall He not much more *clothe* them? that being all He will have them regard as secured to them (compare ^{<5335>}Hebrews 13:5). The expression, “Little-faithed ones,” which our Lord applies once and again to His disciples (^{<4035>}Matthew 8:26 14:31 16:8), can hardly be regarded as rebuking any actual manifestations of unbelief at that early period, and before such an audience. It is His way of gently chiding the *spirit* of unbelief, so natural even to the best, who are surrounded by a world of sense, and of kindling a generous desire to shake it off.

31. Therefore take no thought — solicitude.

saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32. (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) — rather, “pursue.” Knowing nothing definitely beyond the present life to kindle their aspirations and engage their supreme attention, the heathen naturally pursue present objects as their chief, their only good. To what an elevation above these does Jesus here lift His disciples!

for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things — How precious this word! Food and raiment are pronounced *needful* to God’s children; and He who could say, “No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (^{<4127>}Matthew 11:27), says with an authority which none but Himself could claim, “Your heavenly Father *knoweth* that ye have need of all these

things.” Will not that suffice you, O ye needy ones of the household of faith?

33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you — This is the great summing up. Strictly speaking, it has to do only with the subject of the present section — the right state of the heart with reference to heavenly and earthly things; but being couched in the form of a brief general directory, it is so comprehensive in its grasp as to embrace the whole subject of this discourse. And, as if to make this the more evident, the two keynotes of this great sermon seem purposely struck in it — “the KINGDOM” and “the RIGHTEOUSNESS” Of the kingdom — as the grand objects, in the supreme pursuit of which all things needful for the present life will be added to us. The precise sense of every word in this golden verse should be carefully weighed. “*The kingdom of God*” is the primary subject of the Sermon on the Mount — that kingdom which the God of heaven is erecting in this fallen world, within which are all the spiritually recovered and inwardly subject portion of the family of Adam, under Messiah as its Divine Head and King. “*The righteousness thereof*” is the character of all such, so amply described and variously illustrated in the foregoing portions of this discourse. The “*seeking*” of these is the making them the object of supreme choice and pursuit; and the seeking of them “*first*” is the seeking of them before and above all else. The “*all these things*” which shall in that case be added to us are just the “all these things” which the last words of ⁴⁰¹²Matthew 6:32 assured us “our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of”; that is, all we require for the present life. And when our Lord says they shall be “*added*,” it is implied, as a matter of course, that the seekers of the kingdom and its righteousness shall have these as their proper and primary portion: the rest being their gracious reward for *not* seeking them. (See an illustration of the principle of this in ⁴⁰¹¹2 Chronicles 1:11,12). What follows is but a reduction of this great general direction into a practical and ready form for daily use.

34. Take therefore no thought — anxious care.

for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself — (or, according to other authorities, “for itself”) — shall have its own causes of anxiety.

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof — An admirable practical maxim, and better rendered in our version than in almost any other, not excepting the preceding English ones. Every day brings its own cares; and to anticipate is only to double them.

CHAPTER 7

SERMON ON THE MOUNT — *CONCLUDED.*

~~400E~~ MATTHEW 7:1-12.

MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLEMENTARY COUNSELS.

That these verses are entirely supplementary is the simplest and most natural view of them. All attempts to make out any evident connection with the immediately preceding context are, in our judgment, forced. But, though supplementary, these counsels are far from being of subordinate importance. On the contrary, they involve some of the most delicate and vital duties of the Christian life. In the vivid form in which they are here presented, perhaps they could not have been introduced with the same effect under any of the foregoing heads; but they spring out of the same great principles, and are but other forms and manifestations of the same evangelical “righteousness.”

Censorious Judgment (~~400E~~ Matthew 7:1-5).

1. Judge not, that ye be not judged — To “judge” here does not exactly mean to pronounce condemnatory judgment, nor does it refer to simple judging at all, whether favorable or the reverse. The context makes it clear that the thing here condemned is that disposition to look unfavorably on the character and actions of others, which leads invariably to the pronouncing of rash, unjust, and unlovely judgments upon them. No doubt it is the judgments so pronounced which are here spoken of; but what our Lord aims at is the spirit out of which they spring. Provided we eschew this unlovely spirit, we are not only warranted to sit in judgment upon a brother’s character and actions, but in the exercise of a necessary discrimination are often constrained to do so for our own guidance. It is the violation of the law of love involved in the exercise of a censorious disposition which alone is here condemned. And the argument against it — “that ye be not judged” — confirms this: “that your own character and actions be not pronounced upon with the like severity”; that is, at the great day.

2. For with what judgments ye Judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete — whatever standard of judgment ye apply to others.

it shall be measured to you again — This proverbial maxim is used by our Lord in other connections — as in ^{<40B>}Mark 4:24, and with a slightly different application in ^{<40B>}Luke 6:38 — as a great principle in the divine administration. Unkind judgment of others will be judicially returned upon ourselves, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. But, as in many other cases under the divine administration, such harsh judgment gets self-punished even here. For people shrink from contact with those who systematically deal out harsh judgment upon others — naturally concluding that they themselves may be the next victims — and feel impelled in self-defense, when exposed to it, to roll back upon the assailant his own censures.

3. And why beholdest thou the mote — “splinter,” here very well rendered “mote,” denoting any small fault.

that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? — denoting the much greater fault which we overlook in ourselves.

4. Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

5. Thou hypocrite — “Hypocrite.”

first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye — Our Lord uses a most hyperbolic, but not unfamiliar figure, to express the monstrous inconsistency of this conduct. The “hypocrisy” which, not without indignation, He charges it with, consists in the pretense of a zealous and compassionate charity, which cannot possibly be real in one who suffers worse faults to lie uncorrected in himself. He only is fit to be a reprover of others who jealously and severely judges himself. Such persons will not only be slow to undertake the office of censor on their neighbors, but, when constrained in faithfulness to deal with them, will make it evident that they do it with *reluctance* and not satisfaction, with *moderation* and not exaggeration, with *love* and not harshness.

Prostitution of Holy Things (^{<40B>}Matthew 7:6).

The opposite extreme to that of censoriousness is here condemned — want of discrimination of character.

6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs — savage or snarling haters of truth and righteousness.

neither cast ye your pearls before swine — the impure or coarse, who are incapable of appreciating the priceless jewels of Christianity. In the East, dogs are wilder and more gregarious, and, feeding on carrion and garbage, are coarser and fiercer than the same animals in the West. Dogs and swine, besides being ceremonially unclean, were peculiarly repulsive to the Jews, and indeed to the ancients generally.

lest they trample them under their feet — as swine do.

and turn again and rend you — as dogs do. Religion is brought into contempt, and its professors insulted, when it is forced upon those who cannot value it and will not have it. But while the indiscriminately zealous have need of this caution, let us be on our guard against too readily setting our neighbors down as dogs and swine, and excusing ourselves from endeavoring to do them good on this poor plea.

Prayer (⁴⁰⁰Matthew 7:7-11).

Enough, one might think, had been said on this subject in ⁴⁰⁵Matthew 6:5-15. But the difficulty of the foregoing duties seems to have recalled the subject, and this gives it quite a new turn. “How shall we ever be able to carry out such precepts as these, of tender, holy, yet discriminating love?” might the humble disciple inquire. “Go to God with it,” is our Lord’s reply; but He expresses this with a fullness which leaves nothing to be desired, urging now not only confidence, but importunity in prayer.

7. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you — Though there seems evidently a climax here, expressive of more and more importunity, yet each of these terms used presents what we desire of God in a different light. We *ask* for what we *wish*; we *seek* for what we *miss*; we *knock* for that from which we feel ourselves *shut out*. Answering to this threefold representation is the triple assurance of success to our believing efforts. “But ah!” might some humble disciple say, “I cannot persuade myself that *I* have any interest with God.” To meet this, our Lord repeats the triple assurance He had just given, but in such a form as to silence every such complaint.

8. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened — Of course, it is presumed that he asks aright — that is, in faith — and with an honest purpose to make use of what he receives. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering (undecided

whether to be altogether on the Lord's side). For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For *let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*" (^{<5015>}James 1:5-7). Hence, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (^{<5048>}James 4:3).

9. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread — a loaf.

will he give him a stone? — round and smooth like such a loaf or cake as was much in use, but only to mock him.

10. Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? — like it, indeed, but only to sting him.

11. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him! — Bad as our fallen nature is, the *father* in us is not extinguished. What a heart, then, must the Father of all fathers have towards His pleading children! In the corresponding passage in Luke (see on ^{<4113>}Luke 11:13), instead of "good things," our Lord asks whether He will not much more give *the Holy Spirit* to them that ask Him. At this early stage of His ministry, and before such an audience, He seems to avoid such sharp doctrinal teaching as was more accordant with His plan at the riper stage indicated in Luke, and in addressing His own disciples exclusively.

Golden Rule (^{<4012>}Matthew 7:12).

12. Therefore — to say all in one word.

all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them — the same thing and in the same way.

for this is the law and the prophets — "This is the substance of all relative duty; all Scripture in a nutshell." Incomparable summary! How well called "the royal law!" (^{<5118>}James 2:8; compare ^{<5139>}Romans 13:9). It is true that similar maxims are found floating in the writings of the cultivated Greeks and Romans, and naturally enough in the Rabbinical writings. But so expressed as it is here — in immediate connection with, and as the sum of *such* duties as has been just enjoined, and such principles as had been before taught — it is to be found nowhere else. And the best commentary upon this fact is, that never till our Lord came down thus to teach did men effectually and widely exemplify it in their practice. The precise sense of the maxim is best referred to common sense. It is not, of course, what — in our wayward, capricious, gasping moods — we should *wish* that men would do to us, that we are to hold ourselves bound to do to them; but only

what — in the exercise of an impartial judgment, and putting ourselves in their place — we consider it reasonable that they should do to us, that we are to do to them.

MATTHEW 7:13-29.

CONCLUSION AND EFFECT OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

We have here the application of the whole preceding discourse.

Conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (^{<4073>}Matthew 7:13-27).

“The righteousness of the kingdom,” so amply described, both in principle and in detail, would be seen to involve *self-sacrifice* at every step. Multitudes would never face this. But it must be faced, else the consequences will be fatal. This would divide all within the sound of these truths into two classes: the many, who will follow the path of ease and self-indulgence — end where it might; and the few, who, bent on eternal safety above everything else, take the way that leads to it — at whatever cost. This gives occasion to the two opening verses of this application.

13. Enter ye in at the strait gate — as if hardly wide enough to admit one at all. This expresses the difficulty of the first right step in religion, involving, as it does, a triumph over all our natural inclinations. Hence the still stronger expression in Luke (^{<4233>}Luke 13:24), “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.”

for wide is the gate — easily entered.

and broad is the way — easily trodden.

that leadeth to destruction, and — thus lured “many there be which go in thereat.”

14. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life — In other words, the whole course is as difficult as the first step; and (so it comes to pass that).

few there be that find it — The recommendation of the broad way is the ease with which it is trodden and the abundance of company to be found in it. It is sailing with a fair wind and a favorable tide. The natural inclinations are not crossed, and fears of the issue, if not easily hushed, are in the long run effectually subdued. The one disadvantage of this course is its end — it

“leadeth to destruction.” The great Teacher says it, and says it as “One having authority.” To the supposed injustice or harshness of this He never once adverts. He leaves it to be inferred that such a course righteously, naturally, necessarily so ends. But whether men see this or no, here He lays down the law of the kingdom, and leaves it with us. As to the other way, the disadvantage of it lies in its narrowness and solicitude. Its very first step involves a revolution in all our purposes and plans for life, and a surrender of all that is dear to natural inclination, while all that follows is but a repetition of the first great act of self-sacrifice. No wonder, then, that few find and few are found in it. But it has one advantage — it “leadeth unto life.” Some critics take “the gate” here, not for the first, but the last step in religion; since gates seldom open into roads, but roads usually terminate in a gate, leading straight to a mansion. But as this would make our Lord’s words to have a very inverted and unnatural form as they stand, it is better, with the majority of critics, to view them as we have done. But since such teaching would be as unpopular as the way itself, our Lord next forewarns His hearers that preachers of smooth things — the true heirs and representatives of the false prophets of old — would be rife enough in the new kingdom.

15. Beware — But beware.

of false prophets — that is, of teachers coming as authorized expounders of the mind of God and guides to heaven. (See [Acts 20:29,30](#) [2 Peter 2:1,2](#)).

which come to you in sheep’s clothing — with a bland, gentle, plausible exterior; persuading you that the gate is not strait nor the way narrow, and that to teach so is illiberal and bigoted — precisely what the old prophets did ([Ezekiel 13:1-10,22](#)).

but inwardly they are ravening wolves — bent on devouring the flock for their own ends ([2 Corinthians 11:2,3,13-15](#)).

16. Ye shall know them by their fruits — not their doctrines — as many of the elder interpreters and some later ones explain it — for that corresponds to the tree itself; but the practical effect of their teaching, which is the proper fruit of the tree.

Do men gather grapes of thorns — any kind of prickly plant.

or figs of thistles? — a three-pronged variety. The general sense is obvious — Every tree bears its own fruit.

17. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit — Obvious as is the truth here expressed in different forms — that the heart determines and is the only proper interpreter of the actions of our life — no one who knows how the Church of Rome makes a merit of actions, quite apart from the motives that prompt them, and how the same tendency manifests itself from time to time even among Protestant Christians, can think it too obvious to be insisted on by the teachers of divine truth. Here follows a wholesome digression.

19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire — (See on ^{<4180>}Matthew 3:10).

20. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them — that is, But the point I now press is not so much the end of such, as the means of detecting them; and this, as already said, is their fruits. The hypocrisy of teachers now leads to a solemn warning against religious hypocrisy in general.

21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord — the reduplication of the title “Lord” denoting zeal in according it to Christ (see ^{<4145>}Mark 14:45). Yet our Lord claims and expects this of all His disciples, as when He washed their feet: “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am” (^{<4133>}John 13:13).

shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven — that will which it had been the great object of this discourse to set forth. Yet our Lord says warily, not “the will of *your* Father,” but “of *My* Father”; thus claiming a relationship to His Father with which His disciples might not intermeddle, and which He never lets down. And He so speaks here to give authority to His asseverations. But now He rises higher still — not formally *announcing* Himself as the Judge, but intimating what men will say to Him, and He to them, *when* He sits as their final judge.

22. Many will say to me in that day — What day? It is emphatically unnamed. But it is the day to which He had just referred, when men shall “enter” or not enter “into the kingdom of heaven.” (See a similar way of speaking of “that day” in ^{<4112>}2 Timothy 1:12 4:8).

Lord, Lord — The reiteration denotes surprise. “What, Lord? How is this? Are we to be disowned?”

have we not prophesied — or, “publicly taught.” As one of the special gifts of the Spirit in the early Church, it has the sense of “inspired and authoritative teaching,” and is ranked next to the apostleship. (See ^{<4128>}1

Corinthians 12:28 ^{<0111>}Ephesians 4:11). In this sense it is used here, as appears from what follows.

in thy name — or, “to thy name,” and so in the two following clauses — “having reference to Thy name as the sole power in which we did it.”

and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works — or, miracles. These are selected as three examples of the highest services rendered to the Christian cause, and through the power of Christ’s own name, invoked for that purpose; He Himself, too, responding to the call. And the threefold repetition of the question, each time in the same form, expresses in the liveliest manner the astonishment of the speakers at the view now taken of them.

23. And then will I profess unto them — or, openly proclaim — tearing off the mask.

I never knew you — What they claimed intimacy with Christ, is just what He repudiates, and with a certain scornful dignity. “Our acquaintance was not broken off — there never was any.”

depart from me — (Compare ^{<0254>}Matthew 25:41). The connection here gives these words an awful significance. They claimed intimacy with Christ, and in the corresponding passage, ^{<0138>}Luke 13:26, are represented as having gone out and in with Him on familiar terms. “So much the worse for you,” He replies: “I bore with that long enough; but now — begone!”

ye that work iniquity — not “that wrought iniquity”; for they are represented as fresh from the scenes and acts of it as they stand before the Judge. (See on the almost identical, but even more vivid and awful, description of the scene in ^{<0138>}Luke 13:24-27). That the apostle alludes to these very words in ^{<0129>}2 Timothy 2:19 there can hardly be any doubt — “Nevertheless 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.”

24. Therefore — to bring this discourse to a close.

whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them — see ^{<0122>}James 1:22, which seems a plain allusion to these words; also ^{<0138>}Luke 11:28 ^{<0123>}Romans 2:13 ^{<0187>}1 John 3:7.

I will liken him unto a wise man — a shrewd, prudent, provident man.

which built his house upon a rock — the rock of true discipleship, or genuine subjection to Christ.

25. And the rain descended — from above.

and the floods came — from below.

and the winds blew — sweeping across.

and beat upon that house — thus from every direction.

and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock — See ^{<G107>}1 John 2:17.

26. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine — in the attitude of discipleship.

and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand — denoting a loose foundation — that of an empty profession and mere external services.

27. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house — struck against that house;

and it fell: and great was the fall of it — terrible the ruin! How lively must this imagery have been to an audience accustomed to the fierceness of an Eastern tempest, and the suddenness and completeness with which it sweeps everything unsteady before it!

Effect of the Sermon on the Mount (^{<102>}Matthew 7:28, 29).

28. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine — rather, “His teaching,” for the reference is to the manner of it quite as much as the matter, or rather more so.

29. For he taught them as one having authority — The word “one,” which our translators have here inserted, only weakens the statement.

and not as the scribes — The consciousness of divine authority, as Lawgiver, Expounder and Judge, so beamed through His teaching, that the scribes teaching could not but appear drivelling in such a light.

CHAPTER 8

◀1018▶ MATTHEW 8:1-4.

HEALING OF A LEPER. (◀1049▶ MARK 1:40-45 ◀1052▶ LUKE 5:12-16).

The time of this miracle seems too definitely fixed here to admit of our placing it where it stands in Mark and Luke, in whose Gospels no such precise note of time is given.

1. When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

2. And, behold, there came a leper — “a man full of leprosy,” says ◀1052▶ Luke 5:12. Much has been written on this disease of leprosy, but certain points remain still doubtful. All that needs be said here is that it was a cutaneous disease, of a loathsome, diffusive, and, there is reason to believe, when thoroughly pronounced, incurable character; that though in its distinctive features it is still found in several countries — as Arabia, Egypt, and South Africa — it prevailed, in the form of what is called white leprosy, to an unusual extent, and from a very early period, among the Hebrews; and that it thus furnished to the whole nation a familiar and affecting symbol of SIN, considered as

(1) *loathsome,*

(2) *spreading,*

(3) *incurable.*

And while the ceremonial ordinances for detection and cleansing prescribed in this case by the law of Moses (◀1051▶ Leviticus 13:1-14:57) held forth a coming remedy “for sin and for uncleanness” (◀1550▶ Psalm 51:7 ◀1218▶ 2 Kings 5:1,7,10,13,14), the numerous cases of leprosy with which our Lord came in contact, and the glorious cures of them which He wrought, were a fitting manifestation of the work which He came to accomplish. In this view, it deserves to be noticed that the first of our Lord’s miracles of healing recorded by Matthew is this cure of a leper.

and worshipped him — in what sense we shall presently see. Mark says (◀1049▶ Mark 1:40), he came, “beseeching and kneeling to Him,” and Luke says (◀1052▶ Luke 5:12), “he fell on his face.”

saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean — As this is the only cure of leprosy recorded by all the three first Evangelists, it was probably the first case of the kind; and if so, this leper's faith in the power of Christ must have been formed in him by what he had heard of His other cures. And how striking a faith is it! He does not say he *believed* Him able, but with a brevity expressive of a confidence that knew no doubt, he says simply, "Thou canst." But of Christ's willingness to heal him he was not so sure. It needed more knowledge of Jesus than he could be supposed to have to assure him of that. But one thing he was sure of, that He had but to "will" it. This shows with what "worship" of Christ this leper fell on his face before Him. Clear theological knowledge of the Person of Christ was not then possessed even by those who were most with Him and nearest to Him. Much less could full insight into all that we know of the Only-begotten of the Father be expected of this leper. But he who at that moment felt and owned that to heal an incurable disease needed but the *fiat* of the Person who stood before him, had assuredly that very faith in the germ which now casts its crown before Him that loved us, and would at any time die for His blessed name.

3. And Jesus — or "He," according to another reading, — "moved with compassion," says Mark (^{<4048>}Mark 1:41); a precious addition.

put forth his hand, and touched him — Such a touch occasioned ceremonial defilement (^{<4038>}Leviticus 5:3); even as the leper's coming near enough for contact was against the Levitical regulations (^{<4036>}Leviticus 13:46). But as the man's faith told him there would be no case for such regulations if the cure he hoped to experience should be accomplished, so He who had healing in His wings transcended all such statutes.

saying, I will; be thou clean — How majestic those two words! By not assuring the man of His *power* to heal him, He delightfully sets His seal to the man's previous confession of that power; and by assuring him of the one thing of which he had any doubt, and for which he waited — His *will* to do it — He makes a claim as divine as the cure which immediately followed it.

And immediately his leprosy was cleansed — Mark, more emphatic, says (^{<4042>}Mark 1:42), "And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed" — as perfectly as instantaneously. What a contrast this to modern pretended cures!

4. And Jesus — "straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away" (^{<4043>}Mark 1:43), and

saith unto him, See thou tell no man — A hard condition this would seem to a grateful heart, whose natural language, in such a case, is “Come, hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul” (^{<4066>}Psalm 66:16). We shall presently see the reason for it.

but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded — (^{<4048>}Leviticus 14:1-57).

for a testimony unto them — a palpable witness that the Great Healer had indeed come, and that “God had visited His people.” What the sequel was, our Evangelist Matthew does not say; but Mark thus gives it (^{<4045>}Mark 1:45): “But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to Him from every quarter.” Thus — by an over-zealous, though most natural and not very culpable, infringement of the injunction to keep the matter quiet — was our Lord, to some extent, thwarted in His movements. As His whole course was sublimely noiseless (^{<4029>}Matthew 12:19), so we find Him repeatedly taking steps to prevent matters prematurely coming to a crisis with Him. (But see on ^{<4059>}Mark 5:19,20). “And He withdrew Himself,” adds Luke (^{<4056>}Luke 5:16), “into the wilderness, and prayed”; retreating from the popular excitement into the secret place of the Most High, and thus coming forth as dew upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth (^{<4072>}Psalm 72:6). And this is the secret both of strength and of sweetness in the servants and followers of Christ in every age.

^{<4085>}MATTHEW 8:5-15.

HEALING OF THE CENTURION'S SERVANT. (^{<4001>}LUKE 7:1-10).

This incident belongs to a later stage. For the exposition, see on ^{<4001>}Luke 7:1-10.

^{<4084>}MATTHEW 8:14-17.

HEALING OF PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW AND MANY OTHERS. (^{<4029>}MARK 1:29-34 ^{<4038>}LUKE 4:38-41).

For the exposition, see on ^{<4029>}Mark 1:29-34.

MATTHEW 8:18-22.

INCIDENTS ILLUSTRATIVE OF DISCIPLESHIP.

(LUKE 9:57-62).

The incidents here are two: in the corresponding passage of Luke they are three. Here they are introduced before the mission of the Twelve: in Luke, when our Lord was making preparation for His final journey to Jerusalem. But to conclude from this, as some good critics do (as BENGEL, ELLICOTT, etc.) that one of these incidents at least occurred twice — which led to the mention of the others at the two different times — is too artificial. Taking them, then, as one set of occurrences, the question arises. Are they recorded by Matthew or by Luke in their proper place? NEANDER, SCHLEIERMACHER, and OLSHAUSEN adhere to Luke's order; while MEYER, DE WETTE, and LANGE prefer that of Matthew. Probably the first incident is here in its right place. But as the command, in the second incident, to preach the kingdom of God, would scarcely have been given at so early a period, it is likely that it and the third incident have their true place in Luke. Taking these three incidents up here then we have,

I. THE RASH OR PRECIPITATE DISCIPLE

(MATTHEW 8:19, 20).

19. And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

20. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head

— Few as there were of the scribes who attached themselves to Jesus, it would appear, from his calling Him Teacher, that this one was a “disciple” in that looser sense of the word in which it is applied to the crowds who flocked after Him, with more or less conviction that His claims were well founded. But from the answer which he received we are led to infer that there was more of transient emotion — of temporary impulse — than of intelligent principle in the speech. The preaching of Christ had riveted and charmed him; his heart had swelled; his enthusiasm had been kindled; and in this state of mind he will go anywhere with Him, and feels impelled to tell Him so. “Wilt thou?” replies the Lord Jesus. “Knowest thou whom thou art pledging thyself to follow, and whither haply He may lead thee? No warm home, no downy pillow has He for thee: He has them not for Himself. The foxes are not without their holes, nor do the birds of the air lack their nests; but the Son of man has to depend on the hospitality of others, and borrow the pillow whereon He lays His head.” How affecting is

this reply! And yet He rejects not this man's offer, nor refuses him the liberty to follow Him. Only He will have him know what he is doing, and "count the cost." He will have him weigh well the real nature and the strength of his attachment, whether it be such as will abide in the day of trial. If so, he will be right welcome, for Christ puts none away. But it seems too plain that in this case that had not been done. And so we have called this the Rash or Precipitate Disciple.

II. THE PROCRASTINATING OR ENTANGLED DISCIPLE (^{<4182>}MATTHEW 8:21, 22).

As this is more fully given in Luke (^{<4189>}Luke 9:59), we must take both together. "And He said unto another of His disciples, Follow Me. But he said,"

Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead — or, as more definitely in Luke, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (^{<4191>}Luke 9:60). This disciple did not, like the former, volunteer his services, but is called by the Lord Jesus, not only to follow, but to preach Him. And he is quite willing; only he is not ready just yet. "Lord, I *will*; but" — "There is a difficulty in the way just now; but that once removed, I am Thine." What now is this difficulty? Was his father actually dead — lying a corpse — having only to be buried? Impossible. As it was the practice, as noticed on ^{<4172>}Luke 7:12, to bury on the day of death, it is not very likely that this disciple would have been here at all if his father had just breathed his last; nor would the Lord, if He was there, have hindered him discharging the last duties of a son to a father. No doubt it was the common case of a son having a frail or aged father, not likely to live long, whose head he thinks it his duty to see under the ground ere he goes abroad. "This aged father of mine will soon be removed; and if I might but delay till I see him decently interred, I should then be free to preach the kingdom of God wherever duty might call me." This view of the case will explain the curt reply, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Like all the other paradoxical sayings of our Lord, the key to it is the different senses — a higher and a lower — in which the same word "dead" is used: There are two kingdoms of God in existence upon earth; the kingdom of nature, and the kingdom of grace: To the one kingdom all the children of this world, even the most ungodly, are fully alive; to the other, only the children of light: The reigning irreligion consists not in indifference to the common humanities of social life, but to things spiritual and eternal: Fear not, therefore, that your father will in your absence be neglected, and that when he breathes his last there will not be

relatives and friends ready enough to do to him the last offices of kindness. Your wish to discharge these yourself is natural, and to be allowed to do it a privilege not lightly to be foregone. But the kingdom of God lies now all neglected and needy: Its more exalted character few discern; to its paramount claims few are alive: and to “preach” it fewer still are qualified and called: But thou art: The Lord therefore hath need of thee: Leave, then, those claims of nature, high though they be, to those who are dead to the still higher claims of the kingdom of grace, which God is now erecting upon earth — Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And so have we here the genuine, but Procrastinating or Entangled Disciple.

The next case is recorded only by Luke:

III. THE IRRESOLUTE OR WAVERING DISCIPLE

(^{<1961>}LUKE 9:61,62)

^{<1961>}LUKE 9:61:

And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house.

^{<1962>}LUKE 9:62:

And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. But for the very different replies given, we should hardly have discerned the difference between this and the second case: the one man called, indeed, and the other volunteering, as did the first; but both seemingly alike willing, and only having a difficulty in their way just at that moment. But, by help of what is said respectively to each, we perceive the great difference between the two cases. From the warning given against “looking back,” it is evident that this man’s discipleship was not yet *thorough*, his separation from the world not entire. It is not a case of *going* back, but of *looking* back; and as there is here a manifest reference to the case of “Lot’s wife” (^{<1963>}Genesis 19:26; and see on ^{<1972>}Luke 17:32), we see that it is not *actual return* to the world that we have here to deal with, but a *reluctance to break with it*. The figure of putting one’s hand to the plough and looking back is an exceedingly vivid one, and to an agricultural people most impressive. As ploughing requires an eye intent on the furrow to be made, and is marred the instant one turns about, so will they come short of salvation who prosecute the work of God with a distracted attention, a divided heart. The reference may be chiefly to ministers; but the application at least is general. As the image seems plainly to have been suggested by the case of Elijah and Elisha, a difficulty may be

raised, requiring a moment's attention. When Elijah cast his mantle about Elisha, which the youth quite understood to mean appointing him his successor, he was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, the last pair held by himself. Leaving his oxen, he ran after the prophet, and said, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and [then] I will follow thee." Was this said *in the same spirit* with the same speech uttered by our disciple? Let us see. "And Elijah said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee." Commentators take this to mean that Elijah had really done nothing to hinder him from going on with all his ordinary duties. But to us it seems clear that Elijah's intention was to try what manner of spirit the youth was of: — "Kiss thy father and mother? And why not? By all means, go home and stay with them; for what have I done to thee? I did but throw a mantle about thee; but what of that?" If this was his meaning, Elisha thoroughly apprehended and nobly met it. "He returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen (the wood of his ploughing implements), and gave unto the people, and they did eat: then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him" (~~1199~~1 Kings 19:19-21). We know not if even his father and mother had time to be called to this hasty feast. But this much is plain, that, though in affluent circumstances, he gave up his lower calling, with all its prospects, for the higher and at that time perilous, office to which he was called. What now is the bearing of these two cases? Did Elisha do wrong in bidding them farewell with whom he was associated in his early calling? Or, if not, would this disciple have done wrong if he had done the same thing, and in the same spirit, with Elisha? Clearly not. Elisha's doing it proved that he could *with safety* do it; and our Lord's warning is not against bidding them farewell which were at home at his house, but against the probable *fatal consequences* of that step; lest the embraces of earthly relationship should prove too strong for him, and he should never return to follow Christ. Accordingly, we have called this the Irresolute or Wavering Disciple.

~~1023~~ MATTHEW 8:23-27.

JESUS CROSSING THE SEA OF GALILEE, MIRACULOUSLY STILLS A TEMPEST. (~~1065~~ MARK 4:35-41 ~~1022~~ LUKE 8:22-25).

For the exposition, see on ~~1065~~ Mark 4:35-41.

⌄ MATTHEW 8:28-34.**JESUS HEALS THE GERGESENE DEMONIACS.****(⌄ MARK 5:1-20 ⌄ LUKE 8:26-39).**

For the exposition, see on ⌄ Mark 5:1-20.

CHAPTER 9

◀100▶ MATTHEW 9:1-8.

HEALING A PARALYTIC. (◀100▶ MARK 2:1-12 ◀101▶ LUKE 5:17-26).

This incident appears to follow next in order of time to the cure of the leper (◀100▶ Matthew 8:1-4). For the exposition, see on ◀100▶ Mark 2:1-12.

◀100▶ MATTHEW 9:9-13.

MATTHEW'S CALL AND FEAST. (◀101▶ MARK 2:14-17 ◀102▶ LUKE 5:27-32).

The Call of Matthew (◀100▶ Matthew 9:9).

9. And as Jesus passed forth from thence — that is, from the scene of the paralytic's cure in Capernaum, towards the shore of the Sea of Galilee, on which that town lay. Mark, as usual, pictures the scene more in detail, thus (◀102▶ Mark 2:13): “And He went forth again by the seaside; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them” — or, “kept teaching them.” “And as He passed by”

he saw a man, named Matthew — the writer of this precious Gospel, who here, with singular modesty and brevity, relates the story of his own calling. In Mark and Luke he is called *Levi*, which seems to have been his family name. In their lists of the twelve apostles, however, Mark and Luke give him the name of Matthew, which seems to have been the name by which he was known as a disciple. While he himself sinks his family name, he is careful not to sink his occupation, the obnoxious associations with which he would place over against the grace that called him from it, and made him an apostle. (See on ◀100▶ Matthew 10:3). Mark alone tells us (◀101▶ Mark 2:14) that he was “the son of Alphaeus” — the same, probably, with the father of James the Less. From this and other considerations it is pretty certain that he must at least have heard of our Lord before this meeting. Unnecessary doubts, even from an early period, have been raised about the identity of Levi and Matthew. No capable jury, with the evidence before them which we have in the Gospels, would hesitate in giving a unanimous verdict of identity.

sitting at the receipt of custom — as a publican, which Luke (^{<4127>}Luke 5:27) calls him. It means the place of receipt, the toll house or booth in which the collector sat. Being in this case by the seaside, it might be the ferry tax for the transit of persons and goods across the lake, which he collected. (See on ^{<4186>}Matthew 5:46).

and he saith unto him, Follow me — Witching words these, from the lips of Him who never employed them without giving them resistless efficacy in the hearts of those they were spoken to.

And he — “left all” (^{<4188>}Luke 5:28), “arose and followed him.”

The Feast (^{<4190>}Matthew 9:10-13).

10. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house — The modesty of our Evangelist signally appears here. Luke says (^{<4129>}Luke 5:29) that “Levi made Him *a great feast*,” or “reception,” while Matthew merely says, “He sat at meat”; and Mark and Luke say that it was in Levi’s “own house,” while Matthew merely says, “He sat at meat *in the house*.” Whether this feast was made now, or not till afterwards, is a point of some importance in the order of events, and not agreed among harmonists. The probability is that it did not take place till a considerable time afterwards. For Matthew, who ought surely to know what took place while his Lord was speaking at his own table, tells us that the visit of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, occurred at that moment (^{<4198>}Matthew 9:18). But we know from Mark and Luke that this visit of Jairus did not take place till after our Lord’s return, at a later period from the country of the Gadarenes. (See ^{<4121>}Mark 5:21, etc., and ^{<4184>}Luke 8:40, etc.). We conclude, therefore, that the feast was not made in the novelty of his discipleship, but after Matthew had had time to be somewhat established in the faith; when returning to Capernaum, his compassion for old friends, of his own calling and character, led him to gather them together that they might have an opportunity of hearing the gracious words which proceeded out of His Master’s mouth, if haply they might experience a like change.

behold, many publicans and sinners — Luke says, “a great company” (^{<4129>}Luke 5:29) — came and sat down with him and his disciples. In all such cases the word rendered “sat” is “reclined,” in allusion to the ancient mode of lying on couches at meals.

11. And when the Pharisees — “and scribes,” add Mark and Luke (^{<4116>}Mark 2:6 ^{<4121>}Luke 5:21).

saw it, they said — “murmured” or “muttered,” says Luke (^{<4130>}Luke 5:30).

unto his disciples — not venturing to put their question to Jesus Himself.

Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? — (See on ^{<2152>}Luke 15:2).

12. But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them — to the Pharisees and scribes; addressing Himself to them, though they had shrunk from addressing Him.

They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick — that is, “Ye deem yourselves whole; My mission, therefore, is not to you: The physician’s business is with the sick; therefore eat I with publicans and sinners.” Oh, what myriads of broken hearts, of sin-sick souls, have been bound up by this matchless saying!

13. But go ye and learn what that meaneth — (^{<3006>}Hosea 6:6),

I will have mercy, and not sacrifice — that is, the one rather than the other. “Sacrifice,” the chief part of the ceremonial law, is here put for a religion of literal adherence to mere rules; while “mercy” expresses such compassion for the fallen as seeks to lift them up. The duty of keeping aloof from the polluted, in the sense of “having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,” is obvious enough; but to understand this as prohibiting such intercourse with them as is necessary to their recovery, is to abuse it. This was what these pharisaical religionists did, and this is what our Lord here exposes.

for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance — The italicized words are of doubtful authority here, and more than doubtful authority in ^{<4017>}Mark 2:17; but in ^{<4152>}Luke 5:32 they are undisputed. We have here just the former statement stripped of its figure. “The righteous” are the whole; “sinners,” the sick. When Christ “called” the latter, as He did Matthew, and probably some of those publicans and sinners whom he had invited to meet Him, it was to heal them of their spiritual maladies, or save their souls: “The righteous,” like those miserable self-satisfied Pharisees, “He sent empty away.”

^{<4094>}MATTHEW 9:14-17.

DISCOURSE ON FASTING.

See on ^{<4153>}Luke 5:33-39.

MATTHEW 9:18-26.

THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD HEALED. — THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS RAISED TO LIFE.

(LUKE 8:40-56 MARK 5:21-43).

For the exposition, see on Mark 5:21-43.

MATTHEW 9:27-34.

TWO BLIND MEN AND A DUMB DEMONIAIC HEALED.

These two miracles are recorded by Matthew alone.

Two Blind Men Healed (Matthew 9:27-31).

27. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him — hearing, doubtless, as in a later case is expressed, “that Jesus passed by” (Matthew 20:30).

crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us — It is remarkable that in the only other recorded case in which the blind applied to Jesus for their sight, and obtained it, they addressed Him, over and over again, by this one Messianic title, so well known — “Son of David” (Matthew 20:30). Can there be a doubt that their faith fastened on such great Messianic promises as this, “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,” etc. (Isaiah 35:5).⁹ and if so, this appeal to Him, as the Consolation of Israel, to do His predicted office, would fall with great weight upon the ears of Jesus.

28. And when he was come into the house — To try their faith and patience, He seems to have made them no answer. But

the blind men came to Him — which, no doubt, was what He desired.

and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? they said unto him, Yea, Lord — Doubtless our Lord’s design was not only to put their faith to the test by this question, but to deepen it, to raise their expectation of a cure, and so prepare them to receive it; and the cordial acknowledgment, so touchingly simple, which they immediately made to Him of His power to heal them, shows how entirely that object was gained.

29. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you — not, Receive a cure *proportioned* to your faith, but, Receive this cure as *granted to* your faith. Thus would they carry about with them, in their restored vision, a gracious seal of the faith which drew it from their compassionate Lord.

30. And their eyes were opened: and Jesus straitly charged them — The expression is very strong, denoting great earnestness.

31. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country — (See on ^{<4006}Matthew 8:4).

A Dumb Demoniac Healed (^{<4007}Matthew 9:32-34).

32. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil — “demonized.” The dumbness was not natural, but was the effect of the possession.

33. And when the devil — demon.

was cast out, the dumb spake — The particulars in this case are not given; the object being simply to record the instantaneous restoration of the natural faculties on the removal of the malignant oppression of them, the form which the popular astonishment took, and the very different effect of it upon another class.

and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel — referring, probably, not to this case only, but to all those miraculous displays of healing power which seemed to promise a new era in the history of Israel. Probably they meant by this language to indicate, as far as they thought it safe to do so, their inclination to regard Him as the promised Messiah.

34. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils — “the demons through the prince of the demons.” This seems to be the first muttering of a theory of such miracles which soon became a fixed mode of calumniating them — a theory which would be ridiculous if it were not melancholy as an outburst of the darkest malignity. (See on ^{<4125}Matthew 12:24, etc.).

◀1025 MATTHEW 9:35-10:5.

THIRD GALILEAN CIRCUIT — MISSION OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

As the Mission of the Twelve supposes the previous choice of them — of which our Evangelist gives no account, and which did not take place till a later stage of our Lord's public life — it is introduced here out of its proper place, which is after what is recorded in ▶1062 Luke 6:12-19.

Third Galilean Circuit (▶1025 Matthew 9:35) — and probably the last.

35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease *among the people* — The italicized words are of more than doubtful authority here, and were probably introduced here from ▶1023 Matthew 4:23. The language here is so identical with that used in describing the first circuit (▶1023 Matthew 4:23), that we may presume the work done on both occasions was much the same. It was just a further preparation of the soil, and a fresh sowing of the precious seed. (See on ▶1023 Matthew 4:23). To these fruitful journeyings of the Redeemer, “with healing in His wings,” Peter no doubt alludes, when, in his address to the household of Cornelius, he spoke of “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him” (▶1018 Acts 10:38).

Jesus Compassionating the Multitudes, Asks Prayer for Help
(▶1035 Matthew 9:36-38).

He had now returned from His preaching and healing circuit, and the result, as at the close of the first one, was the gathering of a vast and motley multitude around Him. After a whole night spent in prayer, He had called His more immediate disciples, and from them had solemnly chosen the twelve; then, coming down from the mountain, on which this was transacted, to the multitudes that waited for Him below, He had addressed to them — as we take it — that discourse which bears so strong a resemblance to the Sermon on the Mount that many critics take it to be the same. (See on ▶1062 Luke 6:12-49; and ▶1006 Matthew 5:1, Introductory Remarks). Soon after this, it should seem, the multitudes still hanging on Him, Jesus is touched with their wretched and helpless condition, and acts as is now to be described.

36. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted — This reading, however, has hardly any authority at all. The true reading doubtless is, “were harassed.”

and were scattered abroad — rather, “lying about,” “abandoned,” or “neglected.”

as sheep, having no shepherd — their pitiable condition as wearied under bodily fatigue, a vast disorganized mass, being but a faint picture of their wretchedness as the victims of pharisaic guidance; their souls uncared for, yet drawn after and hanging upon Him. This moved the Redeemer’s compassion.

37. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous — His eye doubtless rested immediately on the Jewish field, but this he saw widening into the vast field of “the world” (^{<4038>}Matthew 13:38), teeming with souls having to be gathered to Him.

but the laborers — men divinely qualified and called to gather them in.

38. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest — the great Lord and Proprietor of all. Compare ^{<6101>}John 15:1, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman.”

that he will send forth laborers into his harvest — The word properly means “thrust forth”; but this emphatic sense disappears in some places, as in ^{<4025>}Matthew 9:25, and ^{<6104>}John 10:4 — “When He *putteth forth* His own sheep.” (See on ^{<4001>}Matthew 4:1).

CHAPTER 10

◀~~1017~~ MATTHEW 10:1-5.

MISSION OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

(◀~~1017~~ MARK 6:7-13 ◀~~1018~~ LUKE 9:1-6).

The last three verses of the ninth chapter form the proper introduction to the Mission of the Twelve, as is evident from the remarkable fact that the Mission of the Seventy was prefaced by the very same words. (See on ◀~~1017~~ Luke 10:2).

1. And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power — The word signifies both “power,” and “authority” or “right.” Even if it were not evident that here both ideas are included, we find both words expressly used in the parallel passage of Luke (◀~~1018~~ Luke 9:1) — “He gave them power and authority” — in other words, He both *qualified* and *authorized* them.

against — or “over.”

2. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these — The other Evangelists enumerate the twelve in immediate connection with their appointment (◀~~1018~~ Mark 3:13-19 ◀~~1019~~ Luke 6:13-16). But our Evangelist, not intending to record the appointment, but only the Mission of the Twelve, gives their names here. And as in the Acts (◀~~1019~~ Acts 1:13) we have a list of the Eleven who met daily in the upper room with the other disciples after their Master’s ascension until the day of Pentecost, we have four catalogues in all for comparison.

The first, Simon, who is called Peter — (See on ◀~~1019~~ John 1:42).

and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother — named after James, as the younger of the two.

3. Philip and Bartholomew — That this person is the same with “Nathanael of Cana in Galilee” is justly concluded for the three following reasons: First, because Bartholomew is not so properly an individual’s name as a family surname; next, because not only in this list, but in Mark’s and Luke’s (◀~~1018~~ Mark 3:18 ◀~~1019~~ Luke 6:14), he follows the name of “Philip,” who was the instrument of bringing Nathanael first to Jesus (◀~~1019~~ John 1:45);

and again, when our Lord, after His resurrection, appeared at the Sea of Tiberias, “Nathanael of Cana in Galilee” is mentioned along with six others, all of them apostles, as being present (^{<4012>}John 21:2).

Matthew the publican — In none of the four lists of the Twelve is this apostle so branded but in his own, as if he would have all to know how deep a debtor he had been to his Lord. (See on ^{<4003>}Matthew 1:3; ^{<4009>}Matthew 9:9).

James the son of Alphaeus — the same person apparently who is called *Cleopas* or *Clopas* (^{<4248>}Luke 24:18 ^{<4025>}John 19:25); and, as he was the husband of Mary, sister to the Virgin, James the Less must have been our Lord’s cousin.

and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus — the same, without doubt, as “Judas the brother of James,” mentioned in both the lists of Luke (^{<4016>}Luke 6:16 ^{<4013>}Acts 1:13), while no one of the name of Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus is so. It is he who in John (^{<4022>}John 14:22) is sweetly called “Judas, not Iscariot.” That he was the author of the Catholic Epistle of “Jude,” and not “the Lord’s brother” (^{<4035>}Matthew 13:55), unless these be the same, is most likely.

4. Simon the Canaanite — rather “Kananite,” but better still, “the Zealot,” as he is called in ^{<4015>}Luke 6:15, where the original term should not have been retained as in our version (“Simon, called Zelotes”), but rendered “Simon, called the Zealot.” The word “Kananite” is just the *Aramaic*, or *Syro-Chaldaic*, term for “Zealot.” Probably before his acquaintance with Jesus, he belonged to the sect of the Zealots, who bound themselves, as a sort of voluntary ecclesiastical police, to see that the law was not broken with impunity.

and Judas Iscariot — that is, Judas of Kerioth, a town of Judah (^{<4055>}Joshua 15:25); so called to distinguish him from “Judas the brother of James” (^{<4016>}Luke 6:16).

who also betrayed him — a note of infamy attached to his name in all the catalogues of the Twelve.

^{<4005>}MATTHEW 10:5-42.

THE TWELVE RECEIVE THEIR INSTRUCTIONS.

This directory divides itself into three distinct parts. The *first* part (^{<4005>}Matthew 10:5-15) contains directions for the brief and temporary

mission on which they were now going forth, with respect to the places they were to go to, the works they were to do, the message they were to bear, and the manner in which they were to conduct themselves. The *second* part (^{<4006>}Matthew 10:16-23) contains directions of no such limited and temporary nature, but opens out into the permanent exercise of the Gospel ministry. The *third* part (^{<4008>}Matthew 10:24-42) is of wider application still, reaching not only to the ministry of the Gospel in every age, but to the service of Christ in the widest sense. *It is a strong confirmation of this threefold division, that each part closes with the words, "VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU"* (^{<4005>}Matthew 10:15,23,42).

Directions for the Present Mission (^{<4005>}Matthew 10:5-15).

5. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not —

The Samaritans were Gentiles by blood; but being the descendants of those whom the king of Assyria had transported from the East to supply the place of the ten tribes carried captive, they had adopted the religion of the Jews, though with admixtures of their own: and, as the nearest neighbors of the Jews, they occupied a place intermediate between them and the Gentiles. Accordingly, when this prohibition was to be taken off, on the effusion of the Spirit at Pentecost, the apostles were told that they should be Christ's witnesses first "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea," then "in Samaria," and lastly, "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (^{<4008>}Acts 1:8).

6. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel — Until Christ's death, which broke down the middle wall of Partition (^{<4024>}Ephesians 2:14), the Gospel commission was to the Jews only, who, though the visible people of God, were "lost sheep," not merely in the sense which all sinners are (^{<2536>}Isaiah 53:6 ^{<4025>}1 Peter 2:25; compare with ^{<2901>}Luke 19:10), but as abandoned and left to wander from the right way by faithless shepherds (^{<2810>}Jeremiah 50:6,17 ^{<3642>}Ezekiel 34:2-6, etc.).

7. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand — (See on ^{<4002>}Matthew 3:2).

8. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils — (The italicized clause — "*raise the dead*" — is wanting in many manuscripts). Here we have the first communication of supernatural power by Christ Himself to His followers — thus anticipating the gifts of Pentecost. And right royally does He dispense it.

freely ye have received, freely give — Divine saying, divinely said! (Compare ^{<6501>}Deuteronomy 15:10,11 ^{<4036>}Acts 3:6) — an apple of gold in a

setting of silver (^{<3151>}Proverbs 25:11). It reminds us of that other golden saying of our Lord, rescued from oblivion by Paul, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (^{<4015>}Acts 20:35). Who can estimate what the world owes to such sayings, and with what beautiful foliage and rich fruit such seeds have covered, and will yet cover, this earth!

9. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses — “for” your purses; literally, “your belts,” in which they kept their money.

10. Nor scrip for your journey — the bag used by travelers for holding provisions.

neither two coats — or tunics, worn next the skin. The meaning is, Take no change of dress, no additional articles.

neither shoes — that is change of them.

nor yet staves — The received text here has “a staff,” but our version follows another reading, “staves,” which is found in the received text of Luke (^{<4015>}Luke 9:3). The true reading, however, evidently is “a staff” — meaning, that they were not to procure even that much. expressly for this missionary journey, but to go with what they had. No doubt it was the misunderstanding of this that gave rise to the reading “staves” in so many manuscripts. Even if this reading were genuine, it could not mean “more than one”; for who, as ALFORD well asks, would think of taking a spare staff?

for the workman is worthy of his meat — his “food” or “maintenance”; a principle which, being universally recognized in secular affairs, is here authoritatively applied to the services of the Lord’s workmen, and by Paul repeatedly and touchingly employed in his appeals to the churches (^{<6157>}Romans 15:27 ^{<4011>}1 Corinthians 9:11 ^{<8015>}Galatians 6:6), and once as “scripture” (^{<5158>}1 Timothy 5:18).

11. And into whatsoever city or town — town or village.

ye shall enter inquire — carefully.

who in it is worthy — or “meet” to entertain such messengers; not in point of rank, of course, but of congenial disposition.

and there abide till ye go thence — not shifting about, as if discontented, but returning the welcome given with a courteous, contented, accommodating disposition.

12. And when ye come into an house — or “the house,” but it means not the worthy house, but the house ye first enter, to try if it be worthy.

salute it — show it the usual civilities.

13. And if the house be worthy — showing this by giving you a welcome.

let your peace come upon it — This is best explained by the injunction to the Seventy, “And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house” (^{<2015>}Luke 10:5). This was the ancient salutation of the East, and it prevails to this day. But from the lips of Christ and His messengers, it means something far higher, both in the gift and the giving of it, than in the current salutation. (See on ^{<8427>}John 14:27).

but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you — If your peace finds a shut, instead of an open, door in the heart of any household, take it back to yourselves, who know how to value it; and it will taste the sweeter to you for having been offered, even though rejected.

14. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city — for possibly a whole town might not furnish one “worthy.”

shake off the dust of your feet — “for a testimony against them,” as Mark and Luke add (^{<4011>}Mark 6:11 ^{<2011>}Luke 10:11). By this symbolical action they vividly shook themselves from all *connection* with such, and all *responsibility* for the guilt of rejecting them and their message. Such symbolical actions were common in ancient times, even among others than the Jews, as strikingly appears in Pilate (^{<4274>}Matthew 27:24). And even to this day it prevails in the East.

15. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable — more bearable.

for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city — Those Cities of the Plain, which were given to the flames for their loathsome impurities, shall be treated as less criminal, we are here taught, than those places which, though morally respectable, reject the Gospel message and affront those that bear it.

Directions for the Future and Permanent Exercise of the Christian Ministry (^{<4016>}Matthew 10:16-23).

16. Behold, I send you forth — The “I” here is emphatic, holding up Himself as the Fountain of the Gospel ministry, as He is also the Great Burden of it.

as sheep — defenseless.

in the midst of wolves — ready to make a prey of you (^{<4800>}John 10:12). To be left exposed, as sheep to wolves, would have been startling enough; but that the sheep should be *sent* among the wolves would sound strange indeed. No wonder this announcement begins with the exclamation, “Behold.”

be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves — Wonderful combination this! Alone, the wisdom of the serpent is mere cunning, and the harmlessness of the dove little better than weakness: but in combination, the wisdom of the serpent would save them from unnecessary exposure to danger; the harmlessness of the dove, from sinful expedients to escape it. In the apostolic age of Christianity, how harmoniously were these qualities displayed! Instead of the fanatical thirst for martyrdom, to which a later age gave birth, there was a manly combination of unflinching zeal and calm discretion, before which nothing was able to stand.

17. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils — the local courts, used here for civil magistrates in general.

and they will scourge you in their synagogues — By this is meant persecution at the hands of the ecclesiastics.

18. And ye shall be brought before governors — provincial rulers.

and kings — the highest tribunals.

for my sake, for a testimony against them — rather, “to them,” in order to bear testimony to the truth and its glorious effects.

and the Gentiles — “to the Gentiles”; a hint that their message would not long be confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Acts of the Apostles are the best commentary on these warnings.

19. But when they deliver you up, take no thought — be not solicitous or anxious. (See on ^{<4065>}Matthew 6:25).

how or what ye shall speak — that is, either in what *manner* ye shall make your defense, or of what *matter* it shall consist.

for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak — (See ^{<0042>}Exodus 4:12 ^{<2007>}Jeremiah 1:7).

20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you — How remarkably this has been verified, the whole history of persecution thrillingly proclaims — from the Acts of the Apostles to the latest martyrology.

21. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death — for example, by lodging information against them with the authorities. The deep and virulent hostility of the old nature and life to the new — as of Belial to Christ — was to issue in awful wrenches of the dearest ties; and the disciples, in the prospect of their cause and themselves being launched upon society, are here prepared for the worst.

22. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake — The universality of this hatred would make it evident to them, that since it would not be owing to any temporary excitement, local virulence, or personal prejudice, on the part of their enemies, so no amount of discretion on their part, consistent with entire fidelity to the truth, would avail to stifle that enmity — though it might soften its violence, and in some cases avert the outward manifestations of it.

but he that endureth to the end shall be saved — a great saying, repeated, in connection with similar warnings, in the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem (^{<4B13>}Matthew 24:13); and often reiterated by the apostle as a warning against “drawing back unto perdition” (^{<5B13>}Hebrews 3:6,13 6:4-6 10:23,26-29,38,39, etc.). As “drawing back unto perdition” is merely the palpable evidence of the want of “root” from the first in the Christian profession (^{<4B13>}Luke 8:13), so “enduring to the end” is just the proper evidence of its reality and solidity.

23. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another — “into the other.” This, though applicable to all time, and exemplified by our Lord Himself once and again, had special reference to the brief opportunities which Israel was to have of “knowing the time of His visitations.”

for verily I say unto you — what will startle you, but at the same time show you the solemnity of your mission, and the need of economizing the time for it.

Ye shall not have gone over — Ye shall in nowise have completed.

the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come — To understand this — as LANGE and others do — in the first instance, of Christ's own peregrinations, as if He had said, “Waste not your time upon hostile places, for I Myself will be after you ere your work be over” — seems almost trifling. “The coming of the Son of man” has a fixed doctrinal sense, here referring immediately to the crisis of Israel's history as the visible kingdom of God, when Christ was to come and judge it; when “the wrath would

come upon it to the uttermost”; and when, on the ruins of Jerusalem and the old economy, He would establish His own kingdom. This, in the uniform language of Scripture, is more immediately “the coming of the Son of man,” “the day of vengeance of our God” (^{<163>}Matthew 16:28 24:27,34; compare with ^{<3825>}Hebrews 10:25 ^{<5079>}James 5:7-9) — but only as being such a lively anticipation of His second coming for vengeance and deliverance. So understood, it is parallel with ^{<1244>}Matthew 24:14 (on which see).

Directions for the Service of Christ in Its Widest Sense
(^{<1003>}Matthew 10:24-42).

24. The disciple is not above his master — teacher.

nor the servant above his lord — another maxim which our Lord repeats in various connections (^{<1640>}Luke 6:40 ^{<3136>}John 13:16 15:20).

25. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub — All the *Greek* manuscripts, write “Beelzebul,” which undoubtedly is the right form of this word. The other reading came in no doubt from the Old Testament “Baalzebub,” the god of Ekron (^{<1202>}2 Kings 1:2), which it was designed to express. As all idolatry was regarded as devil worship (^{<3170>}Leviticus 17:7 ^{<1527>}Deuteronomy 32:17 ^{<9437>}Psalms 106:37 ^{<3101>}1 Corinthians 10:20), so there seems to have been something peculiarly satanic about the worship of this hateful god, which caused his name to be a synonym of Satan. Though we nowhere read that our Lord was actually called “Beelzebul,” He was charged with being in league with Satan under that hateful name (^{<1224>}Matthew 12:24,26), and more than once Himself was charged with “having a devil” or “demon” (^{<1130>}Mark 3:30 ^{<3120>}John 7:20 8:48). Here it is used to denote the most opprobrious language which could be applied by one to another.

how much more shall they call them of his household — “the inmates.” Three relations in which Christ stands to His people are here mentioned: He is their Teacher — they His disciples; He is their Lord — they His servants; He is the Master of the household — they its inmates. In all these relations, He says here, He and they are so bound up together that they cannot look to fare better than He, and should think it enough if they fare no worse.

26. Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known — that is, There is no use, and no need, of concealing anything; right and wrong, truth and error, are about to come into open and deadly collision; and the day is coming

when all hidden things shall be disclosed, everything seen as it is, and every one have his due (^{<4015>}1 Corinthians 4:5).

27. What I tell you in darkness — in the privacy of a teaching for which men are not yet ripe.

that speak ye in the light — for when ye go forth all will be ready.

and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops — Give free and fearless utterance to all that I have taught you while yet with you. *Objection:* But this may cost us our life? *Answer:* It may, but there their power ends:

28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul — In ^{<213>}Luke 12:4, “and after that have no more that they can do.”

but rather fear him — In Luke (^{<215>}Luke 12:5) this is peculiarly solemn, “I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear,” even Him

which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell — A decisive proof this that there is a hell for the body as well as the soul in the eternal world; in other words, that the torment that awaits the lost will have elements of suffering adapted to the *material* as well as the spiritual part of our nature, both of which, we are assured, will exist for ever. In the corresponding warning contained in Luke (^{<216>}Luke 12:4), Jesus calls His disciples “My friends,” as if He had felt that such sufferings constituted a bond of peculiar tenderness between Him and them.

29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? — In Luke (^{<217>}Luke 12:6) it is “five sparrows for two farthings”; so that, if the purchaser took two farthings’ worth, he got one in addition — of such small value were they.

and one of them shall not fall on the ground — exhausted or killed

without your Father — “Not one of them is forgotten before God,” as it is in Luke (^{<218>}Luke 12:6).

30. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered — See ^{<218>}Luke 21:18 (and compare for the language ^{<0945>}1 Samuel 14:45 ^{<4273>}Acts 27:34).

31. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows — Was ever language of such simplicity felt to carry such weight as this does? But here lies much of the charm and power of our Lord’s teaching.

32. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men — despising the shame.

him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven — I will not be ashamed of him, but will own him before the most august of all assemblies.

33. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven — before that same assembly: “He shall have from Me his own treatment of Me on the earth.” (But see on ^{<1627>}Matthew 16:27).

34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword — strife, discord, conflict; deadly opposition between eternally hostile principles, penetrating into and rending asunder the dearest ties.

35. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law — (See on ^{<1251>}Luke 12:51).

36. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household — This saying, which is quoted, as is the whole verse, from ^{<3076>}Micah 7:6, is but an extension of the Psalmist’s complaint (^{<1409>}Psalm 41:9 55:12-14), which had its most affecting illustration in the treason of Judas against our Lord Himself (^{<1318>}John 13:18 ^{<1648>}Matthew 26:48-50). Hence would arise the necessity of a choice between Christ and the nearest relations, which would put them to the severest test.

37. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me — (Compare ^{<6319>}Deuteronomy 33:9). As the preference of the one would, in the case supposed, necessitate the abandonment of the other, our Lord here, with a sublime, yet awful self-respect, asserts His own claims to supreme affection.

38. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me — a saying which our Lord once and again emphatically reiterates (^{<1624>}Matthew 16:24 ^{<1427>}Luke 9:23 14:27). We have become so accustomed to this expression — “taking up one’s cross” — in the sense of “being prepared for trials in general for Christ’s sake,” that we are apt to lose sight of its primary and proper sense here — “a preparedness to go forth even to crucifixion,” as when our Lord had to bear His own cross on His way to Calvary — a saying the more remarkable as our Lord had not as yet given a hint that He would die this death, nor was crucifixion a Jewish mode of capital punishment.

39. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it — another of those pregnant sayings which our Lord so often reiterates (^{<1165>}Matthew 16:25 ^{<1173>}Luke 17:33 ^{<8125>}John 12:25). The pith of such paradoxical maxims depends on the double sense attached to the word “life” — a lower and a higher, the natural and the spiritual, the temporal and eternal. An entire sacrifice of the lower, with all its relationships and interests — or, a willingness to make it which is the same thing — is indispensable to the preservation of the higher life; and he who cannot bring himself to surrender the one for the sake of the other shall eventually lose both.

40. He that receiveth you — entertaineth you,

receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me — As the treatment which an ambassador receives is understood and regarded as expressing the light in which he that sends him is viewed, so, says our Lord here, “Your authority is Mine, as Mine is My Father’s.”

41. He that receiveth a prophet — one divinely commissioned to deliver a message from heaven. Predicting future events was no necessary part of a prophet’s office, especially as the word is used in the New Testament.

in the name of a prophet — for his office’s sake and love to his master. (See ^{<1149>}2 Kings 4:9 and see on ^{<1240>}2 Kings 4:10).

shall receive a prophet’s reward — What an encouragement to those who are not prophets! (See ^{<8183>}John 3:5-8).

and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man — from sympathy with his character and esteem for himself as such

shall receive a righteous man’s reward — for he must himself have the seed of righteousness who has any real sympathy with it and complacency in him who possesses it.

42. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones — Beautiful epithet! Originally taken from ^{<3837>}Zechariah 13:7. The reference is to their lowliness in spirit, their littleness in the eyes of an undiscerning world, while high in Heaven’s esteem.

a cup of cold water only — meaning, the smallest service.

in the name of a disciple — or, as it is in Mark (^{<4104>}Mark 9:41), because ye are Christ’s: from love to Me, and to him from his connection with Me.

verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward — There is here a descending climax — “a prophet,” “a righteous man,” “a little one”;

signifying that however low we come down in our services to those that are Christ's, all that is done for His sake, and that bears the stamp of love to His blessed name, shall be divinely appreciated and owned and rewarded.

CHAPTER 11

◀1102 MATTHEW 11:1-19.

THE IMPRISONED BAPTIST'S MESSAGE TO HIS MASTER — THE REPLY, AND DISCOURSE, ON THE DEPARTURE OF THE MESSENGERS, REGARDING JOHN AND HIS MISSION. (◀1178 LUKE 7:18-35).

1. And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciple — rather, “the twelve disciples,”

he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities — This was scarcely a fourth circuit — if we may judge from the less formal way in which it was expressed — but, perhaps, a set of visits paid to certain places, either not reached at all before, or too rapidly passed through, in order to fill up the time till the return of the Twelve. As to their labors, nothing is said of them by our Evangelist. But Luke (◀1106 Luke 9:6) says, “They departed, and went through, the towns,” or “villages,” “preaching the Gospel, and healing everywhere.” Mark (◀1162 Mark 6:12,13), as usual, is more explicit: “And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils (demons) and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.” Though this “anointing with oil” was not mentioned in our Lord’s instructions — at least in any of the records of them — we know it to have been practiced long after this in the apostolic Church (see ◀3164 James 5:14, and compare ◀1162 Mark 6:12,13) — not *medicinally*, but as a sign of the healing virtue which was communicated by their hands, and a symbol of something still more precious. It was *unction*, indeed, but, as BENGEL remarks, it was something very different from what Romanists call *extreme unction*. He adds, what is very probable, that they do not appear to have carried the oil about with them, but, as the Jews used oil as a medicine, to have employed it just as they found it with the sick, in their own higher way.

2. Now when John had heard in the prison — For the account of this imprisonment, see on ◀1167 Mark 6:17-20.

the works of Christ, he sent, etc. — On the whole passage, see on ◀1178 Luke 7:18-35.

◀113▶ MATTHEW 11:20-30.

OUTBURST OF FEELING SUGGESTED TO THE MIND OF JESUS BY THE RESULT OF HIS LABORS IN GALILEE.

The connection of this with what goes before it and the similarity of its tone make it evident, we think, that it was delivered on the same occasion, and that it is but a new and more comprehensive series of reflections in the same strain.

20. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.

21. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! — not elsewhere mentioned, but it must have lain near Capernaum.

woe unto thee, Bethsaida — “fishing-house,” a fishing station — on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, and to the north of Capernaum; the birthplace of three of the apostles — the brothers Andrew and Peter, and Philip. These two cities appear to be singled out to denote the whole region in which they lay — a region favored with the Redeemer’s presence, teaching, and works above every other.

for if the mighty works — the miracles

which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon — ancient and celebrated commercial cities, on the northeastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, lying north of Palestine, and the latter the northernmost. As their wealth and prosperity engendered luxury and its concomitant evils — irreligion and moral degeneracy — their overthrow was repeatedly foretold in ancient prophecy, and once and again fulfilled by victorious enemies. Yet they were rebuilt, and at this time were in a flourishing condition.

they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes — remarkable language, showing that they had done less violence to conscience, and so, in God’s sight, were less criminal than the region here spoken of.

22. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you — more endurable.

23. And thou, Capernaum — (See on ▶1083▶ Matthew 4:13).

which art exalted unto heaven — Not even of Chorazin and Bethsaida is this said. For since at Capernaum Jesus had His stated abode during the whole period of His public life which He spent in Galilee, it was *the most favored spot upon earth*, the most exalted in privilege.

shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom — destroyed for its pollutions.

it would have remained until this day — having done no such violence to conscience, and so incurred speakably less guilt.

24. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee — “It has been indeed,” says DR. STANLEY, “more tolerable, in one sense, in the day of its earthly judgment, for the land of Sodom than for Capernaum; for the name, and perhaps even the remains of Sodom are still to be found on the shores of the Dead Sea; while that of Capernaum has, on the Lake of Gennesareth, been utterly lost.” But the judgment of which our Lord here speaks is still future; a judgment not on material cities, but their responsible inhabitants — a judgment final and ir retrievable.

25. At that time Jesus answered and said — We are not to understand by this, that the previous discourse had been concluded, and that this is a record only of something said about the same period. For the connection is most close, and the word “answered” — which, when there is no one to answer, refers to something just before said, or rising in the mind of the speaker in consequence of something said — confirms this. What Jesus here “answered” evidently was the melancholy results of His ministry, lamented over in the foregoing verses. It is as if He had said, “Yes; but there is a brighter side to the picture; even in those who have rejected the message of eternal life, it is the pride of their own hearts only which has blinded them, and the glory of the truth does but the more appear in their inability to receive it. Nor have all rejected it even here; souls thirsting for salvation have drawn water with joy from the wells of salvation; the weary have found rest; the hungry have been filled with good things, while the rich have been sent empty away.”

I thank thee — rather, “I assent to thee.” But this is not strong enough. The idea of “*full*” or “cordial” concurrence is conveyed by the preposition. The thing expressed is adoring acquiescence, holy satisfaction with that law of the divine procedure about to be mentioned. And as, when He afterwards uttered the same words, He “exulted in spirit” (see on ~~10:21~~ Luke 10:21), probably He did the same now, though not recorded.

O Father, Lord of heaven and earth — He so styles His Father here, to signify that from Him of right emanates all such high arrangements.

because thou hast hid these things — the knowledge of these saving truths.

from the wise and prudent — The former of these terms points to the men who pride themselves upon their speculative or philosophical attainments; the latter to the men of worldly shrewdness — the clever, the sharp-witted, the men of affairs. The distinction is a natural one, and was well understood. (See ^{<419>}1 Corinthians 1:19, etc.). But why had the Father hid from such the things that belonged to their peace, and why did Jesus so emphatically set His seal to this arrangement? Because it is not for the offending and revolted to speak or to speculate, but to listen to Him from whom we have broken loose, that we may learn whether there be any recovery for us at all; and if there be, on what principles — of what nature — to what ends. To bring our own “wisdom and prudence” to such questions is impertinent and presumptuous; and if the truth regarding them, or the glory of it, be “hid” from us, it is but a fitting retribution, to which all the right-minded will set their seal along with Jesus.

hast revealed them unto babes — to babe-like men; men of unassuming docility, men who, conscious that they know nothing, and have no right to sit in judgment on the things that belong to their peace, determine simply to “hear what God the Lord will speak.” Such are well called “babes.” (See ^{<483>}Hebrews 5:13 ^{<431>}1 Corinthians 13:11:14:20, etc.).

26. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good — the emphatic and chosen term for expressing any object of divine complacency; whether Christ Himself (see on ^{<407>}Matthew 3:17), or God’s gracious eternal arrangements (see on ^{<483>}Philippians 2:13).

in thy sight — This is just a sublime echo of the foregoing words; as if Jesus, when He uttered them, had paused to reflect on it, and as if the glory of it — not so much in the light of its own reasonableness as of God’s absolute will that so it should be — had filled His soul.

27. All things are delivered unto me of my Father — He does not say, They are *revealed* — as to one who knew them not, and was an entire stranger to them save as they were discovered to Him — but, They are “delivered over,” or “committed,” to Me of My Father; meaning the whole administration of the kingdom of grace. So in ^{<485>}John 3:35, “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand” (see on ^{<485>}John 3:35). But though the “all things” in both these passages refer properly to the kingdom of grace, they of course include all things necessary to the full

execution of that trust — that is, *unlimited* power. (Song of Solomon
 <188>Matthew 28:18 <170>John 17:2 <102>Ephesians 1:22).

and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will — willeth

to reveal him — What a saying is this, that “the Father and the Son are mutually and exclusively known to each other!” A higher claim to equality with the Father cannot be conceived. Either, then, we have here one of the revolting assumptions ever uttered, or the proper divinity of Christ should to Christians be beyond dispute. “But, alas for me!” may some burdened soul, sighing for relief, here exclaim. If it be thus with us, what can any poor creature do but lie down in passive despair, unless he could dare to hope that *he* may be one of the favored class “to whom the Son is willing to reveal the Father.” But nay. This testimony to the sovereignty of that gracious “will,” on which alone men’s salvation depends, is designed but to reveal the source and enhance the glory of it when once imparted — not to paralyze or shut the soul up in despair. Hear, accordingly, what follows:

28. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest — Incomparable, ravishing sounds these — if ever such were heard in this weary, groaning world! What gentleness, what sweetness is there in the very style of the invitation — “Hither to Me”; and in the words, “All ye that toil and are burdened,” the universal wretchedness of man is depicted, on both its sides — the *active* and the *passive* forms of it.

29. Take my yoke upon you — the yoke of subjection to Jesus.

and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls — As Christ’s willingness to empty Himself to the uttermost of His Father’s requirements was the spring of ineffable repose to His own Spirit, so in the same track does He invite all to follow Him, with the assurance of the same experience.

30. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light — Matchless paradox, even among the paradoxically couched maxims in which our Lord delights! That rest which the soul experiences when once safe under Christ’s wing makes all yokes easy, all burdens light.

CHAPTER 12

⋄¹² MATTHEW 12:1-8.

PLUCKING CORN EARS ON THE SABBATH DAY.

(⋄¹²³ MARK 2:23-28 ⋄¹²⁶ LUKE 6:1-5).

The season of the year when this occurred is determined by the event itself. Ripe corn ears are found in the fields only just before harvest. The barley harvest seems clearly intended here, at the close of our March and beginning of our April. It coincided with the Passover season, as the wheat harvest with Pentecost. But in Luke (⋄¹²⁶ Luke 6:1) we have a still more definite note of time, if we could be certain of the meaning of the peculiar term which he employs to express it “It came to pass (he says) on the sabbath, which was the *first-second*,” for that is the proper rendering of the word, and not “the second sabbath after the first,” as in our version. Of the various conjectures what this may mean, that of SCALIGER is the most approved, and, as we think, the freest from difficulty, namely, the first sabbath after the second day of the Passover; that is, the first of the seven sabbaths which were to be reckoned from the second day of the Passover, which was itself a sabbath, until the next feast, the feast of Pentecost (⋄¹²³⁴ Leviticus 23:15,16 ⋄¹²⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 16:9,10) In this case, the day meant by the Evangelist is the first of those seven sabbaths intervening between Passover and Pentecost. And if we are right in regarding the “feast” mentioned in ⋄¹²⁶ John 5:1 as a *Passover*, and consequently the second during our Lord’s public ministry (see on ⋄¹²⁶ John 5:1), this plucking of the ears of corn must have occurred immediately after the scene and the discourse recorded in ⋄¹²⁶⁹ John 5:19-47, which, doubtless, would induce our Lord to hasten His departure for the north, to avoid the wrath of the Pharisees, which He had kindled at Jerusalem. Here, accordingly, we find Him in the fields — on His way probably to Galilee.

1. At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn — “the cornfields” (⋄¹²³ Mark 2:23 ⋄¹²⁶ Luke 6:1).

and his disciples were an hungered — not as one may be before his regular meals; but evidently from shortness of provisions: for Jesus defends their plucking the corn-ears and eating them on the plea of *necessity*.

and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat — “rubbing them in their hands” (^{<4001>}Luke 6:1).

2. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day — The act itself was expressly permitted (^{<4025>}Deuteronomy 23:25). But as being “servile work,” which was prohibited on the sabbath day, it was regarded as sinful.

3. But he said unto them, Have ye not read — or, as Mark (^{<4025>}Mark 2:25) has it, “Have ye never read.”

what David did when he was an hungered, and they that were with him — (^{<0201>}1 Samuel 21:1-6)

4. How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? — No example could be more apposite than this. The man after God’s own heart, of whom the Jews ever boasted, when suffering in God’s cause and straitened for provisions, asked and obtained from the high priest what, according to the law, it was illegal for anyone save the priests to touch. Mark (^{<4026>}Mark 2:26) says this occurred “in the days of Abiathar the high priest.” But this means not during his high priesthood — for it was under that of his father Ahimelech — but simply, in his time. Ahimelech was soon succeeded by Abiathar, whose connection with David, and prominence during his reign, may account for his name, rather than his father’s, being here introduced. Yet there is not a little confusion in what is said of these priests in different parts of the Old Testament. Thus he is called both the son of the father of Ahimelech (^{<0221>}1 Samuel 22:20 ^{<0817>}2 Samuel 8:17); and Ahimelech is called Ahiah (^{<0403>}1 Samuel 14:3), and Abimelech (^{<1316>}1 Chronicles 18:16).

5. Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath — by doing “servile work.”

and are blameless? — The double offerings required on the sabbath day (^{<0809>}Numbers 28:9) could not be presented, and the new-baked showbread (^{<0205>}Leviticus 24:5 ^{<1103>}1 Chronicles 9:32) could not be prepared and presented every sabbath morning, without a good deal of servile work on the part of the priests; not to speak of circumcision, which, when the child’s eighth day happened to fall on a sabbath, had to be performed by the priests on that day. (See on ^{<4072>}John 7:22,23).

6. But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple — or rather, according to the reading which is best supported, “something

greater.” The argument stands thus: “The ordinary rules for the observance of the sabbath give way before the requirements of the temple; but there are rights here before which the temple itself must give way.” Thus indirectly, but not the less decidedly, does our Lord put in His own claims to consideration in this question — claims to be presently put in even more nakedly.

7. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice — (³⁰⁶Hosea 6:6 ³⁰⁶Micah 6:6-8, etc.). See on ⁴⁹³Matthew 9:13.

ye would not have condemned the guiltless — that is, Had ye understood the great principle of all religion, which the Scripture everywhere recognizes — that ceremonial observances must give way before moral duties, and particularly the necessities of nature — ye would have refrained from these captious complaints against men who in this matter are blameless. But our Lord added a specific application of this great principle to the law of the sabbath, preserved only in Mark: “And he said unto them, the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (⁴⁰⁷⁷Mark 2:27). A glorious and far-reaching maxim, alike for the permanent establishment of the sabbath and the true freedom of its observance.

8. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day — In what sense now is the Son of man Lord of the sabbath day? Not surely to abolish it — that surely were a strange lordship, especially just after saying that it was made or instituted for MAN — but to *own* it, to *interpret* it, to *preside over* it, and to *ennoble* it, by merging it in the “Lord’s Day” (⁶⁰⁰Revelation 1:10), breathing into it an air of liberty and love necessarily unknown before, and thus making it the nearest resemblance to the eternal sabbatism.

⁴⁰⁰MATTHEW 12:9-21.

THE HEALING OF A WITHERED HAND ON THE SABBATH DAY AND RETIREMENT OF JESUS TO AVOID DANGER.

(⁴⁰⁰MARK 3:1-12 ⁴⁰⁶LUKE 6:6-11).

Healing of a Withered Hand (⁴⁰⁰Matthew 12:9-14).

9. And when he was departed thence — but “on another sabbath” (⁴⁰⁶Luke 6:6).

he went into their synagogue — and taught,” He had now, no doubt, arrived in Galilee; but this, it would appear, did not occur at Capernaum, for

after it was over, He “withdrew Himself,” it is said “*to the sea*” (^(~~4007~~)Mark 3:7), whereas Capernaum was at the sea.

And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered — disabled by paralysis (as in ^(~~4108~~)1 Kings 13:4). It was his right hand, as Luke (^(~~4006~~)Luke 6:6) graphically notes. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him — Mark and Luke (^(~~4006~~)Mark 3:2 ^(~~4007~~)Luke 6:7) say they “watched Him whether He would heal on the sabbath day.” They were now come to the length of dogging His steps, to collect materials for a charge of impiety against Him. It is probable that it was to their *thoughts* rather than their words that Jesus addressed Himself in what follows.

11. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

12. How much then is a man better than a sheep? — Resistless appeal! “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast” (^(~~4109~~)Proverbs 12:10), and would instinctively rescue it from death or suffering on the sabbath day; how much more his nobler fellow man! But the reasoning, as given in the other two Gospels, is singularly striking: “But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life or to destroy it?” (^(~~4108~~)Luke 6:8,9), or as in Mark (^(~~4006~~)Mark 3:4), “to kill?” He thus shuts them. up to this startling alternative: “Not to do good, when it is in the power of our hand to do it, is to do evil; not to save life, when we can, is to kill” — and must the letter of the sabbath rest be kept at this expense? This unexpected thrust shut their mouths. By this great ethical principle our Lord, we see, held Himself bound, as man. But here we must turn to Mark, whose graphic details make the second Gospel so exceedingly precious. “When He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man” (^(~~4006~~)Mark 3:5). This is one of the very few passages in the Gospel history which reveal our Lord’s *feelings*. How holy this anger was appears from the “grief” which mingled with it at “the hardness of their hearts.”

13. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth — the power to obey going forth with the word of command.

and it was restored whole, like as the other — The poor man, having faith in this wonderful Healer — which no doubt the whole scene would

singularly help to strengthen — disregarded the proud and venomous Pharisees, and thus gloriously put them to shame.

14. Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him — This is the first explicit mention of their murderous designs against our Lord. Luke (^{<4081>}Luke 6:11) says, they were filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.” But their doubt was not, *whether* to get rid of Him, but *how* to compass it. Mark (^{<4086>}Mark 3:6), as usual, is more definite: “The Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.” These Herodians were supporters of Herod’s dynasty, created by Caesar — a political rather than religious party. The Pharisees regarded them as untrue to their religion and country. But here we see them combining together against Christ as a common enemy. So on a subsequent occasion (^{<4025>}Matthew 22:15,16).

Jesus Retires to Avoid Danger (^{<4025>}Matthew 12:15-21).

15. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence — whither, our Evangelist says not; but Mark (^{<4087>}Mark 3:7) says “it was *to the sea*” — to some distance, no doubt, from the scene of the miracle, the madness, and the plotting just recorded.

and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all — Mark gives the following interesting details: “A great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things He did, came unto Him. And He spake to His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him. For He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues. And unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And He straitly charged them that they should not make Him known” (^{<4087>}Mark 3:7-12). How glorious this extorted homage to the Son of God! But as this was not the time, so neither were they the fitting preachers, as BENGEL says. (See on ^{<4025>}Mark 1:25, and compare ^{<3029>}James 2:19). Coming back now to our Evangelist: after saying, “He healed them all,” he continues:

16. And charged them — the healed.

that they should not make him known — (See on ^{<4088>}Matthew 8:4).

17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying — (^{<3011>}Isaiah 42:1).

18. Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.

19. He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

20. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory — “unto truth,” says the *Hebrew* original, and the *Septuagint* also. But our Evangelist merely seizes the spirit, instead of the letter of the prediction in this point. The grandeur and completeness of Messiah’s victories would prove, it seems, not more wonderful than the unobtrusive noiselessness with which they were to be achieved. And whereas one rough touch will break a bruised reed, and quench the flickering, smoking flax, His it should be, with matchless tenderness, love, and skill, to lift up the meek, to strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees, to comfort all that mourn, to say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.

21. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust — Part of His present audience were Gentiles — from Tyre and Sidon — first-fruits of the great Gentile harvest contemplated in the prophecy.

<1022>MATTHEW 12:22-37.

A BLIND AND DUMB DEMONIAK HEALED AND REPLY TO THE MALIGNANT EXPLANATION PUT UPON IT.

(<1033>MARK 3:20-30 <1014>LUKE 11:14-23).

The precise time of this section is uncertain. Judging from the statements with which Mark introduces it, we should conclude that it was when our Lord’s popularity was approaching its zenith, and so before the feeding of the five thousand. But, on the other hand, the advanced state of the charges brought against our Lord, and the plainness of His warnings and denunciations in reply, seem to favor the later period at which Luke introduces it. “And the multitude,” says Mark (<1033>Mark 3:20,21), “cometh together again,” referring back to the immense gathering which Mark had before recorded (<1012>Mark 2:2) — “so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when His friends” — or rather, “relatives,” as appears from <1023>Matthew 12:31, and see on <1024>Matthew 12:46 — “heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside Himself.” Compare <1013>2 Corinthians 5:13, “For whether we be beside ourselves, it is *to God*.”

22. Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil — “a demonized person.”

blind and dumb, and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and the dumb both spake and saw.

23. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? — The form of the interrogative requires this to be rendered, “Is this the Son of David?” And as questions put in this form (in *Greek*) suppose doubt, and expect rather a negative answer, the meaning is, “Can it possibly be?” — the people thus indicating their secret impression that this must be He; yet saving themselves from the wrath of the ecclesiastics, which a direct assertion of it would have brought upon them. (On a similar question, see on ^{<4023>}John 4:29; and on the phrase, “Son of David,” see on ^{<4027>}Matthew 9:27).

24. But when the Pharisees heard it — Mark (^{<4022>}Mark 3:22) says, “the scribes which came down from Jerusalem”; so that this had been a hostile party of the ecclesiastics, who had come all the way from Jerusalem to collect materials for a charge against Him. (See on ^{<4024>}Matthew 12:14).

they said, This fellow — an expression of contempt.

doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub — rather, “Beelzebul” (see on ^{<4025>}Matthew 10:25).

the prince of the devils — Two things are here implied — first, that the bitterest enemies of our Lord were unable to deny the reality of His miracles; and next, that they believed in an *organized internal kingdom of evil*, under one chief. This belief would be of small consequence, had not our Lord set His seal to it; but this He immediately does. Stung by the unsophisticated testimony of “all the people,” they had no way of holding out against His claims but the desperate shift of ascribing His miracles to Satan.

25. And Jesus knew their thoughts — “called them” (^{<4023>}Mark 3:23).

and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand — “house,” that is, “household”

26. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? — The argument here is irresistible. “No organized society can stand — whether kingdom, city, or household — when turned against itself; such intestine war is suicidal: But the works I do

are destructive of Satan's kingdom: That I should be in league with Satan, therefore, is incredible and absurd."

27. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children — "your sons," meaning here the "disciples" or pupils of the Pharisees, who were so termed after the familiar language of the Old Testament in speaking of the sons of the prophets (^{<1128>}1 Kings 20:35 ^{<1129>}2 Kings 2:3, etc.). Our Lord here seems to admit that such works were wrought by them; in which case the Pharisees stood self-condemned, as expressed in Luke (^{<1119>}Luke 11:19), "Therefore shall they be your judges."

28. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God — In Luke (^{<1120>}Luke 11:20) it is, "with (or 'by') the finger of God." This latter expression is just a figurative way of representing the *power* of God, while the former tells us the *living Personal Agent* was made use of by the Lord Jesus in every exercise of that power.

then — "no doubt" (^{<1120>}Luke 11:20).

the kingdom of God is come unto you — rather "upon you," as the same expression is rendered in Luke (^{<1120>}Luke 11:20): — that is, "If this expulsion of Satan is, and can be, by no other than the Spirit of God, then is his Destroyer already in the midst of you, and that kingdom which is destined to supplant his is already rising on its ruins."

29. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house — or rather, "the strong man's house."

and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

30. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad — On this important parable, in connection with the corresponding one (^{<1126>}Matthew 12:43-45), see on ^{<1121>}Luke 11:21-26.

31. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men — The word "blasphemy" properly signifies "detraction," or "slander." In the New Testament it is applied, as it is here, to vituperation directed against God as well as against men; and in this sense it is to be understood as an aggravated form of sin. Well, says our Lord, all sin — whether in its ordinary or its more aggravated forms — shall find forgiveness with God. Accordingly, in Mark (^{<1128>}Mark 3:28) the language is still stronger: "All sin shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme." There is no sin whatever, it seems, of which it may be said. "That is not a pardonable sin."

This glorious assurance is not to be limited by what follows; but, on the contrary, what follows is to be explained by this.

but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

32. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come — In Mark the language is awfully strong, “hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation” — or rather, according to what appears to be the preferable though very unusual reading, “in danger of eternal guilt” — a guilt which he will underlie for ever. Mark has the important addition (^{<4183>}Mark 3:30), “Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.” (See on ^{<4125>}Matthew 10:25). What, then, is this sin against the Holy Ghost — the unpardonable sin? One thing is clear: Its unpardonableness cannot arise from anything in the nature of sin itself; for that would be a naked contradiction to the emphatic declaration of ^{<4123>}Matthew 12:31, that all manner of sin is pardonable. And what is this but the fundamental truth of the Gospel? (See ^{<4138>}Acts 13:38,39 ^{<4122>}Romans 3:22,24 ^{<4107>}1 John 1:7, etc.). Then, again when it is said (^{<4122>}Matthew 12:32), that to speak against or blaspheme the Son of man is pardonable, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is not pardonable, it is not to be conceived that this arises from any greater sanctity in the one blessed Person than the other. These remarks so narrow the question that the true sense of our Lord’s words seem to disclose themselves at once. It is a contrast between slandering “the Son of man” *in His veiled condition and unfinished work* — which might be done “ignorantly, in unbelief” (^{<4113>}1 Timothy 1:13), and slandering the same blessed Person after the blaze of glory which *the Holy Ghost* was soon to throw around His claims, and in the full knowledge of all that. This would be to slander Him with eyes open, or to do it “presumptuously.” To blaspheme Christ in the former condition — when even the apostles stumbled at many things — left them still open to conviction on fuller light: but to blaspheme Him in the latter condition would be to hate the light the clearer it became, and resolutely to shut it out; which, of course, precludes salvation. (See on ^{<3807>}Hebrews 10:26-29). The Pharisees had not as yet done this; but in charging Jesus with being in league with hell they were displaying beforehand a malignant determination to shut their eyes to all evidence, and so, *bordering upon*, and *in spirit* committing, the unpardonable sin.

33. Either make the tree good, etc.

34. O generation of vipers — (See on ^{<4107>}Matthew 3:7).

how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh — a principle obvious enough, yet of deepest significance and vast application. In ^{<0165>}Luke 6:45 we find it uttered as part of the discourse delivered after the choice of the apostles.

35. A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things — or, “putteth forth good things”:

and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things — or “putteth forth evil things.” The word “putteth “ indicates the spontaneity of what comes from the heart; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh. We have here a new application of a former saying (see on ^{<0176>}Matthew 7:16-20). Here, the sentiment is, “There are but two kingdoms, interests, parties — with the proper workings of each: If I promote the one, I cannot belong to the other; but they that set themselves in wilful opposition to the kingdom of light openly proclaim to what other kingdom they belong. As for you, in what ye have now uttered, ye have but revealed the venomous malignity of your hearts.”

36. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment — They might say, “It was nothing: we meant no evil; we merely threw out a supposition, as one way of accounting for the miracle we witnessed; if it will not stand, let it go; why make so much of it, and bear down with such severity for it?” Jesus replies, “It was not nothing, and at the great day will not be treated as nothing: Words, as the index of the heart, however idle they may seem, will be taken account of, whether good or bad, in estimating character in the day of judgment.”

^{<028>}MATTHEW 12:38-50.

A SIGN DEMANDED AND THE REPLY — HIS MOTHER AND BRETHREN SEEK TO SPEAK WITH HIM, AND THE ANSWER. (^{<0116>}LUKE 11:16,24-36 ^{<0131>}MARK 3:31-35 ^{<0189>}LUKE 8:19-21).

A Sign Demanded, and the Reply (^{<028>}Matthew 12:38-45).

The occasion of this section was manifestly the same with that of the preceding.

38. Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master — “Teacher,” equivalent to “Rabbi.”

we would see a sign from thee — “a sign from heaven” (^{<2116>}Luke 11:16); something of an immediate and decisive nature, to show, not that His miracles were *real* — that they seemed willing to concede — but that they were from above, not from beneath. These were not the same class with those who charged Him with being in league with Satan (as we see from ^{<2115>}Luke 11:15,16); but as the spirit of both was similar, the tone of severe rebuke is continued.

39. But he answered and said unto them — “when the people were gathered thick together” (^{<2129>}Luke 11:29).

An evil and adulterous generation — This latter expression is best explained by ^{<2120>}Jeremiah 3:20, “Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.” For this was the relationship in which He stood to the covenant-people — “I am married unto you” (^{<2124>}Jeremiah 3:14).

seeketh after a sign — In the eye of Jesus this class were but the spokesmen of their generation, the exponents of the reigning spirit of unbelief.

and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.

40. For as Jonas was — “a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation” (^{<2130>}Luke 11:30). For as Jonas was

three days and three nights in the whale’s belly — (^{<3017>}Jonah 1:17).

so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth — This was the second public announcement of His resurrection three days after His death. (For the first, see ^{<4129>}John 2:19). Jonah’s case was analogous to this. as being a signal judgment of God; reversed in three days; and followed by a glorious mission to the Gentiles. The expression “in the heart of the earth,” suggested by the expression of Jonah with respect to the sea (^{<3023>}Jonah 2:3, in the *Septuagint*), means simply the grave, but this considered as the most emphatic expression of real and total entombment. The period during which He was to lie in the grave is here expressed in round numbers, according to the Jewish way of speaking, which was to regard any part of a day, however small, included within a period of days, as a full day. (See ^{<3021>}1 Samuel 30:12,13 ^{<7046>}Esther 4:16 5:1 ^{<4128>}Matthew 27:63,64, etc.).

41. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, etc. — The Ninevites, though heathens, repented at a man’s preaching;

while they, God's covenant-people, repented not at the preaching of the Son of God — whose supreme dignity is rather implied here than expressed.

42. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, etc. — The queen of Sheba (a tract in Arabia, near the shores of the Red Sea) came from a remote country, “south” of Judea, to hear the wisdom of a mere man, though a gifted one, and was transported with wonder at what she saw and heard (^{<1100>}1 Kings 10:1-9). They, when a Greater than Solomon had come *to them*, despised and rejected, slighted and slandered Him.

43-45. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, etc. — On this important parable, in connection with the corresponding one (^{<1029>}Matthew 12:29) see on ^{<1021>}Luke 11:21-26.

A charming little incident, given only in ^{<1027>}Luke 11:27,28, seems to have its proper place here.

^{<1027>}**LUKE 11:27:**

And it came to pass, as He spake these things, a certain woman of the company — out of the crowd.

lifted up her voice and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked — With true womanly feeling she envies the mother of such a wonderful Teacher. And a higher and better than she had said as much before her (see on ^{<1028>}Luke 1:28). How does our Lord, then, treat it? He is far from condemning it. He only holds up as “blessed rather” another class:

^{<1028>}**LUKE 11:28:**

But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it — in other words, the humblest real saint of God. How utterly alien is this sentiment from the teaching of the Church of Rome, which would doubtless excommunicate any one of its members that dared to talk in such a strain!

His Mother and Brethren Seek to Speak with Hint and the Answer
(^{<1026>}Matthew 12:46-50).

46. While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren — (See on ^{<1025>}Matthew 13:55,56).

stood without, desiring to speak with him — “and could not come at Him for the press” (^{<1024>}Luke 8:19). For what purpose these came, we learn

from ^{}Mark 3:20,21. In His zeal and ardor He seemed indifferent both to food and repose, and “they went to lay hold of Him” as one “beside Himself.” Mark (^{}Mark 3:32) says graphically, “And the multitude sat about Him” — or “around Him.”

47. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee, etc. — Absorbed in the awful warnings He was pouring forth. He felt this to be an unseasonable interruption, fitted to dissipate the impression made upon the large audience — such an interruption as duty to the nearest relatives did not require Him to give way to. But instead of a direct rebuke, He seizes on the incident to convey a sublime lesson, expressed in a style of inimitable condescension.

49. And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples — How graphic is this! It is the language evidently of an eye-witness.

and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

50. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother — that is, “There stand here the members of a family transcending and surviving this of earth: Filial subjection to the will of My Father in heaven is the indissoluble bond of union between Me and all its members; and whosoever enters this hallowed circle becomes to Me brother, and sister, and mother!”

CHAPTER 13

◀DECE MATTHEW 13:1-52.

JESUS TEACHES BY PARABLES.

(◀DECE MARK 4:1-34 ◀DECE LUKE 8:4-18 13:18-20).

Introduction (◀DECE Matthew 13:1-3).

1. The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside.

2. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship — the article in the received text lacks authority

and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore — How graphic this picture! — no doubt from the pen of an eye-witness, himself impressed with the scene. It was “the same day” on which the foregoing solemn discourse was delivered, when His kindred thought Him “beside Himself” for His indifference to food and repose — that same day retiring to the seashore of Galilee; and there seating Himself, perhaps for coolness and rest, the crowds again flock around Him, and He is fain to push off from them, in the boat usually kept in readiness for Him; yet only to begin, without waiting to rest, a new course of teaching by parables to the eager multitudes that lined the shore. To the parables of our Lord there is nothing in all language to be compared, for simplicity, grace, fullness, and variety of spiritual teaching. They are adapted to all classes and stages of advancement, being understood by each according to the measure of his spiritual capacity.

3. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, etc. — These parables are SEVEN in number; and it is not a little remarkable that while this is the *sacred number*, the first FOUR of them were spoken to the mixed multitude, while the remaining THREE were spoken to the Twelve in private — these divisions, *four* and *three*, being themselves notable in the symbolical arithmetic of Scripture. Another thing remarkable in the structure of these parables is, that while the first of the Seven — that of the Sower — is of the nature of an Introduction to the whole, the remaining Six consist of *three pairs* — the Second and Seventh, the Third and Fourth, and the Fifth and Sixth, corresponding to each other; each pair setting forth the same general truths, but with a certain diversity of aspect. All this can hardly be accidental.

First Parable: THE SOWER (^{<403>}Matthew 13:3-9,18-23).

This parable may be entitled, THE EFFECT OF THE WORD DEPENDENT ON THE STATE OF THE HEART. For the exposition of this parable, see on ^{<404>}Mark 4:1-9,14-20.

Reason for Teaching in Parables (^{<403>}Matthew 13:10-17).

10. And the disciples came, and said unto him — “they that were with Him, when they were alone” (^{<404>}Mark 4:10).

Why speakest thou to them in parables? — Though before this He had couched some things in the parabolic form, for more vivid illustration, it would appear that He now, for the first time, formally employed this method of teaching.

11. He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven — The word “mysteries” in Scripture is not used in its classical sense — of religious secrets, nor yet of things incomprehensible, or in their own nature difficult to be understood — but in the sense of things of purely divine revelation, and, usually, things darkly announced under the ancient economy, and during all that period darkly understood, but fully published under the Gospel (^{<405>}1 Corinthians 2:6-10 ^{<406>}Ephesians 3:3-6,8,9). “The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” then, mean those glorious Gospel truths which at that time only the more advanced disciples could appreciate, and they but partially.

but to them it is not given — (See on ^{<405>}Matthew 11:25). Parables serve the double purpose of *revealing* and *concealing*; presenting “the mysteries of the kingdom” to those who know and relish them, though in never so small a degree, in a new and attractive light; but to those who are insensible to spiritual things yielding only, as so many tales, some temporary entertainment.

12. For whosoever hath — that is, keeps; as a thing which he values.

to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance — He will be rewarded by an increase of what he so much prizes.

but whosoever hath not — who lets this go or lie unused, as a thing on which he sets no value.

from him shall be taken away even that he hath — or as it is in Luke (^{<408>}Luke 8:18), “what he seemeth to have,” or, thinketh he hath. This is a principle of immense importance, and, like other weighty sayings, appears to have been uttered by our Lord on more than one occasion, and in

different connections. (See on ⁽²⁰¹⁹⁾Matthew 25:9). As a great ethical principle, we see it in operation everywhere, under the general law of *habit*; in virtue of which moral principles become stronger by exercise, while by disuse, or the exercise of their contraries, they wax weaker, and at length expire. The same principle reigns in the intellectual world, and even in the animal — if not in the vegetable also — as the facts of physiology sufficiently prove. Here, however, it is viewed as a divine ordination, as a judicial retribution in continual operation under the divine administration.

13. Therefore speak I to them in parables — which our Lord, be it observed, did not begin to do till His miracles were malignantly ascribed to Satan.

because they seeing, see not — They “saw,” for the light shone on them as never light shone before; but they “saw not,” for they closed their eyes.

and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand — They “heard,” for He taught them who “spake as never man spake”; but they “heard not,” for they took nothing in, apprehending not the soul-penetrating, life-giving words addressed to them. In Mark and Luke (⁽⁴⁰¹²⁾Mark 4:12 ⁽²⁰¹⁰⁾Luke 8:10), what is here expressed as a human fact is represented as the fulfillment of a divine purpose — “that seeing they may see, and not perceive,” etc. The explanation of this lies in the statement of the foregoing verse — that, by a fixed law of the divine administration, the duty men voluntarily refuse to do, and in point of fact do not do, they at length become morally incapable of doing.

14. And in them is fulfilled — rather, “is fulfilling,” or “is receiving its fulfillment.”

the prophecy of Esaias, which saith — (⁽²⁰⁰⁹⁾Isaiah 6:9,10 — here quoted according to the *Septuagint*).

By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, etc. — They were thus judicially sealed up under the darkness and obduracy which they deliberately preferred to the light and healing which Jesus brought nigh to them.

16. But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear — that is, “Happy ye, whose eyes and ears, voluntarily and gladly opened, are drinking in the light divine.”

17. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired — rather, “coveted.”

to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them — Not only were the disciples blessed above the blinded just spoken of, but favored above the most honored and the best that lived under the old economy, who had but glimpses of the things of the new kingdom, just sufficient to kindle in them desires not to be fulfilled to any in their day. In ^{<4013>}Luke 10:23,24, where the same saying is repeated on the return of the Seventy — the words, instead of “many prophets and righteous men,” are “many prophets *and kings*”; for several of the Old Testament saints were kings.

Second and Seventh Parables or *First Pair*:

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES, and THE GOOD AND BAD FISH (^{<4013>}Matthew 13:24-30 36-43 47-50).

The subject of both these parables — which teach the same truth, with a slight diversity of aspect — is: THE MIXED CHARACTER OF THE KINGDOM IN ITS PRESENT STATE, AND THE FINAL ABSOLUTE SEPARATION OF THE TWO CLASSES.

The Tares and the Wheat (^{<4013>}Matthew 13:24-30,36-43).

24, 36-38. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field — Happily for us, these exquisite parables are, with like charming simplicity and clearness, expounded to us by the Great Preacher Himself. Accordingly, we pass to: ^{<4013>}Matthew 13:36-38. See on ^{<4013>}Matthew 13:36; ^{<4013>}Matthew 13:38

25, 38, 39. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way — (See on ^{<4013>}Matthew 13:38,39).

26. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also — the growth in both cases running parallel, as antagonistic principles are seen to do.

27. So the servants of the householder came — that is, Christ’s ministers.

and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? — This well expresses the surprise, disappointment, and anxiety of Christ’s faithful servants and people at the discovery of “false brethren” among the members of the Church.

28. He said unto them, An enemy hath done this — Kind words these from a good Husbandman, honorably clearing His faithful servants of the wrong done to his field.

The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? — Compare with this the question of James and John (^{<4154>}Luke 9:54), “Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume” those Samaritans? In this kind of zeal there is usually a large mixture of carnal heat. (See ^{<4121>}James 1:20).

29. But he said, Nay — “It will be done in due time, but not now, nor is it your business.”

lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them — Nothing could more clearly or forcibly teach the difficulty of distinguishing the two classes, and the high probability that in the attempt to do so these will be confounded.

30, 39. Let both grow together — that is, in the visible Church.

until the harvest — till the one have ripened for full salvation, the other for destruction. (See on ^{<4139>}Matthew 13:39).

and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers — (See on ^{<4139>}Matthew 13:39).

Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them — “in the fire” (^{<4140>}Matthew 13:40).

but gather the wheat into my barn — Christ, as the Judge, will separate the two classes (as in ^{<4132>}Matthew 25:32). It will be observed that the tares are burned *before* the wheat is housed; in the exposition of the parable (^{<4134>}Matthew 13:41,43) the same order is observed: and the same in ^{<4156>}Matthew 25:46 — as if, in some literal sense, “with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked” (^{<4908>}Psalms 91:8).

Third and Fourth Parables or *Second Pair*:

THE MUSTARD SEED and THE LEAVEN (^{<4131>}Matthew 13:31-33).

The subject of both these parables, as of the first pair, is the same, but under a slight diversity of aspect, namely —

THE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM FROM THE SMALLEST BEGINNINGS TO ULTIMATE UNIVERSALITY.

The Mustard Seed (^{<4131>}Matthew 13:31,32).

31. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field;

32. Which indeed is the least of all seeds — not absolutely, but popularly and proverbially, as in ^{<2709}Luke 17:6, “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed,” that is, “never so little faith.”

but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs — not absolutely, but in relation to the small size of the seed, and in warm latitudes proverbially great.

and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof — This is added, no doubt, to express the *amplitude* of the tree. But as this seed has a hot, fiery vigor, gives out its best virtues when bruised, and is grateful to the taste of birds, which are accordingly attracted to its branches both for shelter and food, is it straining the parable, asks TRENCH, to suppose that, besides the wonderful *growth* of His kingdom, our Lord selected this seed to illustrate further the *shelter, repose* and *blessedness* it is destined to afford to the nations of the world?

The Leaven (^{<0133}Matthew 13:33).

33. Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened — This parable, while it teaches the same general truth as the foregoing one, holds forth, perhaps, rather the *inward* growth of the kingdom, while “the Mustard Seed” seems to point chiefly to the *outward*. It being a woman’s work to knead, it seems a refinement to say that “the woman” here represents *the Church*, as the instrument of depositing the leaven. Nor does it yield much satisfaction to understand the “three measures of meal” of that threefold division of our nature into “spirit, soul, and body,” alluded to in ^{<1623}1 Thessalonians 5:23, or of the threefold partition of the world among the three sons of Noah (^{<0132}Genesis 10:32), as some do. It yields more real satisfaction to see in this brief parable just the *all-penetrating* and *assimilating* quality of the Gospel, by virtue of which it will yet mould all institutions and tribes of men. and exhibit over the whole earth one “kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.”

34. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them — that is, on this occasion; refraining not only from all naked discourse, but even from all interpretation of these parables to the mixed multitude.

35. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying — (^{<98E>}Psalm 78:2, nearly as in the *Septuagint*).

I will open my mouth in parables, etc. — Though the Psalm seems to contain only a summary of Israelitish *history*, the Psalmist himself calls it “a parable,” and “dark sayings from of old” — as containing, *underneath the history*, truths for all time, not fully brought to light till the Gospel day.

36-38. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field, etc. — In the parable of the Sower, “the seed is the word of God” (^{<48E1>}Luke 8:11). But here that word has been received into the heart, and has converted him that received it into a new creature, a “child of the kingdom,” according to that saying of James (^{<50E8>}James 1:18), “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” It is worthy of notice that this vast field of the world is here said to be *Christ’s own* — “His field,” says the parable. (See ^{<48E8>}Psalm 2:8).

38. The tares are the children of the wicked one — As this sowing could only be “while men slept,” no blame seems intended, and certainly none is charged upon “the servants”; it is probably just the dress of the parable.

39. The enemy that sowed them is the devil — emphatically “*His enemy*” (^{<48E25>}Matthew 13:25). (See ^{<48E8>}Genesis 3:15 ^{<48E1>}1 John 3:8). By “tares” is meant, not what in our husbandry is so called, but some noxious plant, probably *darnel*. “The tares are the children of the wicked one”; and by their being sown “among the wheat” is meant their being deposited within the territory of the visible Church. As they resemble the children of the kingdom, so they are produced, it seems, by a similar process of “sowing” — the seeds of evil being scattered and lodging in the soil of those hearts upon which falls the seed of the world. The enemy, after sowing his “tares,” “went his way” — his dark work soon done, but taking time to develop its true character.

The harvest is the end of the world — the period of Christ’s second coming, and of the judicial separation of the righteous and the wicked. Till then, no attempt is to be made to effect such separation. But to stretch this so far as to justify allowing openly scandalous persons to remain in the communion of the Church, is to wrest the teaching of this parable to other than its proper design, and go in the teeth of apostolic injunctions (1 Corinthians 5).

And the reapers are the angels — But whose angels are they? “The Son of man shall send forth His angels” (^{<4034>}Matthew 13:41). Compare ^{<4022>}1 Peter 3:22, “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

41. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom — to which they never really belonged. They usurped their place and name and outward privileges; but “the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners [abide] in the congregation of the righteous” (^{<4005>}Psalm 1:5).

all things that offend — all those who have proved a stumbling-block to others

and them which do iniquity — The former class, as the worst, are mentioned first.

42. And shall cast them into a furnace of fire — rather, “the furnace of fire”:

there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth — What terrific strength of language — the “casting” or “flinging” expressive of indignation, abhorrence, contempt (compare ^{<4007>}Psalm 9:17 ^{<4016>}Daniel 12:2): “the furnace of fire” denoting the fierceness of the torment: the “wailing” signifying the anguish this causes; while the “gnashing of teeth” is a graphic way of expressing the despair in which its remedilessness issues (see ^{<4022>}Matthew 8:12)!

43. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father — as if they had been under a cloud during the present association with ungodly pretenders to their character, and claimants of their privileges, and obstructors of their course.

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear — (See ^{<4009>}Mark 4:9).

Fifth and Sixth Parables or *Third Pair*: THE HIDDEN TREASURE and THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE (^{<4034>}Matthew 13:44-46).

The subject of this last pair, as of the two former, is the same, but also under a slight diversity of aspect: namely —

THE PRICELESS VALUE OF THE BLESSINGS OF THE KINGDOM. And while the one parable represents the Kingdom as “found without seeking,” the other holds forth the Kingdom as “sought and found.”

The Hidden Treasure (^{<4034>}Matthew 13:44).

44. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field — no uncommon thing in unsettled and half-civilized countries, even now as well as in ancient times, when there was no other way of securing it from the rapacity of neighbors or marauders. (^{<240B>}Jeremiah 41:8 ^{<187B>}Job 3:21 ^{<100B>}Proverbs 2:4).

the which when a man hath found — that is, unexpectedly found.

he hideth, and for joy thereof — on perceiving what a treasure he had lighted on, surpassing the worth of all he possessed.

goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field — in which case, by Jewish law, the treasure would become his own.

The Pearl of Great Price (^{<103B>}Matthew 13:45,46).

45. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls.

46. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it — The one pearl of great price, instead of being found by accident, as in the former case, is found by one whose *business* it is to seek for such, and who finds it just in the way of *searching* for such treasures. But in both cases the surpassing value of the treasure is alike recognized, and in both all is parted with for it.

The Good and Bad Fish (^{<103B>}Matthew 13:47-50).

The object of this brief parable is the same as that of the Tares and Wheat. But as its details are fewer, so its teaching is less rich and varied.

47. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind — The word here rendered “net” signifies a large *drag-net*, which draws everything after it, suffering nothing to escape, as distinguished from a *casting-net* (^{<101B>}Mark 1:16,18). The far-reaching efficacy of the Gospel is thus denoted. This Gospel net “gathered of every kind,” meaning every variety of character.

48. Which, when it was full, they drew to shore — for the separation will not be made till the number of the elect is accomplished.

and sat down — expressing the deliberateness with which the judicial separation will at length be made.

and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away — literally, “the rotten,” but here meaning, “the foul” or “worthless” fish: corresponding to the “tares” of the other parable.

49. So shall it be at the end of the world, etc. — (See on ^{<4130>}Matthew 13:42). We have said that each of these two parables holds forth the same truth under a slight diversity of aspect. What is that diversity? First, the *bad*, in the former parable, are represented as vile seed sown among the wheat by the enemy of souls; in the latter, as foul fish drawn forth out of the great sea of human beings by the Gospel net itself. Both are important truths — that the Gospel draws within its pale, and into the communion of the visible Church, multitudes who are Christians only in name; and that the injury thus done to the Church on earth is to be traced to the wicked one. But further, while the former parable gives chief prominence to the present mixture of good and bad, in the latter, the prominence is given to the future separation of the two classes.

51. Jesus saith unto them — that is, to the Twelve. He had spoken the first *four* in the hearing of the mixed multitude: the last *three* He reserved till, on the dismissal of the mixed audience, He and the Twelve were alone (^{<4130>}Matthew 13:36, etc.).

Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

52. Then said he unto them, Therefore — or as we should say, “Well, then.”

every scribe — or Christian teacher: here so called from that well-known class among the Jews. (See ^{<4123>}Matthew 23:34).

which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven — himself taught in the mysteries of the Gospel which he has to teach to others.

is like unto a man that is an householder which bringeth forth — “turneth” or “dealeth out.”

out of his treasure — his store of divine truth.

things new and old — old truths in ever new forms, aspects, applications, and with ever new illustrations.

^{<4130>}MATTHEW 13:53-58.

HOW JESUS WAS REGARDED BY HIS RELATIVES.

(^{<4101>}MARK 6:1-6 ^{<4016>}LUKE 4:16-30).

53. And it came to pass, that, when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

54. And when he was come into his own country — that is, Nazareth; as is plain from ^{<4001>}Mark 6:1. See on ^{<4043>}John 4:43, where also the same phrase occurs. This, according to the majority of Harmonists, was the *second* of *two* visits which our Lord paid to Nazareth during His public ministry; but in our view it was His *first* and *only* visit to it. See on ^{<4013>}Matthew 4:13; and for the reasons, see ^{<4016>}Luke 4:16-30.

Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? — “these miracles.” These surely are not like the questions of people who had asked precisely the same questions before, who from astonishment had proceeded to rage, and in their rage had hurried Him out of the synagogue, and away to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, to thrust Him down headlong, and who had been foiled even in that object by His passing through the midst of them, and going His way. But see on ^{<4016>}Luke 4:16, etc.

55. Is not this the carpenter’s son? — In Mark (^{<4003>}Mark 6:3) the question is, “Is not this the carpenter?” In all likelihood, our Lord, during His stay under the roof of His earthly parents, wrought along with His legal father.

is not his mother called Mary? — “Do we not know all about His parentage? Has He not grown up in the midst of us? Are not all His relatives our own townsmen? Whence, then, such wisdom and such miracles?” These particulars of our Lord’s *human* history constitute the most valuable testimony, first, to His true and real humanity — for they prove that during all His first thirty years His townsmen had discovered nothing about Him different from other men; secondly, to the divine character of His mission — for these Nazarenes proclaim both the unparalleled character of His teaching and the reality and glory of His miracles, as transcending human ability; and thirdly, to His wonderful humility and self-denial — in that when He was such as they now saw Him to be, He yet never gave any indications of it for thirty years, because “His hour was not yet come.”

And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

56. And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? An exceedingly difficult question here arises — What were these “brethren” and “sisters” to Jesus? Were they, *First*, His full brothers and sisters? or, *Secondly*, Were they His step-brothers and step-sisters, children of Joseph by a former marriage? or, *Thirdly*, Were they cousins, according to a common way of speaking among the Jews respecting persons of collateral descent? On this subject an immense deal has been written, nor are opinions yet by any means agreed. For the second

opinion there is no ground but a vague tradition, arising probably from the wish for some such explanation. The *first* opinion undoubtedly suits the text best in all the places where the parties are certainly referred to (^{<4126>}Matthew 12:46; and its parallels, ^{<4038>}Mark 3:31 ^{<4089>}Luke 8:19; our present passage, and its parallels, ^{<4108>}Mark 6:3 ^{<4012>}John 2:12 7:3,5,10 ^{<4014>}Acts 1:14). But, in addition to other objections, many of the best interpreters, thinking it in the last degree improbable that our Lord, when hanging on the cross, would have committed His mother to John if He had had full brothers of His own then alive, prefer the third opinion; although, on the other hand, it is not to be doubted that our Lord might have good reasons for entrusting the guardianship of His doubly widowed mother to the beloved disciple in preference even to full brothers of His own. Thus dubiously we prefer to leave this vexed question, encompassed as it is with difficulties. As to the names here mentioned, the first of them, “JAMES,” is afterwards called “the Lord’s brother” (see on ^{<4019>}Galatians 1:19), but is perhaps not to be confounded with “James the son of Alphaeus,” one of the Twelve, though many think their identity beyond dispute. This question also is one of considerable difficulty, and not without importance; since the James who occupies so prominent a place in the Church of Jerusalem, in the latter part of the Acts, was apparently the apostle, but is by many regarded as “the Lord’s brother,” while others think their identity best suits all the statements. The *second* of those here named, “JOSES” (or Joseph), must not be confounded with “Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus” (^{<4023>}Acts 1:23); and the *third* here named, “SIMON,” is not to be confounded with Simon the Kananite or Zealot (see on ^{<4004>}Matthew 10:4). These three are nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament. The *fourth* and last-named, “JUDAS,” can hardly be identical with the apostle of that name — though the brothers of both were of the name of “James” — nor (unless the two be identical, was this Judas) with the author of the catholic Epistle so called.

58. And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief — “save that He laid His hands on a few sick folk, and healed them” (^{<4015>}Mark 6:5). See on ^{<4016>}Luke 4:16-30.

CHAPTER 14

⋄ MATTHEW 14:1-12.

HEROD THINKS JESUS A RESURRECTION OF THE MURDERED BAPTIST — ACCOUNT OF HIS IMPRISONMENT AND DEATH. (⋄ MARK 6:14-29 ⋄ LUKE 9:7-9).

The time of this alarm of Herod Antipas appears to have been during the mission of the Twelve, and shortly after the Baptist — who had been in prison for probably more than a year — had been cruelly put to death.

Herod's Theory of the Works of Christ (⋄ Matthew 14:1,2).

1. At that time Herod the tetrarch — Herod Antipas, one of the three sons of Herod the Great, and own brother of Archelaus (⋄ Matthew 2:22), who ruled as *ethnarch* over Galilee and Perea.

heard of the fame of Jesus — “for His name was spread abroad” (⋄ Mark 6:14).

2. And said unto his servants — his counsellors or court-ministers.

This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead, etc. — The murdered prophet haunted his guilty breast like a specter and seemed to him alive again and clothed with unearthly powers in the person of Jesus.

Account of the Baptist's Imprisonment and Death
(⋄ Matthew 14:3-12).

For the exposition of this portion, see on ⋄ Mark 6:17-29.

◀142 MATTHEW 14:12-21.

HEARING OF THE BAPTIST DEATH JESUS CROSSES THE LAKE WITH TWELVE AND MIRACULOUSLY FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND. (◀169 MARK 6:30-44 ▶190 LUKE 9:10-17 ▶801 JOHN 6:1-14).

For the exposition of this section — one of the very few where all the four Evangelists run parallel — see on ▶169 Mark 6:30-44.

◀142 MATTHEW 14:22-26.

JESUS CROSSES TO THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE LAKE WALKING ON THE SEA — INCIDENTS ON LANDING.
(◀165 MARK 6:45 ▶805 JOHN 6:15-24).

For the exposition, see on ▶805 John 6:15-24.

28. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it is thou, bid me come to thee on the water — (Also see on ▶1059 Mark 6:50.)

29. And he said, Come. And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus — (Also see on ▶1059 Mark 6:50.)

30. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me — (Also see on ▶1059 Mark 6:50.)

31. And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said to him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? — (Also see on ▶1059 Mark 6:50.)

32. And when they had come into the boat, the wind ceased — (Also see on ▶1059 Mark 6:50.)

CHAPTER 15

⌘ MATTHEW 15:1-20.

DISCOURSE ON CEREMONIAL POLLUTION. (⌘ MARK 7:1,23).

The time of this section was after that Passover which was nigh at hand when our Lord fed the five thousand (⌘ John 6:4) — the third Passover, as we take it, since His public ministry began, but which He did not keep at Jerusalem for the reason mentioned in ⌘ John 7:1.

1. Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem — or “from Jerusalem.” Mark (⌘ Mark 7:1) says they “came from” it: a deputation probably sent from the capital expressly to watch Him. As He had not come to them at the last Passover, which they had reckoned on, they now come to Him. “And,” says Mark (⌘ Mark 7:2,3), “when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands” — hands not ceremonially cleansed by washing — “they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft” — literally, “in” or “with the fist”; that is, probably washing the one hand by the use of the other — though some understand it, with our version, in the sense of “diligently,” “sedulously” — “eat not, holding the tradition of the elders”; acting religiously according to the custom handed down to them. “And when they come from the market” (⌘ Mark 7:4) — “And after market”: after any common business, or attending a court of justice, where the Jews, as WEBSTER and WILKINSON remark, after their subjection to the Romans, were especially exposed to intercourse and contact with heathens — “except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels and tables” — rather, “couches,” such as were used at meals, which probably were merely *sprinkled* for ceremonial purposes. “Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him,”

saying — as follows:

2. Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

3. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? — The charge is retorted

with startling power: “The tradition they transgress is but *man’s*, and is itself the occasion of heavy transgression, undermining the authority of *God’s law*.”

4. For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother — (^{<4856>}Deuteronomy 5:16).

and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death — (^{<4217>}Exodus 21:17).

5. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift — or simply, “A gift!” In Mark (^{<4171>}Mark 7:11), it is, “*Corban!*” that is, “An oblation!” meaning, any unbloody offering or gift dedicated to sacred uses.

by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

6. And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free — that is, It is true, father — mother — that by giving to thee this, which I now present, thou mightest be profited by me; but I have gifted it to pious uses, and therefore, at whatever cost to thee, I am not now at liberty to alienate any portion of it. “And,” it is added in Mark (^{<4172>}Mark 7:12), “ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother.” To dedicate property to God is indeed lawful and laudable, but not at the expense of filial duty.

Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect — cancelled or nullified it “by your tradition.”

7. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying — (^{<2393>}Isaiah 29:13).

8. This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, etc. — By putting the commandments of men on a level with the divine requirements, *their whole worship was rendered vain* — a principle of deep moment in the service of God. “For,” it is added in ^{<4178>}Mark 7:8, “laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do.” The drivelling nature of their multitudinous observances is here pointedly exposed, in contrast with the manly observance of “the commandment of God”; and when our Lord says, “Many other such like things ye do,” it is implied that He had but given a specimen of the hideous treatment which the divine law received, and the grasping disposition which, under the mask of piety, was manifested by the ecclesiastics of that day.

10. And he called the multitude, and said unto them — The foregoing dialogue, though in the people’s hearing, was between Jesus and the

pharisaic cavillers, whose object was to disparage Him with the people. But Jesus, having put them down, turns to the multitude, who at this time were prepared to drink in everything He said, and with admirable plainness, strength, and brevity, lays down the great principle of real pollution, by which a world of bondage and uneasiness of conscience would be dissipated in a moment, and the sense of sin be reserved for deviations from the holy and eternal law of God.

Hear and understand:

11. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man — This is expressed even more emphatically in Mark (^{<4075>}Mark 7:15,16), and it is there added, “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.” As in ^{<4139>}Matthew 13:9, this so oft-repeated saying seems designed to call attention to the *fundamental* and *universal* character of the truth it refers to.

12. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? — They had given vent to their irritation, and perhaps threats, not to our Lord Himself, from whom they seem to have slunk away, but to some of the disciples, who report it to their Master.

13. But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up — They are offended, are they? Heed it not: their corrupt teaching is already doomed: the garden of the Lord upon earth, too long cumbered with their presence, shall yet be purged of them and their accursed system: yea, and whatsoever is not of the planting of My heavenly Father, the great Husbandman (^{<4953>}John 15:1), shall share the same fate.

14. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch — Striking expression of the ruinous effects of erroneous teaching!

15. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable — “when He was entered into the house from the people,” says Mark (^{<4077>}Mark 7:17).

16. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? — Slowness of spiritual apprehension in His genuine disciples grieves the Savior: from others He expects no better (^{<4131>}Matthew 13:11).

17, 18. Do not ye yet understand that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth, etc. — Familiar though these sayings have now become, what freedom from bondage to outward things do they proclaim, on the one

hand; and on the other, how searching is the truth which they express — that nothing which enters from without can really defile us; and that only the evil that is in the heart, that is allowed to stir there, to rise up in thought and affection, and to flow forth in voluntary action, really defiles a man!

19. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts — “evil reasonings”; referring here more immediately to those corrupt reasonings which had stealthily introduced and gradually reared up that hideous fabric of tradition which at length practically nullified the unchangeable principles of the moral law. But the statement is far broader than this; namely that the first shape which the evil that is in the heart takes, when it begins actively to stir, is that of “considerations” or “reasonings” on certain suggested actions.

murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies — detractions, whether directed against God or man; here the reference seems to be to the latter. Mark (^{<4072>}Mark 7:22) adds, “covetousnesses” — or desires after more; “wickednesses” — here meaning, perhaps, malignities of various forms; “deceit, lasciviousness” — meaning, excess or enormity of any kind, though by later writers restricted to lewdness; “an evil eye” — meaning, all looks or glances of envy, jealousy, or ill will towards a neighbor; “pride, foolishness” — in the Old Testament sense of “folly”; that is, criminal senselessness, the folly of the *heart*. How appalling is this black catalogue!

20. These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man — Thus does our Lord sum up this whole searching discourse.

^{<4152>}MATTHEW 15:21-28.

THE WOMAN OF CANAAN AND HER DAUGHTER.

For the exposition, see on ^{<41724>}Mark 7:24-30.

23. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us — (Also see on ^{<41026>}Mark 7:26.)

24. But he answered and said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel — (Also see on ^{<41026>}Mark 7:26.)

25. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me — (Also see on ^{<41026>}Mark 7:26.)

◀159▶ **MATTHEW 15:29-39.**

**MIRACLES OF HEALING — FOUR THOUSAND
MIRACULOUSLY FED.**

For the exposition, see on ▶173▶ Mark 7:31; ▶1080▶ Mark 8:10.

CHAPTER 16

◀◀◀ MATTHEW 16:1-12.

A SIGN FROM HEAVEN SOUGHT AND REFUSED — CAUTION AGAINST THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES.

For the exposition, see on ◀◀◀ Mark 8:11-21.

◀◀◀ MATTHEW 16:13-28.

PETER'S NOBLE CONFESSION OF CHRIST AND THE BENEDICTION PRONOUNCED UPON HIM — CHRIST'S FIRST EXPLICIT ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS APPROACHING SUFFERINGS, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION — HIS REBUKE OF PETER AND WARNING TO ALL THE TWELVE. (◀◀◀ MARK 8:27 9:1 ◀◀◀ LUKE 9:18-27).

The time of this section — which is beyond doubt, and will presently be mentioned — is of immense importance, and throws a touching interest around the incidents which it records.

Peter's Confession, and the Benediction Pronounced upon Him.
(◀◀◀ Matthew 16:13-20).

13. When Jesus came into the coasts — “the parts,” that is, the territory or region. In Mark (◀◀◀ Mark 8:27) it is “the towns” or “villages.”

of Caesarea Philippi — It lay at the foot of Mount Lebanon, near the sources of the Jordan, in the territory of Dan, and at the northeast extremity of Palestine. It was originally called *Panium* (from a cavern in its neighborhood dedicated to the god *Pan*) and *Paneas*. Philip, the tetrarch, the only good son of Herod the Great, in whose dominions Paneas lay, having beautified and enlarged it, changed its name to *Caesarea*, in honor of the Roman emperor, and added *Philippi* after his own name, to distinguish it from the other *Caesarea* (◀◀◀ Acts 10:1) on the northeast coast of the Mediterranean Sea. [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 15.10,3; 18.2,1]. This quiet and distant retreat Jesus appears to have sought with the view of

talking over with the Twelve the fruit of His past labors, and breaking to them for the first time the sad intelligence of His approaching death.

he asked his disciples — “by the way,” says Mark (^{<4027>}Mark 8:27), and “as He was alone praying,” says Luke (^{<4018>}Luke 9:18).

saying, Whom — or more grammatically, “Who”

do men say that I the Son of man am? — (or, “that the Son of man is” — the recent editors omitting here the *me* of Mark and Luke [^{<4027>}Mark 8:27 ^{<4018>}Luke 9:18]; though the evidence seems pretty nearly balanced) — that is, “What are the views generally entertained of Me, the Son of man, after going up and down among them so long?” He had now closed the first great stage of His ministry, and was just entering on the last dark one. His spirit, burdened, sought relief in retirement, not only from the multitude, but even for a season from the Twelve. He retreated into “the secret place of the Most High,” pouring out His soul “in supplications and prayers, with strong crying and tears” (^{<3817>}Hebrews 5:7). On rejoining His disciples, and as they were pursuing their quiet journey, He asked them this question.

14. And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist — risen from the dead. So that Herod Antipas was not singular in his surmise (^{<4011>}Matthew 14:1,2).

some, Elias — (Compare ^{<4065>}Mark 6:15).

and others, Jeremias — Was this theory suggested by a supposed resemblance between the “Man of Sorrows” and “the weeping prophet?”

or one of the prophets — or, as Luke (^{<4008>}Luke 9:8) expresses it, “that one of the old prophets is risen again.” In another report of the popular opinions which Mark (^{<4065>}Mark 6:15) gives us, it is thus expressed, “That it is a prophet [or], as one of the prophets”: in other words, That He was a prophetic person, resembling those of old.

15. He saith unto them, But whom — rather, “who.”

say ye that I am? — He had never put this question before, but the crisis He was reaching made it fitting that He should now have it from them. We may suppose this to be one of those moments of which the prophet says, in His name, “Then I said, I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain” (^{<3904>}Isaiah 49:4): Lo, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree; and what is it? As the result of all, I am taken for John the Baptist, for Elias, for Jeremias, for one of the prophets. Yet some there are that have beheld My glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, and I shall hear their voice, for it is sweet.

16. And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God — He does not say, “Scribes and Pharisees, rulers and people, are all perplexed; and shall we, unlettered fishermen, presume to decide?” But feeling the light of his Master’s glory shining in his soul, he breaks forth — not in a tame, prosaic acknowledgment, “*I believe that Thou art,*” etc. — but in the language of adoration — such as one uses in worship, “**THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!**” He first owns Him the promised *Messiah* (see on ^{<4016>}Matthew 1:16); then he rises higher, echoing the voice from heaven — “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”; and in the important addition — “Son of the LIVING GOD” — he recognizes the essential and eternal life of God as in this His Son — though doubtless without that distinct perception afterwards vouchsafed.

17. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou — Though it is not to be doubted that Peter, in this noble testimony to Christ, only expressed the conviction of all the Twelve, yet since he alone seems to have had clear enough apprehensions to put that conviction in proper and suitable words, and courage enough to speak them out, and readiness enough to do this at the right time — so he only, of all the Twelve, seems to have met the present want, and communicated to the saddened soul of the Redeemer at the critical moment that balm which was needed to cheer and refresh it. Nor is Jesus above giving indication of the deep satisfaction which this speech yielded Him, and hastening to respond to it by a signal acknowledgment of Peter in return.

Simon-Barjona — or, “son of Jona” (^{<4014>}John 1:42), or “Jonas” (^{<4015>}John 21:15). This name, denoting his humble fleshly extraction, seems to have been purposely here mentioned, to contrast the more vividly with the spiritual elevation to which divine illumination had raised him.

for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee — “This is not the fruit of human teaching.”

but my Father which is in heaven — In speaking of God, Jesus, it is to be observed, never calls Him, “our Father” (see on ^{<4017>}John 20:17), but either “your Father” — when He would encourage His timid believing ones with the assurance that He was theirs, and teach themselves to call Him so — or, as here, “My Father,” to signify some peculiar action or aspect of Him as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

18. And I say also unto thee — that is, “As thou hast borne such testimony to Me, even so in return do I to thee.”

That thou art Peter — At his first calling, this new name was announced to him as an honor afterwards to be conferred on him (^{}John 1:43). Now he gets it, with an explanation of what it was meant to convey.

and upon this rock — As “Peter” and “Rock” are one word in the dialect familiarly spoken by our Lord — the *Aramaic* or *Syro-Chaldaic*, which was the mother tongue of the country — this exalted *play upon the word* can be fully seen only in languages which have one word for both. Even in the *Greek* it is imperfectly represented. In French, as WEBSTER and WILKINSON remark, it is perfect, *Pierre* — *pierre*.

I will build my Church — not on the man Simon-Barjona; but on him as the heavenly-taught confessor of a faith. “My Church,” says our Lord, calling the Church His OWN; a magnificent expression regarding Himself, remarks BENGEL — nowhere else occurring in the Gospel.

and the gates of hell — “of Hades,” or, the unseen world; meaning, the gates of Death: in other words, “It shall never perish.” Some explain it of “the assaults of the powers of darkness”; but though that expresses a glorious truth, probably the former is the sense here.

19. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven — the kingdom of God about to be set up on earth

and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven — Whatever this mean, it was soon expressly *extended to all the apostles* (^{}Matthew 18:18); so that the claim of supreme authority in the Church, made for Peter by the Church of Rome, and then arrogated to themselves by the popes as the legitimate successors of St. Peter, is baseless and impudent. As first in confessing Christ, Peter got this commission before the rest; and with these “keys,” on the day of Pentecost, he first “opened the door of faith” to the *Jews*, and then, in the person of Cornelius, he was honored to do the same to the *Gentiles*. Hence, in the lists of the apostles, Peter is always first named. See on ^{}Matthew 18:18. One thing is clear, that not in all the New Testament is there the vestige of any authority either claimed or exercised by Peter, or conceded to him, above the rest of the apostles — a thing conclusive against the Romish claims in behalf of that apostle.

20. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ — Now that He had been so explicit, they might naturally think the time come for giving it out openly; but here they are told it had not.

Announcement of His Approaching Death and Rebuke of Peter
(^{<4062>}Matthew 16:21-28).

The occasion here is evidently the same.

21. From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples — that is, with an *explicitness and frequency* He had never observed before.

how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things — “and be rejected,” (^{<4089>}Mark 8:31 ^{<4092>}Luke 9:22).

of the elders and chief priests and scribes — not as before, merely by not receiving Him, but by formal deeds.

and be killed, and be raised again the third day — Mark (^{<4082>}Mark 8:32) adds, that “He spake that saying openly” — “explicitly,” or “without disguise.”

22. Then Peter took him — aside, apart from the rest; presuming on the distinction just conferred on him; showing how *unexpected* and *distasteful* to them all was the announcement.

and began to rebuke him — affectionately, yet with a certain generous indignation, to chide Him.

saying, Be it far from thee: this shall not be unto thee — that is, “If I can help it”: the same spirit that prompted him in the garden to draw the sword in His behalf (^{<4880>}John 18:10).

23. But he turned, and said — in the hearing of the rest; for Mark (^{<4083>}Mark 8:33) expressly says, “When He had turned about and looked on His disciples, He rebuked Peter”; perceiving that he had but boldly uttered what others felt, and that the check was needed by them also.

Get thee behind me, Satan — the same words as He had addressed to the Tempter (^{<4048>}Luke 4:8); for He felt in it a satanic lure, a whisper from hell, to move Him from His purpose to suffer. So He shook off the Serpent, then coiling around Him, and “felt no harm” (^{<4085>}Acts 28:5). How quickly has the “rock” turned to a devil! The fruit of divine teaching the Lord delighted to honor in Peter; but the mouthpiece of hell, which he had in a moment of forgetfulness become, the Lord shook off with horror.

thou art an offense — a stumbling-block.

unto me — “Thou playest the Tempter, casting a stumbling-block in My way to the Cross. Could it succeed, where wert thou? and how should the Serpent’s head be bruised?”

for thou savourest not — thou thinkest not.

the things that be of God, but those that be of men — “Thou art carried away by human views of the way of setting up Messiah’s kingdom, quite contrary to those of God.” This was kindly said, not to take off the sharp edge of the rebuke. but to explain and justify it, as it was evident Peter knew not what was in the bosom of his rash speech.

24. Then said Jesus unto his disciples — Mark (^{<4036>}Mark 8:34) says, “When He had called the people unto Him, with His disciples also, He said unto them” — turning the rebuke of one into a warning to all.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

25. For whosoever will save — is minded to save, or bent on saving.

his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it — (See on ^{<4038>}Matthew 10:38,39). “A suffering and dying Messiah liketh you ill; but what if His servants shall meet the same fate? They may not; but who follows Me must be prepared for the worst.”

26. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul — or forfeit his own soul?

or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? — Instead of these weighty words, which we find in ^{<4035>}Mark 8:36 also, it is thus expressed in ^{<4025>}Luke 9:25: “If he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away,” or better, “If he gain the whole world, and destroy or forfeit himself.” How awful is the stake as here set forth! If a man makes the present world — in its various forms of riches, honors, pleasures, and such like — the object of supreme pursuit, be it that he gains the world; yet along with it he forfeits his own soul. Not that any ever did, or ever will gain the whole world — a very small portion of it, indeed, falls to the lot of the most successful of the world’s votaries — but to make the extravagant concession, that by giving himself entirely up to it, a man gains the whole world; yet, setting over against this gain the forfeiture of his soul — necessarily following the surrender of his whole heart to the world — what is he profited? But, if not the whole world, yet possibly something else may be conceived as an equivalent for the soul. Well, what is it? — “Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Thus, in language the weightiest, because the simplest, does our Lord shut up His hearers, and all who shall read these words to the end of the world, to the priceless value to every man of his own soul. In Mark and Luke (^{<4033>}Mark 8:38 ^{<4023>}Luke 9:26) the following words are added: “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of

Me and of My words [shall be ashamed of belonging to Me, and ashamed of My Gospel] in this adulterous and sinful generation” (see on ^{<4123>}Matthew 12:39), “of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels.” He will render back to that man his own treatment, disowning him before the most august of all assemblies, and putting him to “*shame* and everlasting *contempt*” (^{<2713>}Daniel 12:2). “O shame,” exclaims BENGEL, “to be put to shame before God, Christ, and angels!” The sense of *shame* is founded on our love of *reputation*, which causes instinctive aversion to what is fitted to lower it, and was given us as a preservative from all that is properly *shameful*. To be *lost to shame* is to be nearly past hope. (^{<3085>}Zephaniah 3:5 ^{<3185>}Jeremiah 6:15 ^{<3185>}3:3). But when Christ and “His words” are unpopular, the same instinctive desire to *stand well with others* begets that temptation to be ashamed of Him which only the expulsive power of a higher affection can effectually counteract.

27. For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels — in the splendor of His Father’s authority and with all His angelic ministers, ready to execute His pleasure.

and then he shall reward, etc.

28. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here — “some of those standing here.”

which shall not taste of death, fill they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom — or, as in Mark (^{<4103>}Mark 9:1), “till they see the kingdom of God come with power”; or, as in Luke (^{<4127>}Luke 9:27), more simply still, “till they see the kingdom of God.” The reference, beyond doubt, is to the firm establishment and victorious progress, in the lifetime of some then present, of that new kingdom of Christ, which was destined to work the greatest of all changes on this earth, and be the grand pledge of His final coming in glory.

CHAPTER 17

◀1708 MATTHEW 17:1-13.

JESUS IS TRANSFIGURED — CONVERSATION ABOUT ELIAS. (◀1709 MARK 9:2-13 ◀1708 LUKE 9:28-36).

For the exposition, see on ◀1708 Luke 9:28-36.

◀1714 MATTHEW 17:14-23.

HEALING OF A DEMONIAK BOY — SECOND EXPLICIT ANNOUNCEMENT BY OUR LORD OF HIS APPROACHING DEATH AND RESURRECTION. (◀1714 MARK 9:14-32 ◀1715 LUKE 9:37-45).

The time of this section is sufficiently denoted by the events which all the narratives show to have immediately preceded it — the first explicit announcement of His death, and the transfiguration — both being between His third and His fourth and last Passover.

Healing of the Demoniac and Lunatic Boy (◀1714 Matthew 17:14-21).

For the exposition of this portion, see on ◀1714 Mark 9:14-32.

Second Announcement of His Death (◀1722 Matthew 17:22,23).

22. And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them — Mark (◀1709 Mark 9:30), as usual, is very precise here: “And they departed thence” — that is, from the scene of the last miracle — “and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it.” So this was not a preaching, but a private, journey through Galilee. Indeed, His public ministry in Galilee was now all but concluded. Though He sent out the Seventy after this to preach and heal, He Himself was little more in public there, and He was soon to bid it a final adieu. Till this hour arrived, He was chiefly occupied with the Twelve, preparing them for the coming events.

The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men ... And they were exceeding sorry — Though the shock would not be so great as at the first announcement (◀1702 Matthew 16:21,22), their “sorrow” would not be

the less, but probably the greater, the deeper the intelligence went down into their hearts, and a new wave dashing upon them by this repetition of the heavy tidings. Accordingly, Luke (^{<0196}Luke 9:43,44), connecting it with the scene of the miracle just recorded, and the teaching which arose out of it — or possibly with all His recent teaching — says our Lord forewarned the Twelve that they would soon stand in need of all that teaching: “But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, He said unto His disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered,” etc.: “Be not carried off your feet by the grandeur you have lately seen in Me, but remember what I have told you, and now tell you again, that that Sun in whose beams ye now rejoice is soon to set in midnight gloom.” Remarkable is the antithesis in those words of our Lord preserved in all the three narratives — “The son of *man* shall be betrayed into the hands of *men*.” Luke adds (^{<0195}Luke 9:45) that “they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not” — for the plainest statements, when they encounter long-continued and obstinate prejudices, are seen through a distorting and dulling medium — “and were afraid to ask Him”; deterred partly by the air of lofty sadness with which doubtless these sayings were uttered, and on which they would be reluctant to break in, and partly by the fear of laying themselves open to rebuke for their shallowness and timidity. How artless is all this!

^{<0124}MATTHEW 17:24-27.

THE TRIBUTE MONEY.

The time of this section is evidently in immediate succession to that of the preceding one. The brief but most pregnant incident which it records is given by Matthew alone — for whom, no doubt, it would have a peculiar interest, from its relation to his own town and his own familiar lake.

24. And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money — the double drachma; a sum equal to two Attic drachmas, and corresponding to the Jewish “half-shekel,” payable, towards the maintenance of the temple and its services, by every male Jew of twenty years old and upward. For the origin of this annual tax, see ^{<0103}Exodus 30:13,14 ^{<0106}2 Chronicles 24:6,9. Thus, it will be observed, it was not a civil, but an ecclesiastical tax. The tax mentioned in ^{<0125}Matthew 17:25 was a civil one. The whole teaching of this very remarkable scene depends upon this distinction.

came to Peter — at whose house Jesus probably resided while at Capernaum. This explains several things in the narrative.

and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? — The question seems to imply that the payment of this tax was *voluntary*, but *expected*; or what, in modern phrase, would be called a “voluntary assessment.”

25. He saith, yes — that is, “To be sure He does”; as if eager to remove even the suspicion of the contrary. If Peter knew — as surely he did — that there was at this time no money in the bag, this reply must be regarded as a great act of faith in his Master.

And when he was come into the house — Peter’s.

Jesus prevented him — anticipated him; according to the old sense of the word “prevent.”

saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? — using his family name for familiarity.

of whom do the kings of the earth take custom — meaning custom on goods exported or imported.

or tribute — meaning the poll-tax, payable to the Romans by everyone whose name was in the census. This, therefore, it will be observed, was strictly a *civil* tax.

of their own children, or of strangers — This cannot mean “foreigners,” from whom sovereigns certainly do not raise taxes, but those who are not of their own family, that is, their subjects.

26. Peter saith unto him, Of strangers — “of those not their children.”

Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free — By “the children” our Lord cannot here mean Himself and the Twelve together, in some loose sense of their near relationship to God as their common Father. For besides that our Lord never once mixes Himself up with His disciples in speaking of their relation to God, but ever studiously keeps His relation and theirs apart (see, for example, on the last words of this chapter) — this would be to teach the right of believers to exemption from the dues required for sacred services, in the teeth of all that Paul teaches and that He Himself indicates throughout. He can refer here, then, only to Himself; using the word “children” evidently in order to express the general principle observed by sovereigns, who do not draw taxes from their own children, and thus convey the truth respecting His own exemption the more strikingly: — namely, “If the sovereign’s own family be exempt, you know the inference

in My case”; or to express it more nakedly than Jesus thought needful and fitting: “This is a tax for upholding My Father’s House. As His Son, then, that tax is not due by Me — I AM FREE.”

27. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend — stumble.

them — all ignorant as they are of My relation to the Lord of the Temple, and should misconstrue a claim to exemption into indifference to His honor who dwells in it.

go thou to the sea — Capernaum, it will be remembered, lay on the Sea of Galilee.

and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shall find a piece of money — a stater. So it should have been rendered, and not indefinitely, as in our version, for the coin was an Attic silver coin equal to two of the aforementioned “didrachms” of half a shekel’s value, and so, was the exact sum required for both. Accordingly, the Lord adds,

that take, and give unto them for me and thee — literally, “instead of Me and thee”; perhaps because the payment was a *redemption of the person* paid for (⁴²⁹¹²Exodus 30:12) — in which view Jesus certainly was “free.” If the house was Peter’s, this will account for payment being provided on this occasion, not for all the Twelve, but only for him and His Lord. Observe, our Lord does not say “for us,” but “for Me and thee”; thus distinguishing the Exempted One and His non-exempted disciple.

CHAPTER 18

MATTHEW 18:1-9.

STRIFE AMONG THE TWELVE WHO SHOULD BE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, WITH RELATIVE TEACHING. (~~4083~~ MARK 9:33-50 ~~4096~~ LUKE 9:46-50).

For the exposition, see on ~~4083~~ Mark 9:33-50.

MATTHEW 18:10-35.

FURTHER TEACHING ON THE SAME SUBJECT INCLUDING THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL DEBTOR.

Same Subject (~~4080~~ Matthew 18:10-20).

10. Take heed that ye despise — stumble.

not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven —

A difficult verse; but perhaps the following may be more than an illustration: — Among men, those who nurse and rear the royal children, however humble in themselves, are allowed free entrance with their charge, and a degree of familiarity which even the highest state ministers dare not assume. Probably our Lord means that, in virtue of their charge over His disciples (~~3013~~ Hebrews 1:13 ~~4015~~ John 1:51), the angels have *errands* to the throne, a *welcome* there, and a *dear familiarity* in dealing with “His Father which is in heaven,” which on their own matters they could not assume.

11. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost — or “is lost.” A golden saying, once and again repeated in different forms. Here the connection seems to be, “Since the whole object and errand of the Son of man into the world is to save the lost, take heed lest, by causing offenses, ye lose the saved.” That this is the idea intended we may gather from ~~4084~~ Matthew 18:14.

12, 13. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, etc. — This is another of those pregnant sayings which our Lord uttered more than once. See on the delightful parable of the lost sheep in ^{<4250>}Luke 15:4-7. Only the object *there* is to show what the good Shepherd will do, when even one of His sheep is lost, to *find* it; *here* the object is to show, when found, how reluctant He is to *lose* it. Accordingly, it is added,

14. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish — How, then, can He but visit for those “offenses” which endanger the souls of these little ones?

15. Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother, etc. — Probably our Lord had reference still to the late dispute, Who should be the greatest? After the rebuke — so gentle and captivating, yet so dignified and divine — under which they would doubtless be smarting, perhaps each would be saying, It was not I that began it, it was not I that threw out unworthy and irritating insinuations against my brethren. Be it so, says our Lord; but as such things will often arise, I will direct you how to proceed. *First*, Neither harbor a grudge against your offending brother, nor break forth upon him in presence of the unbelieving; but take him aside, show him his fault, and if he own and make reparation for it, you have done more service to him than even justice to yourself. *Next*, If this fail, take two or three to witness how just your complaint is, and how brotherly your spirit in dealing with him. *Again*, If this fail, bring him before the Church or congregation to which both belong. *Lastly*, If even this fail, regard him as no longer a brother Christian, but as one “without” — as the Jews did Gentiles and publicans.

18. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven — Here, what had been granted but a short time before to Peter only (see on ^{<4169>}Matthew 16:19) is plainly extended to all the Twelve; so that whatever it means, it means nothing peculiar to Peter, far less to his pretended successors at Rome. It has to do with admission to and rejection from the membership of the Church. But see on ^{<4123>}John 20:23.

19. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20. For where two or three are gathered together in my name — or “unto my name.”

there am I in the midst of them — On this passage — so full of sublime encouragement to Christian union in action and prayer — observe, first, the connection in which it stands. Our Lord had been speaking of church meetings before which the obstinate perversity of a brother was in the last resort to be brought, and whose decision was to be final — such honor does the Lord of the Church put upon its lawful assemblies. But not these assemblies only does He deign to countenance and honor. For even two uniting to bring any matter before Him shall find that they are not alone, for My Father is with them, says Jesus. Next, observe the *premium here put upon union in prayer*. As this cannot exist with fewer than two, so by letting it down so low as that number, He gives the utmost conceivable encouragement to union in this exercise. But what kind of union? Not an agreement merely to pray in concert, but to pray *for some definite thing*. “As touching anything which they shall ask,” says our Lord — anything they shall agree to ask in concert. At the same time, it is plain He had certain things at that moment in His eye, as most fitting and needful subjects for such concerted prayer. The Twelve had been “falling out by the way” about the miserable question of precedence in their Master’s kingdom, and this, as it stirred their corruptions, had given rise — or at least was in danger of giving rise — to “offenses” perilous to their souls. The Lord Himself had been directing them how to deal with one another about such matters. “But now shows He unto them a more excellent way.” Let them bring all such matters — yea, and everything whatsoever by which either their own loving relationship to each other, or the good of His kingdom at large, might be affected — to their Father in heaven; and if they be but agreed in petitioning Him about that thing, it shall be done for them of His Father which is in heaven. But further, it is not merely union in prayer for the same thing — for that might be with very jarring ideas of the thing to be desired — but it is to symphonious prayer, the prayer by kindred spirits, members of one family, servants of one Lord, constrained by the same love, fighting under one banner, cheered by assurances of the same victory; a living and loving union, whose voice in the divine ear is as the sound of many waters. Accordingly, what they ask “*on earth*” is done for them, says Jesus, “of My Father which is *in heaven*.” Not for nothing does He say, “of MY FATHER” — not “YOUR FATHER”; as is evident from what follows: “For where two or three are gathered together *unto My name*” — the “My” is emphatic, “*there am I* in the midst of them.” As His name would prove a spell to draw together many clusters of His dear disciples, so if there should be but two or three, that will attract Himself down into the midst of them; and related as He is to both the parties, the petitioners and the Petitioned — to the one on earth by the tie of His assumed flesh, and to the other in heaven by the tie of His eternal Spirit — their symphonious prayers on earth would thrill upward through Him to

heaven, be carried by Him into the holiest of all, and so reach the Throne. Thus will He be the living Conductor of the prayer upward, and the answer downward.

Parable of the Unmerciful Debtor (^{<482>}Matthew 18:21-35).

21. Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? — In the recent dispute, Peter had probably been an object of special envy, and his forwardness in continually answering for all the rest would likely be cast up to him — and if so, probably by Judas — notwithstanding his Masters' commendations. And as such insinuations were perhaps made once and again, he wished to know how often and how long he was to stand it.

till seven times? — This being the sacred and complete number, perhaps his meaning was, Is there to be a limit at which the needful forbearance will be *full*?

22. Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven — that is, so long as it shall be needed and sought: you are never to come to the point of refusing forgiveness sincerely asked. (See on ^{<273>}Luke 17:3,4).

23. Therefore — “with reference to this matter.”

is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants — or, would scrutinize the accounts of his revenue collectors.

24. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents — If *Attic* talents are here meant, ten thousand of them would amount to above \$7,500,000; if Jewish talents, to a much larger sum.

25. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made — (See ^{<201>}2 Kings 4:1 ^{<4618>}Nehemiah 5:8 ^{<8239>}Leviticus 25:39).

26. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him — or did humble obeisance to him.

saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all — This was just an acknowledgment of the justice of the claim made against him, and a piteous imploration of mercy.

27. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt — Payment being hopeless, the

master is first moved with compassion; next, liberates his debtor from prison; and then cancels the debt freely.

28. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants — Mark the difference here. The first case is that of master and servant; in this case, both are on a footing of equality. (See ⁴⁰⁸³Matthew 18:33).

which owed him an hundred pence — If Jewish money is intended, this debt was to the other less than *one to a million*.

and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat — he seized and throttled him.

saying, Pay me that thou owest — Mark the mercilessness even of the tone.

29. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all — The same attitude, and the same words which drew compassion from his master, are here employed towards himself by his fellow servant.

30. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt, etc. — Jesus here vividly conveys the intolerable injustice and impudence which even the servants saw in this act on the part of one so recently laid under the heaviest obligation to their common master.

32, 33. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, etc. — Before bringing down his vengeance upon him, he calmly points out to him how shamefully unreasonable and heartless his conduct was; which would give the punishment inflicted on him a double sting.

34. And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors — more than *jailers*; denoting the severity of the treatment which he thought such a case demanded.

till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35. So likewise — in this *spirit*, or on this principle.

shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

CHAPTER 19

Ⓜ MATTHEW 19:1-12.

FINAL DEPARTURE FROM GALILEE — DIVORCE.

(Ⓜ MARK 10:1-12 Ⓜ LUKE 9:51).

Farewell to Galilee (Ⓜ Matthew 19:1,2).

1. And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee — This marks a very solemn period in our Lord's public ministry. So slightly is it touched here, and in the corresponding passage of Mark (Ⓜ Mark 10:1), that few readers probably note it as the Redeemer's *Farewell to Galilee*, which however it was. See on the sublime statement of Luke (Ⓜ Luke 9:51), which relates to the same transition stage in the progress of our Lord's work.

and came into the coasts — or, boundaries

of Judea beyond Jordan — that is, to the further, or east side of the Jordan, into Perea, the dominions of Herod Antipas. But though one might conclude from our Evangelist that our Lord went straight from the one region to the other, we know from the other Gospels that a considerable time elapsed between the departure from the one and the arrival at the other, during which many of the most important events in our Lord's public life occurred — probably a large part of what is recorded in Ⓜ Luke 9:51, onward to Ⓜ Matthew 18:15, and part of Ⓜ John 7:2-11:54.

2. And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there — Mark says further (Ⓜ Mark 10:1), that "as He was wont, He taught them there." What we now have on the subject of divorce is some of that teaching.

Divorce (Ⓜ Matthew 19:3-12).

3. Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? — Two rival schools (as we saw on Ⓜ Matthew 5:31) were divided on this question — a delicate one, as DE WETTE pertinently remarks, in the dominions of Herod Antipas.

4. And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female — or

better, perhaps, “He that made them made them from the beginning a male and a female.”

5. And said, For this cause — to follow out this divine appointment.

shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? — Jesus here sends them back to the original constitution of man as one pair, a male and a female; to their marriage, as such, by divine appointment; and to the purpose of God, expressed by the sacred historian, that in all time one man and one woman should by marriage become one flesh — so to continue as long as both are in the flesh. This being *God’s* constitution, let not *man* break it up by causeless divorces.

7. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8. He saith unto them, Moses — as a civil lawgiver.

because of — or “having respect to.”

the hardness of your hearts — looking to your low moral state, and your inability to endure the strictness of the original law.

suffered you to put away your wives — tolerated a relaxation of the strictness of the marriage bond — not as approving of it, but to prevent still greater evils.

But from the beginning it was not so — This is repeated, in order to impress upon His audience the temporary and purely civil character of this Mosaic relaxation.

9. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except, etc. — See on ⁴¹⁸³Matthew 5:31.

10. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry — that is, “In this view of marriage, surely it must prove a snare rather than a blessing, and had better be avoided altogether.”

11. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given — that is, “That the unmarried state is better, is a saying not for everyone, and indeed only for such as it is divinely intended for.” But who are these? they would naturally ask; and this our Lord proceeds to tell them in three particulars.

12. For there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb — persons constitutionally either incapable of or indisposed to marriage.

and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men — persons rendered incapable by others.

and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake — persons who, to do God's work better, deliberately choose this state. Such was Paul (^{<400>}1 Corinthians 7:7).

He that is able to receive it, let him receive it — “He who feels this to be his proper vocation, let him embrace it”; which, of course, is as much as to say — “he only.” Thus, all are left free in this matter.

^{<409>}MATTHEW 19:13-15.

LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST.

(^{<410>}MARK 10:13-16 ^{<411>}LUKE 18:15-17).

For the exposition, see on ^{<412>}Luke 18:15-17.

^{<416>}MATTHEW 19:16-30.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER. (^{<417>}MARK 10:17-31 ^{<418>}LUKE 18:18-30).

For the exposition, see on ^{<419>}Luke 18:18-30.

CHAPTER 20

◀1808▶ MATTHEW 20:1-16.

PARABLE OF THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD.

This parable, recorded only by Matthew, is closely connected with the end of the nineteenth chapter, being spoken with reference to Peter's question as to how it should fare with those who, like himself, had left all for Christ. It is designed to show that while *they* would be richly rewarded, a certain equity would still be observed towards *later* converts and workmen in His service.

1. For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, etc. — The figure of a vineyard, to represent the rearing of souls for heaven, the culture required and provided for that purpose, and the care and pains which God takes in that whole matter, is familiar to every reader of the Bible. (◀1808▶ Psalm 80:8-16 ◀2301E▶ Isaiah 5:1-7 ◀2402E▶ Jeremiah 2:21 ◀2209▶ Luke 20:9-16 ◀6151E▶ John 15:1-8). At vintage time, as WEBSTER and WILKINSON remark, labor was scarce, and masters were obliged to be early in the market to secure it. Perhaps the pressing nature of the work of the Gospel, and the comparative paucity of laborers, may be incidentally suggested, ◀4087▶ Matthew 9:37,38. The "laborers," as in ◀4088▶ Matthew 9:38, are first, the *official* servants of the Church, but after them and along with them *all* the servants of Christ, whom He has laid under the weightiest obligation to work in His service.

2. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny — a usual day's hire.

he sent them into his vineyard.

3. And he went out about the third hour — about nine o'clock, or after a fourth of the working day had expired: the day of twelve hours was reckoned from six to six.

and saw others standing idle in the market place — unemployed.

4. And said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right — just, equitable, in proportion to their time.

I will give you. And they went their way.

5. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour — about noon, and about three o'clock in the afternoon.

and did likewise — hiring and sending into his vineyard fresh laborers each time.

6. And about the eleventh hour — but one hour before the close of the working day; a most unusual hour both for offering and engaging

and found others standing idle, and saith, Why stand ye here all the day idle? — Of course they had not been there, or not been disposed to offer themselves at the proper time; but as they were now willing, and the day was not over, and “yet there was room,” they also are engaged, and on similar terms with all the rest.

8. So when even was come — that is, the reckoning time between masters and laborers (see ^{<RB45>}Deuteronomy 24:15); pointing to the day of final account.

the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward — answering to Christ Himself, represented “as a Son over His own house” (^{<RB6>}Hebrews 3:6; see ^{<RB27>}Matthew 11:27 ^{<RB35>}John 3:35 5:27).

Call the laborers and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first — Remarkable direction this — last hired, first paid.

9. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny — a full day's wages.

10. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more — This is that calculating, mercenary spirit which had peeped out — though perhaps very slightly — in Peter's question (^{<RB27>}Matthew 19:27), and which this parable was designed once for all to put down among the servants of Christ.

11. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house — rather, “the householder,” the word being the same as in ^{<RB11>}Matthew 20:1.

12. Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat — the burning heat.

of the day — who have wrought not only longer but during a more trying period of the day.

13. But he answered one of them — doubtless the spokesman of the complaining party.

and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? etc.

15. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? — that is, “You appeal to *justice*, and by that your mouth is shut; for the sum you agreed for is paid you. Your case being disposed of, with the terms I make with other laborers you have nothing to do; and to grudge the benevolence shown to others, when by your own admission you have been honorably dealt with, is both unworthy envy of your neighbor, and discontent with the goodness that engaged and rewarded you in his service at all.”

16. So the last shall be first, and the first last — that is, “Take heed lest by indulging the spirit of these murmurers at the penny given to the last hired, ye miss your own penny, though first in the vineyard; while the consciousness of having come in so late may inspire these last with such a humble frame, and such admiration of the grace that has hired and rewarded them at all, as will put them into the foremost place in the end.”

for many be called, but few chosen — This is another of our Lord’s terse and pregnant sayings, more than once uttered in different connections. (See ^{1018B}Matthew 19:30 22:14). The “calling” of which the New Testament almost invariably speaks is what divines call *effectual* calling, carrying with it a supernatural operation on the will to secure its consent. But that cannot be the meaning of it here; the “called” being emphatically distinguished from the “chosen.” It can only mean here the “invited.” And so the sense is, Many receive the invitations of the Gospel whom God has never “chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (^{1018B}2 Thessalonians 2:13). But what, it may be asked, has this to do with the subject of our parable? Probably this — to teach us that men who have wrought in Christ’s service all their days may, by the spirit which they manifest at the last, make it too evident that, as between God and their own souls, they never were chosen workmen at all.

◀1017▶ **MATTHEW 20:17-28.**

**THIRD EXPLICIT ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS
APPROACHING SUFFERINGS, DEATH, AND
RESURRECTION — THE AMBITIOUS REQUEST OF JAMES
AND JOHN, AND THE REPLY. (◀1106▶ MARK 10:32-45 ▶1038▶ LUKE
18:31-34).**

For the exposition, see on ▶1106▶ Mark 10:32-45.

◀1109▶ **MATTHEW 20:29-34.**

**TWO BLIND MEN HEALED. (◀1106▶ MARK 10:46-52 ▶1038▶ LUKE 18:35-
43).**

For the exposition, see on ▶1038▶ Luke 18:35-43.

CHAPTER 21

◀206 MATTHEW 21:1-9.

CHRIST'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK. (◀4106 MARK 11:1-11 ▶299 LUKE 19:29-40 ▶622 JOHN 12:12-19).

For the exposition of this majestic scene — recorded, as will be seen, by all the Evangelists — see on ▶299 Luke 19:29-40.

◀420 MATTHEW 21:10-22.

STIR ABOUT HIM IN THE CITY — SECOND CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE, AND MIRACLES THERE — GLORIOUS VINDICATION OF THE CHILDREN'S TESTIMONY — THE BARREN FIG TREE CURSED, WITH LESSONS FROM IT. (◀4116 MARK 11:11-26 ▶295 LUKE 19:45-48).

For the exposition, see on ▶295 Luke 19:45-48; and ▶4112 Mark 11:12-26.

◀423 MATTHEW 21:23-46.

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS QUESTIONED AND THE REPLY — THE PARABLES OF THE TWO SONS, AND OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMAN. (◀4127 MARK 11:27-12 12 ▶201 LUKE 20:1-19).

Now commences, as ALFORD remarks, that series of parables and discourses of our Lord with His enemies, in which He develops, more completely than ever before, His hostility to their hypocrisy and iniquity: and so they are stirred up to compass His death.

The Authority of Jesus Questioned, and the Reply
(▶423 Matthew 21:23-27).

23. By what authority doest thou these things! — referring particularly to the expulsion of the buyers and sellers from the temple, and who gave thee this authority?

24. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, etc.

25. The baptism of John — meaning his whole mission and ministry, of which baptism was the proper character.

whence was it? from heaven, or of men? — What wisdom there was in this way of meeting their question will best appear by their reply.

If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? — “Why did ye not believe the testimony which he bore to Me, as the promised and expected Messiah?” for that was the burden of John’s whole testimony.

26. But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people — rather, “the multitude.” In Luke (⁴²¹⁰Luke 20:6) it is, “all the people will stone us.”

for all hold John as a prophet — Crooked, cringing hypocrites! No wonder Jesus gave you no answer.

27. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell — Evidently their difficulty was, how to answer, so as neither to shake their determination to reject the claims of Christ nor damage their reputation with the people. For the truth itself they cared nothing whatever.

Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things — What composure and dignity of wisdom does our Lord here display, as He turns their question upon themselves, and, while revealing His knowledge of their hypocrisy, closes their mouths! Taking advantage of the surprise, silence, and awe produced by this reply, our Lord followed it up immediately by the two following parables.

Parable of the Two Sons (⁴²¹⁵Matthew 21:28-32).

28. But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard — for true religion is a practical thing, a “bringing forth fruit unto God.”

29. He answered and said, I will not — TRENCH notices the rudeness of this answer, and the total absence of any attempt to excuse such disobedience, both characteristic; representing careless, reckless sinners resisting God to His face.

30. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir — “I, sir.” The emphatic “I,” here, denotes the self-righteous complacency which says, “God, I thank thee that *I* am not as other men” (<D181>Luke 18:11).

and went not — *He* did not “afterward repent” and refuse to go; for there was here no *intention* to go. It is the class that “say and do not” (<D182>Matthew 23:3) — a falseness more abominable to God, says STIER, than any “I will not.”

31. Whether of them twain did the will of his Father? They say unto him, The first — Now comes the application.

Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go — or, “are going”; even now entering, while ye hold back.

into the kingdom of God before you — The publicans and the harlots were the first son, who, when told to work in the Lord’s vineyard, said, I will not; but afterwards repented and went. Their early life was a flat and flagrant refusal to do what they were commanded; it was one continued rebellion against the authority of God. The chief priests and the elders of the people, with whom our Lord was now speaking, were the second son, who said, I go, sir, but went not. They were early called, and all their life long professed obedience to God, but never rendered it; their life was one of continued disobedience.

32. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness — that is, calling you to repentance; as Noah is styled “a preacher of righteousness” (<D183>2 Peter 2:5), when like the Baptist he warned the old world to “flee from the wrath to come.”

and ye believed him not — They did not reject him; nay, they “were willing for a season to rejoice in his light” (<D184>John 5:35); but they would not receive his testimony to Jesus.

but the publicans and the harlots believed him — Of the publicans this is twice expressly recorded, <D185>Luke 3:12 7:29. Of the harlots, then, the same may be taken for granted, though the fact is not expressly recorded. These outcasts gladly believed the testimony of John to the coming Savior, and so hastened to Jesus when He came. See <D186>Luke 7:37 15:1, etc.

and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him — Instead of being “provoked to jealousy” by their example, ye have seen them flocking to the Savior and getting to heaven, unmoved.

Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (<D187>Matthew 21:33-46).

33. Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard — (See on ^{<4216>}Luke 13:6).

and hedged it round about, and dugged a winepress in it, and built a tower — These details are taken, as is the basis of the parable itself, from that beautiful parable of ^{<2378>}Isaiah 5:1-7, in order to fix down the application and sustain it by Old Testament authority.

and let it out to husbandmen — These are just the ordinary spiritual guides of the people, under whose care and culture the fruits of righteousness are expected to spring up.

and went into a far country — “for a long time” (^{<2719>}Luke 20:9), leaving the vineyard to the laws of the spiritual husbandry during the whole time of the Jewish economy. On this phraseology, see on ^{<4087>}Mark 4:26.

34. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen — By these “servants” are meant the prophets and other extraordinary messengers, raised up from time to time. See on ^{<4237>}Matthew 23:37.

that they might receive the fruits of it — Again see on ^{<2136>}Luke 13:6.

35. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one — see ^{<2575>}Jeremiah 37:15 38:6.

and killed another — see ^{<2571>}Jeremiah 26:20-23.

and stoned another — see ^{<4221>}2 Chronicles 24:21. Compare with this whole verse ^{<4237>}Matthew 23:37, where our Lord reiterates these charges in the most melting strain.

36. Again, he sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise — see ^{<2713>}2 Kings 17:13 ^{<4696>}2 Chronicles 36:16,18 ^{<4126>}Nehemiah 9:26.

37. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son — In Mark (^{<4126>}Mark 12:6) this is most touchingly expressed: “Having yet therefore one son, His well-beloved, He sent Him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence My Son.” Luke’s version of it too (^{<2013>}Luke 20:13) is striking: “Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send My beloved Son: it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him.” Who does not see that our Lord here severs Himself, by the sharpest line of demarcation, from all merely *human* messengers, and claims for Himself *Sonship* in its loftiest sense? (Compare ^{<3888>}Hebrews 3:3-6). The expression, “*It may be they will reverence My*

Son,” is designed to teach the almost unimaginable guilt of *not* reverentially welcoming God’s Son.

38. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves — Compare ^{<137B>}Genesis 37:18-20 ^{<147>}John 11:47-53.

This is the heir — Sublime expression this of the great truth, that God’s inheritance was destined for, and in due time is to come into the possession of, His own Son *in our nature* (^{<30D>}Hebrews 1:2).

come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance — that so, from mere *servants*, we may become *lords*. This is the deep aim of the depraved heart; this is emphatically “the root of all evil.”

39. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard — compare ^{<83B>}Hebrews 13:11-13 (“without the gate — without the camp”); ^{<121B>}1 Kings 21:13 ^{<167>}John 19:17.

and slew him.

40. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh — This represents “the settling time,” which, in the case of the Jewish ecclesiastics, was that judicial trial of the nation and its leaders which issued in the destruction of their whole state.

what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41. They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men — an emphatic alliteration not easily conveyed in English: “He will badly destroy those bad men,” or “miserably destroy those miserable men,” is something like it.

and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons — If this answer was given by the Pharisees, to whom our Lord addressed the parable, they thus unwittingly pronounced their own condemnation: as did David to Nathan the prophet (^{<125B>}2 Samuel 12:5-7), and Simon the Pharisee to our Lord (^{<174B>}Luke 7:43, etc.). But if it was given, as the two other Evangelists agree in representing it, by our Lord Himself, and the explicitness of the answer would seem to favor that supposition, then we can better explain the exclamation of the Pharisees which followed it, in Luke’s report (^{<206>}Luke 20:16) — “And when they heard it, they said, God forbid” — His whole meaning now bursting upon them.

42. Jesus saith unto them. Did ye never read in the scriptures — (^{<182B>}Psalm 118:22,23).

The stone which the builders rejected, etc. — A bright Messianic prophecy, which reappears in various forms (^{<2336>}Isaiah 28:16, etc.), and was made glorious use of by Peter before the Sanhedrim (^{<4011>}Acts 4:11). He recurs to it in his first epistle (^{<4104>}1 Peter 2:4-6).

43. Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God — God’s visible Kingdom, or Church, upon earth, which up to this time stood in the seed of Abraham.

shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof — that is, the great evangelical community of the faithful, which, after the extrusion of the Jewish nation, would consist chiefly of Gentiles, until “all Israel should be saved” (^{<6125>}Romans 11:25,26). This vastly important statement is given by Matthew only.

44. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder — The Kingdom of God is here a Temple, in the erection of which a *certain stone*, rejected as unsuitable by the spiritual builders, is, by the great Lord of the House, made the keystone of the whole. On that Stone the builders were now “falling” and being “broken” (^{<2385>}Isaiah 8:15). They were sustaining great spiritual hurt; but soon that Stone should “fall upon *them*” and “grind them to powder” (^{<2134>}Daniel 2:34,35 ^{<3012>}Zechariah 12:2) — in their *corporate* capacity, in the tremendous destruction of Jerusalem, but *personally*, as unbelievers, in a more awful sense still.

45. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables — referring to that of the Two Sons and this one of the Wicked Husbandmen.

they perceived that he spake of them.

46. But when they sought to lay hands on him — which Luke (^{<2219>}Luke 20:19) says they did “the same hour,” hardly able to restrain their rage.

they feared the multitude — rather, “the multitudes.”

because they took him for a prophet — just as they feared to say John’s baptism was of men, because the masses took him for a prophet (^{<4123>}Matthew 21:26). Miserable creatures! So, for this time, “they left Him and went their way” (^{<4122>}Mark 12:12).

CHAPTER 22

Ⓜ MATTHEW 22:1-14.

PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON.

This is a different parable from that of the Great Supper, in Ⓜ Luke 14:15, etc., and is recorded by Matthew alone.

2. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son — “In this parable,” as TRENCH admirably remarks, “we see how the Lord is revealing Himself in ever clearer light as the central Person of the kingdom, giving here a far plainer hint than in the last parable of the nobility of His descent. There He was indeed the Son, the only and beloved one (Ⓜ Mark 12:6), of the Householder; but here His race is royal, and He appears as Himself at once the King and the King’s Son (Ⓜ Psalm 72:1). The last was a parable of the Old Testament history; and Christ is rather the last and greatest of the line of its prophets and teachers than the founder of a new kingdom. In that, God appears *demanding* something *from* men; in this, a parable of grace, God appears more as *giving* something *to* them. Thus, as often, the two complete each other: this taking up the matter where the other left it.” The “marriage” of Jehovah to His people Israel was familiar to Jewish ears; and in Ⓜ Psalm 45:1-17 this marriage is seen consummated in the Person of Messiah “THE KING,” Himself addressed as “GOD” and yet as anointed by “His GOD” with the oil of gladness above His fellows. These apparent contradictions (see on Ⓜ Luke 20:41-44) are resolved in this parable; and Jesus, in claiming to be this King’s Son, *serves Himself Heir to all that the prophets and sweet singers of Israel held forth as to Jehovah’s ineffably near and endearing union to His people*. But observe carefully, that THE BRIDE does not come into view in this parable; its design being to teach certain truths under the figure of *guests* at a wedding *feast*, and the want of a wedding *garment*, which would not have harmonized with the introduction of the Bride.

3. and sent forth his servants — representing all preachers of the Gospel.

to call them that were bidden — here meaning the Jews, who were “bidden,” from the first choice of them onwards through every summons addressed to them by the prophets to hold themselves in readiness for the appearing of their King.

to the wedding — or the marriage festivities, when the preparations were all concluded.

and they would not come — as the issue of the whole ministry of the Baptist, our Lord Himself, and His apostles thereafter, too sadly showed.

4. my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage — This points to those Gospel calls *after* Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and effusion of the Spirit, to which the parable could not directly allude, but when only it could be said, with strict propriety, "that all things were ready." Compare ^{<4074>}1 Corinthians 5:7,8, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore, let us keep the feast"; also ^{<4068>}John 6:51, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

5. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

6. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully — insulted them.

and slew them — These are two different classes of unbelievers: the one simply *indifferent*; the other absolutely *hostile* — the one, contemptuous *scorners*; the other, bitter *persecutors*.

7. But when the king — the Great God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

heard thereof, he was wroth — at the affront put both on His Son, and on Himself who had deigned to invite them.

and he sent forth his armies — The *Romans* are here styled God's armies, just as the Assyrian is styled "the rod of His anger" (^{<2005>}Isaiah 10:5), as being the executors of His judicial vengeance.

and destroyed those murderers — and in what vast numbers did they do it!

and burned up their city — Ah! Jerusalem, once "the city of the Great King" (^{<982>}Psalms 48:2), and even up almost to this time (^{<4055>}Matthew 5:35); but now it is "*their city*" — just as our Lord, a day or two after this, said of the temple, where God had so long dwelt, "Behold *your* house is left unto you desolate" (^{<4038>}Matthew 23:38)! Compare ^{<4094>}Luke 19:43,44.

8. The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy

— for how should those be deemed worthy to sit down at His table who had affronted Him by their treatment of His gracious invitation?

9. Go ye therefore into the highways — the great outlets and thoroughfares, whether of town or country, where human beings are to be found.

and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage — that is, just as they are.

10. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good — that is, without making any distinction between open sinners and the morally correct. The Gospel call fetched in Jews, Samaritans, and outlying heathen alike. Thus far the parable answers to that of “the Great Supper” (²⁴¹⁶Luke 14:16, etc.). But the distinguishing feature of our parable is what follows:

11. And when the king came in to see the guests — Solemn expression this, of that *omniscient inspection of every professed disciple of the Lord Jesus* from age to age, in virtue of which his true character will hereafter be judicially proclaimed!

he saw there a man — This shows that it is the judgment of *individuals* which is intended in this latter part of the parable: the first part represents rather *national* judgment.

which had not on a wedding garment — The language here is drawn from the following remarkable passage in ³⁰¹⁷Zephaniah 1:7,8: — “Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath bid His guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord’s sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king’s children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.” The custom in the East of presenting festival garments (see ⁴⁴⁵²Genesis 45:22 ⁴¹⁵²2 Kings 5:22), even though nor clearly proved, is certainly presupposed here. It undoubtedly means something which they bring not of their own — for how could they have any such dress who were gathered in from the highways indiscriminately? — but which they *receive* as their appropriate dress. And what can that be but what is meant by “putting on the Lord Jesus,” as “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS?” (See ⁴⁹⁵³Psalms 45:13,14). Nor could such language be strange to those in whose ears had so long resounded those words of prophetic joy: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of

righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (^{<23310>}Isaiah 61:10).

12. Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless — being self-condemned.

13. Then said the king to the servants — the angelic ministers of divine vengeance (as in ^{<4134>}Matthew 13:41).

Bind him hand and foot — putting it out of his power to resist.

and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness — So ^{<4182>}Matthew 8:12 25:30. The expression is emphatic — “the darkness which is outside.” To be “*outside*” at all — or, in the language of ^{<6215>}Revelation 22:15, to be “*without*” the heavenly city, excluded from its joyous nuptials and gladsome festivities — is sad enough of itself, without anything else. But to find themselves not only excluded from the brightness and glory and joy and felicity of the kingdom above, but thrust into a region of “darkness,” with all its horrors, this is the dismal retribution here announced, that awaits the unworthy at the great day.

there — in that region and condition.

shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. See on ^{<4134>}Matthew 13:42.

14. For many are called, but few are chosen — So ^{<4083>}Matthew 19:30. See on ^{<4116>}Matthew 20:16.

^{<41215>}MATTHEW 22:15-40.

ENTANGLING QUESTIONS ABOUT TRIBUTE THE RESURRECTION, AND THE GREAT COMMANDMENT, WITH THE REPLIES. (^{<41213>}MARK 12:13-34 ^{<42111>}LUKE 20:20-40).

For the exposition, see on ^{<41213>}Mark 12:13-34.

^{<41241>}MATTHEW 22:41-46.

CHRIST Baffles the Pharisees by a question about David and Messiah. (^{<41235>}MARK 12:35-37 ^{<42141>}LUKE 20:41-44).

For the exposition, see on ^{<41235>}Mark 12:35-37.

CHAPTER 23

Ⓜ MATTHEW 23:1-39.

DENUNCIATION OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES — LAMENTATION OVER JERUSALEM, AND FAREWELL TO THE TEMPLE. (Ⓜ MARK 12:38-40 Ⓜ LUKE 20:45-47).

For this long and terrible discourse we are indebted, with the exception of a few verses in Mark and Luke, to Matthew alone. But as it is only an extended repetition of denunciations uttered not long before at the table of a Pharisee, and recorded by Luke (Ⓜ Luke 11:37-54), we may take both together in the exposition.

Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees (Ⓜ Matthew 23:1-36).

The first twelve verses were addressed more immediately to the disciples, the rest to the scribes and Pharisees.

1. **Then spake Jesus to the multitude** — to the multitudes, “and to his disciples.”
2. **Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit** — The Jewish teachers *stood* to read, but *sat* to expound the Scriptures, as will be seen by comparing Ⓜ Luke 4:16 with Ⓜ Matthew 23:20.
- in Moses’ seat** — that is, as interpreters of the law given by Moses.
3. **All therefore** — that is, all which, as *sitting in that seat* and *teaching out of that law*.

they bid you observe, that observe and do — The word “therefore” is thus, it will be seen, of great importance, as limiting those injunctions which He would have them obey to what they fetched from the law itself. In requiring implicit obedience to such injunctions, He would have them to recognize the authority with which they taught over and above the obligations of the law itself — an important principle truly; but He who denounced the traditions of such teachers (Ⓜ Matthew 15:3) cannot have meant here to throw His shield over these. It is remarked by WEBSTER and WILKINSON that the warning to *beware* of the scribes is given by Mark and Luke (Ⓜ Mark 12:38 Ⓜ Luke 20:46) without any qualification: the charge to *respect* and *obey* them being reported by Matthew alone,

indicating for whom this Gospel was especially written, and the writer's desire to conciliate the Jews.

4. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them — “touch them not” (^{<2149>}Luke 11:46).

with one of their fingers — referring not so much to the irksomeness of the legal rites, though they were irksome enough (^{<4450>}Acts 15:10), as to the heartless rigor with which they were enforced, and by men of shameless inconsistency.

5. But all their works they do for to be seen of men — Whatever good they do, or zeal they show, has but one motive — human applause.

they make broad their phylacteries — strips of parchment with Scripture — texts on them, worn on the forehead, arm, and side, in time of prayer.

and enlarge the borders of their garments — fringes of their upper garments (^{<01537>}Numbers 15:37-40).

6. And love the uppermost rooms at feasts — The word “room” is now obsolete in the sense here intended. It should be “the uppermost place,” that is, the place of highest honor.

and the chief seats in the synagogues. See on ^{<2147>}Luke 14:7,8.

7. And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi — It is the spirit rather than the *letter* of this that must be pressed; though the violation of the letter, springing from spiritual pride, has done incalculable evil in the Church of Christ. The reiteration of the word “Rabbi” shows how it tickled the ear and fed the spiritual pride of those ecclesiastics.

8. But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master — your Guide, your Teacher.

9. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven, etc. — To construe these injunctions into a condemnation of every title by which Church rulers may be distinguished from the flock which they rule, is virtually to condemn that rule itself; and accordingly the same persons do both — but against the whole strain of the New Testament and sound Christian judgment. But when we have guarded ourselves against these extremes, let us see to it that we retain the full spirit of this warning against that itch for ecclesiastical superiority which has been

the bane and the scandal of Christ's ministers in every age. (On the use of the word "Christ" here, see on ^{<100E>}Matthew 1:1).

11. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant — This plainly means, "shall show that he is so by becoming your servant"; as in ^{<100F>}Matthew 20:27, compared with ^{<100G>}Mark 10:44.

12. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased — See on ^{<100H>}Luke 18:14. What follows was addressed more immediately to the scribes and Pharisees.

13. But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men — Here they are charged with *shutting heaven* against men: in ^{<100I>}Luke 11:52 they are charged with what was worse, *taking away the key* — "the key of knowledge" — which means, not the key to open knowledge, but knowledge as the only key to open heaven. A right knowledge of God's revealed word is eternal life, as our Lord says (^{<100J>}John 17:3 5:39); but this they took away from the people, substituting for it their wretched traditions.

14. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, etc. — Taking advantage of the helpless condition and confiding character of "widows," they contrived to obtain possession of their property, while by their "long prayers" they made them believe they were raised far above "filthy lucre." So much "the greater damnation" awaits them. What a lifelike description of the Romish clergy, the true successors of those scribes!

15. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte — from heathenism. We have evidence of this in JOSEPHUS.

and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves — condemned, for the hypocrisy he would learn to practice, both by the religion he left and that he embraced.

16. Woe unto you, ye blind guides — Striking expression this of the ruinous effects of erroneous teaching. Our Lord, here and in some following verses, condemns the subtle distinctions they made as to the sanctity of oaths — distinctions invented only to promote their own avaricious purposes.

which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing — He has incurred no debt.

but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple — meaning not the gold that adorned the temple itself, but the *Corban*, set apart for sacred uses (see on ^{<153>}Matthew 15:5).

he is a debtor! — that is, it is no longer his own, even though the necessities of the parent might require it. We know who the successors of these men are.

but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty — It should have been rendered, “he is a debtor,” as in ^{<236>}Matthew 23:16.

19. Ye fools, and blind! for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? — (See ^{<237>}Exodus 29:37).

20-22. Whose therefore shall swear by the altar, etc. — See on ^{<153>}Matthew 5:33-37.

23. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise — rather, “dill,” as in *Margin*.

and cummin — In Luke (^{<214>}Luke 11:42) it is “and rue, and all manner of herbs.” They grounded this practice on ^{<273>}Leviticus 27:30, which they interpreted rigidly. Our Lord purposely names the most trifling products of the earth as examples of what they punctiliously exacted the tenth of.

and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith — In Luke (^{<214>}Luke 11:42) it is “judgment, mercy, and the love of God” — the expression being probably varied by our Lord Himself on the two different occasions. In both His reference is to ^{<316>}Micah 6:6-8, where the prophet makes all acceptable religion to consist of three elements — “doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God”; which third element presupposes and comprehends both the “faith” of Matthew and the “love” of Luke. See on ^{<129>}Mark 12:29; ^{<129>}Mark 12:32,33. The same tendency to merge greater duties in less besets even the children of God; but *it is the characteristic of hypocrites*.

these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone — There is no need for one set of duties to jostle out another; but it is to be carefully noted that of the *greater* duties our Lord says, “Ye ought to have done” them, while of the *lesser* He merely says, “Ye ought not to leave them undone.”

24. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat — The proper rendering — as in the older English translations, and perhaps our own as it came from the translators’ hands — evidently is, “strain out.” It was the custom, says TRENCH, of the stricter Jews to strain their wine, vinegar, and other potables

through linen or gauze, lest unawares they should drink down some little unclean insect therein and thus transgress (^{<B13>}Leviticus 11:20,23,41,42) — just as the Buddhists do now in Ceylon and Hindustan — and to this custom of theirs our Lord here refers.

and swallow a camel — the largest animal the Jews knew, as the “gnat” was the smallest; both were by the law *unclean*.

25. within they are full of extortion — In Luke (^{<B13>}Luke 11:39) the same word is rendered “ravening,” that is, “rapacity.”

26. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also — In Luke (^{<B14>}Luke 11:40) it is, “Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also?” — “He to whom belongs the outer life, and of right demands its subjection to Himself, is the inner man less His?” A remarkable example this of our Lord’s power of drawing the most striking illustrations of great truths from the most familiar objects and incidents in life. To these words, recorded by Luke, He adds the following, involving a principle of immense value: “But rather give alms of such things as ye have, and behold, all things are clean unto you” (^{<B14>}Luke 11:41). As the greed of these hypocrites was one of the most prominent features of their character (^{<B14>}Luke 16:14), our Lord bids them exemplify the opposite character, and then their *outside*, ruled by this, would be beautiful in the eye of God, and their meals would be eaten with clean hands, though much fouled with the business of this everyday world. (See ^{<B15>}Ecclesiastes 9:7).

27. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like whited sepulchres — or, whitewashed sepulchres. (Compare ^{<B16>}Acts 23:3). The process of whitewashing the sepulchres, as LIGHTFOOT says, was performed on a certain day every year, not for ceremonial cleansing, but., as the following words seem rather to imply, to beautify them.

which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness — What a powerful way of conveying the charge, that with all their fair show their hearts were full of corruption! (Compare ^{<B17>}Psalms 5:9 ^{<B18>}Romans 3:13). But our Lord, stripping off the figure, next holds up their iniquity in naked colors.

Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets — that is “ye be witnesses that ye have inherited, and voluntarily served yourselves heirs to, the truth-hating, prophet-killing, spirit of your fathers.” Out of pretended respect and honor, they repaired and beautified the sepulchres of the prophets, and with whining hypocrisy said, “If we had been in their days, how differently

should we have treated these prophets?" While all the time they were witnesses to themselves that they were the children of them that killed the prophets, convicting themselves daily of as exact a resemblance in spirit and character to the very classes over whose deeds they pretended to mourn, as child to parent. In ^{<[144]}Luke 11:44 our Lord gives another turn to this figure of a grave: "Ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." As one might unconsciously walk over a grave concealed from view, and thus contract ceremonial defilement, so the plausible exterior of the Pharisees kept people from perceiving the pollution they contracted from coming in contact with such corrupt characters.

33. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? — In thus, at the end of His ministry, recalling the words of the Baptist at the outset of his, our Lord would seem to intimate that the only difference between their condemnation now and then was, that now they were ripe for their doom, which they were not then.

34. Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes — The I here is emphatic: "I am sending," that is, "am about to send." In ^{<[145]}Luke 11:49 the variation is remarkable: "Therefore also, said the wisdom of God, I will send them," etc. What precisely is meant by "the wisdom of God" here, is somewhat difficult to determine. To us it appears to be simply an announcement of a purpose of the Divine Wisdom, in the high style of ancient prophecy, to send a last set of messengers whom the people would reject, and rejecting, would fill up the cup of their iniquity. But, whereas in Luke it is "I, the Wisdom of God, will send them," in Matthew it is "I, Jesus, am sending them"; language only befitting the one sender of all the prophets, the Lord God of Israel now in the flesh. They are evidently evangelical messengers, but called by the familiar Jewish names of "prophets, wise men, and scribes," whose counterparts were the inspired and gifted servants of the Lord Jesus; for in Luke (^{<[146]}Luke 11:49) it is "prophets and apostles."

unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar — As there is no record of any fresh murder answering to this description, probably the allusion is not to any recent murder, but to ^{<[147]}2 Chronicles 24:20-22, as the *last recorded* and most suitable case for illustration. And as Zacharias' last words were, "The Lord require it," so they are here warned that of that generation it should be *required*.

36. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation — As it was only in the last generation of them that "the

iniquity of the Amorites was full” (^{<01516>}Genesis 15:16), and then the abominations of ages were at once completely and awfully avenged, so the iniquity of Israel was allowed to accumulate from age to age till in that generation it came to the full, and the whole collected vengeance of heaven broke at once over its devoted head. In the first French Revolution the same awful principle was exemplified, and *Christendom has not done with it yet*.

Lamentation over Jerusalem and Farewell to the Temple

(^{<0237>}Matthew 23:37-39).

37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, etc. — How ineffably grand and melting is this apostrophe! It is the very heart of God pouring itself forth through human flesh and speech. It is this incarnation of the innermost life and love of Deity, pleading with men, bleeding for them, and ascending only to open His arms to them and win them back by the power of this story of matchless love, that has conquered the world, that will yet “draw all men unto Him,” and beautify and ennoble Humanity itself! “Jerusalem” here does not mean the mere city or its inhabitants; nor is it to be viewed merely as the metropolis of the *nation*, but as the *center of their religious life* — “the city of their solemnities, whither the tribes went up, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord”; and at this moment it was full of them. It is the whole family of God, then, which is here apostrophized by a name dear to every Jew, recalling to him all that was distinctive and precious in his religion. The intense feeling that sought vent in this utterance comes out first in the redoubling of the opening word — “Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” but, next, in the picture of it which He draws — “that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee!” — not content with spurning God’s messages of mercy, that canst not suffer even the messengers to live! When He adds, “How often would I have gathered thee!” He refers surely to something beyond the six or seven times that He visited and taught in Jerusalem while on earth. No doubt it points to “the prophets,” whom they “killed,” to “them that were sent unto her,” whom they “stoned.” But whom would He have gathered so often? “Thee,” truth-hating, mercy-spurning, prophet-killing Jerusalem — how often would I have gathered *thee!* Compare with this that affecting clause in the great ministerial commission, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem!*” (^{<02447>}Luke 24:47). What encouragement to the heartbroken at their own long-continued and obstinate rebellion! But we have not yet got at the whole heart of this outburst. I would have gathered thee, He says, “even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.” Was ever imagery so homely invested with such grace and such sublimity as this, at our Lord’s touch? And yet how

exquisite the figure itself — of protection, rest, warmth, and all manner of conscious well-being in those poor, defenseless, dependent little creatures, as they creep under and feel themselves overshadowed by the capacious and kindly wing of the mother bird! If, wandering beyond hearing of her peculiar call, they are overtaken by a storm or attacked by an enemy, what can they do but in the one case droop and die, and in the other submit to be torn in pieces? But if they can reach in time their place of safety, under the mother's wing, in vain will any enemy try to drag them thence. For rising into strength, kindling into fury, and forgetting herself entirely in her young, she will let the last drop of her blood be shed out and perish in defense of her precious charge, rather than yield them to an enemy's talons. How significant all this of what Jesus is and does for men! Under His great Mediatorial wing would He have "gathered" Israel. For the figure, see ^{<620>}Deuteronomy 32:10-12 ^{<622>}Ruth 2:12 ^{<670>}Psalms 17:8 36:7 61:4 63:7 91:4 ^{<2315>}Isaiah 31:5 ^{<3042>}Malachi 4:2. The ancient rabbins had a beautiful expression for proselytes from the heathen — that they had "come under the wings of the Shekinah." For this last word, see on ^{<4238>}Matthew 23:38. But what was the result of all this tender and mighty love? The answer is, "And ye would not." O mysterious word! mysterious the resistance of such patient Love-mysterious the liberty of self-undoing! The awful dignity of the *will*, as here expressed, might make the ears to tingle.

38. Behold, your house — the temple, beyond all doubt; but *their* house now, not *the Lord's*. See on ^{<4207>}Matthew 22:7.

is left unto you desolate — deserted, that is, of its Divine Inhabitant. But who is that? Hear the next words:

39. For I say unto you — and these were *His last words* to the impenitent nation, see on ^{<4131>}Mark 13:1, opening remarks.

Ye shall not see me henceforth — What? Does Jesus mean that He was Himself the Lord of the temple, and that it became "deserted" when HE finally left it? It is even so. Now is thy fate sealed, O Jerusalem, for the glory is departed from thee! That glory, once visible in the holy of holies, over the mercy seat, when on the day of atonement the blood of typical expiation was sprinkled on it and in front of it — called by the Jews the *Shekinah*, or the *Dwelling*, as being the visible pavilion of Jehovah — that glory, which Isaiah (^{<2301>}Isaiah 6:1-13) saw in vision, the beloved disciple says was *the glory of Christ* (^{<6241>}John 12:41). Though it was never visible in the second temple, Haggai foretold that "*the glory of that latter house should be greater than of the former*" (^{<3049>}Haggai 2:9) because "the Lord whom they sought was suddenly to come to His temple" (^{<3011>}Malachi 3:1), not in a mere bright cloud, but enshrined in living humanity! Yet brief as

well as “sudden” was the manifestation to be: for the words He was now uttering were to be HIS VERY LAST within its precincts.

till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord — that is, till those “Hosannas to the Son of David” with which the multitude had welcomed Him into the city — instead of “sore displeasing the chief priests and scribes” (^{<4115>}Matthew 21:15) — should break forth from the whole nation, as their glad acclaim to their once pierced, but now acknowledged, Messiah. That such a time will come is clear from ^{<3120>}Zechariah 12:10 ^{<5126>}Romans 11:26 ^{<4115>}2 Corinthians 3:15,16, etc. In what sense they shall then “see Him” may be gathered from ^{<3117>}Zechariah 2:10-13 ^{<5723>}Ezekiel 37:23-28 39:28,29, etc.

CHAPTER 24

~~<1B0>~~ **MATTHEW 24:1-51.**

**CHRIST'S PROPHECY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF
JERUSALEM, AND WARNINGS SUGGESTED BY IT TO
PREPARE FOR HIS SECOND COMING. (~~<11E>~~ MARK 13:1-37
~~<2X>~~ LUKE 21:5-36).**

For the exposition, see on ~~<1E0>~~ Mark 13:1-37.

CHAPTER 25

◀¹⁸⁷ MATTHEW 25:1-13.

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS.

This and the following parable are in Matthew alone.

1. Then — at the time referred to at the close of the preceding chapter, the time of the Lord's Second Coming to reward His faithful servants and take vengeance on the faithless. *Then* shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took

their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom — This supplies a key to the parable, whose object is, in the main, the same as that of the last parable — to illustrate *the vigilant and expectant attitude of faith*, in respect of which believers are described as “they that look for Him” (¹⁸⁸Hebrews 9:28), and “love His appearing” (¹⁸⁹2 Timothy 4:8). In the last parable it was that of servants waiting for their absent Lord; in this it is that of virgin attendants on a Bride, whose duty it was to go forth at night with lamps, and be ready on the appearance of the Bridegroom to conduct the Bride to his house, and go in with him to the marriage. This entire and beautiful change of figure brings out the lesson of the former parable in quite a new light. But let it be observed that, just as in the parable of the Marriage Supper, so in this — the *Bride* does not come into view at all in this parable; the *Virgins* and the *Bridegroom* holding forth all the intended instruction: nor could believers be represented both as Bride and Bridal Attendants without incongruity.

2. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish — They are not distinguished into good and bad, as TRENCH observes, but into “wise” and “foolish” — just as in ¹⁹⁰Matthew 7:25-27 those who reared their house for eternity are distinguished into “wise” and “foolish builders”; because in both cases a certain degree of goodwill towards the truth is assumed. To make anything of the equal number of both classes would, we think, be precarious, save to warn us how large a portion of those who, up to the last, so nearly resemble those that love Christ's appearing will be disowned by Him when He comes.

3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps — What are these “lamps” and this “oil”? Many answers have been given. But since the foolish as well as the wise took their lamps and went forth with them to meet the Bridegroom, these lighted lamps and this advance a certain way in company with the wise, must denote that Christian profession which is common to all who bear the Christian name; while the insufficiency of this without something else, of which they never possessed themselves, shows that “the foolish” mean those who, with all that is common to them with real Christians, *lack the essential preparation for meeting Christ*. Then, since the wisdom of “the wise” consisted in their taking with their lamps a supply of oil in their vessels, keeping their lamps burning till the Bridegroom came, and so fitting them to go in with Him to the marriage, this supply of oil must mean that *inward reality of grace* which alone will stand when He appears whose eyes are as a flame of fire. But this is too general; for it cannot be for nothing that this inward grace is here set forth by the familiar symbol of *oil*, by which *the Spirit of all grace* is so constantly represented in Scripture. Beyond all doubt, this was what was symbolized by that precious anointing oil with which Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priestly office (⁴⁰²³Exodus 30:23-25,30); by “the oil of gladness above His fellows” with which Messiah was to be anointed (⁴⁹⁸¹Psalms 45:7 ³⁰⁰⁹Hebrews 1:9), even as it is expressly said, that “God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him” (⁴¹³⁴John 3:34); and by the bowl full of golden oil, in Zechariah’s vision, which, receiving its supplies from the two olive trees on either side of it, poured it through seven golden pipes into the golden lamp-stand to keep it continually burning bright (³⁰⁰⁷Zechariah 4:1-14) — for the prophet is expressly told that it was to proclaim the great truth, “Not by might, nor by power, but by MY SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts [shall this temple be built]. Who art thou, O great mountain [of opposition to this issue]? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain [or, be swept out of the way], and he shall bring forth the head stone [of the temple], with shoutings [crying], GRACE, GRACE unto it.” This supply of oil, then, representing that inward grace which distinguishes the wise, must denote, more particularly, that “supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,” which, as it is the source of the new spiritual life at the first, is the secret of its *enduring* character. Everything *short of this* may be possessed by “the foolish”; while it is the possession of this that makes “the wise” to be “ready” when the Bridegroom appears, and fit to “go in with Him to the marriage.” Just so in the parable of the Sower, the stony-ground hearers, “having no deepness of earth” and “no root in themselves,” though they spring up and get even into ear, never ripen, while they in the good ground bear the precious grain.

5. While the bridegroom tarried — So in ^{<428>}Matthew 24:48, “My Lord delayeth His coming”; and so Peter says sublimely of the ascended Savior, “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things” (^{<412>}Acts 3:21, and compare ^{<291>}Luke 19:11,12). Christ “tarries,” among other reasons, to try the faith and patience of His people. they

all slumbered and slept — the wise as well as the foolish. The world “slumbered” signifies, simply, “nodded,” or, “became drowsy”; while the world “slept” is the usual word for lying down to sleep, denoting two stages of spiritual declension — first, that half-involuntary lethargy or drowsiness which is apt to steal over one who falls into inactivity; and then a conscious, deliberate yielding to it, after a little vain resistance. Such was the state alike of the wise and the foolish virgins, even till the cry of the Bridegroom’s approach awoke them. So likewise in the parable of the Importunate Widow: “When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” (^{<288>}Luke 18:8).

6. And at midnight — that is, the time when the Bridegroom will be least expected; for “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (^{<312>}1 Thessalonians 5:2).

there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him — that is, Be ready to welcome Him.

7. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps — the foolish virgins as well as the wise. How very long do both parties seem the same — almost to the moment of decision! Looking at the mere form of the parable, it is evident that the folly of “the foolish” consisted not in having no oil at all; for they must have had oil enough in their lamps to keep them burning up to this moment: their folly consisted in not making provision against its *exhaustion*, by taking with their lamp an *oil-vessel* wherewith to replenish their lamp from time to time, and so have it burning until the Bridegroom should come. Are we, then — with some even superior expositors — to conclude that the foolish virgins must represent true Christians as well as do the wise, since only true Christians have the Spirit, and that the difference between the two classes consists only in the one having the necessary watchfulness which the other wants? Certainly not. Since the parable was designed to hold forth the prepared and the unprepared to meet Christ at His coming, and how the unprepared might, up to the very last, be confounded with the prepared — the structure of the parable behoved to accommodate itself to this, by making the lamps of the foolish to burn, as well as those of the wise, up to a certain point of time, and only then to discover their inability to burn on for want of a fresh supply of oil. But this is evidently just a *structural device*; and the real

difference between the two classes who profess to love the Lord's appearing is a *radical one* — the possession by the one class of *an enduring principle of spiritual life*, and the want of it by the other.

8. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out — rather, as in the *Margin*, “are going out”; for oil will not light an extinguished lamp, though it will keep a burning one from going out. Ah! now at length they have discovered not only their own folly, but the wisdom of the other class, and they do homage to it. They did not perhaps despise them before, but they thought them righteous overmuch; now they are forced, with bitter mortification, to wish they were like them.

9. But the wise answered, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you — The words “Not so,” it will be seen, are not in the original, where the reply is very elliptical — “In case there be not enough for us and you.” A truly wise answer this. “And what, then, if we shall share it with you? Why, both will be undone.”

but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves — Here again it would be straining the parable beyond its legitimate design to make it teach that men may get salvation even after they are supposed and required to have it already gotten. It is merely a friendly way of reminding them of the proper way of obtaining the needed and precious article, with a certain reflection on them for having it now to seek. Also, when the parable speaks of “selling” and “buying” that valuable article, it means simply, “Go, get it in the only legitimate way.” And yet the word “buy” is significant; for we are elsewhere bidden, “buy wine and milk without money and without price,” and “buy of Christ gold tried in the fire,” (²⁵⁸¹Isaiah 55:1 ⁴¹⁸⁸Revelation 3:18). Now, since what we pay the demanded price for becomes thereby *our own property*, the salvation which we thus take gratuitously at God's hands, being bought in His own sense of that word, becomes ours thereby in inalienable possession. (Compare for the language, ⁴¹²³Proverbs 23:23 ⁴¹³⁴Matthew 13:44).

10. And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut — They are sensible of their past folly; they have taken good advice: they are in the act of getting what alone they lacked: a very little more, and they also are ready. But the Bridegroom comes; the ready are admitted; “the door is shut,” and they are undone. How graphic and appalling this picture of one *almost saved — but lost!*

11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us — In ⁴⁰²²Matthew 7:22 this reiteration of the name was an exclamation rather of surprise; here it is a piteous cry of urgency, bordering on despair.

Ah! now at length their eyes are wide open, and they realize all the consequences of their past folly.

12. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not — The attempt to establish a difference between “I know you not” here, and “I never knew you” in ^{<4023>}Matthew 7:23 — as if this were gentler, and so implied a milder fate, reserved for “the foolish” of this parable — is to be resisted, though advocated by such critics as OLSHAUSEN, STIER, and ALFORD. Besides being inconsistent with the general tenor of such language, and particularly the solemn moral of the whole (^{<4253>}Matthew 25:13), it is a *kind* of criticism which tampers with some of the most awful warnings regarding the future. If it be asked why unworthy guests were admitted to the marriage of the King’s Son, in a former parable, and the foolish virgins are excluded in this one, we may answer, in the admirable words of GERHARD, quoted by TRENCH, that those festivities are celebrated in this life, in the Church militant; these at the last day, in the Church triumphant; to those, even they are admitted who are not adorned with the wedding garment; but to these, only they to whom it is granted to be arrayed in fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints (^{<698>}Revelation 19:8); to those, men are called by the trumpet of the Gospel; to these by the trumpet of the Archangel; to those, who enters may go out from them, or be cast out; who is once introduced to these never goes out, nor is cast out, from them any more: wherefore it is said, “The door is shut.”

13. Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh — This, the moral or practical lesson of the whole parable, needs no comment.

^{<4254>}MATTHEW 25:14-30.

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

This parable, while closely resembling it, is yet a different one from that of THE POUNDS, in ^{<2911>}Luke 19:11-27; though CALVIN, OLSHAUSEN, MEYER, and others identify them — but not DE WETTE and NEANDER. For the difference between the two parables, see the opening remarks on that of The Pounds. While, as TRENCH observes with his usual felicity, “the virgins were represented as *waiting* for their Lord, we have the servants *working* for Him; there the *inward spiritual life* of the faithful was described; here his *external activity*. It is not, therefore, without good reason that they appear in their actual order — that of the Virgins first, and of the Talents

following — since it is the sole condition of a profitable outward activity for the kingdom of God, that the life of God be diligently maintained within the heart.”

14. For the kingdom of heaven is as a man — The ellipsis is better supplied by our translators in the corresponding passage of Mark (^{<413B>}Mark 13:34), “[For the Son of man is] as a man”

travelling into a far country — or more simply, “going abroad.” The idea of long “tarrying” is certainly implied here, since it is expressed in ^{<4159>}Matthew 25:19.

who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods — Between master and slaves this was not uncommon in ancient times. Christ’s “servants” here mean all who, by their Christian profession, stand in the relation to Him of entire subjection. His “goods” mean all their gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. As all that slaves have belongs to their master, so Christ has a claim to everything which belongs to His people, everything which, may be turned to good, and He demands its appropriation to His service, or, viewing it otherwise, they first offer it up to Him; as being “not their own, but bought with a price” (^{<4169>}1 Corinthians 6:19,20), and He “delivers it to them” again to be put to use in His service.

15. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one — While the *proportion of gifts* is different in each, the same *fidelity* is required of all, and equally rewarded. And thus there is perfect equity.

to every man according to his several ability — his natural capacity as enlisted in Christ’s service, and his opportunities in providence for employing the gifts bestowed on him.

and straightway took his journey — Compare ^{<4123>}Matthew 21:33, where the same departure is ascribed to God, after setting up the ancient economy. In both cases, it denotes the leaving of men to the action of all those spiritual laws and influences of Heaven under which they have been graciously placed for their own salvation and the advancement of their Lord’s kingdom.

16. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same — expressive of the activity which he put forth and the labor he bestowed.

and made them other five talents.

17. And likewise he that had received two he also gained other two — each doubling what he received, and therefore *both equally faithful*.

18. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money — not misspending, but simply making no use of it. Nay, his action seems that of one anxious that the gift should not be misused or lost, but ready to be returned, just as he got it.

19. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them — That any one — within the lifetime of the apostles at least — with such words before them, should think that Jesus had given any reason to expect His Second Appearing within that period, would seem strange, did we not know the tendency of enthusiastic, ill-regulated love of His appearing ever to take this turn.

20. Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained besides them five talents more — How beautifully does this illustrate what the beloved disciple says of “boldness in the day of judgment,” and his desire that “when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming!” (^{<G047>}1 John 4:17 2:28).

21. His lord said unto him, Well done — a single word, not of bare satisfaction, but of warm and delighted commendation. And from what Lips!

thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, etc.

22. He also that had received two talents came ... good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things — *Both are commended in the same terms, and the reward of both is precisely the same.* (See on ^{<A255>}Matthew 25:15). Observe also the contrasts: “Thou hast been faithful as a *servant*; now be a *ruler* — thou hast been *entrusted* with a few things; now have *dominion* over *many* things.”

enter thou into the joy of thy lord — thy Lord's own joy. (See ^{<A651>}John 15:11 ^{<S102>}Hebrews 12:2).

24. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man — harsh. The word in Luke (^{<A221>}Luke 19:21) is “austere.”

reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed — The sense is obvious: “I knew thou wast one whom it was impossible to serve, one whom nothing would please: exacting what was

impracticable, and dissatisfied with what was attainable.” Thus do men secretly think of God as a hard Master, and virtually throw on Him the blame of their fruitlessness.

25. And I was afraid — of making matters worse by meddling with it at all.

and went and hid thy talent in the earth — This depicts the conduct of all those who shut up their gifts from the active service of Christ, without actually prostituting them to unworthy uses. Fitly, therefore, may it, at least, comprehend those, to whom TRENCH refers, who, in the early Church, pleaded that they had enough to do with their own souls, and were afraid of losing them in trying to save others; and so, instead of being the salt of the earth, thought rather of keeping their own saltiness by withdrawing sometimes into caves and wildernesses, from all those active ministries of love by which they might have served their brethren.

Thou wicked and slothful servant — “Wicked” or “bad” means “falsehearted,” as opposed to the others, who are emphatically styled “good servants.” The addition of “slothful” is to mark the precise nature of his wickedness: it consisted, it seems, not in his doing anything *against*, but simply *nothing for* his master.

Thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed — He takes the servant’s own account of his demands, as expressing graphically enough, not the *hardness* which he had basely imputed to him, but simply his demand of a *profitable return for the gift entrusted*.

27. thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers — the banker.

and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury — interest.

29. For unto every one that hath shall be given, etc. — See on ⁴¹³²Matthew 13:12.

30. And cast ye — cast ye out.

the unprofitable servant — the useless servant, that does his Master no service.

into outer darkness — the darkness which is outside. On this expression see on ⁴¹²³Matthew 22:13.

there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth — See on ^{<03C>}Matthew 13:42.

^{<03B>}MATTHEW 25:31-46.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

The close connection between this sublime scene — peculiar to Matthew — and the two preceding parables is too obvious to need pointing out.

31. When the Son of man shall come in his glory — His *personal* glory.

and all the holy angels with him — See ^{<03B>}Deuteronomy 33:2 ^{<009>}Daniel 7:9,10 ^{<014>}Jude 1:14; with ^{<006>}Hebrews 1:6 ^{<032>}1 Peter 3:22.

then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory — the glory of His *judicial authority*.

32. And before him shall be gathered all nations — or, “all the nations.” That this should be understood to mean the *heathen nations*, or all *except* believers in Christ, will seem amazing to any simple reader. Yet this is the exposition of OLSHAUSEN, STIER, KEIL, ALFORD (though latterly with some diffidence), and of a number, though not all, of those who hold that Christ will come the second time before the millennium, and that the saints will be caught up to meet Him in the air before His appearing. Their chief argument is, the impossibility of any that ever knew the Lord Jesus wondering, at the Judgment Day, that they should be thought to have done — or left undone — anything “unto Christ.” To that we shall advert when we come to it. But here we may just say, that if this scene does not describe a personal, public, final judgment on men, according to the treatment they have given to Christ — and consequently men within the Christian pale — we shall have to consider again whether our Lord’s teaching on the greatest themes of human interest does indeed possess that incomparable simplicity and transparency of meaning which, by universal consent, has been ascribed to it. If it be said, But how can this be the general judgment, if only those within the Christian pale be embraced by it? — we answer, What is here described, as it certainly does not meet the case of all the family of Adam, is of course *so far* not general. But we have no right to conclude that the whole “judgment of the great day” will be limited to the point of view here presented. Other explanations will come up in the course of our exposition.

and he shall separate them — now for the first time; the two classes having been mingled all along up to this awful moment.

as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats — (See ²⁶¹⁷Ezekiel 34:17).

33. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand — the side of honor (¹¹²⁹1 Kings 2:19 ¹⁹⁶¹⁹Psalms 45:9 110:1, etc.).

but the goats on the left — the side consequently of dishonor.

34. Then shall the King — Magnificent title, here for the first and only time, save in parabolical language, given to Himself by the Lord Jesus, and that on the eve of His deepest humiliation! It is to intimate that in then addressing the heirs of the kingdom, *He will put on all His regal majesty.*

say unto them on his right hand, Come — the same sweet word with which He had so long invited all the weary and heavy laden to come unto Him for rest. Now it is addressed exclusively to such as *have* come and found rest. It is still, “Come,” and to “rest” too; but to rest in a higher style, and in another region.

ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world — The whole story of this their blessedness is given by the apostle, in words which seem but an expression of these: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” They were chosen from everlasting to the possession and enjoyment of all spiritual blessings in Christ, and so chosen in order to be holy and blameless in love. This is the holy love whose practical manifestations the King is about to recount in detail; and thus we see that their whole life of love to Christ is the fruit of an eternal purpose of love to them in Christ.

35. For I was an hungered ... thirsty ... a stranger, etc.

36. Naked ... sick ... prison, and ye came unto me.

37-39. Then shall the righteous answer him, etc.

40. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, etc. — Astonishing dialogue this between the King, from the Throne of His glory, and His wondering people! “I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat,” etc. — “Not we,” they reply. “We never did that, Lord: We were born out of due time, and enjoyed not the privilege of ministering unto

Thee.” “But ye did it to these My brethren, now beside you, when cast upon your love.” “Truth, Lord, but was that doing it to Thee? Thy name was indeed dear to us, and we thought it a great honor to suffer shame for it. When among the destitute and distressed we discerned any of the household of faith, we will not deny that our hearts leapt within us at the discovery, and when their knock came to our dwelling, our bowels were moved, as though ‘our Beloved Himself had put in His hand by the hole of the door.’ Sweet was the fellowship we had with them, as if we had ‘entertained angels unawares’; all difference between giver and receiver somehow melted away under the beams of that love of Thine which knit us together; nay, rather, as they left us with gratitude for our poor givings, we seemed the debtors — not they. But, Lord, were we all that time in company with Thee? ... Yes, that scene was all with Me,” replies the King — “Me in the disguise of My poor ones. The door shut against Me by others was opened by you — ‘Ye took Me in.’ Apprehended and imprisoned by the enemies of the truth, ye whom the truth had made free sought Me out diligently and found Me; visiting Me in My lonely cell at the risk of your own lives, and cheering My solitude; ye gave Me a coat, for I shivered; and then I felt warm. With cups of cold water ye moistened My parched lips; when famished with hunger ye supplied Me with crusts, and my spirit revived — “YE DID IT UNTO ME.” What thoughts crowd upon us as we listen to such a description of the scenes of the Last Judgment! And in the light of this view of the heavenly dialogue, how bald and wretched, not to say unscriptural, is that view of it to which we referred at the outset, which makes it a dialogue between Christ and *heathens* who never heard of His name, and of course never felt any stirrings of His love in their hearts! To us it seems a poor, superficial objection to the *Christian* view of this scene, that Christians could never be supposed to ask such questions as the “blessed of Christ’s Father” are made to ask here. If there were any difficulty in explaining this, the difficulty of the other view is such as to make *it*, at least, insufferable. But there is no real difficulty. The surprise expressed is not at their being told that they acted from love to Christ, but that *Christ Himself* was the *Personal Object* of all their deeds: that they found *Him* hungry, and supplied Him with food: that they brought water to *Him*, and slaked His thirst; that seeing *Him* naked and shivering, they put warm clothing upon Him, paid *Him* visits when lying in prison for the truth, and sat by *His* bedside when laid down with sickness. This is the astonishing interpretation which Jesus says “the King” will give to them of their own actions here below. And will any Christian reply, “How could this astonish them? Does not every Christian know that He does these very things, when He does them at all, just as they are here represented?” Nay, rather, is it conceivable that they should *not* be astonished, and almost doubt their own ears, to hear such an account of their own actions upon earth

from the lips of the Judge? And remember, that Judge has come in His glory, and now sits upon the throne of His glory, and all the holy angels are with Him; and that it is from those glorified Lips that the words come forth, “Ye did all this unto ME.” Oh, can we imagine such a word addressed to *ourselves*, and then fancy ourselves replying, “Of course we did — To whom else did we anything? It must be others than we that are addressed, who never knew, in all their good deeds, what they were about?” Rather, can we imagine ourselves not overpowered with astonishment, and scarcely able to credit the testimony borne to us by the King?

41. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, etc. — As for you on the left hand, ye did nothing for Me. I came to you also, but ye knew Me not: ye had neither warm affections nor kind deeds to bestow upon Me: I was as one despised in your eyes.” “In *our* eyes, Lord? We never saw Thee before, and never, sure, behaved we so to Thee.” “But thus ye treated these little ones that believe in Me and now stand on My right hand. In the disguise of these poor members of Mine I came soliciting your pity, but ye shut up your bowels of compassion from Me: I asked relief, but ye had none to give Me. Take back therefore your own coldness, your own contemptuous distance: Ye bid Me away from your presence, and now I bid you from Mine — *Depart from Me, ye cursed!*”

46. And these shall go away — these “cursed” ones. Sentence, it should seem, was first *pronounced* — in the hearing of the wicked — upon the *righteous*, who thereupon sit as assessors in the judgment upon the wicked (⁴⁰⁶1 Corinthians 6:2); but sentence is first *executed*, it should seem, upon the *wicked*, in the sight of the righteous — whose glory will thus not be beheld by the wicked, while *their* descent into “their own place” will be witnessed by the righteous, as BENGEL notes.

into everlasting punishment — or, as in ⁴⁰⁵Matthew 25:41, “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Compare ⁴⁰³Matthew 13:42 ³⁰⁰2 Thessalonians 1:9, etc. This is said to be “prepared for the devil and his angels,” because they were “first in transgression.” But both have one doom, because one unholy character.

but the righteous into life eternal — that is, “life everlasting.” The word in both clauses, being in the original the same, should have been the same in the translation also. Thus the decisions of this awful day will be final, irreversible, unending.

CHAPTER 26

Ⓜ MATTHEW 26:1-16.

CHRIST'S FINAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS DEATH, AS NOW WITHIN TWO DAYS, AND THE SIMULTANEOUS CONSPIRACY OF THE JEWISH AUTHORITIES TO COMPASS IT — THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY — JUDAS AGREES WITH THE CHIEF PRIESTS TO BETRAY HIS LORD. (Ⓜ MARK 14:1-11 Ⓜ LUKE 22:1-6 Ⓜ JOHN 12:1-11).

For the exposition, see on Ⓜ Mark 14:1-11.

Ⓜ MATTHEW 26:17-30.

PREPARATION FOR AND LAST CELEBRATION OF THE PASSOVER ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TRAITOR, AND INSTITUTION OF THE SUPPER. (Ⓜ MARK 14:12-26 Ⓜ LUKE 22:7-23 Ⓜ JOHN 13:1-3,10,11,18-30).

For the exposition, see on Ⓜ Luke 22:7-23.

Ⓜ MATTHEW 26:31-35.

THE DESERTION OF JESUS BY HIS DISCIPLES AND THE DENIAL OF PETER FORETOLD. (Ⓜ MARK 14:27-31 Ⓜ LUKE 22:31-38 Ⓜ JOHN 13:36-38).

For the exposition, see on Ⓜ Luke 22:31-38.

◀1836▶ **MATTHEW 26:36-46.**

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.
 (◀1143▶ **MARK 14:32-42** ▶2239▶ **LUKE 22:39-46**).

For the exposition, see on ▶2239▶ Luke 22:39-46.

◀1847▶ **MATTHEW 26:47-56.**

BETRAYAL AND APPREHENSION OF JESUS - FLIGHT OF HIS DISCIPLES. (◀1143▶ **MARK 14:43-52** ▶2247▶ **LUKE 22:47-54** ▶3801▶ **JOHN 18:1-12**).

For the exposition, see on ▶3801▶ John 18:1-12.

◀1857▶ **MATTHEW 26:57-75.**

JESUS ARRAIGNED BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM CONDEMNED TO DIE, AND SHAMEFULLY ENTREATED — THE DENIAL OF PETER. (◀1143▶ **MARK 14:53-72** ▶2254▶ **LUKE 22:54-71** ▶3813▶ **JOHN 18:13-18,24-27**).

For the exposition, see on ▶1143▶ Mark 14:53-72.

CHAPTER 27

Ⓜ MATTHEW 27:1-10.

JESUS LED AWAY TO PILATE — REMORSE AND SUICIDE OF JUDAS. (Ⓜ MARK 15:1 Ⓛ LUKE 23:1 Ⓜ JOHN 18:28).

Jesus Led Away to Pilate (Ⓜ Matthew 27:1,2).

For the exposition of this portion, see on Ⓜ John 18:28, etc.

Remorse and Suicide of Judas (Ⓜ Matthew 27:3-10).

This portion is peculiar to Matthew. On the progress of guilt in the traitor, see on Ⓜ Mark 14:1-11; Ⓜ John 13:21-30.

3. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned — The condemnation, even though not unexpected, might well fill him with horror. But perhaps this unhappy man expected, that, while he got the bribe, the Lord would miraculously escape, as He had once and again done before, out of His enemies power: and if so, his remorse would come upon him with all the greater keenness.

repented himself — but, as the issue too sadly showed, it was “the sorrow of the world, which worketh death” (Ⓜ 2 Corinthians 7:10).

and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders — A remarkable illustration of the power of an awakened conscience. A short time before, the promise of this sordid pelf was temptation enough to his covetous heart to outweigh the most overwhelming obligations of duty and love; now, the possession of it so lashes him that he cannot use it, cannot even keep it!

4. Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood — What a testimony this to Jesus! Judas had been with Him in all circumstances for three years; his post, as treasurer to Him and the Twelve (Ⓜ John 12:6), gave him peculiar opportunity of watching the spirit, disposition, and habits of his Master; while his covetous nature and thievish practices would incline him to dark and suspicious, rather than frank and generous, interpretations of all that He said and did. If, then, he could have fastened on one questionable feature in all that he had so long witnessed, we may be sure that no such speech as this would ever have escaped his lips,

nor would he have been so stung with remorse as not to be able to keep the money and survive his crime.

And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that — “Guilty or innocent is nothing to us: We have Him now — begone!” Was ever speech more hellish uttered?

5. And he cast down the pieces of silver — The sarcastic, diabolical reply which he had got, in place of the sympathy which perhaps he expected, would deepen his remorse into an agony.

in the temple — the temple proper, commonly called “the sanctuary,” or “the holy place,” into which only the priests might enter. How is this to be explained? Perhaps he flung the money in after them. But thus were fulfilled the words of the prophet — “I cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord” (^{<38113>}Zechariah 11:13).

and departed, and went and hanged himself — For the details, see on ^{<4018>}Acts 1:18.

6. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury — “the *Corban*,” or chest containing the money dedicated to sacred purposes (see on ^{<1515>}Matthew 15:5).

because it is the price of blood — How scrupulous now! But those punctilious scruples made them unconsciously fulfill the Scripture.

9. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying — (^{<38112>}Zechariah 11:12,13). Never was a complicated prophecy, otherwise hopelessly dark, more marvellously fulfilled. Various conjectures have been formed to account for Matthew’s ascribing to Jeremiah a prophecy found in the book of Zechariah. But since with this book he was plainly familiar, having quoted one of its most remarkable prophecies of Christ but a few chapters before (^{<4201>}Matthew 21:4,5), the question is one more of critical interest than real importance. Perhaps the true explanation is the following, from LIGHTFOOT: “Jeremiah of old had the first place among the prophets, and hereby he comes to be mentioned above all the rest in ^{<1614>}Matthew 16:14; because he stood first in the volume of the prophets [as he proves from the learned DAVID KIMCHI] therefore he is first named. When, therefore, Matthew produceth a text of Zechariah under the name of JEREMY, he only cites the words of the volume of the prophets under his name who stood first in the volume of the prophets. Of which sort is that also of our Savior (^{<2441>}Luke 24:41), “All things must be fulfilled which are written of Me in the Law, and the Prophets, and the Psalms,” or the Book of Hagiographa, in which the Psalms were placed first.”

◀171▶ **MATTHEW 27:11-26.**

JESUS AGAIN BEFORE PILATE — HE SEEKS TO RELEASE HIM BUT AT LENGTH DELIVERS HIM TO BE CRUCIFIED.

(◀151▶ **MARK 15:1-15** ▶231▶ **LUKE 23:1-25** ▶633▶ **JOHN 18:28-40**).

For the exposition, see on ▶231▶ Luke 23:1-25; ▶633▶ John 18:28-40.

◀172▶ **MATTHEW 27:27-33.**

JESUS SCORNFULLY AND CRUELLY ENTREATED OF THE SOLDIERS, IS LED AWAY TO BE CRUCIFIED. (◀156▶ **MARK 15:16-22 ▶233▶ **LUKE 23:26-31** ▶612▶ **JOHN 19:2,17**).**

For the exposition, see on ▶156▶ Mark 15:16-22.

◀173▶ **MATTHEW 27:34-50.**

CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF THE LORD JESUS.

(◀155▶ **MARK 15:25-37** ▶233▶ **LUKE 23:33-46** ▶633▶ **JOHN 19:18-30**).

For the exposition, see on ▶633▶ John 19:18-30.

◀175▶ **MATTHEW 27:51-66.**

SIGNS AND CIRCUMSTANCES FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF THE LORD JESUS — HE IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS, AND BURIED — THE SEPULCHRE IS GUARDED.

(◀158▶ **MARK 15:38-47** ▶233▶ **LUKE 23:47-56** ▶633▶ **JOHN 19:31-42**).

The Veil Rent (◀175▶ Matthew 27:51).

51. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom — This was the thick and gorgeously wrought veil which was hung between the “holy place” and the “holiest of all,” shutting out all access to the presence of God as manifested “from above the mercy seat and from between the cherubim” — “the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was *not yet* made manifest” (◀308▶ Hebrews 9:8).

Into this holiest of all none might enter, not even the high priest, save once a year, on the great day of atonement, and then only with the blood of atonement in his hands, which he sprinkled “upon and before the mercy seat seven times” (^{<816>}Leviticus 16:14) — to signify that *access for sinners to a holy God is only through atoning blood*. But as they had only the blood of bulls and of goats, which could not take away sins (^{<810>}Hebrews 10:4), during all the long ages that preceded the death of Christ the thick veil remained; the blood of bulls and of goats continued to be shed and sprinkled; and once a year access to God through an atoning sacrifice was vouchsafed — *in a picture*, or rather, was *dramatically represented*, in those symbolical actions — nothing more. But *now*, the one atoning Sacrifice being provided in the precious blood of Christ, access to this holy God could no longer be denied; and so the moment the Victim expired on the altar, that thick veil which for so many ages had been the dread symbol of *separation between God and guilty men* was, without a hand touching it, mysteriously “rent in twain from top to bottom” — “the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was NOW made manifest!” How emphatic the statement, *from top to bottom*; as if to say, Come boldly now to the Throne of Grace; *the veil is clean gone*; the mercy seat stands open to the gaze of sinners, and the way to it is sprinkled with the blood of Him — “who through the eternal Spirit hath offered Himself without spot to God!” Before, it was *death to go in*, now it is *death to stay out*. See more on this glorious subject on ^{<809>}Hebrews 10:19-22.

An Earthquake — The Rocks Rent — The Graves Opened, that the Saints Which Slept in Them Might Come Forth after Their Lord’s Resurrection (^{<475>}Matthew 27:51-53).

51. and the earth did quake — From what follows it would seem that this earthquake was local, having for its object the rending of the rocks and the opening of the graves.

and the rocks rent — “were rent” — the physical creation thus sublimely proclaiming, at the bidding of its Maker, the *concussion* which at that moment was taking place in the moral world at the most critical moment of its history. Extraordinary rents and fissures have been observed in the rocks near this spot.

52. And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose — These sleeping saints (see on ^{<504>}1 Thessalonians 4:14) were Old Testament believers, who — according to the usual punctuation in our version — were quickened into resurrection life at the moment of their Lord’s death, but lay in their graves till His resurrection, when they came forth. But it is far more natural, as we think, and consonant with other

Scriptures, to understand that only the graves were opened, probably by the earthquake, at our Lord's death, and this only in preparation for the subsequent exit of those who slept in them, when the Spirit of life should enter into them from their risen Lord, and along with Him they should come forth, trophies of His victory over the grave. Thus, in the opening of the graves at the moment of the Redeemer's expiring, there was a glorious symbolical proclamation that the death which had just taken place had "swallowed up death in victory"; and whereas the saints that slept in them were awakened only by their risen Lord, to accompany Him out of the tomb, it was fitting that "the Prince of Life ... should be *the First* that should rise from the dead" (^{<4023>}Acts 26:23 ^{<4651>}1 Corinthians 15:20,23 ^{<5018>}Colossians 1:18 ^{<6105>}Revelation 1:5).

and went into the holy city — that city where He, in virtue of whose resurrection they were now alive, had been condemned.

and appeared unto many — that there might be undeniable evidence of their own resurrection first, and through it of their Lord's. Thus, while it was not deemed fitting that He Himself should appear again in Jerusalem, save to the disciples, provision was made that the fact of His resurrection should be left in no doubt. It must be observed, however, that the resurrection of these sleeping saints was not like those of the widow of Nain's son, of Jairus' daughter, of Lazarus, and of the man who "revived and stood upon his feet," on his dead body touching the bones of Elisha (^{<1232>}2 Kings 13:21) — which were mere temporary recallings of the departed spirit to the *mortal* body, to be followed by a final departure of it "till the trumpet shall sound." But this was a resurrection *once for all, to life everlasting*; and so there is no room to doubt that they went to glory with their Lord, as bright trophies of His victory over death.

The Centurion's Testimony (^{<1274>}Matthew 27:54).

54. Now when the centurion — the military superintendent of the execution.

and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake — or felt it and witnessed its effects.

and those things that were done — reflecting upon the entire transaction.

they feared greatly — convinced of the presence of a Divine Hand.

saying, Truly this was the Son of God — There cannot be a reasonable doubt that this expression was used in the Jewish sense, and that it points to the claim which Jesus made to be the Son of God, and on which His condemnation expressly turned. The meaning, then, clearly is that He must

have been what He professed to be; in other words, that He was no impostor. There was no medium between those two. See, the similar testimony of the penitent thief — “This man hath done nothing amiss” — on ^{<4234>}Luke 23:41.

The Galilean Women (^{<4275>}Matthew 27:55,56).

55. And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus — The sense here would be better brought out by the use of the pluperfect, “which had followed Jesus.”

from Galilee, ministering unto him — As these dear women had ministered to Him during His glorious missionary tours *in* Galilee (see on ^{<4101>}Luke 8:1-3), so from this statement it should seem that they accompanied him and ministered to His wants *from* Galilee on His final journey to Jerusalem.

56. Among which was Mary Magdalene — (See on ^{<4102>}Luke 8:2).

and Mary the mother of James and Joses — the wife of Cleophas, or rather Clopas, and sister of the Virgin (^{<4125>}John 19:25). See on ^{<4135>}Matthew 13:55,56.

and the mother of Zebedee’s children — that is, Salome: compare ^{<4150>}Mark 15:40. All this about the women is mentioned for the sake of what is afterwards to be related of their purchasing spices to anoint their Lord’s body.

*The Taking Down from the Cross and the Burial
(^{<4275>}Matthew 27:57-60).*

For the exposition of this portion, see on ^{<4138>}John 19:38-42.

*The Women Mark the Sacred Spot that They Might Recognize It on
Coming Thither to Anoint the Body (^{<4276>}Matthew 27:61).*

61. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary — “the mother of James and Joses,” mentioned before (^{<4276>}Matthew 27:56).

sitting over against the sepulcher — (See on ^{<4161>}Mark 16:1).

The Sepulchre Guarded (^{<4276>}Matthew 27:62-66).

62. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation — that is, after six o’clock of our *Saturday* evening. The crucifixion took place on the *Friday* and all was not over till shortly before sunset, when the Jewish sabbath commenced; and “that sabbath day was an high day” (^{<4138>}John

19:31), being the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. That day being over at six on Saturday evening, they hastened to take their measures.

63. Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver — Never, remarks BENGEL, will you find the heads of the people calling Jesus by His own name. And yet here there is betrayed a certain uneasiness, which one almost fancies they only tried to stifle in their own minds, as well as crush in Pilate's, in case he should have any lurking suspicion that he had done wrong in yielding to them.

said, while he was yet alive — Important testimony this, from the lips of His bitterest enemies, to *the reality of Christ's death*; the corner-stone of the whole Christian religion.

After three days — which, according to the customary Jewish way of reckoning, need signify no more than “after the commencement of the third day.”

I will rise again — “I rise,” in the present tense, thus reporting not only the *fact* that this prediction of His had reached their ears, but that they understood Him to look forward *confidently* to its occurring on the very day named.

64. Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure — by a Roman guard.

until the third day — after which, if He still lay in the grave, the imposture of His claims would be manifest to all.

and say unto the people, he is risen from the dead — Did they really fear this?

so the last error shall be worse than the first — the imposture of His pretended resurrection worse than that of His pretended Messiahship.

65. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch — The guards had already acted under orders of the Sanhedrim, with Pilate's consent; but probably they were not clear about employing them as a night watch without Pilate's express authority.

go your way, make it as sure as ye can — as ye know how, or in the way ye deem securest. Though there may be no irony in this speech, it evidently insinuated that *if* the event should be contrary to their wish, it would not be for want of sufficient human appliances to prevent it.

66. So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone — which Mark (⁴¹⁶⁶Mark 16:4) says was “very great.”

and setting a watch — to guard it. What more could man do? But while they are trying to prevent the resurrection of the Prince of Life, God makes use of their precautions for His own ends. Their stone-covered, seal-secured sepulcher shall preserve the sleeping dust of the Son of God free from all indignities, in undisturbed, sublime repose; while their watch shall be His guard of honor until the angels shall come to take their place.

CHAPTER 28

◀180▶ MATTHEW 28:1-15.

GLORIOUS ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, THAT CHRIST IS RISEN — HIS APPEARANCE TO THE WOMEN — THE GUARDS BRIBED TO GIVE A FALSE ACCOUNT OF THE RESURRECTION.
 (◀116▶ MARK 16:1-8 ◀240▶ LUKE 24:1-8 ◀311▶ JOHN 20:1).

The Resurrection Announced to the Women (◀180▶ Matthew 28:1-8).

1. In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn — after the Sabbath, as it grew toward daylight.

toward the first day of the week — Luke (◀240▶ Luke 24:1) has it, “very early in the morning” — properly, “at the first appearance of daybreak”; and corresponding with this, John (◀311▶ John 20:1) says, “when it was yet dark.” See on ◀116▶ Mark 16:2. Not an hour, it would seem, was lost by those dear lovers of the Lord Jesus.

came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary — “the mother of James and Joses” (see on ◀1256▶ Matthew 27:56; ◀1266▶ Matthew 27:61).

to see the sepulcher — with a view to the anointing of the body, for which they had made all their preparations. (See on ◀116▶ Mark 16:1,2).

And, behold, there was — that is, there had been, before the arrival of the women.

a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, etc. — And this was the state of things when the women drew near. Some judicious critics think all this was transacted while the women were approaching; but the view we have given, which is the prevalent one, seems the more natural. All this august preparation — recorded by Matthew alone — bespoke the grandeur of the exit which was to follow. The angel sat upon the huge stone, to overawe, with the lightning — luster that darted from him, the Roman guard, and do honor to his rising Lord.

3. His countenance — appearance.

was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow — the one expressing the *glory*, the other the *purity* of the celestial abode from which he came.

4. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men — Is the sepulcher “sure” now, O ye chief priests? He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh at you.

5. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye — The “ye” here is emphatic, to contrast their case with that of the guards. “Let those puny creatures, sent to keep the Living One among the dead, for fear of Me shake and become as dead men (^{<4180>}Matthew 28:4); but ye that have come hither on another errand, fear not ye.”

for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified — Jesus the Crucified.

6. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said — See on ^{<4245>}Luke 24:5-7.

Come — as in ^{<4128>}Matthew 11:28.

see the place where the Lord lay — Charming invitation! “Come, see the spot where the Lord of glory lay: now it is an empty grave: He lies not here, but He *lay* there. Come, feast your eyes on it!” But see on ^{<4302>}John 20:12.

7. And go quickly, and tell his disciples — For a precious addition to this, see on ^{<4167>}Mark 16:7.

that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee — to which those women belonged (^{<4275>}Matthew 27:55).

there shall ye see him — This must refer to those more public manifestations of Himself to large numbers of disciples at once, which He vouchsafed only in Galilee; for individually He was seen of some of those very women almost immediately after this (^{<4309>}Matthew 28:9,10).

Lo, I have told you — Behold, ye have this word from the world of light!

8. And they departed quickly — Mark (^{<4168>}Mark 16:8) says “they fled.”

from the sepulcher with fear and great joy — How natural this combination of feelings! See on a similar statement of ^{<4161>}Mark 16:11.

and did run to bring his disciples word — “Neither said they anything to any man [by the way]; for they were afraid” (^{<4168>}Mark 16:8).

Appearance to the Women (^{<4309>}Matthew 28:9,10).

This appearance is recorded only by Matthew.

9. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail! — the usual salute, but from the lips of Jesus bearing a higher signification.

And they came and held him by the feet — How truly womanly!

10. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid — What dear associations would these familiar words — now uttered in a higher style, but by the same Lips — bring rushing back to their recollection!

go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me — The brethren here meant must have been His brethren after the flesh (compare ^{<135>}Matthew 13:55); for His brethren in the higher sense (see on ^{<137>}John 20:17) had several meetings with Him at Jerusalem *before* He went to Galilee, which they would have missed if they had been the persons ordered to Galilee to meet Him.

The Guards Bribed (^{<138>}Matthew 28:11-15).

The whole of this important portion is peculiar to Matthew.

11. Now when they were going — while the women were on their way to deliver to His brethren the message of their risen Lord.

some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done — Simple, unsophisticated soldiers! How could ye imagine that such a tale as ye had to tell would not at once commend itself to your scared employers? Had they doubted this for a moment, would they have ventured to go near them, knowing it was death to a Roman soldier to be proved asleep when on guard? and of course that was the only other explanation of the case.

12. And when they were assembled with the elders — But Joseph at least was absent: Gamaliel probably also; and perhaps others.

and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers — It would need a good deal; but the whole case of the Jewish authorities was now at stake. With what contempt must these soldiers have regarded the Jewish ecclesiastics!

13. Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept — which, as we have observed, was a capital offense for soldiers on guard.

14. And if this come to the governor's ears — rather, "If this come before the governor"; that is, not in the way of mere report, but for judicial investigation.

we will persuade him, and secure you — The “we” and the “you” are emphatic here — “we shall [take care to] persuade him and keep you from trouble,” or “save you harmless.” The grammatical form of this clause implies that the thing supposed was expected to happen. The meaning then is, “If this come before the governor — as it likely will — we shall see to it that,” etc. The “persuasion” of Pilate meant, doubtless, quieting him by a bribe, which we know otherwise he was by no means above taking (like Felix afterwards, ^{<4025>}Acts 24:26).

15. So they took the money, and did as they were taught — thus consenting to brand themselves with infamy.

and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day — to the date of the publication of this Gospel. The wonder is that so clumsy and incredible a story lasted so long. But those who are resolved *not* to come to the light will catch at straws. JUSTIN MARTYR, who flourished about A.D. 170, says, in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, that the Jews dispersed the story by means of special messengers sent to every country.

^{<4286>}MATTHEW 28:16-20.

JESUS MEETS WITH THE DISCIPLES ON A MOUNTAIN IN GALILEE AND GIVES FORTH THE GREAT COMMISSION.

16. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee — but certainly not before the second week after the resurrection, and probably somewhat later.

into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them — It should have been rendered “the mountain,” meaning some certain mountain which He had named to them — probably the night before He suffered, when He said, “After I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee” (^{<4052>}Matthew 26:32 ^{<4148>}Mark 14:28). What it was can only be conjectured; but of the two between which opinions are divided — the Mount of the Beatitudes or Mount Tabor — the former is much the more probable, from its nearness to the Sea of Tiberias, where last before this the Narrative tells us that He met and dined with seven of them. (^{<4201>}John 21:1, etc.). That the interview here recorded was the same as that referred to in one

place only — ^{<4656>}1 Corinthians 15:6 — when “He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remained unto that day, though some were fallen asleep,” is now the opinion of the ablest students of the evangelical history. Nothing can account for such a number as five

hundred assembling at one spot but the expectation of some promised manifestation of their risen Lord: and the promise before His resurrection, twice repeated after it, best explains this immense gathering.

17. And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted — certainly none of “the Eleven,” after what took place at previous interviews in Jerusalem. But if the five hundred were now present, we may well believe this of some of them.

19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations — rather, “make disciples of all nations”; for “teaching,” in the more usual sense of that word, comes in afterwards, and is expressed by a different term.

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost — It should be, “into the name”; as in ^{<460B>}1 Corinthians 10:2, “And were all baptized unto (or rather ‘into’) Moses”; and ^{<462Z>}Galatians 3:27, “For as many of you as have been baptized *into* Christ.”

20. Teaching them — This is teaching in the more usual sense of the term; or instructing the converted and baptized disciples.

to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I — The “I” here is emphatic. It is enough that *I*

am with you alway — “all the days”; that is, till making converts, baptizing, and building them up by Christian instruction, shall be no more.

even unto the end of the world. Amen — This glorious Commission embraces two primary departments, the *Missionary* and the *Pastoral*, with two sublime and comprehensive *Encouragements* to undertake and go through with them.

First, The MISSIONARY department (^{<463B>}Matthew 28:18): “Go, make disciples of all nations.” In the corresponding passage of Mark (^{<463S>}Mark 16:15) it is, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” The only difference is, that in this passage the *sphere*, in its world-wide compass and its universality of *objects*, is more fully and definitely expressed; while in the former the great *aim* and certain *result* is delightfully expressed in the command to “make disciples of all nations.” “Go, conquer the world for Me; carry the glad tidings into all lands and to every ear, and deem not this work at an end till all nations shall have embraced the Gospel and enrolled themselves My disciples.” Now, Was all this meant to be done by the Eleven men nearest to Him of the multitude then crowding around the risen Redeemer? Impossible. Was it to be done even in their lifetime? Surely not. In that little band Jesus virtually addressed Himself to all who, in every age, should take up from them the

same work. Before the eyes of the Church's risen Head were spread out, in those Eleven men, all His servants of every age; and one and all of them received His commission at that moment. Well, what next? Set the seal of visible discipleship upon the converts, by "baptizing them into the name," that is, into the whole fullness of the grace "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," as belonging to them who believe. (See on ^{<47B34>}2 Corinthians 13:14). This done, the Missionary department of your work, which in its own nature is temporary, must merge in another, which is permanent. This is

Second, The PASTORAL department (^{<47B34>}Matthew 28:20): "Teach them" — teach these baptized members of the Church visible — "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," My apostles, during the three years ye have been. with Me. What must have been the feelings which such a Commission awakened? "WE who have scarce conquered our own misgivings — we, fishermen of Galilee, with no letters, no means, no influence over the humblest creature, conquer the world for Thee, Lord? Nay, Lord, do not mock us." "I mock you not, nor send you a warfare on your own charges. For" — Here we are brought to

Third, The ENCOURAGEMENTS to undertake and go through with this work. These are two; one in the van, the other in the rear of the Commission itself.

First Encouragement: "All power in *heaven*" — the whole power of Heaven's love and wisdom and strength, "and all power in *earth*" — power over all persons, all passions, all principles, all movements — to bend them to this one high object, the evangelization of the world: All this "is *given unto Me*," as the risen Lord of all, to be *by Me placed at your command* — "Go ye therefore." But there remains a

Second Encouragement: "And lo! I am with you all the days" — not only to perpetuity, but without one day's interruption, "even to the end of the world," The "Amen" is of doubtful genuineness in this place. If, however, it belongs to the text, it is the Evangelist's own closing word.