

HAND-BOOKS
FOR
BIBLE CLASSES

—
LESSONS
ON THE
LIFE OF JESUS

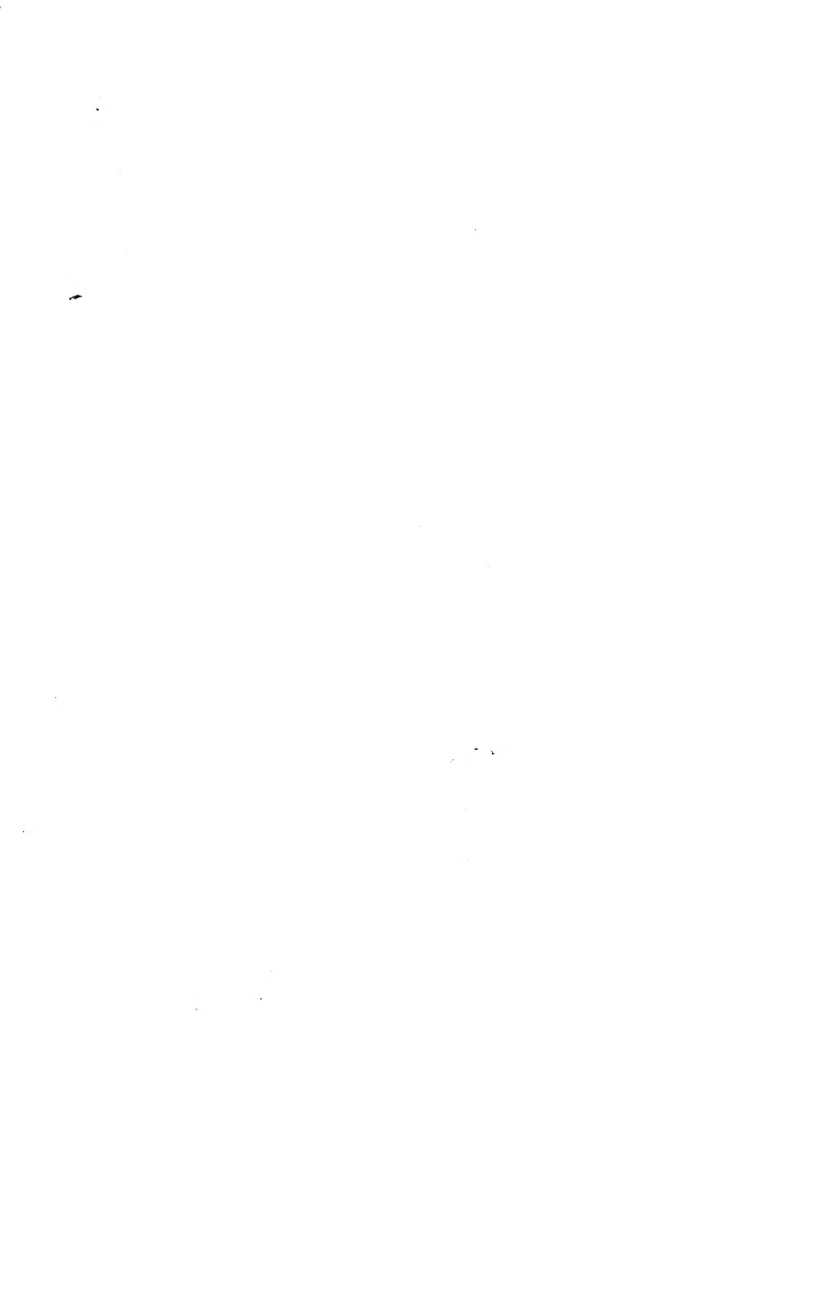
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Lessons on the life of Jesus





Handbooks for Bible Classes.

EDITED BY

REV. MARCUS DODS, D.D.,

AND

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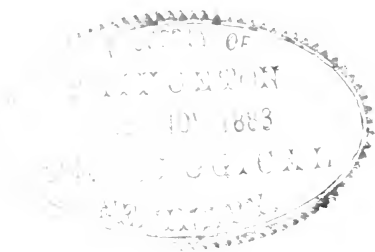
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BY
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BRIDGEGATE FREE CHURCH, GLASGOW.

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PREFATORY NOTE.



THE aim of Mr. Stalker in his *Life of Jesus Christ*, which forms one of these Handbooks, was 'to throw into prominence the great masses of our Lord's life, and point clearly out its hinge-events.' The object of the present volume is rather to present, in the order of their occurrence, all the facts in the life of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, with due regard to the measure of their importance and influence. But, since it is impossible to separate between the incidents of our Lord's life and His teachings, the more important of His discourses have been noticed, and a brief analysis of their contents given.

As all who have tried to harmonize the Gospel narratives know, the task is not an easy one. Still this had to be attempted, if the works and words of Jesus were to be given their place in a gradually unfolding history. But in every instance in which the work of the Harmonist is specially difficult, footnotes have been added, stating the reasons for the order of events followed in the text.

The 'Hints to Students and Teachers,' appended to most of the Lessons, are mainly intended to point to the sources from which exact and full information may be obtained, and to furnish material for illustrating the subject of the Lesson.

The quotations from the New Testament are taken from the Revised Version.

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LESSONS ON THE LIFE OF JESUS.

LESSON I.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

Read Matt. i. ii. ; Luke ii. 1-38.

IT was foretold in prophecy that the one chosen to be the Saviour of a sinful world was to be no mere man, but the Son of God (Ps. ii. 7 ; Isa. ix. 6). But it was foretold as clearly that He should be a member of the human race (Gen. iii. 15), a descendant of Abraham (Gen. xii. 3), of the seed of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 14), and a scion of the royal house of David (Isa. xi. 1). Accordingly, 'when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman' (Gal. iv. 4).

Jesus, alone of all the children of men, had no earthly father, but was 'the Son of God' (Luke i. 35). But He had an earthly mother, Mary, a virgin moving in a lowly station, but claiming descent from Israel's greatest king (Luke i. 32), and who, though not immaculate, was certainly a woman of singular purity and nobleness. Betrothed in early life to Joseph, a kinsman of her own, and also of the family of David¹ (Matt. i. 20), Mary was

¹ Matthew (i. 1-16) and Luke (iii. 23-28) give us genealogical tables professing to state the human pedigree of our Lord. But these two tables present points of difference so marked as to have led some to suppose that the one was designed to show the descent of Joseph, the other that of Mary. More probably, however, both were meant to give what they profess to give,

in due time wedded to him. Her husband, though but a village carpenter, was a devout and honoured servant of God. They had their home in Nazareth, a little town of no pretensions to fame, within the territory of Zebulun, in the province of Galilee.

But the time drew near when Mary was to be delivered of her first-born child; the child of whom she could say, in a sense in which no other mother ever could, 'I have gotten a man from the Lord.' It was not befitting, however, that such an event should take place in an obscure and distant village like Nazareth. The Saviour long promised to Israel must make His appearance in circumstances likelier to excite interest and expectation. He must be shown at the outset to be the one described by David himself as his son and Lord. It had been divinely determined that it should be so, and that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem, David's native town. Micah had predicted this (v. 2) in words with which every well-instructed Israelite was familiar. And He who had inspired Micah to utter this prophecy, found means for securing the fulfilment of it.

Judæa, though nominally an independent kingdom at this time, under the rule of Herod the Great, was really subject to the

the ancestry of Joseph. For Jesus was adopted by him as his own son, and was generally regarded as being actually his son; and it was of consequence that the supposed father of the one who claimed to be the Messiah, should be recognised as a descendant of David. But while Matthew takes Solomon, Luke names Nathan as the son of David through whom the line of ancestry runs. The explanation of this seems to be that Matthew aims at giving the line of royal succession, with the view of exhibiting Joseph as heir to the throne of David, while Luke seeks rather to present the line of direct personal descent. But the line of Solomon ended with Jehoiachin, with regard to whom Jeremiah received the charge, 'Write this man childless' (Jer. xxii. 30); and another branch of David's family must have been substituted for it. And it is remarkable that just at this point the genealogies of Matthew and Luke meet;—the names of Salathiel and his son Zerubbabel finding a place in both lists. After again diverging, the lines meet once more in Matthan or Matthat, the grandfather of Joseph. If Joseph was the son of Jacob, as Matthew states,—or of Heli, as stated by Luke,—and married Mary, the eldest daughter of his father's brother, the last point of apparent conflict between the genealogies disappears, and Jesus is seen to have been in the strictest sense the son of David.

Roman emperors, who appointed its kings and displaced them at their pleasure. The Emperor Augustus, then on the throne, took a singular delight in obtaining from time to time a census of the inhabitants of the countries under his sway. Shortly before the birth of Jesus 'there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed' (Luke ii. 1). In each country under the imperial sway this enrolment would take place in a way suited to the circumstances and habits of the people. In Judæa it would naturally be carried out by the governor of Syria, with the co-operation of Herod. Luke accordingly tells us (ii. 2) that 'this was the first enrolment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.'¹

In accordance with national custom, the men of Israel were enrolled, not at their place of residence, but rather at the place with which they were connected by the ties of tribe or family. Hence Joseph and Mary went southwards to Bethlehem, to be enrolled there. It must have taken at least four days' journey to bring them from their home in Nazareth to the city of David. When they found their way to the inn, it appeared that every one of the apartments running off from the court had already its full complement of inmates. So that all that could be done was to secure some corner of the square reserved for the cattle, and take possession of it. And it was there that the pangs of travail came upon Mary, and that she gave birth to the child Jesus, and, after wrapping Him in swaddling-clothes, laid Him in a manger.

Yet, lowly as were the circumstances in which the birth of the Saviour took place, the event was one over which heaven held jubilee. And the joy of heaven was made known to men on earth. For shepherds, who were watching over their flocks that night in the fields around Bethlehem, were startled by a light

¹ At one time great difficulty was thought to attach to this statement of Luke's, from its being considered an unquestionable fact that P. Sulp. Quirinius did not enter on the governorship of Syria till ten years after our Lord's birth. But recent investigations have shown that he held this office twice, and that it was during his first tenure of it that the census spoken of was taken.

shining all around them, which they could only think of as 'the glory of the Lord,' and were addressed by an angel in these words: 'Fear not! for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people; for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' And, while he spoke, a multitude of the heavenly host appeared, and filled earth and sky with the strains of a song, the sweetest that had ever fallen on mortal ears, and the refrain of which was, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men, in whom He is well pleased.' When the song had ceased and the heavenly visitants had passed away, the shepherds sought the inn, and found there the babe lying, as they had been told, in the manger, and rendered Him their adoring homage (Luke ii. 1-20).

When a week had passed, the child was circumcised, like other Jewish children, and received the name of Joshua or Jesus (*i.e.* Jehovah's salvation), the name which God had selected for Him as the One who should save men from their sins (Luke i. 31, ii. 21). When other three-and-thirty days had come and gone, Joseph and Mary went up to Jerusalem, to present the sacrifice in all such cases required of a mother. That sacrifice ordinarily consisted of a yearling lamb for a burnt-offering, and a turtle-dove or young pigeon as a sin-offering (Lev. xii. 1-8). But the poor were allowed to substitute for the lamb another turtle-dove or pigeon. And Mary was not ashamed to make acknowledgment of her poverty by presenting the less costly offering. Joseph and she also presented the child to the Lord as their first-born son, and redeemed Him from the obligation to serve in the sanctuary by making the payment of five shekels (Num. xviii. 15, 16).

The parents had just entered the courts of the temple on this errand, when they were accosted by the aged Simeon, to whom there had been given the assurance that, ere his eyes closed in death, he should look on the Saviour. Instantaneously recognizing in the child Jesus the One who should be the consolation of Israel, he took Him in his arms, and said, 'Lord, now lettest

Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' Scarcely had he finished speaking, when a saintly woman named Anna, who, after a brief married life of seven years, had seen eighty-four years of widowhood, came forward under a similar impulse, and gave thanks to God for having sent redemption to His people (Luke ii. 21-38).

Shortly afterwards there appeared in Jerusalem certain strangers from the far East, whose coming excited universal attention. They belonged to the order of the Magi, well known in Persia and other lands, and revered for their wisdom, and specially for their reputed knowledge of things to come. They told that, as they had been scanning the heavens, they had observed, in that part of the sky which had special influence over Judæa, a bright star altogether new to them, the appearance of which seemed to announce the birth of some great king. Their story could not but deeply interest all to whom it was reported. Herod, who happened at the time to be residing in his palace on Mount Zion, heard of the distinguished visitors, and of the errand on which they had come; and, concluding that their inquiries had reference to the kingly deliverer whom Israel had long been expecting, he called together the most learned men of the nation, and demanded of them 'where the Christ should be born.' 'In Bethlehem of Judæa,' was the answer at once given; and the well-known prediction of Micah was cited as settling the point.

Herod's object in wishing to ascertain the birthplace of the Christ was of the most sinister kind. Old age and disease forewarned him that his reign was now near a close. Detested by the nation over which he ruled, he knew that his death would be hailed with joy, and that his dynasty was likely to be short-lived. If, therefore, the Messiah had been born, the death-knell of himself and his family might well seem to have been rung. But he must exert all his ingenuity to avert such a disaster. There will be the greater likelihood of his succeeding in doing this, if he should appear to be himself longing for the advent of the Christ, and ready to welcome Him and lay his authority and resources at

His feet. In pursuance of this plan, Herod, having obtained a confidential interview with the Magi, questioned them closely as to the time when the star appeared, and then charged them to go to Bethlehem and search diligently for the new-born king, and report the result of their inquiries to him. If these measures were carried out, the crafty and unscrupulous tyrant made sure of getting hold of the Christ and of making short work of Israel's most cherished hopes.

Immediately after this interview with Herod, the wise men set out for Bethlehem. And the star which they had seen in the east shone brightly forth on them again,¹ as if to light them to the spot to which their steps were bent; and as they entered the city of David, it seemed right above them, showing the very house in which the child Jesus was to be found. Entering the house thus indicated to them, they saw the child in His mother's arms, and, falling down before Him, did Him lowly reverence. Then, opening the treasure-chests which they had brought with them, they took of their contents and presented to Him such an offering as seemed suitable to a king, 'Gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.'

It is deeply interesting to find these representatives of the Gentile world welcoming the newly-born Saviour, of whom it had been foretold that He should be 'for a light to lighten the Gentiles,' as well as the One who should 'raise up the tribes of Jacob' (Isa. xlix. 6). Most interesting is it also to see, side by side with the shepherds of Bethlehem, some of the members of a

¹ The star seen by the Magi was probably a temporary star, such as blazed forth in A.D. 1572, and, after passing through a variety of phases, disappeared about two years afterwards. Such a star would be the more likely to attract attention, and to be thought of as betokening the occurrence of great events in Judæa, that, a few years before the birth of our Lord, there had been no fewer than three conjunctions of the planets Jupiter and Saturn in the sign of Pisces, a quarter of the heavens with which the fortunes of the Jewish people were regarded as closely allied. Such remarkable phenomena would seem the more significant, that there had spread throughout the world 'an ancient and stedfast opinion' that the Jews would about this time play an important part in human affairs (Suet. *Vespas*, c. iv.).

class who would have been regarded as the fittest of their time to represent the intellect and science of the world, kneeling reverently before Him of whom all men have equal need, and in whom the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, equally find a Saviour.¹

The Magi did not return to Herod, having received in a dream divine forewarning of his intentions. And enraged at finding himself befooled, but resolved not to be baffled, the king gave orders that all the children in Bethlehem under two years of age should be put to death. The cruel edict was carried out; and there arose such a wail of grief from Bethlehem as to suggest that at last the prophecy had been fulfilled: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted, because they were not' (Jer. xxxi. 15). The inhuman deed has not been recorded by any historian, save the evangelist Matthew. But it harmonizes well with the character of the tyrant who murdered nearly all who had any claim upon his love; who, five days before his own death, secured the execution of one of his sons; and who gave orders that the leading men of the Jewish nation should lose their life at the moment at which he died, that so his death might cause something like universal sorrow.

The child Jesus, however, escaped the doom marked out for Him. For Joseph received in a dream the charge to flee with Him into Egypt, and, acting on the hint, fled that very night (Matt. ii. 1-18).

1. *What are the leading prophecies which represent the Messiah as a descendant of David?*
2. *From what point do the genealogical lines given in Matt. i. and Luke iii. diverge? And how is it possible to harmonize them?*

¹ There has been much discussion as to the exact date of our Lord's birth. It is certain that He was not born in the year usually regarded as that of the Christian era, viz. in A.U.C. 754; for Herod the Great died in April A.U.C. 750. Probably the birth of Jesus occurred in the beginning of that year, or towards the end of the year preceding it.

3. *When did the consecration of a first-born son to God become an established usage in Israel?*
4. *What ancient prophecy, uttered by one of their own order, may have led the Magi to connect the birth of the Messiah with the appearance of a star?*
5. *When was the accepted date of our Lord's birth authoritatively fixed?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. For the character and reign of Herod, see Joseph. *Antiq.*, Books XIV.-XVII., and *Wars of the Jews*, Book I. chaps. x.-xxxiii.

2. A good synopsis of the various views as to the taxing mentioned in Luke ii. 1, 2, is given in Andrews' *Life of our Lord*, pp. 65-74. And a clear statement of the reasons for holding that Cyrenius was twice governor of Syria, is to be found in Alford's note.

3. The article headed 'Magi' in Smith's *Bibl. Dict.* is full of interesting matter.

4. Chap. iii. of Neander's *Life of Christ* treats in a most instructive way of the events connected with our Lord's birth.

5. Read Milton's noble hymn on the Nativity, beginning 'It was the Winter wild.' Next to it ranks C. Wesley's 'Hark how all the welkin rings.'

LESSON II.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF JESUS

Read Matt. ii. 19-23 ; Luke ii. 40-52.

THE residence of the holy family in Egypt probably did not extend over many months. Immediately on the death of Herod, Joseph was apprized of the event, and told that now he might return to his fatherland with safety. Both Mary and he would appear to have thought of taking up their abode permanently in Bethlehem, which, as the home of their ancestors, had always been dear to them, and, as the birthplace of Him who was the Hope of Israel, had now a peculiar sacredness in their eyes. But hearing that Archelaus, who inherited many of the worst qualities of his father Herod, was ethnarch of Judæa, they deemed it advisable to return to Galilee, which was under the gentler sway of Antipas. Accordingly they found their way back to Nazareth, and resolved to make it henceforward their home.

Nazareth, the scene of our Lord's early life, is one of the most interesting of the towns of Palestine. The hill on the side of which it is situated rises behind it to a height of nearly five hundred feet. Reaching down from the town into the valley beneath it there are gardens, separated from each other by hedges of cactus, in which the fig-tree, the olive, the orange, and the pomegranate grow luxuriantly. From the summit of the hill above the town a view of unsurpassed beauty presents itself, embracing Hermon and Tabor and Carmel and the shore of the great Mediterranean. Along the narrow streets of that town,

when the period of infancy had passed by, the child Jesus moved on many an errand. Among the thyme and wild-flowers beautifying the hillside His feet often wandered. And from the brow of the hill by-and-by He obtained a glimpse of the great world lying outside of that pleasant valley.

Like all children, Jesus was during His earliest years most under His mother's eye. She would teach Him all that she herself knew, and specially all that she knew of God. Under the stimulating and guiding influence of Mary's teaching and training, 'the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him' (Luke ii. 40). There was growth in mind as well as in body; all the mental faculties being gradually drawn into exercise and strengthened, and leading Him onward to increasing fulness of knowledge. And one of the chief sources of this growing intellectual enrichment is to be thought of as instruction in Bible truth, delightedly given, and delightedly received.

In the home in which Jesus was brought up there came also to be other children besides Himself,—brothers named James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas; and sisters too, with whose names the people of Nazareth were familiar (Matt. xiii. 55). And, in intercourse with them, Jesus made acquaintance with human nature, and learned to practise brotherly sympathy and forbearance and helpfulness. In that home circle also He learned not a little regarding sin, and had early experience of sorrow and of trial.

Only one incident in the child-life of Jesus has been preserved to us, that recorded in Luke ii. 41-50. Joseph and Mary, who were in the habit of going up together to Jerusalem on occasion of the great feasts, when the child had completed His twelfth year, and had attained the standing of a 'son of the law,' determined to take Him with them to the feast of the Passover. This first visit to the Holy City could not but deeply interest Him. But, with whatever interest He may have looked on Jerusalem, 'builded as a city that is compact together,' what

most deeply moved Him was the temple with its solemn services. As often as it was possible for Him to take the way to it, He was there. And even when the feast-days were over, and the Galilean pilgrims set out on their journey homewards, He tarried behind in Jerusalem, out of His love for the house of God. Amid the excitement and bustle of the hour, Mary and her husband had lost sight of the child, and it was not till the first stage of the journey was reached that they missed Him. After three days spent in searching for Him, He was found at last in the temple, sitting in the midst of the Rabbis, both hearing them and asking them questions. And when Mary, in tones of complaint, said to Him, 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing,' He gave the profoundly significant reply, 'How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?' (or 'about my Father's business?'). The reply was a remarkable one. It showed a mind thoroughly aroused,—a conviction that between God and Himself there existed a relationship quite peculiar,—the feeling that, as being in a special sense God's Son, He must find His chief occupation in the things of God.

After this striking incident, Jesus continued to render the same filial obedience as before to His mother, and to him who occupied a father's place and faithfully fulfilled a father's duty—'He was subject unto them.' And He 'increased in wisdom and stature,' advancing step by step towards the possession of the full powers and acquisitions of manhood. He grew also 'in favour with God,' as one grace of character after another blossomed forth, and bore its lovely and pleasant fruit. And He grew 'in favour with man,' as His beauty of character came more and more clearly out, and as the love which He cherished to all showed itself ever more fully in word and deed (Luke ii. 51, 52).

When childhood passed over into youth, it was not to a life of study under any of the Rabbis that Jesus felt Himself drawn. He never enrolled Himself as a pupil in any of the schools of

the recognised masters in Israel. This was so well known that men afterwards asked, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' He may have visited Jerusalem often, and on such occasions may have made that intimate acquaintance with the character and doctrines of Pharisees, and Sadducees, and scribes, of which His teachings give abundant evidence. But during these early years, His life as a whole was spent at Nazareth, and to outward appearance was simply the life of a working-man, who passed as 'the carpenter's son' (Matt. xiii. 55), and was Himself known as 'the carpenter' (Mark vi. 3). Such a life had the advantage of bringing Him into contact, not with the few, but with the many,—of making Him acquainted with human nature as it manifests itself in everyday life,—and of giving Him, through the medium of personal experience, a knowledge of the wants, the evils, and the trials, which go far to make up the ordinary lot of man.

There was one thing all-important for Jesus to know, which Nazareth, little to its credit, gave Him opportunity of making intimate acquaintance with. Among the towns of Galilee, Nazareth had obtained for itself the unenviable notoriety of being the one most deeply sunk in sin. This was the opinion entertained regarding it by those who lived nearest to it, and who knew it well (John i. 46). In Galilee generally it had come to be a proverb that no good thing could be expected to come out of Nazareth. Jesus must therefore have been called on from His earliest years to resist the evil influences at work around Him. And it is one of the incidental evidences of His essential sinlessness, that, though brought up in Nazareth, and spending childhood and youth there,—the whole period during which human character is in process of formation,—He came forth from it uncontaminated by its sin.

Yet He saw all that sin, and was grieved with it, and felt it a burden pressing heavily on His heart. He knew that in the sin of Nazareth, the sin of the whole world was only too faithfully mirrored. He could not conceal from Himself the fact that He

was the one holy being in the midst of a race of sinners. His love to men moved Him to long intensely for their salvation, and to make earnest study of the promises of salvation which God had given. The knowledge that He was in a peculiar sense the Son of God, and also the only sinless One whom the world contained, might well suggest to Him that He was the One designed to be the world's Saviour. When this had become His firm conviction, He would seek to prepare Himself for the work requiring to be done by earnest meditation on it, and by communion with His Father regarding it. The great aim of the work would be firmly settled, the general plan of it sketched, and the means required for the prosecution of it chosen. Years were doubtless spent in preparation of this kind. And, when at length Jesus emerged from the seclusion of Nazareth, and, separating Himself from everything else, set Himself to the achievement of man's salvation as the one employment of His life, it was as One who knew well what He proposed to do, and who was well equipped for the doing of it.

1. *At what age was a Jewish lad expected to make a personal profession of religion? and why?*
2. *What were the great festivals at which it was incumbent on the men of Israel to present themselves before the Lord?*
3. *Why has the one incident in our Lord's childhood, recorded in Luke ii. 41-50, been singled out for special notice?*
4. *How can it be said of One who from the beginning was perfectly holy, that He 'grew in favour with God'?*
5. *In what occupation was the youth of Jesus passed,—and what lessons are to be learned from this?*
6. *What preparation did our Lord during His early years make for His great work?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. For a charming picture of Nazareth, see Farrar's *Life of Christ*, chap. v.
2. The circumstances in which the childhood and youth of Jesus were passed, and the influence of these in moulding His character, are well

described in Keim's *Geschichte Jesu*, pp. 105-116; also in Beecher's *Life Christ, fo* chap. iv.

3. As to the possibility of a sinless development in Jesus, read pp. 310-316 of Professor Bruce's work on *The Humiliation of Christ*.

4. The various views held regarding 'the brethren of Jesus' are well stated by Andrews, pp. 97-108.

LESSON III.

THE CONSECRATION OF JESUS TO HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY.

Read Matt. iii. 1-iv. 11; Mark i. 1-15; Luke iii. 1-23, iv. 1-13.

WHEN Jesus was now thirty years of age, separating Himself from everything else, He determined to address Himself to what He had long recognized as the work given Him to do. Events had been preparing the way for His entrance on that work. The whole land had been stirred by the appearance of one who irresistibly reminded men of the prophets of old. It was John, the son of the priest Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, who, after withdrawing himself for years from the haunts of men, that he might hold undisturbed communion with his own spirit and with God, had come forth from his seclusion with a message to Israel. He came into all the country about Jordan, crying, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' He spoke as one who had a divine warrant to speak. The sanctity of his life obtained for him a reverential hearing. And his very appearance, as with unshorn Nazarite locks and in rough camel's hair raiment he presented himself to the people, startled and awed men.

The news that once more God had raised up a prophet in the midst of Israel had spread throughout the length and breadth of the land. From Jerusalem and all Judæa and Galilee, men of all ranks and classes had crowded into the wilderness, to look on and listen to him. They had heard with joy that the kingdom of God, of which ancient prophets had spoken, and which Israel

had through centuries of oppression been sighing for, was at last about to be set up. They had learned from John that he was but the herald sent in advance of the coming King, to cry aloud to all whose ear he could gain, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord : make His paths straight.' They had been told that the preparation needed was universal repentance, and that only they who made that preparation could escape 'the wrath to come.' They had been called on to submit to immersion in the waters of Jordan, in token of their willingness to receive cleansing from sin, a cleansing which John himself could not give, but which would be given by the Mighty One whose coming he foretold. And many, as they listened to the preacher's burning words, had been moved to repentance and baptized by him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

Rumours of the great religious awakening were borne to Nazareth, and deeply interested Jesus. As He heard of the influence exercised by the Baptist over the consciences of men, He rejoiced, and longed to be on the spot, to look on the good work that had been so auspiciously begun, and to further it. He felt that the moment had arrived when He must take action, and enter on the labours destined for Him. He must follow in the footsteps of the ploughman who had broken up the fallow ground, and must scatter broadcast over the furrows the good seed of the kingdom. With this view He set out for Judæa, and, reaching the lower fords of Jordan, passed over to Bethabara (or Bethany), where John was at the time baptizing. At length, after listening for a time to the preaching of John, Jesus came forward to submit Himself to the rite of baptism. But the attention of the Baptist had already been drawn to Him, and he had observed in Him the marks of a purity and elevation of character distinguishing Him from all others, and had thought that this might be the Messiah whose coming he had been privileged to foretell.

Under the influence of such feelings, he said to Jesus, 'I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?' But the answer, 'Suffer it to be so now ; for thus it becometh us to fulfil

all righteousness,' at once removed his scruples. Jesus felt that it was a seemly thing that He, holy as He was, should in this way acknowledge the suitableness of a divine ordinance justly prescribed for men. He submitted to be baptized, just as He submitted to all the humiliation which came to Him because of His having united Himself with sinners. He saw also that, in going down beneath the waters of Jordan and then emerging from them, there would be presented an impressive symbol of the fact that He was now leaving ordinary earthly work behind Him, and entering on a new and higher life.

Giving way to His earnest desire, John baptized Him. On coming forth from the water, as He knelt down on the river's bank to pray (Luke iii. 21), 'Lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and coming upon Him.' This descent of the Spirit on Jesus intimated the bestowal on Him of a fulness of spiritual power, endowing His human nature with all the qualifications requisite for the work to which He had consecrated Himself. It was the divine anointing of Him for the office of Redeemer, so that He might now stand forth in the view of all men as the Christ. And, accompanying this sign, there came a voice from heaven, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' This solemn acknowledgment of Jesus by His Father, and the bestowal of the Spirit on Him in measureless fulness, constituted a distinct call to Him to enter openly and at once on the great work to which He had felt Himself drawn.

But the supernatural events connected with the baptism of Jesus had significance for John also. He, too, witnessed the descent of the Spirit on Jesus, and heard the voice from heaven that proclaimed Him God's beloved Son; and what he saw and heard he fully understood the meaning of. 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove,' said he afterwards, 'and it abode upon Him: 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 ' (John i. 32-34).

Immediately on receiving this call to enter on His work as Redeemer, Jesus withdrew from the neighbourhood of Jordan, and, entering the wilderness of Judæa, pressed onward to its loneliest recesses. He did so under the influence of a spiritual pressure mighty and irresistible. He went, impelled by the necessity of pouring out His heart in solitude before God, and of engaging in earnest meditation on the work before Him. He went also to meet the great enemy whose works He had come to destroy.

For forty days Jesus continued in the wilderness ; and during all that time He was without food. Nor did He feel the want of it, for the spiritual exercises in which He was absorbed raised Him above all thoughts on the necessities of the body. During the forty days many a temptation was presented to Him (Luke iv. 2). But it was at the close of that time that 'the Tempter came to Him' (Matt. iv. 3), to ply Him with the most insidious temptations at his command. Jesus was now an hungered ; and Satan, availing himself of this fact, said to Him : ' If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' He would have Him put forth the supernatural power undoubtedly belonging to Him as God's beloved Son, for the purpose of converting the stones lying around Him into loaves, and thus freeing Himself from the pangs of hunger.

But Jesus made answer : ' It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' The passage of Scripture referred to (Deut. viii. 3) states that God fed His people with manna during their wilderness journey, in order to convince them that bread is not the only thing that can sustain man's life, but that whatever He may appoint for that purpose will suffice. Jesus says that in like manner God can easily supply His wants, even in the absence of bread, and that therefore He will trust in His Father's providential care. Though the Son of God, He is also man, and will be content to fare like

His brethren, and will not put forth on His own behalf any of the divine powers of which He is the possessor. And in announcing this determination, Jesus states the principle to which through His whole earthly life He meant to adhere. His life was to be a life all for others, and not at all for Himself. It was to be a life of self-denying, self-sacrificing love.

But now the scene is changed.¹ The wilderness vanishes from the view of Jesus,² and He seems standing on the loftiest pinnacle of the temple. And the Tempter whispers to Him : ' If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down ; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.' The Saviour, who had just expressed His full confidence in God, is shown a way in which He may manifest His faith. By casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, He will show how free He is from unchildlike fear, and will experience the guardian care of Him who has promised to protect every child of His, and who will let no harm befall His beloved Son.

But Jesus answers the Tempter : ' It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' The tempting of God here spoken of is that referred to by Moses in his last address to Israel, when he said : ' Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah ' (Deut. vi. 16). This tempting of God consisted in an impatient and premature appealing to Him for assistance,—a presumptuous and unwarranted invoking of

¹ It is not necessary to suppose that there was any transportation of the Saviour from place to place. The presentation of a succession of views passing before the mind's eye would have the same effect, and might constitute quite as real a temptation. The 'exceeding high mountain' from which Jesus was shown 'all the kingdoms of the world,' can have been no actual mountain, but might be a height to which in imagination Jesus was uplifted. After the Tempter has left Him on the mountain and has departed, He is still in the wilderness, just as when the temptation began. All that the narrative demands is, that we admit three real temptations brought before the soul of Jesus by a personal tempter, known to be present, though perhaps not seen.

² The order in which the temptations followed each other seems to have been that given by Matthew. The words which he employs to connect them point to succession in time ; whereas those used by Luke do not,

His help. Jesus will rely on His Father's protection, only when He can feel assured that He is doing His Father's will. He will not presume on His Father's love, in order to win for Himself admiration by appearing as the chosen favourite of Heaven.

Once more the scene changes; and now Jesus seems looking from a mountain summit round on the whole world. And, as His eye takes in all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, the Tempter says to Him: 'All this power will I give Thee, for it is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine.' The offer made is that of the world-wide dominion promised to the Messiah in such words as these: 'Ask of me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession' (Ps. ii. 8). But this sovereignty was to be gained by Him only after an arduous conflict. He must vanquish the prince of this world, ere He could wrest from him the territory over which he reigned. And this could be accomplished only through toil and suffering. The Tempter, however, points out a way in which the coveted prize may be gained much more easily. He will surrender the world at once to Jesus, provided homage be done to him for the gift. If Jesus will but consent to take the world on his terms, and to rule over it in a way agreeable to him, He may have it at once.

The answer of Jesus to the Tempter is: 'Get thee hence, Satan! for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' He will rule over this world, only as the Son and Servant of God. He will accept of no unholy sovereignty; but only of that spiritual dominion which consists in the subjection of all men to God and to His holy will. He will make no compromise with evil, but will wage unremitting war with it, and, at whatever cost of toil and suffering to Himself, will re-establish on this earth the kingdom of God.

The aim of all these temptations was to induce Jesus to substitute self-seeking for love, and so to turn Him aside from the path which He must follow, if He would be man's Redeemer.

But all the efforts of the cunning Tempter were put forth in vain, 'and he departed from Him for a season.' And when he had gone, 'angels came and ministered unto Him.'

1. *What was the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus? And how can the existence of this relationship be reconciled with John's statement, 'I knew Him not'? (John i. 33).*
2. *What interval was there between the last of the Old Testament prophets and the appearance of John?*
3. *Was John the first to administer the rite of baptism? If not, explain the question in John i. 35.*
4. *Why did the Spirit descend on Jesus in the form of a dove?*
5. *Does the doctrine of the Trinity receive any illustration from the incidents of our Lord's baptism?*
6. *What other instances does Scripture give of a fast of forty days?*
7. *What was the main purpose of the Tempter in his threefold temptation of our Lord?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. For the connection of the Old and New Testament histories, see Smith's *Student's New Testament History*, Book i.

2. On the character and work of the Baptist there is nothing to be compared with the series of discourses in *The Collected Writings of Edward Irving*, vol. ii.

3. The Temptation is the main theme of Milton's *Paradise Regained*. The inmost meaning of it is well unfolded in Neander, Book iii. part 2.

4. The question, 'How is it possible that a perfectly holy being should be tempted?' is admirably answered in Professor M'Lagan's 'Sermon on Heb. iv. 15,' published in Dods's treatise on *The Incarnation of the Eternal Word*, also in pp. 283-291 of Professor Bruce's work on *The Humiliation of Christ*.

5. Christ an example to all who are called upon to choose between a life of self-pleasing and a life of self-denial and self-sacrifice.

LESSON IV.

THE OPENING OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY.

Read John i. 19-ii. 12.

RETURNING from the wilderness to the banks of Jordan, Jesus once more took His place among the multitude that gathered around the Baptist. It may have been on the very day of His return that a deputation from the Sanhedrim presented themselves at Bethabara for the purpose of learning from John how he stood related to that kingdom of God which he declared about to appear. After telling them that he was not the Christ, and that the baptism which he administered only symbolized the baptism of the Spirit, he said: 'In the midst of you standeth One whom ye know not, even He that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose.' It was to Jesus that he alluded; but for wise reasons he refrained from publicly pointing Him out as the Christ.

The next day, as Jesus was drawing near to the Baptist, John, on getting sight of Him, exclaimed, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' He saw in Jesus a purity that marked Him out from all other men as 'the Lamb;' and a look of meek endurance, befitting a sacrificial lamb laden with the sin of others. And it flashed on him that this must be the One typified by the lamb of the daily sacrifice, and by the paschal lamb; the One described by Isaiah (liii. 7) as led like a lamb to the slaughter, because laden with the guilt of sins not His own.

There were two of the Baptist's hearers who listened to this testimony with the deepest interest. They were Galilean youths who had been led to attach themselves to him as his disciples. The day following, they stood engaged in earnest conversation with their teacher, when the One whose approach had so stirred his heart the day before was seen passing by, and again drew forth from him the exclamation, 'Behold the Lamb of God!' The one of these disciples was Andrew, and the other, though not named, was doubtless the evangelist John, whose vivid account of the incidents of that day shows that he is describing the most eventful day in his own history. They both felt that their master, in directing their attention to Jesus in this marked way, meant to point Him out as the Messiah, and hinted that it was his wish that they should now leave him for One who was able to do for them far more than he could do. Acting on the hint, they left the Baptist's side, and began somewhat timidly to follow Jesus. Hearing their footsteps, He turned and asked them, 'What seek ye?' 'Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?' answered they, showing that they had resolved to accept Him as their teacher, and that they earnestly desired an opportunity of confidential converse with Him. 'Come and see,' was His brief reply; and, assured that their discipleship was acceptable to Him, they followed Him to His temporary abode, and remained with Him for some hours, telling Him of all that was in their hearts, and listening with entranced ear to all that He was pleased to say to them.

When they left His presence, it was as men fully convinced that they had met with Israel's Saviour. And immediately they went in quest of Simon, Andrew's brother, that they might impart the good news to him. Andrew was the first to find him, and at once said to him, 'We have found the Messiah,' and led him into the presence of Jesus, who, comprehending at a glance his character, said to him, 'Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas'—a rock. And Simon's first interview resulted in a conviction as deep as his brother's, that he had been guided to the Christ.

The next day another addition was made to the little band of disciples. Philip of Bethsaida, a fellow-townsmen of Andrew and Simon, who had come from Galilee with them to listen to the preaching of the Baptist, had been as powerfully impressed by it as his friends, and had, like them, been visited with a yearning desire for redemption. There was a peculiarly close intimacy between him and Andrew (John xii. 22), who, in all likelihood, communicated to him the welcome information that the Christ had come. His name may even have been mentioned to Jesus as that of an earnest seeker after salvation. And when, at an early hour of the day following on the call of the others, Jesus, having found him, said to him, 'Follow me,' the invitation was joyfully accepted.

On that same day, Jesus, accompanied by these four disciples, left Judæa for Galilee. There He would be comparatively free from the supervision of the elders and priesthood. And He would also find minds less prejudiced against the gospel which He had come to proclaim. The journey to Galilee probably occupied the better part of a week, and was not marked by any incident meriting special notice. But when Jesus and His disciples reached the neighbourhood of Cana, a town a few miles distant from Nazareth, Philip went in search of his friend Nathanael, a native of that town, and, having found him seated under his fig-tree, said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph.' And though to Nathanael it seemed incredible that any good thing should come out of Nazareth, yet, when bidden come and judge of Jesus for himself, he came. But great was his astonishment to find that Jesus knew him well, and was able even to tell of his employments as he sat under the shade of his fig-tree, with no one near but the Searcher of hearts. 'Rabbi!' exclaimed he, 'Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.' And at once he took his place as a disciple, and continued to be one of them to the end (John xxi. 2), being usually, however, mentioned not by his own name, but rather as Bartholomew (*i.e.* son of Tolmai).

On the third day after the call of Nathanael, Jesus is again found at Cana. His mother was to be present at a marriage there; and Jesus and His disciples were included in the invitation to it. The bridegroom and those gathered around him on this joyous occasion appear to have been anxious to see One of whom men were beginning to think as the Christ, and to have been disposed to look favourably on His claims.

Such feasts usually continued for a week; the guests repairing to their homes or to the house of any friend at night, and re-appearing next day to resume the festivities. A bridegroom in humble circumstances could ill afford to make provision for an entertainment lasting so long. And though the wedding-guests were wont in such a case to contribute a portion of the materials of the feast, it might easily happen that, after several days' feasting, the stores laid in might fail. On this occasion both the bridegroom and his guests belonged to the humbler classes; and, after the feast had continued for some days, the supply of wine became exhausted. And Mary, who would seem to have been the first to notice this, anxious that no one should mark this evidence of poverty but herself, came to Jesus, and taking Him aside, said, 'They have no wine.'

Up to this time Jesus had wrought no miracle. But Mary knew well that He was the Son of God, and had often wondered at His being so long in manifesting Himself to Israel. She had with joy seen Him at last coming forth from His privacy to reveal Himself as the Messiah. She may have thought that the very purpose of His coming to this feast was, that He might in some way show forth His glory. She may have seen in His bearing also something that convinced her that He had a great work in hand. Mary had, however, to be reminded gently but firmly by Jesus, that the modes and times of working suitable for Him it was beyond her power to judge of.

Soon, however, He went to the outer court, where there stood six water-pots of stone, containing two or three firkins apiece, and used for ceremonial purifications, and bade the servants fill

them with water. When this had been done, they were bidden take a sample of what the water-pots contained to the one who presided over the feast, that he might taste it; and the water was then found to have been changed into wine, the best wine that had been set on the table. It could only have been by a direct act of omnipotence that this wondrous transformation had taken place. So that Jesus, in effecting it, was shown to be the possessor of divine power. 'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.'

After this, Jesus, along with His mother, His brethren, and His disciples; went down to Capernaum, on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and stayed there for a time. He seems to have lived there in comparative privacy. Men needed to learn what kind of salvation they required, before He could with advantage offer Himself to them as their Saviour. He employed Himself, therefore, for the most part, in teaching the disciples whom He had gathered around Him. Probably also He at this time attached to Himself the most, if not all, of those who afterwards came to be known as the Twelve. They were not, indeed, called on to leave their homes and occupations as yet. But they were much beside Him, and He drew them gradually closer to Himself; and, as they became able to receive the truth, He opened it up the more fully to them, and gave them a deeper insight into His character and mission.

1. *Why did the Baptist not at once point out Jesus to the deputation from Jerusalem as the Christ?*
2. *What reasons are there for thinking of the evangelist John as one of the two in whom our Lord found His first disciples?*
3. *How do you reconcile John i. 42 with Matt. xvi. 18?*
4. *With which of the twelve apostles would you identify Nathanael? and why?*
5. *What special appropriateness was there in our Lord's giving the first manifestation of His supernatural power at a marriage-feast?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. Jesus did not enter on His ministry till He was thirty years of age (Luke iii. 23). The work to which He was called required that the full powers and experience of matured manhood should be thrown into it. This was the age at which priestly and Levitical service was entered on (Num. iv. 3).

2. Andrew and Philip illustrate the missionary character of true discipleship. On the character and work of Andrew, see the sermon, entitled 'The World's Benefactors,' in vol. ii. of Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. On the variety of agency employed in bringing the first disciples to Christ, see an interesting paragraph at p. 75 of Hanna's *Life of our Lord on Earth*.

3. On the miracle at Cana of Galilee, see Neander, Book V. chap. iii.; Beecher, pp. 184-196; Luthardt's *Johann. Evang.* vol. i. pp. 351-355; Lange's *Evang. nach Johannes*, pp. 70-76; and two sermons on 'The First Miracle,' in Fred. Wm. Robertson's *Sermons*, 2d Series.

LESSON V.

THE FIRST JUDÆAN MINISTRY.

Read John ii. 3-iii. 36.

THE stay of our Lord and His disciples at Capernaum was not of long continuance. The approach of the Passover feast called Him to Jerusalem. He wished to appear in the temple along with the rest of Israel, to take part in a festival which commemorated the greatest deliverance ever wrought by God for His people in the days of old, and which foretold a still greater deliverance soon to be achieved.

Arrived in Jerusalem, He was soon found in His Father's house, and had His attention arrested by a scene well fitted to awaken righteous indignation. A considerable part of the court of the Gentiles had been appropriated as a place for the sale of cattle to be used in sacrifice. On occasion of one Passover, the number of lambs ascertained to have been actually slain was 256,500. Other sacrifices also of different kinds would be offered up by the two or three millions of Israelites who crowded Jerusalem during the feast. The animals required for such purposes had to be offered for sale at no great distance from the temple. But it was not necessary that they should be brought within the sacred edifice itself. This, however, had been permitted; so that part of the court of the Gentiles was used as a cattle-market, and the lowing of oxen and the bleating of sheep and the chaffering of bargain-makers, during all hours of the day, dinned the ear. Money-changers also had their tables there, and took foreign

coins of every kind in exchange for the half-shekel paid as temple-tribute.

Jesus, as He looked on this spectacle, felt His spirit stirred within Him. And, lifting some of the rushes lying about as litter for the cattle, He plaited them into a scourge, and lashed the busy traders and their cattle out of the temple, and commanded those selling doves to remove them, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers. The majesty of His appearance, the visible purity of His motives, the uplifted scourge recognized as the symbol of divine judgment, and His words, 'Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise,' made those on whom His indignation fell quail and flee before Him. Even the temple officials, when called to the spot, could not plead for the continuance of an abuse altogether indefensible, but had to content themselves with questioning the right of Jesus to interfere with it. 'What sign,' said they, 'showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?' What they demanded was some proof of His being entitled to exercise control over the temple arrangements,—some sign from heaven warranting Him to claim for Himself an authority which could be conceded only to a prophet.

'Destroy this temple,' was His reply, 'and in three days I will raise it up.' His words appeared to refer to the temple in which He and His questioners were standing; but they referred to a temple holier than it. He was Himself the holy temple in which Godhead dwelt. And He knew that those who were now questioning His authority would aim at the destruction of His body, and would effect it. But He knew also that the temple of His body, on the third day after its being laid in ruins, would be raised up incorruptible and glorious.

Those to whom His words were spoken answered, 'Forty and six years was this temple in building; and wilt Thou raise it up in three days?' Yet, though they affected to regard what He had said as a piece of vainglorious boasting, they felt as if there were some hidden and strange meaning in His words. And they showed afterwards that the saying was one which had awakened

both resentment and fear (Matt. xxvi. 61). And when the fulfilment of it was beheld, it came to be seen that in uttering it Jesus had given a sign of His being not only a true prophet, but the Christ (John ii. 22).

Such an incident as this could not but awaken a widespread interest in Jesus. He wrought also not a few works which led many to think favourably of Him. They 'believed in Him,' it is said, 'beholding the signs which He did.' Yet all that the most of these so-called believers saw was, that there was a divine power co-operating with Him, and that this showed in some sense the divineness of His mission. But 'Jesus did not trust Himself to them, for that He knew all men.' In the fickle populace He had no confidence. Their opinions, hastily formed, would as hastily be abandoned. Their feelings, easily influenced in His favour, would as easily be influenced against Him. Hence He made to them no confidential disclosures of His true dignity and errand.

There was one man, however, whom he treated in a very different way. This was Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and a member of the supreme ecclesiastical council of the nation. He came to Jesus by night, partly to escape general observation, and partly to have the advantage of an uninterrupted interview. He came, making this confession, 'Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God ; for no man can do these signs that Thou doest, except God be with him.' The object of his coming was to make closer acquaintance with Jesus, and to learn in what relation He stood to the long-expected kingdom of God. And very startling must have been the first word addressed to him, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus could not understand this ; and Jesus had to explain to him that the new birth was a spiritual change of which all men had need, and that none but those thus spiritually renewed could appreciate the godlikeness of the kingdom to be set up by the Christ, or could seek and obtain a place among its subjects. Jesus then went on to speak of higher things, —of the only-begotten Son of God sent to give life to a perishing

world,—of the revelation of the Father, which none but the Son could give to men,—and of the necessity that this Son of God should as the Son of man be lifted up, like the brazen serpent in the wilderness, that all who looked to Him might be healed and live.

This conversation had the effect of attaching Nicodemus to Jesus as a true disciple. And he is found afterwards demanding justice for Him from his brother-Sanhedrists (John vii. 50), and at last, when few had the courage to confess Him, acknowledging Him openly as His Lord (John xix. 39).

Shortly after this Passover, Jesus made a missionary tour throughout Judæa, which probably occupied several months. John the Baptist was at the time preaching and baptizing at a place called Ænon, near to Salim, of which nothing is known but that it abounded in springs. John still maintained his independent position as a prophet, having a prophet's work to do. He felt that he should continue speaking to men with all plainness concerning their sin, and seeking to awaken within them longings for salvation. He believed that by doing so he would work most effectually into the hands of Jesus.

But an incident occurred, which made some of John's disciples dissatisfied with the inferior position into which their master seemed to have sunk. 'There arose a questioning on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purifying' (John iii. 25). In the course of the discussion the Jew would appear to have hinted that the baptism administered by John was of little value, and that people generally were now leaving him for the One whom he had declared superior to himself. Embarrassed by the arguments pressed on them by this disputant, they betook themselves to their master, and said to him, 'Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou hast borne witness,—behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him.' But John, as he listened to the news, was far from sharing in the chagrin of his disciples. On the contrary, he expressed himself fully satisfied with the appointment of God in assigning to him a lower and to

Jesus a far higher place. He said that Jesus was the Bridegroom and he the Bridegroom's friend, who, after having brought the bride to her lord, is content to rejoice in his joy. And with touching humility he recorded his conviction that the pre-eminence of Jesus over himself should become more signal and visible every day, while his own influence should steadily diminish. 'He must increase,' said he, 'but I must decrease.'

This was the last public testimony borne by the Baptist to Jesus. And it has in it an earnestness and a pathos which show that he had the presentiment that it would be the last. For, though 'John was not yet cast into prison,' imprisonment and death were near.

1. *How many Passovers are mentioned as finding a place in the period covered by our Lord's ministry?*
2. *What points of resemblance and of difference are there between the cleansing of the temple narrated in John ii. 13-17 and that described by the first three evangelists?*
3. *How does Matthew xxvi. 61 go to establish the veracity of John's Gospel?*
4. *What are the different names given to the miracles of Jesus? and in what different aspects do these names represent them?*
5. *How do you account for our Lord's surprise at the inability of Nicodemus to accept the doctrine of regeneration?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. For a statement of the various views entertained regarding the duration of our Lord's ministry, see Andrews, pp. 37-46. Ebrard believes it to have extended over five years (*Evang. Geschichte*, pp. 162-167). Keim (*Geschichte Jesu*, pp. 4-156), following the tradition current in the first two centuries, limits it to one year. Weizsäcker puts in a very convincing form the reasons for adhering to John's representation of a three years' ministry (*Untersuchungen über die Evang. Geschichte*, pp. 305-315).

2. Herod's temple is described in Joseph. *Antiq.*, Book XV. chap. xi. The building of it was commenced twenty years before the accepted date, and sixteen before the real date of our Lord's birth. When Jesus was thirty years of age, therefore, the temple, which had not by that time been finished, had been forty-six years in building. It was completed under Herod Agrippa II., in A.D. 64.

LESSON VI.

MINISTRY IN SAMARIA.

Read John iv. 1-42.

THE success that had attended our Lord's missionary tour throughout Judæa contributed to bring it to a close somewhat hastily. For those who held the position of greatest authority and influence in Jerusalem had been kept fully informed of His movements, and regarded with jealousy the evidences of popular favour accorded to Him. Learning this, He felt that He must leave this neighbourhood, if He was to carry on His work without serious molestation (John iv. 1).

Another reason influenced Jesus to leave Judæa at this time for Galilee. The Baptist, who had for some time been labouring in the territories of Herod Antipas, and who had at first been treated by that monarch with marked consideration, having at length ventured to reprove him for his sin in marrying Herodias, the self-divorced wife of his brother Philip, had been thrown into prison to atone for his offence. And it was well that, without loss of time, Jesus should enter the dominion of that prince, and should show, that though one witness-bearer for the truth had fallen, another and a mightier was ready to take his place. Hence, 'when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee' (Matt. iv. 12).

Setting out from the north of Judæa, He took the direct road through Samaria. Nothing of special interest occurred till He came near to the town of Sychar. Whether we identify that

town with the ancient Shechem (now Nablous), or with the modern village of Askâr, a little to the north of it, it lay in the valley that skirts the base of Gerizim. And Jacob's Well¹ was near it, in the parcel of ground bequeathed to his favourite son Joseph. It was noon-day when Jesus came to the well and sat down by it to rest, while His disciples went into the neighbouring town to buy bread. As He sat, a woman of Sychar came to the well to draw water. Jesus, being athirst, said to her, 'Give me to drink.' But, instead of at once lifting her pitcher to His lips, she asked, 'How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?' The question was natural enough, for Jews had no dealings with Samaritans.² But, greatly to her surprise, He replied, 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.' Partly amused and partly offended with the Jew who affected to be able to give her water superior to that yielded by Jacob's Well, she reminded Him that Jacob had himself been

¹ Jacob's Well is still to be seen. It is 'on the end of a low spur or swell running out from the north-eastern base of Gerizim, and is 15 or 20 feet above the level of the plain below.' Till lately it was covered by a vaulted chamber, the ruins of which have now fallen into it, and well-nigh choked it up. It is circular in form, with a diameter of 9 feet, and has been ascertained to be at least 75 feet in depth. It is hewn out of the solid rock, and is merely a great cistern, fed by no springs. Yet Jacob may well have been at the pains to excavate it, in order to provide for his family and flocks an independent supply of water.

² The enmity subsisting between Jews and Samaritans was intense. It had its roots both in nationality and in religion. The Samaritans were not Israelites, but Cushites, brought by Shalmaneser to colonize the land from which God's people had been carried away captive (2 Kings xvii. 24). Originally idolaters, they had tried to combine the worship of Jehovah with that of the gods of their fathers (2 Kings xvii. 33, 34). After the restoration, they were refused permission to aid in the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem (Ezra iv. 2, 3). At a later time, Manasseh, brother of the Jewish high priest, compelled to take refuge with his Samaritan father-in-law, secured the building of a temple on Mount Gerizim. After that temple had been laid in ruins by the Jews, worship continued to be offered on its site. And all these circumstances led Jew and Samaritan to cherish toward each other an unquenchable hatred.

content to drink of that well, and asked, 'Whence then hast thou that living water?' 'Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him,' He answered, 'shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water springing up into everlasting life.' The woman's curiosity was now thoroughly aroused, and the conviction took possession of her that this stranger was speaking of some great blessing which He believed Himself able to bestow; and she said, 'Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not.' And now Jesus must seek to give definite direction to her desires, and with this view must seek to awaken within her a sense of sin. He did so by asking her to bring her husband, that he might share in the boon which she was about to receive. Something significant in His tone caused her to feel that she was dealing with One who knew her character, and who must be a prophet. Accordingly, she asked Him to give her some light on the question at issue between her nation and the Jews, as to whether the worship offered on Gerizim or at Jerusalem was most acceptable to God. But Jesus declared the question one of little consequence now, since the hour had arrived when no one place was, to the exclusion of another, to be regarded as sacred. A new dispensation was about to be ushered in, when a salvation provided for the whole world was to be accessible to the whole world, and every one who should receive it would stand before God an accepted worshipper. The one thing required now in the worship to be offered to God was that it should be truly spiritual. 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.'

The woman of Sychar could not understand all this, but felt that this prophet was speaking of great religious changes that were to take place. And, naturally connecting this new order of things with the coming of the Messiah, for whom the Samaritans as well as the Jews were longing, she said, 'I know that Messiah cometh; when He is come, He will tell us all things.' 'I that speak unto thee,' said Jesus, 'am He.' It was the first distinct

announcement of His Messiahship that He had as yet made. And, in making it to such a woman, He showed how truly 'the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'

At this point the disciples returned with the bread which they had purchased. But Jesus had now forgotten both hunger and thirst, and said to them, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of.' They soon saw what that meat was, when multitudes of people came from the adjoining city to Him, under the guidance of the woman who had been talking with Him at the well, and eagerly listened to Him as He spoke to them words of eternal life, and said, 'We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' Moved by the entreaties of the men of Sychar, Jesus remained for two days with them; and so great was the success that attended His labours during that brief time, that it seemed as if the seed had been barely sown,¹ when the fields could be seen waving with a rich harvest.

1. *What different opinions have been held regarding the nationality of the Samaritans?*
2. *In what respects did the religious beliefs and worship of the Samaritans differ from those of the Jews?*
3. *How do you account for the vivid expectation of a Messiah entertained by the Samaritans?*
4. *Explain the statement, 'Salvation is of the Jews' (John iv. 22).*
5. *What words spoken by our Lord on this occasion have been regarded as indicating the time of the year at which he passed through Samaria?*
6. *Does Scripture seem to furnish any evidence that the good seed sown at this time in Samaria brought forth fruit afterwards?*

¹ The words, 'Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?' (John iv. 35), have been thought of as indicating the time of the year when the Lord's visit to Sychar took place. If so, since harvest in Palestine begins about the middle of April, the visit to Sychar must have taken place in December. Our Lord may, however, be regarded simply as citing a common proverb to the effect that four months intervene between sowing-time and reaping-time. If so, His meaning is that, while in the natural husbandry such an interval always occurs, in the spiritual husbandry it is otherwise.

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. For information regarding the Samaritans, read Joseph. *Antiq.* ix. 14. 3, xi. 8, and xii. 5 ; also the article 'Samaria' in Smith's *Bib. Dict.*
2. All that is most interesting in regard to Sychar, Jacob's Well, and the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, will be found in chap. xi. of Beecher's *Life of Christ.*
3. Christ's mode of dealing with the woman of Sychar is instructive. He asks a kindness from her with the view of commending to her a boon more precious than anything she has to give ; He presents to her the greatest of spiritual blessings under the guise of a temporal benefit, which she is capable of appreciating ; He refuses to be drawn into the entanglements of controversy, and makes it His one object to bring her to feel that she is a sinner needing Him as her Saviour.

LESSON VII.

BEGINNING OF SECOND GALILEAN MINISTRY.

JESUS AT CANA.

Read John iv. 43-54.

THE great success which Jesus met with among the people of Sychem was secured simply by the proclamation of divine truth. He did not work any miracle among them; for He did not need to do so. They were longing for a gospel of salvation; and, when it was proclaimed to them, they recognized and embraced it. It must have been with regret that our Lord left so interesting a field of labour, and proceeded on His journey toward Galilee. John tells us that it was so, and that, as He left Samaria for Galilee, He Himself 'testified that a prophet hath no honour in his own country' (John iv. 44).

Yet it seemed as if the Galileans were prepared to give Him a favourable reception. 'When He was come into Galilee,' it is said, 'the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did at Jerusalem at the feast' (ver. 45). It was not on account of His teachings, however, that they welcomed Him, but because of His miraculous works. They looked on Him with curiosity and interest, because of the supernatural powers which He possessed. While the Samaritans came to Him for salvation, the Galileans crowded around Him to witness His miracles.

The first place to which He paid a visit of any duration was Cana; and only one incident of His stay there is noticed. A

nobleman or courtier, an officer in Herod's employment,—perhaps Chuza, Herod's steward, whose wife, Joanna, became one of our Lord's most devoted followers (Luke viii. 3),—came to Him from Capernaum, to entreat Him to go and heal his son, who was at the point of death. But Jesus answered him, 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.' This nobleman believed in Jesus as the possessor of superhuman power, and as able to give healing to his son. But he did not believe in Him as a Saviour. He was not a man desiring any spiritual blessing either for himself or for his household. Indeed, he would never have come to Jesus at all, unless under the pressure of a great temporal affliction. And the Lord tells him this, to show him that He knew the truth regarding him, and to bring him to think of his spiritual necessities.

The distressed father felt that Jesus was with good reason dissatisfied with his spiritual state, but yet clung to Him as his only hope, and pled with impassioned earnestness: 'Sir, come down, ere my child die.' And Jesus, unable to resist his importunity, said to him, 'Go thy way; thy son liveth.' In saying so, He intimated that it was not necessary for Him to go to Capernaum; but that, standing where He was, He could give the blessing sought. And the nobleman 'believed the word that Jesus had spoken to him.' So thoroughly did he believe it, that, instead of hastening on at once to Capernaum, he tarried somewhere all night by the way. The next day, when he had resumed his journey, he met some of his servants coming to apprise him of his son's recovery. On inquiring at what hour the favourable change had commenced, he learned that it was at the seventh hour of the previous day, the very hour at which Jesus had said to him, 'Thy son liveth.' The information led him to repose in Jesus a deeper and stronger faith than before. It had taken signs and wonders to bring him to believe; but the Saviour had graciously accommodated Himself to his necessities. And not only did he himself believe, but his whole house.

JESUS AT NAZARETH.

Read Luke iv. 14-30.

After His visit to Cana, our Lord would appear to have let His disciples return for a time to their homes, and to have Himself moved about through Galilee, preaching in the synagogues, and making a profound impression wherever He appeared. The substance of His preaching was, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel' (Mark i. 15). He did not say in so many words that He was Himself the promised Saviour, but He spoke in such a way as to suggest this to those whom He addressed.

At last, when He had become the object of general interest, and His name was on every lip, He resolved to pay a visit to the home of His childhood, to which Mary and her family had now returned. He would seem to have arrived toward the end of the week, and to have remained in strict seclusion till the Sabbath. On the Sabbath-day, 'as His custom was, He went into the synagogue;' and immediately all eyes were turned toward Him. When, after the reading of the Law, He came forward to the platform on which any one qualified to speak took his stand, His purpose was at once understood, and the servant of the synagogue handed Him the prophetic roll from which the lesson for the day was to be read. The passage to be read embraced the Messianic prediction contained in Isa. lxi.; and after reading it He sat down, and directed special attention to the opening words of it: 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' And from this text He preached a sermon, the substance of which has been preserved in these words, 'To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears.'

In words and tones of grace He declared Himself the One

anointed to do all that the prophet had foretold. And it seemed at first as if the glad tidings which He brought would be received with joy ; for ‘all bare Him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth.’ But soon other thoughts began to arise ; and His hearers, as they listened, took to asking themselves what right this fellow-townsmen of theirs had to advance such lofty pretensions. They had always understood that this prophecy referred to the Messiah, a mighty and victorious prince who was to break the yoke of their oppressors. How, then, could it be fulfilled in the carpenter’s son, whose family was one of the poorest in their city? He must at least do some mighty work in support of such astounding claims. Mutterings to this effect were heard on every side.

Jesus saw the change passing over His audience, and felt it necessary to tell them that Nazareth, though His home, had no right to demand from Him any display of supernatural power. He reminded them that God, in His bestowal of blessings, had not been wont to make the men of Israel the objects of His exclusive favour ; that, in a time of famine, it was a widow of Zarephath that Elijah was sent to help ; and that the only leper cleansed by Elisha was Naaman the Syrian.

But, instead of being convinced and solemnized by His words, His hearers in a frenzy of rage rose and hurried Him out of the synagogue, and dragged Him to a precipice, that they might hurl Him from it headlong. And they would have effected their purpose, had He not turned and bent on them a look of majesty that awed and paralyzed them, so that they fell back on every side and He went His way. With a sad heart it was that He left behind Him those whom from childhood He had known and loved, and whom He fain would have saved, and that ‘He came and dwelt in Capernaum’ (Matt. iv. 13).

1. *What difference was there between the reception given to Jesus by the Samaritans and that with which He met on passing into Galilee?*

2. *Why should it be so, that 'a prophet hath no honour in his own country'?* (John iv. 44).
3. *State the points of difference traceable between the nobleman of John iv. 43-54 and the centurion of Matt. viii. 5-13.*
4. *Why did the people of Nazareth take offence at our Saviour's allusions to the miracles wrought in the case of the widow of Zarephath and of Naaman the Syrian?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. The rejection of Jesus by the people of Nazareth is described by Luke (iv. 16-30) as taking place towards the beginning of His ministry. Matthew (xiii. 54-58) and Mark (vi. 1-6) represent Him as rejected by His townsmen at a much later date. Did Jesus twice visit Nazareth, and was He twice rejected? Or did His rejection occur only once? The older expositors, as also Ewald, Meyer, and Stier, take the former view. The most of recent expositors, *e.g.* Neander, Olshausen, Oosterzee, Lange, Alford, and Farrar, take the latter view. To instance one point forcibly stated by Alford, Is it conceivable that Jesus should have been so treated by the Nazarenes on occasion of the visit recorded by Luke; and that on a subsequent occasion He should have marvelled at their unbelief?

2. On a Messianic reference of the prophecy, Isa. lxi. 1-3, consult Delitzsch's *Commentar über den Prophet Isaia*, pp. 586-589; Naegelsbach's *Commentar*, pp. 704-711; and Alexander's *Isaiah*, pp. 886-890.

LESSON VIII.

EARLY LABOURS AT CAPERNAUM.

Read Matt. iv. 13-25 ; Mark i. 16-34 ; Luke iv. 31-v. 11.

It was not solely on account of His rejection by the people of Nazareth that Jesus resolved to make Capernaum for a time His home. It was a place that offered Him peculiar advantages for the work to which He meant to address Himself. It formed one of many thriving towns studding the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The land of Gennesaret, in which it was situated, teemed with an energetic and enterprising population. A rich soil and a genial climate usually crowned the labours of the husbandman with abundance. The Lake, thirteen miles in length and six in breadth, swarmed with fish, and gave employment to thousands of fishermen. So that Capernaum and the country around it provided Jesus with a most inviting field of labour. He could betake Himself also to the other side of the sea, whenever the designs of His enemies or the too urgent pressure of the multitudes should make this expedient. Several of the most ardent and devoted of His disciples dwelt at Capernaum. Simon and Andrew had left the neighbouring town of Bethsaida, and resided there. The two sons of Zebedee also lived there, or in some contiguous place. It was under the influence of such reasons that Jesus was led to come to Capernaum, and to make it so decidedly the centre of His activities, that it came to be known as 'His own city' (Matt. ix. 1).

Immediately on His arrival in Capernaum our Lord began to

proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. On Sabbaths, when men were freed from their ordinary occupations, He obtained His largest audiences, and had the opportunity of making the most powerful impression. And 'they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with power' (Luke iv. 32).

But His labours at Capernaum were suspended for a little, to permit of His going up to Jerusalem, and observing 'a feast of the Jews'¹ (John v. 1). He appears to have gone alone; and the visit is mentioned on account of an incident connected with it which did much to exasperate the priesthood, and to precipitate the conflict that ended in His death. It was one of our Lord's works of healing that was attended with these undesirable results.

He happened on a Sabbath-day to be passing a famous pool or reservoir near to the Sheep-gate, known by the name of Bethesda (*i.e.* House of Mercy). It was so celebrated for its medicinal virtues that many impotent folk resorted to it in anticipation of a cure. For at irregular and uncertain intervals the waters of the pool were singularly troubled,² and were found to be possessed of wondrous efficacy. Under five covered porticoes surrounding the pool, multitudes of infirm people were to be seen waiting for the moving of the waters. As Jesus looked on this sad sight, one case in particular excited His sympathy. It was that of a man who had been ill for thirty-

¹ There has been great variety of conjecture as to what feast this was. If the reading favoured by Tischendorf were adopted, viz.: 'After these things there was the feast of the Jews,' the Passover would suggest itself as the feast meant; and if so, the ministry of Jesus would embrace four Passovers. But if, following the majority of critics, we read simply 'a feast,' any feast may be thought of. And, accordingly, almost every feast has had some one to advocate its claims to be the one alluded to.

² The words in John v. 3, 4, 'Waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel went down,' etc., are wanting in the older and best manuscripts, and are therefore omitted in the Revised Version of the New Testament. They seem to have been at first a mere marginal explanation, and to have eventually found their way into the text. The Pool of Bethesda appears to have been an intermittent fountain, like the present Fountain of the Virgin.

eight years, and had often been brought to the pool, but had never been able to step in when the waters were in commotion. Jesus said to this man, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.' And immediately, desire and faith starting up within him, he tried to rise, and got the power to do so, and, shouldering his pallet, took the way home.

The unusual sight of one carrying such a burden on the Sabbath attracted attention, and led to fault being found with Jesus for giving such a command to the one whom He had cured. But He answered, 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work'—claiming for Himself as the Son of God the right to imitate His Father, who onward from the beginning has been ceaselessly working on Sabbath-days as well as on week-days. The answer was felt to be an aggravation of the offence;—'Therefore the Jews sought to kill Him, because He not only brake the Sabbath, but called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God' (John v. 1-18).

After His return from Jerusalem Jesus resumed His labours at Capernaum, and excited such an interest that multitudes followed Him. On one memorable day, as He moved along by the side of the Lake, 'the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God.' It was but early morning, and some fishermen who had been out at sea all night, but had met with little success, had drawn up their nets on the shore. Simon and Andrew were of the number, and were engaged beside their own boat in washing their nets. A little farther on, James and John were employed in getting their nets into repair. Drawing near to the one boat, Jesus asked Simon to push out a little from the shore; and this having been done, He began to address the people standing on the beach. When the address was finished, 'Launch out into the deep,' said He to Simon, 'and let down your nets for a draught.' 'Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing,' was the answer, 'but at Thy word I will let down the nets.' His brother and he at once carried out the Lord's command, and launched out into the deep, followed closely by James

and John, their partners in business; and their nets were lowered, and enclosed such a multitude of fish that they seemed likely to break. Both boats were filled with fish, and almost ran the risk of sinking. And so impressed was Simon Peter with the miraculous character of what had taken place, that he fell at the feet of Jesus, exclaiming, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' Conscious of his sinfulness, he trembled to feel himself so near to One who was manifestly Divine. But Jesus dissipated his alarms, saying to him, 'Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men.' And Peter rose from his knees with a gladdened heart, to enter at once on the nobler vocation to which he knew himself called. His companions also had no sooner reached land than they received the welcome summons, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men' (Matt. iv. 19). And 'they forsook all, and followed Him.'

These four had for a considerable time been numbered among our Lord's disciples. But from this time they were to make it their chief business to learn all that they could from Him, and to avail themselves to the full of the training required for the work to which He had called them. Instead of enjoying occasional intercourse with Him during the intervals permitted by their secular occupations, they were to keep by His side, and place themselves at His command, and be ready to go on whatever errand He might send them. They knew that this was what He required of them, and they cheerfully responded to His call.

On the first Sabbath after this event (Mark i. 21) Jesus went into the synagogue of Capernaum, and spoke with such power that men's hearts were mightily stirred. Among those present there was 'a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil' (Luke iv. 33). As he listened to the words of Jesus he became inordinately excited, and cried out, 'Let us alone! What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.' 'Hold thy peace,' said Jesus, in answer to these hurried ejaculations,

‘and come out of him.’ And His charge to the unclean spirit had, however reluctantly, to be obeyed. With a loud cry of baffled rage the spirit came out, tearing the one in whom he had dwelt. And the people, as they looked on, said, ‘What a word is this! for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him.’

On leaving the synagogue Jesus went to the house of Simon, to find his mother-in-law ‘holden with a great fever;’ and He was entreated to put forth His power and heal her. Going forward to her bed-side, and affectionately bending over her, He took her by the hand, and, commanding the fever to leave her, raised her up. Instantaneously and completely cured, she rose, and used the health restored to her for the benefit of Him to whom she owed it, busying herself in ministering to Jesus and to those who were with Him.

The news of this second miracle soon circulated through the town, and deepened the impression made by the cure of the demoniac; so that at sunset crowds were to be seen streaming toward the house in which our Lord dwelt, bringing their sick with them. And Jesus healed them all, ‘that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases’ (Matt. viii. 17). His love drew Him near to those whose distresses He looked on, and made Him feel as if their distresses were His own. In His intense sympathy He came under the load of their miseries, and felt as if He were Himself the very sufferer. He did so, animated by the same spirit which led Him to make our sins His own, and to come under the burden that pressed on a sinning world, that He might lift it off and take it quite away.

Rising on the following morning, long before dawn, Jesus withdrew into a lonely place to pray. But His disciples, following Him to His retirement, pled with Him to return. His answer, however, was, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore was I sent.’ And He set out to preach in the synagogues of Galilee.

1. *What reasons probably induced Jesus to choose Capernaum as His home?*
2. *Why has special importance been attached to the question, Whether in John v. 1 the correct reading is 'A feast of the Jews' or 'The feast'?*
3. *What is the force of the argument employed by Jesus to defend His conduct in healing the impotent man at Bethesda on the Sabbath-day?*
4. *What difference did the call addressed to Simon and his three fellow-disciples, as recorded in Matt. iv. 18-22, make in their relationship to Jesus?*
5. *Explain how the words of Isaiah liii. 4 found fulfilment in our Lord's miracles of healing.*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. A good epitome of the views held by different writers regarding the feast mentioned in John v. 1, is to be found in Andrews, pp. 155-162.

2. Dr. A. Moody Stuart, in his volume entitled *Capernaum*, gives an interesting and beautiful exposition of the teachings and doings of our Lord that connect themselves with 'His own city.'

3. Tradition identifies Capernaum with Tell Hûm on the north-western shore of the Lake of Galilee. Dr. Robinson, however, fixes its site at Khan Mintych, some miles farther south. But recent investigators prefer the traditional site. Dr. Thomson gives strong reasons for this preference (*The Land and the Book*, pp. 352-356). Tristram regards the argument for Tell Hûm as greatly strengthened by the latest researches (*Land of Israel*, pp. 428-434). The ruins at Tell Hûm are, both in extent and in architectural character, such as might be expected in what was undoubtedly the leading city in that district.

4. See the discussion on 'Demoniacs and Demon-possession,' in Trench's *Notes on the Parables*, pp. 150-164.

LESSON IX.

TOUR THROUGHOUT GALILEE, AND RETURN TO CAPERNAUM.

Read Matt. ix. 1-17; Mark i. 39-ii. 22; Luke v. 12-39.

THE preaching tour on which our Saviour now entered must have appeared at the time to be a singular success. Wherever He went, men crowded to hear Him, and listened with interest and joy to the gospel which He proclaimed. He showered countless blessings also on the necessitous and suffering, 'healing all manner of sickness and of disease among the people.' His fame both as a preacher and as a wonder-worker spread far and wide, and led multitudes to come from Decapolis, from Peræa, from Syria, and even from Jerusalem (Matt. iv. 25), and to follow Him as He moved onward from city to city. Yet the tour was neither extensive nor prolonged; and only one incident, which occurred in the course of it, is expressly mentioned.

In one of the towns visited, there came to our Lord a man 'full of leprosy;' and, falling at His feet, he made the piteous appeal, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' He had no doubt of the Saviour's ability to cleanse him, but had a fear that he might not be deemed worthy of His compassion. But the humility and faith of the poor suppliant pled for Him with irresistible power; and Jesus, stretching forth His hand, touched him, and said, 'I will: be thou clean.' The 'I will'—the word of love; and the 'Be thou made clean'—the word of power, constituted the outward utterance of an act of will on the part of Jesus, which expelled the leprosy and made the flesh that had

been as white as snow healthful again. And, along with the cure, Jesus laid on the one whom He healed a twofold charge. He bade him go and show himself to the priest, and engage in all the ceremonial observances prescribed by the Mosaic Law (Lev. xiv. 1-32). He did so, because the Law was not yet abrogated, and also because He wished the priests at Jerusalem to know of the miracle, that it might be 'a testimony unto them,' which they might perchance consider. He also laid on the man this charge, 'See that thou say nothing to any man.' It may have been partly out of regard for the man's own spiritual good that he was commanded to keep silence as to what had happened to him. Perhaps also Jesus did not wish that lepers should be crowding around Him, and by their very presence keeping others away.

But, whatever our Lord's reasons for prohibiting the publication of the miracle, the prohibition was disregarded. He on whom the benefit had been conferred 'went out and began to publish it much, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, but was without in desert places' (Mark i. 45). He acted in this way, doubtless, out of gratitude to his benefactor; but he forgot that 'to obey is better than sacrifice.'

On our Lord's return to Capernaum, after this brief evangelistic tour, deeper interest was taken in Him than ever before. The Pharisees, who signalized themselves by a specially scrupulous observance of all religious customs, had now begun to regard Him with close attention. So had the Rabbis or doctors of the Law, who had reason to think that He inculcated a disregard for many of their most venerated traditions. Many of these religious and learned men had found their way to Capernaum, not only from the various parts of Galilee, but from Judæa, and from Jerusalem itself (Luke v. 17); and they availed themselves of every opportunity of listening to His teachings and of studying His conduct. On one occasion, when those who crowded to hear Him filled not only the house in which He resided, but the court in front of it, some of these visitors had a place among the audience. He had already healed not a few sick people, when

four men, carrying a helpless paralytic, came to the door, but could not find an entrance. Not to be defeated in their object, however, they ascended the outside stair to the flat roof of the house, and, removing as much of the tiling as was necessary, they lowered the bed on which the sufferer lay into the room in which Jesus was seated, and succeeded in placing it right before Him. As He looked on the sufferer, our Lord saw in him one more concerned about his sin than his bodily infirmity, and, though desiring healing, still more desirous of salvation. And that He might put him in possession of the greater blessing first, He said to him, 'Son, be of good cheer! thy sins are forgiven.'

Probably all who heard these words were startled by them; for Jesus had never yet claimed to be able to forgive sin. But to the scribes and Pharisees present such a claim seemed, not merely strange, but blasphemous. 'Who can forgive sins,' said they in their hearts, 'but God alone?' It was easy, they thought too, to say to a poor sufferer, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' since there was no way of testing whether an unseen blessing, such as pardon, had actually been bestowed; but not so easy to say, 'Arise and walk!' since in a moment it could be seen whether the power to walk had been given or not. But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said to them, 'What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?' Then He tells them that He will say the thing which it seems to them so perilous to say, in the hope that, when they have witnessed the fulfilment of His word, they will admit His right to say the other thing to which they object. 'That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,' said He to them, as turning to the paralytic, He added, 'I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house.' And immediately His word took effect. The paralytic rose to his feet, and taking up his mattress, walked away, glorifying God. And the onlookers gave praise to God also, and said to one another, 'We have seen strange things to-day.'

Thus Jesus claimed for Himself the authority to forgive sins. He claimed this as being 'the Son of man,' the representative and the Saviour of all mankind.

Shortly after this, as our Lord was again passing along by the shore of the Lake, He saw a publican, named Levi or Matthew,¹ sitting at the place of toll. He was one of many custom-house officers employed at Capernaum in collecting the taxes levied by authority of the Roman Government on goods landed at the port, or carried along the highway between Damascus and Ptolemais. And like all of his class who, though Jews, were content to earn a livelihood by making oppressive exactions on their fellow-countrymen, he was regarded as destitute alike of religion and patriotism. Yet he had become deeply interested in Jesus, and had become at heart one of His followers. Jesus, knowing this, and wishing to have a representative of this class among those privileged to be closely and constantly with Him, said to him, 'Follow me.' The call must have come very unexpectedly to Matthew; but most joyfully did he accept it.

Soon after his being admitted into the circle of our Lord's followers, Matthew made a great feast in his house in honour of the new Master on whose service he had entered, and invited to the feast all his most intimate friends. These consisted mainly of publicans like himself, and of others occupying a somewhat similar position. He wished to introduce them to the One of whom he had come to think as Israel's Saviour, and whose words had awakened himself from the sleep of spiritual death. But to the Pharisees and scribes, who were watching at Matthew's door,—or who entered the room in which the feast was going on,

¹ It scarcely admits of doubt that the two names Levi and Matthew represent the same person. The occupation of the person called, the circumstances of his call, and the feast following on it, as detailed in the first three Gospels, are identical. Besides, the one called is manifestly designed to take his place in the chosen band of disciples, which Jesus was at the time engaged in forming. And if so, the Levi mentioned by Mark and Luke can only be the Matthew mentioned in the first Gospel, and who always finds a place in the list of apostles.

though disdainful to take part in it,—it seemed scandalous that Jesus should mingle with such people as were assembled there; and, in tones meant to reach His own ear, they said to His disciples, ‘Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?’ Nor had they to wait long for an answer. ‘They that are whole,’ said Jesus, ‘have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’

This explanation of His conduct answered its purpose. It silenced the objectors, and perhaps brought some of them to see that true holiness is not only consistent with love to the sinful, but that it must show itself in seeking to purge them from their sin.

Ere the feast closed, some disciples of the Baptist joined the Pharisees in objecting to the free and joyous life which the followers of Jesus appeared to lead. His disciples, they said, did not fast, as the disciples of the Pharisees and of the Baptist did. And He frankly admitted the difference, and justified it. His disciples, He said, were like the companions of the bridegroom, who could not be of a sad heart while the bridegroom was with them, but who would have grief enough when he should be taken away. It would not befit those who rejoiced in the glad tidings which He proclaimed to adopt the strict and severe mode of life suitable to men living under a dispensation of law. To try to combine the old and new in this way would be like taking a piece of undressed cloth to patch an old garment: the new piece would shrink away and leave the rent worse than before. It would be like putting new wine into an old wine-skin: the wine would ferment and burst the skin and be spilt, and the wine-skin would perish. In like manner, the spirit of the new dispensation could not be accommodated to the old forms, but must find new forms appropriate to itself.

1. *Why did Jesus in some cases forbid, and in others command, those whom He healed to speak of the miracle wrought on them?*
2. *What were the distinguishing tenets and practices of the Pharisees?*

3. *What led Jesus to say to the paralytic who was brought to Him for healing, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee'?*
4. *Give reasons for thinking that the disciple mentioned in Matt. ix. 9 as Matthew, is the same as the one spoken of in Mark ii. 14 and Luke v. 27 as Levi.*
5. *Who were the publicans spoken of in the Gospels? and why were they disliked and despised by their fellow-countrymen?*
6. *How did our Lord meet the objection taken by the disciples of the Baptist to the comparatively free and joyous life of His followers?*

LESSON X.

CHOICE OF THE APOSTLES, AND SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

Read Matt. v. 1-vii. 29 ; Luke vi. 12-49.

OUT of those who avowed themselves His disciples, and who followed Him wherever He went, Jesus resolved to select twelve to be His apostles or missionaries. They were to be always beside Him, that they might drink in His Spirit, and be moulded by His influence, and be enabled not merely to publish His teachings, but to bear witness to the facts of His life. They were to be the links connecting the Redeemer with the world which He came to redeem. The selecting of suitable men for this work was an event fraught with the most important consequences, and hence our Lord sought to prepare Himself for it by special prayer. 'He went out into the mountain to pray, and He continued all night in prayer to God' (Luke vi. 12).

When the morning came, those who had attached themselves to Him as His disciples found their way to this mountain solitude, and gathered around Him ; and out of them He chose His twelve apostles. There were embraced in the number the seven on whom He had already laid the charge, 'Follow me,' viz. Simon Peter and his brother Andrew ; James and John, the sons of Zebedee ; Philip and Nathanael (Bartholomew), and Matthew the publican. The five added to these were Thomas, James the son of Alphæus,¹ and his son (or brother)

¹ This Alphæus is not the same as the father of Matthew (Mark i. 14) ; for Matthew and James are nowhere described as brothers. Though probably

Judas¹ (called also Thaddæus and Lebbaeus), Simon the Cananæan² or Zelotes, and Judas Iscariot.³ It was probably on one or other of the summits of the two-peaked hill, known as the Horns of Hattan, that our Lord spent the night preceding the appointment of the apostles. There is one spot to which tradition has steadily pointed as the scene of that night of prayer, and of the events following on it, and to which has been given the name of the Mount of Blessing. The Horns rise only to a height of 60 feet from the tableland at their base; but the plain stretching around them is itself 1000 feet above the level of the Sea of Galilee. By the narrow gorge leading upwards to this plateau there came on that morning multitudes in search of the Great Teacher. He had just set apart the Twelve to their new office; and, attended by them, He went down to meet the constantly increasing crowds. There He 'stood on a level place, and a great multitude of His disciples, and a great number of the people from all Judæa and Jerusalem, and the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases' (Luke vi. 17). After healing many who pressed near for help, He sat down with the twelve disciples in front of Him, and delivered that discourse which has ever since borne the name of 'The Sermon on the Mount.'

Our Lord had been longing for an opportunity of giving a clear and full explanation regarding that kingdom of God of

the same as the Clopas of John xix. 25, this does not prove that James was the cousin of our Lord; for Mary, the wife of Clopas, is probably a different person from the one spoken of there as 'His mother's sister.'

¹ Called Trionymus, or the disciple with three names. He is to be thought of as the son rather than the brother of James; and, if so, is different from Jude, the writer of the General Epistle, who describes himself as 'the brother of James' (Jude 1).

² The Cananæan (not Canaanite) has the same meaning as Zelotes, and makes out Simon as originally belonging to the faction of the Zealots, who held themselves justified in doing anything in defence of their religion.

³ Iscariot (*i.e.* 'man of Keriath'); Keriath, his birth-place, being probably the place of that name mentioned in Josh. xv. 25 as a town in the territory of Judah.

which He had been making proclamation. It was essential that He should do this, for there was much misapprehension regarding it. Men were gathering around Him in thousands, expecting Him to set up a kingdom like that of David or of Solomon, bringing as its choicest blessings national independence and glory. This expectation had been growing, and was fast approaching its height. Jesus must dispel this delusion, and must announce that the kingdom which He sought to establish was a spiritual kingdom—a kingdom of grace and holiness. He has now around Him an audience gathered from all parts of the land, eager to receive an exposition of the objects at which He aims. With nothing to distract His attention or theirs, He can make a calm, continuous statement of the truth which He desires to impress on them. It is peculiarly befitting also that those whom He has just chosen as His messengers to Israel and the world should learn from Him what the message is which they are expected to deliver. Hence Jesus makes now a fuller declaration than ever before of ‘the gospel of the kingdom.’

First, He describes *the subjects* of His kingdom (Matt. v. 3-12). *Israelitish descent* does not suffice to obtain for any one a place in that kingdom. Rather it is spiritual character that does so. The first four beatitudes describe the spiritual characteristics of those *who seek and obtain an entrance* into Christ’s kingdom. They are men deeply sensible of their spiritual poverty, grieved on account of it, lowly in their dispositions alike toward God and men, and earnestly longing for a righteousness of which they know themselves destitute. The three beatitudes following show *what the children of the kingdom become*. They are merciful, because knowing their need of mercy; they are pure in heart; and they are peacemakers. The concluding beatitude shows that the outward condition of the Messiah’s subjects will often be one naturally undesirable; that they may expect to suffer persecution in company with their Lord. And the blessedness ascribed to Christ’s subjects consists in such things as these—that they shall attain to the righteousness which they seek; that

they shall see God, and shall be acknowledged as the children of God ; and that, though not of those of whom men think as conquerors, 'they shall inherit the earth.'

The way in which the subjects of the kingdom shall extend its limits comes next into view (vv. 13-16). They shall extend it by the quiet exercise of spiritual influence. As salt, by its very contact with what is meant to be used as food, preserves it from corruption, and as light by its shining dissipates the darkness around it, so Christ's disciples are to live a life that shall show them to be children of God, and that shall draw men to their Father.

Jesus then explains the relation in which His kingdom stands to the dispensation of law and promise preceding it. He has not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil (vv. 17-19). Thus the law forbade murder ; He forbids the cherishing of malevolent feeling (vv. 21-26). The law forbade adultery ; He condemns the faintest rising of impure desire (vv. 22-30). The law permitted divorce ; He permits it only where the marriage covenant has been dissolved by the commission of sin (vv. 31, 32). The law forbade the violation of an oath ; He prefers that, instead of an oath, a man's yea should be simply yea, and his nay, nay (vv. 31-37). The law gave play to the principle of retaliation ; He would have His followers practise forgiveness (vv. 38-42). The law said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour,'—a requirement that had been interpreted as sanctioning hatred to one's enemies ; He, to prevent any such misinterpretation, said, 'Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you' (vv. 43-48).

Jesus next shows how different the life of those who find a place in His kingdom must be from that of the men around them. The bulk of the men of Israel were either religious men or worldly men. As to the religious men, their real goodness was far from corresponding with their profession and appearance. In contrast with them, the disciples of Jesus are to be characterized by unpretentious sincerity. 'Take heed,' said He,

'that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them' (vi. 1). When they give alms, it is to be from pure compassion, and with no desire to obtain credit for generosity (vv. 1-4). Prayer is to be offered up when they are alone with God (iii. 5, 6), and in the few and simple words befitting children who know their Father's love (vv. 7-15). Fasting is to be practised for purely spiritual ends, and with no outward signs that would attract attention (vv. 16-18).

But as the followers of Jesus are to eschew a religious life savouring of hypocrisy, so are they to beware of worldliness. They are to avoid the eager pursuit of gain (vv. 19-34). And, on the other hand, they are to banish from their hearts that fretful anxiety as to the future, which constitutes the besetting temptation of the poor (vv. 25-34). Seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, they are to trust their heavenly Father to give them all that they need (vi. 33, 34, vii. 7-11).

Yet the subjects of Christ's kingdom, though differing from their fellow-men, are not to pass censorious judgments on them (vii. 1-5). The rule governing their life is to be, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them' (ver. 12). To enter on this life of holy, self-denying love is not easy. It is like pressing in by a strait gate into a narrow way (vv. 13, 14). But they who pretend that eternal life can be reached by any other path are but 'false prophets,' whose character can easily be ascertained from the life they live (vv. 15-20).

The sermon closes with a solemn warning that mere nominal discipleship, even though it were accompanied by faith in Him as the possessor of supernatural powers, and by the ability to work wonders in His name, could obtain for no one admission into heaven (vv. 21-23). To be satisfied with hearing His words, while not doing them, would be to build a house upon the sand; whereas the one who should be a doer of His words would build his house upon the rock (vv. 24-28).

When the discourse was ended, 'the multitudes were astonished

at His teaching; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes' (vv. 28, 29).

1. *What was the special function of the apostles?*
2. *Why were those set apart to the apostleship twelve in number?*
3. *What is the leading and pervading idea of the Sermon on the Mount?*
4. *What are the chief divisions of the sermon?*
5. *How does the work of Christ stand related to the Law?*
6. *In what respects did our Lord's manner of teaching differ from that of the scribes?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. Origen, Chrysostom, and the Greek expositors generally held the discourse contained in Matt. v.-vii. to be the same as that more briefly reported in Luke vi. 12-49. Augustine and most of the Latin exegetes, on the other hand, regarded these as two different though similar discourses, and distinguished them as the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon in the Plain. Modern commentators are all but unanimous in adopting the former view. The chief reasons for considering the discourse reported by Luke to be the same as that given by Matthew, are the similarity of the beginning and the close, the general agreement in the sequence of the parts, and the fact that the sermon is represented as followed by the same incident (Matt. viii. 5-13; Luke vii. 1-10).

2. Portions of the Sermon on the Mount (*e.g.* Matt. vi. 9-13, 25-34, vii. 7-11) occur in an altogether different historical connection in Luke. But many of these utterances are of such a kind that they may have come from the lips of the Saviour on various occasions. It is a quite admissible supposition, however, that, while the sermon in its substance was delivered by Jesus on the occasion described, Matthew may have incorporated with it teachings on kindred topics gleaned from different periods of our Lord's ministry.

3. Tholuck's *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*, translated in Clark's Theolog. Lib., is the best. See also Stier's *Words of the Lord Jesus*, vol. i. pp. 90-325.

LESSON XI.

INCIDENTS OF OUR LORD'S STAY AT CAPERNAUM.

Read Matt. viii. 5-13, xi. 1-9 ; Luke vii. 1-50.

AFTER delivering the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord returned to Capernaum, attended by the Twelve. No sooner had He arrived than a deputation of the elders waited on Him, to ask a favour for one to whom they felt themselves deeply indebted. A centurion in the Roman garrison at Capernaum, a proselyte to the Jewish faith, who had devoted his means to the building of a synagogue, had asked them to use their influence with Jesus to induce Him to come and heal his servant, who was at the point of death.

Touched by their entreaties, He went along with them, and had nearly reached the house, when certain friends of the centurion met Him with the message, 'Trouble not Thyself; for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof; but say the word, and my servant shall be healed.' And the reason given for cherishing this confident assurance was, that, just as he himself was accustomed to give orders to those under his command, and to obtain prompt submission to them, so Jesus had unseen messengers at His beck, sure to obey whatever charge He might lay on them. Such an avowal of faith had never as yet come from human lips; and Jesus, as He listened to it, was at once gladdened and surprised, and, turning to those who followed Him, said, 'I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.' He showed also that this great

faith was well warranted ; for He spoke the word that was needed to give healing, and the sick man was instantaneously restored.

This Roman centurion was the first Gentile who avowed himself a believer in Jesus ; and his faith was hailed by the Lord as the happy augury of His being accepted by-and-by as the Saviour of the whole world. 'I say unto you,' said He, 'that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. viii. 5-13 ; Luke vii. 1-10).

'It came to pass soon afterwards,' Luke tells us, 'that He went to a city called Nain.' The town of Nain was fully twenty miles from Capernaum, and lay on the south-western slope of the Little Hermon, a short way above the plain of Esdraelon. The hills amid which it nestled brought it many a shower, and sent down on the fields surrounding it many a refreshing rill, to give fruitfulness to olive grove, and corn-field, and meadow. Hence the name of Nain, or 'The Pleasant,' given to the village, a name that, with only the slightest variation, clings to the modern village occupying the same site. Jesus, accompanied by His disciples and a considerable crowd of followers, was drawing near to the town, when there issued from its gate a funeral procession. The funeral was that of a young man, 'the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.' Jesus and those accompanying Him opened up a way through which the mournful procession might pass. But when the bier, with the weeping mother close behind, had come opposite Him, touched with tenderest pity, He stepped forward and said to her, 'Weep not.' And while those carrying the bier, astonished at the interruption, halted for a moment, looking at the dead youth, He said to him, 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.' At once he that had been dead sat up and began to speak ; and with joy Jesus restored him to his mother.

Many a miracle of healing had Jesus ere this wrought on the living ; but now for the first time He raised the dead. And He

did so, not as Elijah and Elisha had done, after an agony of prayer and effort, but by a word. In doing so He showed Himself mightier than death, the Lord both of the dead and of the living. It was little to be wondered at that, as men looked on such a deed, 'there came a fear on all.' They glorified God also, saying, 'A great prophet is risen among us, and God hath visited His people' (Luke vii. 11-17).

The fame of the mighty works of Jesus, and specially of this last, the most startling of them all, spread far beyond the limits of Galilee, and reached even the Baptist in his prison cell, in the fortress of Machacrus, near the shores of the Dead Sea. John was still permitted to see his disciples; and, calling two of them, he sent them to Jesus, to put to Him the question, 'Art thou He that cometh? or look we for another?'

Nothing had occurred, and nothing could occur, capable of disturbing John's firm conviction of the Messiahship of Jesus. But he had his own views as to the form which the Messiah's work should take. He thought that Jesus would at the outset announce His Messianic dignity, and summon all true servants of God to gather around Him, that an open separation would take place between those who owned and those who disowned His authority, and that there would ensue a struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, from which God's King and kingdom would come forth crowned with victory. But a year had passed by, and Jesus had as yet made no public proclamation of His Messiahship. The truth that 'the kingdom of God cometh not with observation,' was a truth unknown to John. The great work that was quietly advancing in the souls of men was imperceptible to him. It seemed as if he were to depart from earth, without seeing Jesus acknowledged as the King that should come in the name of the Lord. And, disappointed at the way in which Jesus was conducting His work, it occurred to him to make an attempt to stimulate Him to prompt and more decided action. And, just as a minister of state might say to a sovereign who appeared slow to put forth his power to

reduce his refractory subjects to submission, 'Are you really the sovereign of this realm, or are you not?' John, approaching Jesus through these messengers, with deep humility and unfaltering faith, yet with affectionate urgency, said to Him, 'Art Thou the coming One? or do we look for another?'

In answer to the question, Jesus did many works of healing in presence of the messengers, and said to them, 'Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them.' Such works as these were works befitting the Messiah, the very works ascribed to Him in prophecy (Isa. xxix. 18, 19, lxi. 1). In removing the miseries of men and abolishing the sad consequences of sin, Jesus showed Himself to be the Christ. And He did so more effectually still in proclaiming to the poor in spirit, and the poor in outward estate, the glad tidings of salvation from sin and from all its attendant woes. To this answer Jesus added the wholesome admonition, 'Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me.' John had been disappointed, and almost offended, with the unobtrusive style of the Saviour's working. He had expected greater rapidity, authority, and majesty to characterize the Redeemer's work. But he must dismiss all such thoughts, and must be content that the One whom he believed to be the Christ should carry out in His own way the work that had been given Him to do.

After the messengers of John had departed, the Saviour, to prevent any misunderstanding of the errand on which they had come, asked of the crowds around Him, 'What went ye out into the wilderness to behold?' They had not taken that journey, surely, to look on 'a reed shaken with the wind.' Nor had they gone there to see some man 'gorgeously apparelled and living delicately;' for such were to be found, not in the wilderness, but in the palaces of kings. What they had gone to see was a prophet. And a prophet they did see, and 'more than a

prophet ;' for John was the one of whom it was written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee' (Mal. iii. 1). John was far from being a reed which the breath of popular or royal favour might sway hither and thither, or which the blast of popular or of royal wrath might toss to and fro. He was a true prophet, who fearlessly spoke the truth whether to people or to kings. He was even more than a prophet, for he was privileged to go immediately before the Saviour, and to point to Him and say, 'This is He.' Yet, while bearing this testimony to John, Jesus thinks it meet to add, 'Notwithstanding, he that is but little in the kingdom of God is greater than he.' For those enjoying the advantages of the new dispensation see and hear what was hid from prophets in bygone days, and even from the Baptist himself.

But Jesus, as He speaks about John, is reminded that the reputedly righteous and learned in Israel, the Pharisees and lawyers, rejected him, as they seemed disposed to reject Himself. What reason could there be given for their rejecting two, so unlike to each other? 'John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine,' denying himself the pleasures of the social board, and practising the strictest abstinence. 'The Son of man,' on the other hand, 'is come, eating and drinking,' entering freely into the innocent enjoyments of human life. Yet the leaders of the people would be contented with neither. They disliked John, because he declared them mere externalists, and they took revenge on him by pointing to his attenuated body and wilderness roamings as showing that he was possessed of a demon. They disliked Jesus, both on account of the perfect purity of His life and the joyous freedom of it; and they called Him 'a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.' John was too strict for them, and Jesus too lax. They were like children playing in the market-place, of whom their companions had cause to complain,—'We have piped unto you, and ye did not dance; we wailed, and ye did not weep.' Yet Wisdom, whether appearing in the form of John or of Jesus, would

be justified in her actings by those who were truly her children (Matt. xi. 2-19; Luke vii. 18-35).

Some time after this our Lord was invited to dinner by a Pharisee named Simon, and gladly accepted the invitation. During the entertainment a fallen and sinful woman,¹ entering the chamber, came behind His couch with an alabaster cruse of ointment in her hand. She had been brought to genuine repentance by His words, and had obtained the forgiveness of her sin, and was desirous of showing her gratitude to her Saviour. As she stood behind Him weeping, her tears fell upon His feet, and with her hair she wiped them away, and then kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment. To Simon, however, as he looked on, it seemed strange that Jesus should allow such a woman to touch Him,—so strange that it seemed doubtful whether He could have the holiness or the knowledge which a prophet must possess.

But our Lord addressed to His host this parable: 'A certain creditor had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty; and when they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both.' 'Which of them, therefore,' said Jesus, 'will love him most?' 'He, I suppose, to whom he forgave most,' was the answer. And now came the application of the parable. Simon is reminded that, though he had invited Jesus to his house, he had provided no water for His feet, had given Him no kiss, had poured no fragrant oil upon His head. What explanation could be given of the difference between his treatment of Him and that of this woman? It was, that she had been forgiven much, and therefore loved much; whereas Simon's little love showed that, if he thought of himself as owing anything at

¹ This forgiven penitent has been familiarly spoken of as 'The Magdalene,' but without good reason. For though Luke goes on to speak of 'Mary that was called Magdalene' as from this point following our Lord, and ministering to Him of her substance, he makes the same statement regarding 'Susanna and many others' (Luke viii. 2, 3). The casting forth of seven devils from Mary Magdalene is far from showing her to be the same as 'the woman that was a sinner.'

all to Jesus, it was but little. Then, turning to the woman, He said, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee;' and, regardless of the frowns with which this statement was listened to, He added, 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace' (Luke vii. 36-50).

1. *What evidences of singularly strong faith appear in this centurion?*
2. *Mention any others in whom the Saviour saw illustrious examples of faith.*
3. *How can the Baptist's question (Luke vii. 18) be reconciled with an unfaltering faith in the Messiahship of Jesus?*
4. *How can such works as Jesus pointed to be regarded as proving Him to be the Christ?*
5. *Explain the statement, 'Wisdom is justified of all her children,' and show the application of it to the case in point.*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. The fact that 'the poor have good tidings preached to them' is referred to by Jesus as even more wonderful than the raising of the dead. It is a miracle in the spiritual sphere, and, as such, is a work pre-eminently Christlike.

2. The question, 'What went ye out into the wilderness to see?' has furnished Keble with the keynote of his fine hymn—

'What went ye out to see
O'er the rude sandy lea?'

3. The illustration employed by Jesus (Luke vii. 32) is like a sunbeam shedding its light over His character and life. It shows us that He was one who interested Himself in the amusements of children. He had looked at them in the market-place, playing now at a marriage and now at a funeral, and had taken note of their misunderstandings and mutual recriminations. And in the ways of childhood He had seen the same principles at work that govern the most serious actings of men.

LESSON XII.

SECOND MISSIONARY TOUR THROUGH GALILEE.

Read Matt. xii., xiii. ; Mark iii. 21-iv. 41 ; Luke viii. 1-25.

AFTER this our Lord made a somewhat extensive tour through the cities and villages of Galilee, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. In this tour He was accompanied by His twelve disciples, and also by certain women whom He had healed of evil spirits and infirmities. Foremost among them, like Peter among the apostles, comes Mary the Magdalene (*i.e.* native of Magdala), who had been so completely under the dominion of the wicked one that Jesus is said to have cast forth from her seven devils. Along with her there went Joanna, the wife of Chuza, steward to Herod Antipas ; and Susanna, of whom we know nothing but the name ; and many others, who had been indebted to Jesus for spiritual benefits. They followed Him, that they might listen to His teachings, and also that they might minister to Him out of their substance. And most cheerfully did the Saviour accept the service which was so lovingly tendered.

But there were others who followed Jesus on this tour with a less kindly purpose. The Pharisees, who had come from Jerusalem for the purpose of watching Him and neutralizing His influence, kept close to Him wherever He went. It was their special object to be able to accuse Him of offending against the Law ; and an opportunity of doing so soon presented itself. His disciples, while passing through the corn-fields one Sabbath-day,

were seen plucking the ears of corn and eating them. And being asked to condemn their conduct, He justified it, by reminding their accusers that David, under the pressure of necessity, partook of the shewbread, and did so with the full approbation of Him who prefers mercy to sacrifice. He claimed also for Himself the right to decide how His disciples should observe the Sabbath, since 'the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day' (Matt. xii. 8). And, on entering the synagogue immediately afterwards, He gave healing to a man who had a withered hand, saying as He did so, 'It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days.'

So galled were the opponents of Jesus by the defeats sustained in their encounters with Him, that they took counsel how they might destroy Him, and were only prevented from carrying their designs into effect by His departing elsewhere. But in the place to which He next betook Himself such an impression was made by His miracles, and specially by His restoring a demoniac to his right mind and to the use of his speech and eye-sight, that the onlookers asked, 'Is not this the son of David?' And now the Pharisees, who were again upon His track, and who up to this time had tried to dissemble their hatred of Him, fairly threw off the mask, and suggested that He was able to cast out devils because of a compact into which He had entered with Beelzebub the prince of the devils. But, in answer to this malicious insinuation, Jesus pointed to the palpable fact that His works were utterly unlike those wrought by Satan,—that, while Satan aimed at injuring and destroying men, it was His aim to benefit them and to release them from the destroyer's grasp. 'Every kingdom divided against itself,' said He, 'is brought to desolation; and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how shall then his kingdom stand?' But if, on the other hand, it was with the finger of God that He had cast out devils, this showed that the kingdom of God had come. And to this argument Jesus added a word of solemn warning. For He knew that those who had suggested that His works were wrought through collusion on His part with Beelzebub had no belief in this, but had the inward

conviction that He was One come from God, and that God was with Him. In resisting this conviction, therefore, they were committing a great sin,—a sin which, if obdurately persisted in, would place them beyond the reach of pardon. And, in His intense anxiety to keep them back from this sin, He lifted up the solemn testimony : ‘Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven ’ (Matt. xii. 32).

At this point some of those to whom our Lord was addressing this earnest warning intimated that they were willing to recognize Him as being all that He claimed to be, provided that satisfactory evidence of it were given them. ‘Master,’ said they, ‘we would see a sign from Thee.’ The kind of sign which they craved was (as in Matt. xvi. 1) ‘a sign from heaven.’ But such a sign Jesus refused to give, telling those who sought it that a sign of a different kind would by-and-by be given them, the sign of the prophet Jonah. ‘As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale,’ said He, ‘so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’ Something like a resurrection from the dead was the sign of Jonah’s mission given to the men of Nineveh : a veritable resurrection would be the sign of His mission given to the men of Israel.

This collision between our Lord and ‘the scribes which came down from Jerusalem,’ took place toward the close of His missionary tour, when He had reached some town or village in the neighbourhood of Capernaum. He was at the time seated in a house, in the midst of His disciples, with a crowd of others around Him reaching to the door. The door itself was besieged by many who were trying in vain to get admittance. While He was thus employed, a message was brought to Him that His mother and brothers were outside, desiring to see Him. They had come, because they had heard of the multitudes crowding around Him in such a way that He was not able ‘so much as to eat bread,’ and also because they had learned of the opposition excited against Him, and of the dangers by which He was threatened.

In their anxiety for His safety, they had come to lay hold on Him ; for they said, 'He is beside Himself' (Mark iii. 21). Jesus knew well of the solicitude entertained on His behalf by His mother and brethren. But, instead of going out to see them, He asked, 'Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?' and He answered the question by stretching forth His hand toward His disciples and saying, 'Behold my mother and my brethren ; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother' (Matt. xii. 48-50). In saying so, Jesus intimated that the natural relationship subsisting between Him and even Mary must now be regarded by Him as a subordinate thing, and that the spiritual relationship subsisting between Him and every doer of the will of God must seem to Him the thing all-important. He must now live, not for kinsfolk, however near to Him, but for those who believe in Him—for His Church.

At this time our Lord began to make use of parables in His public teaching. The parable is an earthly story designed to set forth a heavenly truth. It describes an imaginary incident in such a way as to rivet the attention of the hearers, and to lead any one who bends earnest thought on it to see reflected in it as in a mirror some truth bearing on man's highest interests. Our Lord resorted to the parabolic style of teaching, because of its being pleasing to the many and profitable to the few.

It was on the same day in which His mother and brethren sought to persuade Him to abandon His work as a teacher, that He spoke His first parables. Entering a boat, that He might the more easily address the multitudes that had been crowding around Him on the beach, and taking His seat in it, He gave forth the parable of the sower. A sower went forth to sow ; and as he scattered the seed broadcast over the field, some of it fell on the hard-trodden footpath, and was at once seized and devoured by the birds ; some fell on stony ground, where the rock lay near to the surface, covered only by a thin layer of soil, and, though it sprang up quickly, soon withered away ; some fell on ground where thorn-roots lay hidden, but with all their vitality in them,

and, since its nourishment was drained away from it by plants stronger than itself, came to nothing ; while the rest, falling into good ground, brought forth fruit more or less abundantly. The seed (as Jesus afterwards explained in private to His disciples) was the word of the kingdom ; He Himself was the sower ; and the varieties of soil represented the differences of character in those to whom the word was preached. The lesson which He sought to teach by the parable was, 'Take heed how ye hear' (Matt. xiii. 1-23 ; Luke viii. 4-18).

Next came the parable of the wheat and the tares. 'The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field ; but while men slept, his enemy came, and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went his way.' The particular kind of tare sown, the darnel or bastard-wheat, is in the earlier stages of its growth so like the wheat, as to be undistinguishable from it. At last, however, the servants discover the base fraud that has been practised on their master, and in their zeal would proceed at once to root out the hateful weeds. But he restrains them from doing so, lest in uprooting the tares they should uproot the wheat also, and recommends that both be permitted to grow together until the harvest, when the separation between them can be safely made. In the same way (as Jesus afterwards explained) may it be expected that, in the kingdom of God in its earthly form, there shall be found alongside of the children of God some who are really the children of the wicked one ; and this state of things, however grievous it may be, must continue till the judgment-day (Matt. xiii. 24-30, 36-43).

The kingdom of God is next likened to seed which, after being committed to the soil, is left to itself, and grows in secrecy, and advances through successive stages of growth, putting forth first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, till at last it is ripe for the sickle (Mark iv. 26-29). Then follow two parables designed to contrast the insignificant beginnings of the kingdom of God with the dimensions to which it shall ultimately attain. It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man sowed in

his field, and which grew till it became a tree capable of sheltering the birds of the air in its branches. For by the forthputting of its own powers it shall grow till it has filled the whole world. And it is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. For it shall penetrate with its transforming influence all the alien elements around it, till it has assimilated them to itself (Matt. xiii. 31-33; Luke xiii. 18-21).

Other two parables follow, to show how precious the kingdom of heaven is in the eyes of those who get sight of its real excellence. It is like treasure hid in a field, which the finder carefully covers up, and then, going away, sells all that he has that he may purchase that field. It is like one pearl of great price, which a merchant, in search of goodly pearls, eagerly possesses himself of, though he has to part with everything else to acquire it. The treasure-finder in the one parable represents those who, without seeking the blessings of redemption, are led to them, and, perceiving their unspeakable preciousness, are smitten with the desire of them. The merchant in the other parable is the representative of those who are earnestly seeking the highest and the best that the human soul is capable of aspiring towards, and who at last find what they seek in the Redeemer. But both classes are at one in making every sacrifice required of them, that they may win Christ (Matt. xiii. 44-46).

The concluding parable of the series bears a close resemblance to the second. 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away.' The Church of Christ on earth, like the net thrown into the sea, may be expected to draw into itself both good and bad. And as it is only when the net is drawn to land that its contents are examined, and that what is worthless is thrown away, so it is only at the end of the world that the wicked shall be severed from among the righteous. But the separation then made shall be effectual and final. The

wicked shall be cast 'into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matt. xiii. 47-50).

On the day signalized by these manifold labours, 'when even was come,' Jesus proposed to His disciples to cross to the eastern side of the Lake. And that no time might be lost, they took Him with them 'even as He was' in the boat. Wearied out with the work from which He had with difficulty made His escape, He lay down in the stern on the boatmen's cushion, and was soon fast asleep. But a sudden rush of the wind down the mountain gorges struck the surface of the Lake with such violence that the waves dashed into the boat, and seemed on the point of sinking it. And Jesus, whose deep sleep the tempest had been powerless to disturb, was awakened by the loud cry, 'Master, Master, we perish.' 'Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?' said He to His panic-stricken disciples, and then, looking out on the tempest, He said with a voice of authority, 'Peace, be still.' And instantaneously on His uttering the word the storm died away, and there was a great calm. The disciples, who, notwithstanding of their fear, had believed in Jesus as able to help them in this extremity, had their faith greatly strengthened by this manifestation of His power. And the boatmen, who knew comparatively little of Him, in their amazement exclaimed, 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?' It was the first occasion on which Jesus had exercised such a mastery over the mightiest powers of nature, and well might those who beheld it marvel (Matt. viii. 23-27; Mark iv. 35-41).

1. *When did the Pharisees begin to entertain designs against the life of Jesus?*
2. *What important admission was made by those who suggested that Jesus cast out devils through Beelzebub?*
3. *How did our Lord demonstrate the absurdity of this suggestion?*
4. *What is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? and why is it represented as the one unpardonable sin?*
5. *Why did Jesus refuse the conference solicited by His mother and brothers?*
6. *What is a parable?*

7. *What is the chief lesson taught by the parable of the sower?*
8. *Which of the parables first spoken by our Lord show that the Church on earth may be expected to contain both genuine and merely seeming disciples?*
9. *What lessons do the parables of the mustard-seed and of the leaven respectively teach?*

LESSON XIII.

VISIT TO GERGESA, AND RETURN.

The Gadarene Demoniac.

Read Matt. viii. 28-34; Mark v. 1-20; Luke viii. 26-39.

IT was in the country of the Gadarenes or Gerasenes¹ that our Lord and His disciples landed. Scarcely had they reached the shore when they were approached by two demoniacs, who were the terror of that neighbourhood. They dwelt in the caves used by the inhabitants of the adjoining town as burying-places for the dead. One of them was particularly dreaded for his violence and seemingly superhuman strength. And accordingly, while Matthew mentions the two, it is with the case of this one that Mark and Luke specially concern themselves. He roamed about among the mountains in a state of nudity, resting neither by night nor by day, uttering cries of anguish, and in his frenzy inflicting on himself many an injury. All attempts to master him, however

¹ According to the readings favoured by the editors of the Revised Version, Matthew mentions 'the country of the Gadarenes' (viii. 28); Mark (v. 1) and Luke (viii. 26, 37), 'the country of the Gerasenes.' It is noted, however, in the margin, that the word used by Luke may have been 'Gergesenes.' From the earliest times (as we learn from Origen) Gerasa, Gadara, and Gergesa have been named in connection with this miracle. But Gerasa (Jerash), the easternmost town in Peræa, is too distant from the Sea of Galilee to be thought of as 'the city,' in the neighbourhood of which the miracle took place. Gadara, though considerably nearer, is also too remote from the scene of the occurrence, and is separated from it by the deep river Hieromax (Yarmuk). Gergesa, which Origen prefers, is situated right opposite the point from which Jesus set out, and in every respect corresponds with the description of the spot given by the evangelists. Tristram says of

successful they might for a time appear to be, had ended in failure. Though repeatedly seized and bound hand and foot, he had plucked asunder the chains, and broken the fetters in pieces. And no hope of his ever being restored to his right mind was entertained either by others or by himself.

It could not be without apprehension that the disciples saw this ungovernable maniac running with his utmost speed and with loud cries to meet them. It was well for them that they had just seen their Lord quelling the fierce tumult of the elements, and that this inspired them with the assurance that there was no power which He was not able to subdue. And as calmly as He had said to the tempest, 'Peace, be still,' did He now say, 'Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.' Nor was the result of the command different; for in a moment the demoniac was seen grovelling at the feet of Jesus, while in piteous tones he pled with Him: 'What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not.' The man had doubtless heard of Jesus, with whose fame the whole country was ringing; so that immediately on seeing Him, attended by His disciples, he knew who He was. And he felt at once attracted to Him by the hope of obtaining relief from his misery, and repelled from Him by the consciousness that this could only be effected at the cost of a terrible struggle. 'What is thy name?' said Jesus to the poor distracted being crouching at His feet, as if to stir him up to

it, 'At the mouth of the Wady Semakh, directly opposite Gennesaret, are ruins, called Kerza or Gerza. I visited the spot myself from a boat, and observed the remains of a village and a khan. There is here no precipice running sheer to the sea, but a narrow belt of beach, while the bluff behind is so steep, and the shore so narrow, that a herd of swine, rushing frantically down, must certainly have been overwhelmed in the sea before they could have recovered themselves. While the tombs at Gadara are peculiarly interesting and remarkable, yet the whole region is perforated everywhere by these rock-chambers of the dead' (*Land of Israel*, p. 452). At the same time, while Gergesa must have been the city alluded to, the country in which it was included may have been named after the more important city Gadara, or after the still more important though distant Gerasa.

an exercise of self-recollection. But the question only drew forth the answer expressive of utter despondency,—‘My name is Legion, for we are many.’ It seemed to him that as many demons as the Roman legion contained of soldiers had taken possession of him, and held him under their remorseless sway. And the unclean spirits themselves that had found a home in his heart, and had brought his whole being under their dominion, making use of the voice of their hapless victim, pled through him that they might not be sent back to the abyss from which they had come (‘the deep,’ Luke viii. 31), but might be permitted to take possession of a herd of swine feeding at a distance. The permission was for wise reasons given; and the whole herd, consisting of about two thousand, seized with a resistless frenzy, rushed down the steep into the sea, and perished in the waters.

The owners of the swine, if Jews, merited the loss inflicted on them, as a punishment for their flagrant violation of the Divine law in rearing and making a gain out of unclean animals. And, whoever might be the parties called on to sustain the loss, they might well rejoice that, even at such a sacrifice, a fellow-man had been set free from Satan’s grasp. But the only feeling awakened by this singular manifestation of the Saviour’s power seems to have been alarm. The inhabitants of the adjoining city, and of the surrounding country, when they had flocked out to see what had happened, with one voice besought Jesus to depart from their coasts. And He complied with their request, giving to the one on whom He had conferred such a boon, and who would fain have followed Him, the parting charge, to go home and tell his friends what great things God had done for him,—a command which he willingly obeyed, publishing throughout Decapolis the story of his wonderful cure. Re-entering the boat, Jesus and His disciples once more crossed the Lake, and were soon in Capernaum, ‘His own city.’

*The Raising of Jairus' Daughter, and the Stanching of the
Bloody Issue.*

Read Matt. ix. 18-26 ; Mark v. 21-43 ; Luke viii. 40-56.

Our Lord, on His arrival at Capernaum, met with a cordial reception from a great multitude who had been eagerly awaiting Him. But scarcely had He time to receive and return their greetings, when there came forward and fell down at His feet one for whom all made way, Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, who entreated Him to come to his house and heal his little daughter of twelve years of age, who lay a-dying. At once complying with his request, Jesus accompanied him, followed by a crowd which at every step grew denser, and pressed more closely on Him.

Mingling with the multitude, there was one who more than all the others felt anxiety to be near Him. This was a poor sufferer, who for twelve years had been afflicted with an issue of blood, and, after spending all her means on physicians, knew that she had only succeeded in adding the sorrows of poverty to her bodily distress. She had heard of the wondrous cures wrought by Jesus, and had been led to think that in Him lay her only hope. But, since any one would have regarded contact with her as communicating ceremonial defilement, it seemed to her that she must conceal her case from all, and must get unobserved into the presence of Jesus. She thought of Him also as One who was full to overflowing of supernatural powers, which were constantly outstreaming from Him, so that, if she could but touch the hem of His garment, she was certain to be cured. Hence, having with difficulty pressed through the crowd into His presence, she came behind Him, and, timidly reaching forth her finger, touched Him. And the touch brought instantaneous healing ; for 'straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up,' and she knew that she was cured. She thought that she

had obtained the blessing without the knowledge of Jesus ; but it was not so. And she must be taught that His knowledge equalled His power, and that it was to the inward contact of her faith and His love, rather than to the outward contact of her finger and His clothing, that she owed her cure.

Accordingly, no sooner had the miracle been wrought than Jesus, turning about, asked, 'Who touched my garments?' And, heedless of Peter's remonstrance, 'Master, the multitudes press Thee and crush Thee,' He went on to say, 'Some one did touch me, for I perceived that power had gone forth from me.' When the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and, falling down before Him, declared in the presence of all the people for what cause she touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. But Jesus hastened to dispel her fears, saying to her, 'Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole ; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.'

This incident delayed somewhat the progress of Jesus toward the house of Jairus, and must have been very trying to the father, who felt that every moment lost imperilled the life of his child. Yet the interruption taught him a precious lesson ; for it showed him that Jesus could give healing in other ways than by laying His hands on the sick, and that the one who reposed a simple faith in Him might count on an illustrious manifestation of His power. So, when there came the message, 'Thy daughter is dead ; why troublest thou the Master any further?' his heart did not sink within him, especially as he listened to the word of encouragement addressed to him, 'Fear not ; only believe, and she shall be made whole.'

On reaching the house of Jairus, Jesus found it resounding with lamentations, the wailing of the relatives being well-nigh drowned in the tumult made by the flute-players and other professional mourners. 'Why make ye a tumult and weep?' said He ; 'the child is not dead, but sleepeth.' And, regardless of their derisive laughter, He put them all forth, and, accompanied only by the parents, and by Peter and James and John, He

entered the chamber of death, and, taking the maiden by the hand, said to her, 'Talitha, cumi' (*i.e.* 'My lamb, arise'). And immediately she arose, like one awaking from sleep, and partook of food brought to her by His orders. The onlookers were 'amazed with a great amazement.' And Jairus saw his faith in Jesus more than justified, and knew Him as the One able, not only to heal the sick, but to raise the dead.

1. *Explain the difference in locality between Gadara, Gerasa, and Gergesa.*
2. *How do you reconcile Matthew's statement, that two demoniacs were cured at Gergesa, with the account of Mark and Luke, which speaks only of one?*
3. *In what respects were the views entertained regarding Jesus by the woman who touched His garment erroneous?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. According to Mark (iv. 35), the voyage to Gergesa took place on the same day on which Jesus began to speak to the people in parables. Luke represents it (viii. 22) as taking place 'on one of these days.' Matthew (xiii. 1-52) assigns to the teaching in parables a much later position in the history. It would seem that here Mark and Luke adhere with greater strictness to chronological order.

2. In the case of Jairus, we see that delay on God's part in granting a blessing may lead to the bestowal of a blessing greater still.

LESSON XIV.

MISSION OF THE TWELVE.

Read Matt. x. 1-xi. 1 ; Mark vi. 7-13 ; Luke ix. 1-6.

THE time had now come when Jesus could make some use of the Twelve whom He had set apart as apostles. Hitherto they had been with Him exclusively as learners, but as those who were learning that they might be able to teach. They had been privileged beyond the generality of disciples, that they might be fitted for apostleship. They had not only had the opportunity of seeing all their Master's mighty works, and of listening to all His public addresses, but, when alone with Him, they had heard much which others were not able to receive, and had obtained elucidation of whatever in His discourses they had themselves been unable to understand. All that they saw in Him it was designed that they should bear witness to ; all the knowledge of Him which they acquired it was meant that they should communicate. And already they knew much which it was well that they should tell to those whom Jesus could not personally reach. Accordingly, calling them to Him, He told them of the compassion with which He regarded the multitudes, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep having no shepherd ; and, having awakened in their hearts a tender pity like His own, He sent them forth to try to gather in 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. x. 6).

The Twelve were charged to confine their labours at present to Israel, and not to enter either Samaritan or Gentile territory.

And the burden of their message was to be, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' But they were to do more than preach; they were to work miracles of healing. Jesus 'gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.' He gave them these powers to show that they were divinely authorized to make the proclamation with which they went forth, and to secure favour for themselves and their message. They were bidden make no provision for the journey, but cast themselves entirely on the care of God. And they were sent two by two, that they might have the benefit of brotherly counsel and helpfulness.

This mission on which the Twelve were sent, while it was meant to be a source of blessing to every town and village in which they appeared, had its place also in the course of training by which they were to be fitted for still higher work marked out for them. It formed part of the apprenticeship through which they must pass, ere they could be thoroughly qualified and efficient workmen. It was a Trial Mission, in which they were put under probation, and from which they were to return to the Saviour's side, to acquaint Him with their success or failure, with the difficulties and the encouragements they had met with,—to receive His criticism and His counsel,—and so to be led on to fitness for the more arduous work awaiting them when He should be no longer with them.

This evangelistic mission on which the apostles went forth does not seem to have carried them beyond the precincts of Galilee. It must have extended over a good many weeks. And in the meantime our Lord Himself was not inactive. 'When Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to teach and preach in their cities' (Matt. xi. 1). He and they would seem to have returned to Capernaum at about the same time, in accordance, no doubt, with previous arrangement. 'The apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus; and they told Him all things, whatsoever they had done and whatsoever they had taught' (Mark vi. 30). Probably also they

did not come alone from their various fields of labour, but brought in their train many who had been impressed by their words and their works. Deeply interested in the reports brought Him by the Twelve, Jesus longed for an opportunity of confidential intercourse with them. And in order to obtain it, He said to them, 'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile,'—a proposal which they joyfully accepted.

Death of the Baptist.

Read Matt. xiv. 6-11; Mark vi. 21-29.

Another event, which had happened shortly before this, led Jesus to desire a brief season of retirement for Himself and His disciples. John the Baptist had been put to death by orders of Herod Antipas. This had taken place at the instigation of his wife Herodias, who could never forgive the preacher of righteousness for branding her connection with the tetrarch as adulterous. It was through the instrumentality of her daughter Salome that she succeeded in securing her long-sought revenge. At a great feast, given on occasion of his birthday by Herod to the magnates of Galilee and the chief officers of his army, that beautiful young princess had been prevailed on to appear before the guests in the character of a ballet-girl, and had executed a *pas seul* with such grace and animation as to win universal applause, and to lead the king, in the enthusiasm of the moment, to promise her whatever she pleased to ask, even up to the half of his kingdom. And the rash promise was confirmed with an oath. After a brief consultation with her mother, she returned to say that the thing which would most please her would be that John the Baptist should immediately be beheaded, and that his head should be presented to her on one of the dishes which lay on the royal table. And, though most reluctantly, yet from a mistaken notion that his oath made it necessary for him to do what he knew to be a foul wrong, Herod gave orders that the revolting demand should

be complied with. An executioner, sent to the dungeon, made short work of the business entrusted to him; and the bleeding head of the Baptist, laid on a charger, was there and then presented to the daughter of Herodias as the gift which she and her mother most prized. The headless body of the murdered servant of God was committed to the tomb by his sorrowing disciples, who, forthwith setting out for Capernaum, told Jesus of all that had happened.

The news could not but deeply affect Him. He could not but mourn over the fall of a witness for the truth so noble and unflinching. He could not but feel, also, that the fate of the Baptist foreshadowed His own. The removal of the forerunner, moreover, marked a point of advance in the fulfilment of the divine purposes,—the close of one period in the history of redemption, and the opening of another, the most eventful of all. Hence when the apostles returned to their Lord, to tell Him of the incidents of their trial mission, they found Him in a sombre and meditative mood. And coming under the influence of the feelings that so powerfully moved Him, and of which He could not but speak, they hailed with joy the suggestion to go apart with Him into a desert place and rest awhile.

1. *What were the objects designed to be gained by the first mission on which the Twelve were sent?*
2. *What led Jesus, after the return of the Twelve, to take them apart into a desert place?*
3. *What were the circumstances which led to the death of the Baptist?*
4. *When should an oath be regarded as not binding?*

LESSON XV.

FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND, AND EVENTS FOLLOWING ON IT.

Read Matt. xiv. 13-21; Mark vi. 32-44; Luke ix. 10-17; John vi. 1-13.

THE desert place to which Jesus and His disciples retired was on the other side of the Lake, in the neighbourhood of Bethsaida Julias,¹ a town situated in the tetrarchy of Iturea, and within the dominions of Philip, the half-brother of Herod Antipas. Having reached this solitude, 'Jesus went up into the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples' (John vi. 3). But little time, however, was permitted them for private conference. For the people whom they had left on the western shore, and who had witnessed their departure, ran afoot round the north end of the Lake, and, crossing by the ford of Upper Jordan, soon reached the place to which Jesus and His disciples had withdrawn. They were joined on their way also by numbers who were just leaving their homes for Jerusalem, to keep the approaching Passover.

¹ Luke states that our Lord and His disciples went 'to a city called Bethsaida' (ix. 10). Mark mentions that, after the miracle, Jesus sent His disciples away 'unto the other side, to Bethsaida' (vi. 45). That there was a Bethsaida, near the shore of the Sea of Galilee, on the eastern side, Josephus expressly states, and that it was rebuilt by Philip and given the name of Julia, in honour of Julia, the daughter of Augustus (*Ant.* xviii. 2. 1). Its ruins are to be found at Et Tell, on the east side of the Upper Jordan, and two miles from its mouth. The other Bethsaida, on the western side of the Lake, and in the land of Gennesaret (Mark vi. 53), is probably to be identified with Ain Tabighah, a little to the south of Capernaum or Tell-Hûm (*Robinson*, iii. 359).

So that, when Jesus lifted up His eyes, He saw a great company coming to Him. As was afterwards ascertained, five thousand men in all gathered around Him in that lonely place. And, though He had desired retirement, He welcomed them, and spoke to them on His favourite theme, the kingdom of God. Those of them who had need of healing also He healed.

While the multitudes were as yet gathering, Jesus had put to Philip the question, 'Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' and had obtained from him the answer, that more than two hundred pennyworth of bread (£7 of our money) would be required to provide for them a meal. As the day advanced, Philip would seem to have spoken of the same matter to his fellow-disciples, and to have awakened their anxieties; for some of their number came to Jesus, to press on Him the necessity of sending the people away to their homes. But, to their surprise, He said to them, 'Give ye them to eat.' They asked whether they should buy the quantity of bread mentioned by Philip, hinting that the sum necessary for the purpose was not in their possession. On His inquiring what supplies they had with them, they made answer, 'Five loaves and two fishes,' and were told to bring them to Him. Then, after the multitude had sat down on the grass in groups, by hundreds and by fifties, He looked up to heaven and asked a blessing on the food to be partaken of, and, breaking first the bread and then the fishes, gave them to His disciples to distribute to the multitude. Reposing a simple faith in their Lord, the Twelve engaged in the work appointed them; and their unquestioning obedience met with its reward. 'They did all eat, and were filled.' And there was not only enough, but to spare; so that when the disciples, by the directions of Jesus, gathered up the fragments that remained, there were found twelve baskets full.

This miracle was manifestly due to a divine power proceeding from the person of Jesus, and continuing to operate till the exertion of it was no longer required. It has a different character from any work previously wrought by Jesus. In His other

miracles He appears as controlling the powers of nature, either in the way of rectifying something which had become disordered, or of restoring something which had been lost. But here He calls into being something distinctly new, and thus shows Himself possessed of *creative power*. And, in doing so, He proves Himself divine, since none can create but God.

Many of those who had beheld and benefited by this wondrous exhibition of divine power on the part of Jesus, said, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world' (John vi. 14). It seemed to them as if He must be the One of whom Moses gave promise when he said, 'A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from your brethren, like unto me' (Deut. xviii. 15); and as if, in giving this miraculous supply of food, He had been following in the footsteps of the great leader of Israel when he brought manna from heaven to sustain their fathers in the wilderness. Moses, however, was not only a prophet, but the deliverer who had broken the yoke of Egypt and set oppressed Israel free. Did not the miracles of Jesus, and especially this last and greatest of them all, give promise of a Moses-like career? Is He not the heaven-anointed King whom they have been expecting, who is to set up again the throne of David, and whose dominion is to have no end? They will press Him to announce Himself at once as their Deliverer, and to address Himself to the work for which He has been sent.

'When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He withdrew again into the mountain Himself alone' (John vi. 15). It was with no little difficulty that He disengaged Himself from the multitude. The disciples themselves would seem to have had their enthusiasm enkindled, and to have longed to take part in the enthronement of their Lord as Messianic King; for He had to constrain them to enter the boat, and go before Him to the other side.

Jesus walking on the Sea.

Read Matt. xiv. 23-34; Mark vi. 46-53; John vi. 16-21.

Jesus, when He had succeeded in dismissing both His disciples and the multitudes, ascended the mountain that He might have secret communion with God. It had been His object in crossing the Lake to have a brief season of quiet, which might be devoted to meditation and prayer; and He has found it. And so precious was the opportunity, that He availed Himself of it to the full, spending the greater part of the night in prayer.

The disciples would seem to have kept well in by the shore for a time, in the expectation that Jesus would join them. But 'when it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them' (John vi. 17), they had to push out into the deep. From the first they had to struggle against a stiff gale, and made but slow progress; for, at the fourth watch of the night, they had only overtaken from five-and-twenty to thirty furlongs. And now the head-wind had become so violent that further progress was impossible. But Jesus had been looking down from the mountain toward the sea on which His disciples were so manfully struggling, and at last He hastened to their help. In the conscious possession of divine power He stepped on the waters, and was upborne by them, and moved in the direction of the boat and its imperilled occupants. But the rowers, as they got sight of a figure gliding across the water from the eastern shore, and drawing gradually nearer to them, cried out in their terror, 'It is a spirit.' And great must have been their relief when the well-known voice of their Master fell on their ear, saying, 'Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.'

And now Peter, leaping at once from the depths of despair to the heights of exulting confidence, asked for leave to step on the water and go to meet his Lord, and obtained it. And his faith endowed him with power to walk on the waves a little way, till a look at the tempest revealed to him the risk of his adventure,

and, losing courage, he immediately began to sink. But in his extremity he was able to cast himself on the Saviour's compassion, crying, 'Lord, save me;' and the cry brought him instantaneous deliverance. Jesus, reaching out His hand to him, upheld him; and both of them entered the boat. And immediately on their doing so, the wind ceased; and the boat, speeding swiftly onwards, was soon moored to the shore.

Such was the impression made by this incident, that all who witnessed it worshipped Jesus, saying, 'Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God' (Matt. xv. 33). When on a former occasion our Lord in a similar way stilled the storm, the onlookers asked, 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?' The more astounding miracle wrought by Jesus now produced the conviction that He who had the power to work it was divine.

Discourse in the Synagogue of Capernaum, and sifting of the Disciples.

Read John vi. 22-71.

Great part of the people, whose necessities our Lord had miraculously supplied, instead of returning to their homes at the close of that memorable day, scattering themselves throughout the villages around, spent the night there. They had seen the disciples start for the opposite side of the Lake, and had noted that Jesus was not with them. Thinking perhaps that He had merely dismissed them on account of the lateness of the hour, and longing to hear more of His teachings and look on more of His wondrous works, they waited till morning had come, and then set out in search of Him. But, failing to find Him, they availed themselves of boats which had come from Tiberias through the night, and crossed to Capernaum. And, finding Him there teaching in the synagogue, they gathered eagerly around Him.

But Jesus had little pleasure in looking on these visitors; for the events of the preceding day had shown Him that they had no conception of the salvation which He had come to give. They

had followed Him, simply because 'they ate of the loaves and were filled.' They cared for Him, only because they believed Him possessed of superhuman power, and because He had exercised that power on their behalf. They hoped that He would use His power to put them in possession of still greater temporal benefits. And, with a view to this, they wished to put Him at their head, that He might be their victorious champion and deliverer. This expectation on their part has been shown in a way so unmistakeable, and so fraught with danger, that He feels Himself laid under a necessity of at once and effectually undeceiving them. He must open up to them the real character of the work on which He has entered. He must give them a clearer idea of the salvation which He has come to give, and of the mode in which He must proceed, in order to be able to give it. He must do so, even if He should give offence to many, and should repel not a few of His most enthusiastic followers.

With this object in view, Jesus tells those who have gathered around Him in the synagogue of Capernaum that it were well for them to desire something better than the bread of which they had lately partaken. He commended to them another sort of bread, sent down from heaven for the purpose of giving life to the world, and possessed of such virtues that the one who should eat of it should live for ever. 'I am that bread of life,' He said; 'I am the living bread which came down out of heaven.' But, ere He could give life to men, He must Himself die: He must give His flesh for the life of the world. 'He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,' said He, 'hath eternal life.'

To the greater part of His audience these words of our Lord were unintelligible. They said, 'This is a hard saying: Who can hear it?' They understood, however, that He was not the kind of Saviour for whom they had been looking, and that the boon which He pressed on their acceptance was something altogether different from the temporal blessings for which alone they cared. So that the most of His hearers went away with a feeling of deep disappointment. It was so, not only in the case

of those who, though regarding Jesus with considerable favour, had not avowed themselves believers in Him, but in the case of many who had been His recognized followers. 'Many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.'

This result did not surprise Jesus, but it deeply grieved Him. And, as soon as He found Himself alone with the Twelve, He put to them the question, 'Will ye also go away?' 'Lord, to whom shall we go?' answered Simon Peter in name of all, 'Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God' (vv. 68, 69). He and his fellow-disciples have obtained a knowledge of Jesus, which makes it impossible for them to leave Him. *His words* have had a power to move them, to purify and elevate them, and to breathe a new life into them, which the words of no other have ever had. And *His life* has disclosed to them a character of perfect holiness, which proves Him to be One very near and dear to God. They take it ill that He should even suggest the possibility of their leaving Him; for how can any other ever be to them what He has been and is?

Peter thinks himself entitled to make this declaration in name of all. And such a confession of faith and of attachment must have been gratifying to our Lord in the trying circumstances in which He was placed. Yet He had to say with sorrow, 'Did not I choose you, the Twelve? and one of you is a devil.' Jesus refrains from naming the one who shall prove to be an apostate, that all may be weaned from self-confidence and brought to a lowly dependence on Himself. He hints thus early at the treason of Judas, that it may be understood that He is moving forward to a cross—not to a crown.

1. *Distinguish between the two Bethsaidas mentioned in the Gospels.*
2. *In what respects does the feeding of the multitudes differ from the other miracles of our Lord?*
3. *How was it that the feeding of the five thousand did more than any other of the miracles of Jesus to awaken a belief in His Messiahship?*

4. How does Peter's attempt to walk on the sea illustrate both the strength and the weakness characteristic of that disciple?
5. What was there in our Lord's discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum fitted to alienate from Him those who were longing for a temporal deliverer?
6. Mention any Old Testament incident analogous to our Lord's sifting of the disciples.

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. Read the suggestive chapter on 'The Year of Opposition' in Stalker's *Life of Christ*.

2. In Bushnell's *Sermons for the New Life* there is a very striking discourse on the words, 'Give ye them to eat,' entitled 'Duty not measured by our own ability.'

3. Christ's plan for the propagation of the truth is fitly expressed in the words, 'He gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude' (Matt. xiv. 9, xv. 36).

4. The gathering up of the fragments illustrates the blending of economy with generosity in the works of God.

5. On the truth that Christ is the Bread of Life, read Bushnell's sermon on 'The Hunger of the Soul;' also St. Bernard's hymn, 'Jesu, dulcedo cordium,' and Ray Palmer's rendering of it, 'Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts.'

6. The most important of the ruins found on the site of Capernaum are those of the White Synagogue. Tristram says, 'If Tell-Hûm be Capernaum, this is without a doubt the synagogue built by the Roman centurion (Luke vii. 4, 5), and one of the most sacred places on earth.' Colonel Wilson says regarding it, 'It was in this building that our Lord gave the well-known discourse in John vi.; and it was not without a certain strange feeling that, on turning over a large block, we found the pot of manna engraved on its face, and remembered the words, "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead"' (*Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 345).

LESSON XVI.

JESUS VISITS THE COASTS OF TYRE AND SIDON.

Read Matt. xv. 1-39 ; Mark vii. 1, viii. 10.

OUR Lord did not go to Jerusalem on occasion of this Passover. His reasons for absenting Himself from the feast seem to have been—1st, that the Jewish rulers were eagerly watching for an opportunity of getting Him into their power (John v. 16-18), and 2nd, that He wished to have close and undisturbed converse with His disciples. And probably, during the continuance of the feast, He and the chosen Twelve enjoyed that intimate fellowship which appeared to Him so desirable. But no sooner was the Passover past, than spies from Jerusalem were once more in close attendance on Him (Matt. xv. 1). Nor were they long in finding cause of serious complaint. In order to keep themselves free from ceremonial defilement, it was the custom of the Pharisees to wash their hands previous to every meal (Mark vii. 3, 4). And, in defence of this custom, they cited the authority of venerable tradition. But the disciples of Jesus, following the spirit of their Master's teachings, observed no such custom. The neglect was noticed, and brought before Him by way of complaint: 'Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.'

To this complaint Jesus answered that tradition, so far from expressing the mind of God, sometimes flatly contradicted His requirements. Thus, when a son was called on to support his parents, it was permitted to him to say, 'That wherewith thou

mightest have been profited by me is Corban' (*i.e.* given to God); and it forthwith assumed the character of a consecrated thing, and could not be claimed as a means of securing the fulfilment of the command, 'Honour thy father and thy mother.' In this way the Pharisees made void the word of God by their traditions. And, as to that washing of hands on which they insisted, it were better for them to seek to get the heart purified from the evil desires and passions which, flowing out into the life, were the things that really polluted a man.

Our Lord, however, felt it unprofitable to be engaged in perpetual collision with the agents of the priesthood. His freedom of action was hampered by their presence. And He was denied that full and confidential intercourse with His disciples which it was most desirable that He should have. If He was to rid Himself of the distraction caused by these intruders, He must leave the neighbourhood of the Sea of Galilee. Accordingly, He and His disciples left Capernaum, and, taking a northerly direction, came into 'the borders of Tyre and Sidon.'¹ He would not appear to have engaged in preaching in the course of this journey, but rather to have made the teaching and training of His disciples His exclusive work. Nor would He seem to have wrought any miracles of healing. For it was His desire that no man should know of His presence in that land. But 'He could not be hid' (Mark vii. 24). Long ere this His fame had gone abroad throughout all Syria (Matt. iv. 24). And, since not a few of those resident in that region must have seen Him, wherever He went He ran the risk of being recognized.

In one place visited by our Lord, a woman who had heard of His presence came to Him to entreat His help. She was by nationality

¹ It has been questioned whether our Lord actually passed beyond the land of Israel into heathen territory. 'The borders of Tyre and Sidon' (Mark vii. 24) might merely mean the border land. But 'the parts of Tyre and Sidon' (Matt. xv. 21) would seem to indicate the territory belonging to these cities. And the reading of Mark vii. 31, 'He came through Sidon unto the Sea of Galilee,' if accepted, puts it beyond a doubt that on this occasion Jesus set foot in a Gentile country.

a woman of Canaan,—by language, a Greek,—and by residence a Syro-Phœnician, or dweller in that part of Syria inhabited by the Phœnicians. Her prayer to Jesus was, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.’ But at first He took no notice of her, answering her not a word. When His disciples besought Him to grant her request and send her away, He repelled their intercessions, saying, ‘I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ And when she herself fell at His feet, pleading, ‘Lord, help me!’ He replied in words that seemed to render further expostulation hopeless, ‘It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs.’ But, meekly accepting the position assigned her as one of the dogs, with singular ingenuity she extracted from the reproach an argument for the granting of her request, saying, ‘Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.’ ‘O woman, great is thy faith,’ said Jesus; ‘be it done unto thee even as thou wilt.’ And she took her place among the few Gentiles to whom during His personal ministry He gave help, and who were the first-fruits of the great harvest to be gathered in from the whole world. ‘She went her way unto her house, and found the child laid upon the bed, and the devil gone out.’

Still proceeding northwards, Jesus passed through the territory of Sidon (Mark vii. 31), and then turning eastward, threaded one of the passes giving an entrance to the country lying around Upper Jordan. And soon He and His disciples were in the familiar region of the Decapolis, or ‘Ten Cities, to the east of the Lake of Galilee.

In some town or village there, there was brought to him a man deaf, and with an impediment in his speech. Taking him aside, He put His fingers into his ears, and touched his tongue with spittle, probably for the purpose of arresting his attention on Himself, and awakening in his heart something of faith. And then, looking up to heaven, and uttering a sigh, He said, ‘Ephphatha’ (*i.e.* ‘Be opened’); and the ears were opened and

the tongue unloosed. He wished that nothing should be said about the miracle; but the more He insisted on this, the more were they bent on publishing it.

The fame of the miracle spreading all around, it soon became widely known that Jesus had returned; and the news excited the deepest interest. From every quarter people afflicted with ailments and infirmities were brought to Him, and He gave them the needed help (Matt. xv. 30, 31). His popularity had revived; and soon thousands were flocking to Him, and, as they drank in His teachings, and looked on His works, were loath to leave Him. At one time so many as four thousand men, besides women and children, had been with Him for three days (Matt. xv. 38); and, whatever provisions they had brought with them being quite exhausted, Jesus as He looked on them knew that, if He dismissed them as they were, many of them must faint by the way. His disciples, however, had still seven loaves remaining and a few small fishes. And, having given thanks for this slender supply of food, He distributed it to His disciples, and they to the multitude. And all partook of it, and were amply satisfied. After an abundant repast, the broken pieces, when gathered up, were found to fill seven baskets. The people could now be sent away, with the likelihood of reaching their homes in safety. And Jesus and His disciples taking boat, came to the borders of Magdala or Magadan (Matt. xv. 39),—or, as Mark tells us (viii. 10), to a place a little farther south, called Dalmanutha.

1. *What reasons probably influenced Jesus not to go to Jerusalem on occasion of the Passover mentioned in John v. 4?*
2. *Why did the Pharisees insist on the frequent washing of hands?*
3. *Did Jesus ever go outside of Palestine? If so, when and why?*
4. *Explain our Lord's statement in Matt. xv. 24, and show that it is consistent with His having come to be the Saviour of the world.*
5. *Which of the evangelists is at pains to give the very Syriac words used by Jesus on important occasions? Give instances.*

LESSON XVII.

THE GREAT CONFESSION.

Read Matt. xvi. 1-28 ; Mark viii. 11-38 ; Luke ix. 18-27.

SCARCELY had our Lord set foot again in Galilee, when He found that the emissaries of the priesthood were on the outlook for Him, and that their animosity had undergone no abatement. The Pharisees, who from the beginning had regarded Jesus with disfavour, and whose opposition had been gradually becoming more pronounced, were now joined by the Sadducees, the sworn enemies of Traditionalism, whose ambition it was to rank as the enlightened or liberal party in Israel. And certain representatives of the two parties, after consulting together, came to Him with the demand that, if He had really a divine mission, He should prove it by giving them a sign from heaven. Knowing well, however, that no sign that could be given would convince men who were resolved not to believe in Him, He refused ; telling them that they had only to give to the events happening around them the same earnest consideration which enabled them to make accurate forecasts regarding the weather, in order to be able to read the signs of the times (Matt. xvi. 1-4).

But this unsought encounter with those vigilant adversaries showed Jesus that, unless He wished to be engaged in ceaseless and profitless controversy, He must again withdraw Himself from public notice for a time. Accordingly, He and His disciples, taking boat, made for Bethsaida Julias. When they had landed, 'Take heed,' said He to the Twelve, 'and beware of the leaven

of the Pharisees and Sadducees' (ver. 6). The leaven of the Pharisees was a narrow self-righteous orthodoxy; that of the Sadducees an easy-going materialistic scepticism. These were the two leading doctrinal tendencies of the day, against which even the disciples of Jesus needed to be on their guard.

At Bethsaida Jesus gave sight to a blind man, not by one act and in a moment, but by repeated acts and gradually; so that at first men passing by seemed to him to have the appearance of trees, and then afterwards he saw things clearly. The man was taken outside of the town to have the miracle wrought on him, and, after it was wrought, was bidden go straight to his home. For Jesus had no desire to attract attention to Himself at this time, but rather wished to be as much as possible alone with His disciples (Mark viii. 22-26).

Proceeding northwards, Jesus and His disciples came into the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, a town built by Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis, in honour of Tiberius Cæsar, at the base of Mount Hermon, and close beside the most important of the sources of the Jordan. And somewhere in this quarter there occurred a memorable incident. 'In the way' (Mark viii. 27), 'as He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him' (Luke ix. 18). When the prayer had ceased, He drew near to the Twelve, and asked them, 'Who do men say that I am?' And with perfect frankness they answered His question. Some thought of Him as John the Baptist, because of His carrying forward the work of national reformation on which John had entered. Others, struck by His bold rebukes of sin, and by the might and majesty of His miracles, were inclined to think that in His person Elijah had come to earth again. Others, specially impressed by the affectionate tenderness of His entreaties, had seemed to themselves to be listening to the plaintive strains of Jeremiah. And others, without identifying Him with any one in particular, simply regarded Him as 'one of the old prophets risen again.' These reports showed that men in general felt that in Jesus there was something superhuman,—that He was one whom

God had drawn very near to Himself and had filled with His Spirit. Yet these different views of Jesus, with all the variety that characterized them, showed that few, if any, were thinking of Him as Israel's Redeemer, as the Christ.

But, after getting this answer, Jesus put the further question, 'But who say ye that I am?' And to that question, Peter, speaking in the name of all, replied, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' The answer was what Jesus expected, and He showed His gratification by warmly saying, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.' Simon had avowed it to be the conviction of himself and his fellow-disciples that Jesus was the Christ,—One higher than all prophets, the Messiah or consecrated Redeemer of whom prophecy had spoken. And he had affirmed Him also to be 'the Son of the living God,'—One related to God as no man, even the greatest and the best, had ever been, His Only-begotten and Well-beloved. In this brief confession he had stated his view both of the official position and of the personal dignity of Jesus. And Jesus welcomed the confession as the statement of the very truth. He saw also and said that Simon's conviction of the truth was one for which he was indebted, not to human testimony, but to divine revelation.

Long before this, indeed, Simon and the others had felt themselves warranted to say of Jesus, 'We have found the Messias' (John i. 41). But their belief in His Christhood rested at first on the Baptist's testimony regarding Him. They had thought of Him also as the Son of God, because they had heard the Baptist say of Him, 'I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God' (John i. 34). In some cases also the confession of a singularly close relationship on His part to God was occasioned by some remarkable display of supernatural power overcoming amazed human nature for the moment (Matt. xiv. 33). In other cases, doubtless, the conviction of the Christhood and divine Sonship of Jesus to which some were led must be traced

to a divine source, as when Nathanael exclaimed, 'Thou art the Son of God : Thou art the King of Israel' (John i. 49). Yet the acknowledgment now made by Simon Peter differs from everything of the kind that had gone before. It is not a first opinion formed regarding Jesus at an early stage of intercourse with Him. Nor is it a transient burst of enthusiastic feeling called forth by exciting circumstances. But it is the utterance of a deep and matured conviction, resulting from intimate knowledge of Him. All the teachings of Jesus, all His actings, and His whole character as revealed in His life, have convinced Peter and his fellow-disciples that Jesus is 'the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

To the disciple who, in name of the others, has made this confession, Jesus further says, 'Thou art Peter ; and on this rock will I build my Church ; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it' (Matt. xvi. 18). He reminds Simon of the time when first He gave him the name of Cephas or Peter (John i. 42), and hints that the prediction contained in that name is now beginning to receive fulfilment. Simon is now showing himself as Peter. He is a rock ; and the truth which has got imbedded in his soul, and which is to him the truth of truths, is a rock. On this truth Jesus will build His Church ; and that Church shall be imperishable. He will give also to this apostle 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven,'—the right to determine who are to be admitted into His Church, and who excluded from it ; and will secure that whatever he shall do in the way of binding or loosing (*i.e.* forbidding or permitting) on earth shall be ratified in heaven (Matt. xvi. 19). Peter, however, is not the only one to whom these powers are given ; but they are to belong to any two or three who may gather together in the Saviour's name (Matt. xviii. 18-20).

It might have seemed likely that our Lord, now that His disciples have become convinced of His Christhood, would ask them to make widely known the conviction to which they have attained. But He did the opposite of this : He 'charged the

disciples that they should tell no man that He was the Christ' (Matt. xvi. 20). His reason for doing so was, that the people generally thought of the Christ merely as a great temporal deliverer. So that had the disciples begun to proclaim Him openly as the Christ, and had their announcement been credited, the sole effect of this would have been that the people would have sought to make Him a king, and the rallying-point of a political revolution.

Nor had the disciples themselves as yet formed any adequate conception of the Christ, and of the work which He must accomplish. Though they had risen far above the gross expectations entertained by their countrymen generally in regard to the Messiah, they had never thought of Him as One who must be a sufferer. Hence Jesus thinks it well that, before speaking much about Him, they should get clearer views as to what He has come into this world to do. The sooner they get this information, the better. Accordingly, 'from that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up' (Matt. xvi. 21).

Up to this time our Lord had made scarcely any allusion to the rejection and suffering awaiting Him. It was necessary that He should refrain from making any clear statement as to this matter, till the disciples were able to bear it. It was only after they had reached the firm conviction of His Messiahship that His humiliation could be disclosed to them. But that point has now been reached, and a more advanced stage in the intercourse between our Lord and His disciples has been entered on. Now they fully recognize His Messiahship, and He makes unreserved disclosure to them of the suffering to which He must submit, if He is to be the world's Redeemer.

On the first occasion, however, of His speaking plainly about suffering and death as being appointed Him, it was shown how unprepared the disciples were even yet for such a revelation.

For 'Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall never be unto Thee.' It was his love to Jesus that made him shrink from the thought of such a future being in store for Him. But the protest pointed to a life of self-indulgence as being preferable to a life of self-sacrifice, and bore a singular resemblance to the temptation against which Jesus had struggled in the wilderness, and which had come back on Him many a time since then. And, keenly feeling this, He said to Simon, 'Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling-block unto me; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men' (Matt. xvi. 22, 23). And He followed up the rebuke to this one disciple by telling them all that they must deny themselves and take up the cross, if they would be true to Him.

1. *What did Jesus mean by warning His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?*
2. *What were the opinions reported to our Lord as current among the people in regard to Him? And what may have been the reasons which led to such opinions being entertained?*
3. *What radical defect did all these different views exhibit?*
4. *In what respects did the confession drawn from the Twelve at Cæsarea Philippi pass beyond the convictions to which at any former time they had given expression?*
5. *To what change did this confession lead in the confidential teachings addressed by our Lord to His disciples?*
6. *How do you account for the sternness of the rebuke administered to Peter (Matt. xvi. 23)?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. It is on the words addressed to Peter (Matt. xvi. 18, 19) that the claim of that apostle and his successors to primacy in the Christian Church has been based. But it is of the faith which distinguishes Peter *personally* that Jesus speaks as giving him pre-eminence. And, since that which is personal is intransferable, it follows that any primacy which Peter may have had must have ended with himself. It is very instructive also that the disciple who gets so warm an encomium

passed on him by the Saviour, immediately afterwards comes under a sentence of the severest condemnation (Matt. xvi. 23). In the one instance Peter gave evidence of a spirituality, in the other of a carnality distinguishing him from his brethren.

2. The notes of Calvin, of Meyer, and of Alford, on Matt. xvi. 16-19, are worthy of special study; as also chaps. xi. and xii. of Bruce's *Training of the Twelve*.

LESSON XVIII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

Read Matt. xvii. 1-21; Mark ix. 2-29; Luke ix. 28-43.

A WEEK after these events Jesus went up into a mountain,¹ taking with Him only Peter and James and John, and leaving the other disciples in some one of the villages near. He wished to have the opportunity of undisturbed prayer, and in this mountain solitude He found it. And as He continued long in prayer, His companions, wearied out with watching, at length fell asleep. But while they slept, a singular change came over their Lord: 'His face did shine as the sun; and His garments became white as the light.' The glory of His divinity shone forth, irradiating His countenance as man, and making even His raiment white and dazzling. There stood also beside Him two men,—Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, and Elijah, the greatest of Israel's prophets. They had come from heaven to earth on an important errand; and they communicated to Jesus the reason of their visit. The splendours accompanying their arrival would seem to

¹ Tradition has fixed on Mount Tabor, a dome-shaped hill in the north-east corner of the plain of Esdraelon, as the scene of the Transfiguration. But close attention to the Gospel narrative shows this to be a mere conjecture, and quite untenable. For Mark (ix. 30) tells us that *after* the Transfiguration Jesus and His disciples 'went forth from thence and passed through Galilee.' So that the Transfiguration took place outside of Galilee, and in the neighbourhood of those 'villages of Cæsarea Philippi' (Mark viii. 27) made famous by Peter's confession and by our Lord's intimation of His sufferings. But if so, it must have been on some of the summits of Mount Hermon that our Lord was transfigured.

have awakened the disciples, who had no difficulty in recognizing them, and listened in hushed amazement to their communings with the Saviour, which referred to 'the decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem' (Luke ix. 31). The theme of converse between our Lord and these heavenly visitants must have seemed to the disciples very saddening ; yet the mournful future lying before Him was forgotten in the contemplation of His present glory. Moses and Elias, though the bearers of unwelcome news, yet by their very presence testified to the high dignity of Jesus. And the glory of the scene so ravished the hearts of the disciples, that they could have wished to gaze on it for ever. But the messengers, having fulfilled the errand on which they had come, prepared to depart. And 'as they were parting from Him,' Peter exclaimed, 'Master, it is good for us to be here ; and let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' But, while he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them,—the Shechinah, or cloud of glory, which of old rested over the mercy-seat, and was the visible symbol of the presence of God. The cloud enveloped Jesus and the two visitors who were on the eve of parting from Him ; and out from it there came a voice, which said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased : hear ye Him.' The voice was felt by the disciples to be the voice of God, calling on them to recognize in Jesus His Son, and to accept Him as speaking to them in His Father's name, and to render to all His requirements a reverential obedience. Awe-stricken, they fell on their faces as they listened, and only recovered from their terror when Jesus touched them, saying, 'Arise, and be not afraid.' And, lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only.

In the Transfiguration there was given a view of the glory of Jesus well fitted to strengthen the faith of the disciples, discouraged as they were at the time by the disclosure which He had been making to them of the rejection and suffering and death that awaited Him. It must also have helped materially to reconcile them to the sad picture He had drawn of the future

that lay before Him and them, that messengers sent from the heavenly world were overheard conferring with Him concerning 'His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.'

As Jesus and His three disciples made the descent of the mountain, He charged them to tell no one what they had seen till the Son of man should have risen again from the dead. Probably He laid on them this command from a fear lest, if they dilated on the glorious spectacle on which they had gazed, they might awaken in the minds of their brethren earthly hopes certain to be disappointed. And, though unable to comprehend what the rising from the dead should mean, they kept His charge, and 'told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen.' But before joining their fellow-disciples, they asked Jesus to explain to them a statement to which the scribes were wont to give great prominence,—that, before the Messiah should appear and should set up the kingdom of God, Elijah might be expected to appear. In all likelihood it was the appearing of Elijah on the Mount which suggested the question, and which, being so speedily followed by His disappearance, could scarcely be regarded as fulfilling the prophecy (Mal. iv. 5, 6) to which the scribes referred. And, in answer to the question, He said to them, 'I say unto you that Elijah is come already; and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed.' In John the Baptist, Jesus hinted, Elijah had re-appeared; and the disciples understood the hint, and felt that the prophecy now stood explained.

When Jesus and the privileged three who had been with Him on the Mount came in sight of the others whom they had left behind somewhere at its base, a singular scene presented itself. The nine disciples were seen to be surrounded by an excited multitude, conspicuous among whom were some scribes eagerly questioning them. The approach of Jesus being noticed, all immediately ran toward Him; but, as they drew near, they seem to have seen in His countenance some lingering traces of the

glory with which He had lately been irradiated, for 'when they saw Him, they were greatly amazed.' Addressing Himself to the scribes, He inquired what were the matters in regard to which they had been questioning His disciples; but, disconcerted and abashed, they gave no answer. One of the multitude, however, told Him that he had brought his son to Him for healing, and in His absence had applied to His disciples to do what they could, but had found them powerless to help. From early childhood his son had been subject to epilepsy in its most distressing form, and had often fallen into the fire and into the water, to the imminent risk of life. He had become deaf and dumb also, and was slowly pining away. His mind, too, had been convulsed and shattered. And everything seemed to show that this was the work of some demon who had taken possession of him, and sought to destroy him.

Such was the sad story told by this parent; and the unhappy youth, being himself brought forward, gave proof only too convincing of the truth of it. For no sooner had he seen Jesus, than the unclean spirit 'tare him grievously, and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.' 'If Thou canst do anything,' pled his father, 'have compassion on us, and help us.' The inability of the disciples to give any help had plainly caused him to entertain some doubt of their Master's power. Jesus saw this, and, re-echoing his doubting words, said, 'If Thou canst!' adding, 'All things are possible to him that believeth.' And now, feeling that Jesus knew him thoroughly, and was One who deserved to be regarded with the fullest faith, the petitioner, casting Himself on His tender compassion, cried, 'I believe: help Thou mine unbelief!' Nor did Jesus delay giving the blessing asked, but commanded the unclean spirit to come out, never more to return. And His word was obeyed; and all the onlookers were amazed at the mighty power of God.

When the disciples afterwards asked of Him in private the reason of their inability to cast out the demon, they got the answer, 'Because of your little faith.' He had before this given

the Twelve 'power and authority over all devils ;' and they had doubtless exercised that power. But faith was required for the exercise of it ; and their faith had recently been subjected to repeated shocks, and had been greatly weakened. For they had seen opposition to their Lord gradually becoming more powerful and threatening ; they had more than once been His companions in flight ; and they had heard from Himself that He was to be rejected by the rulers of their nation, and to meet with death at their hands. And though all this had not shaken their loyalty to Him, it had discouraged and disheartened them, so that they no longer felt as if following a victorious Deliverer. In these circumstances they met with a case of demoniacal possession, incomparably the worst that they had ever seen ; and though trying to deal with it, they did so with a trembling and doubting heart, and their faith failed them. After pointing out this deficiency in faith as the cause of their inability to do the work required of them, 'If ye have faith,' says Jesus, 'as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.'

Leaving the region signaled by these events, our Lord crossed the Upper Jordan and moved southwards through Galilee. Avoiding publicity as far as possible, He drew the disciples very near to Him, and made the training of them for their future labours His exclusive work. And the truth which He felt it of special importance to impress on them was still this, that only through suffering could He become man's Saviour. 'The Son of man,' said He to them, 'shall be delivered up into the hands of men ; and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised up' (Matt. xvii. 22, 23). And though they understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask Him the meaning of it, both His words and His manner convinced them that He felt Himself marked out as pre-eminently a sufferer ; 'and they were exceeding sorry.' Engaged in converse of this kind, Jesus and His

disciples moved slowly onward, till once more they entered Capernaum.

1. *What are the main reasons for thinking that Mount Tabor was not the scene of the Transfiguration?*
2. *What connection can you trace between the Transfiguration and the events that occurred a week before at Cæsarea Philippi?*
3. *Why were the messengers sent from heaven to Jesus not angels, but men? And what special propriety was there in the selection of the two men sent?*
4. *What light does the incident recorded in Matt. xvii. 14-21 cast on the miraculous powers with which the Twelve were endowed?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. It can easily be understood how Elijah should appear in the body on the Mount of Transfiguration, since he was translated to heaven without tasting of death (2 Kings ii. 11-15). But since Moses both died and was buried (Deut. xxxiv. 5-7), how could he appear in visible form? The mystery connected with his departure from earth, and the reference in the Epistle of Jude (ver. 9) to a contention between Michael the Archangel and Satan concerning his body, have led some to conclude that his body was exempted from corruption, and was eventually reunited with the spirit from which for a time it had been parted. This is the view taken by Bengel, Stier, and others, and vigorously defended by Kurtz in his *History of the Old Covenant* (Clark's translation, vol. iii. pp. 494-502).

2. The influence of the Transfiguration in strengthening the faith of the disciples who were eye-witnesses of it, can be seen from 2 Pet. i. 16-18.

LESSON XIX.

CAPERNAUM REVISITED.

Read Matt. xvii. 24-xviii. 35 ; Mark ix. 33-50 ; Luke ix. 46-50.

SHORTLY after our Lord's arrival at Capernaum a demand was made on Him to pay the poll-tax, levied on every adult Israelite as his contribution to the maintenance of the temple service. The original enactment was that, whenever an enumeration of the people was made, every person above twenty years of age should pay half a shekel for this purpose.¹ But in course of time the tax had come to be an annual one, collected by officials charged with this special duty. It was to Peter that these officials came, asking, 'Doth not your Master pay the half-shekel?' And he, after answering the question in the affirmative, reported the matter to Jesus. 'What thinkest thou, Simon?' asked his Lord ; 'the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons, or from strangers?' And, on getting the answer, 'From strangers,' He added, 'Therefore the sons are free'—intimating that He, as being the King's Son, and no outsider, was one from whom the servants of the King were not entitled to levy any tax. Yet, though under no

¹ The enactment with regard to the half-shekel, as given in Ex. xxx. 11-16, describes it as 'a ransom for the soul,' meant to secure for him who paid it immunity from any special judgment on account of sin. Hence the sum paid was the same for rich and for poor. The value of the half-shekel was the same as that of the didrachm, about 1s. 8d. The stater, or tetradrachm, which Peter was to find in the fish's mouth, passed as of equal value with the shekel, and hence sufficed as payment both for him and his Lord.

obligation to pay the tax, He consented to waive His right of claim exemption, in case His refusal should be misunderstood, and should cause any one to stumble. And so He said to Peter, 'Go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and, when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a shekel; that take, and give unto them for me and thee.' The sum required, though small, had to be provided in a miraculous way, as the common purse would seem to have been at the time nearly or altogether empty. And it was better that a miracle should be wrought than that a stumbling-block should be put in the way even of the weakest Israelite.

But another incident that had occurred while the disciples were journeying to Capernaum demanded prompt and decided notice on the part of their Lord, and, as soon as they were alone with Him, received it. They had been disputing with each other as to which of them should have the highest place in His kingdom. Discussion in regard to this might very naturally arise. On two occasions Jesus had put a special honour on Simon Peter and the sons of Zebedee, privileging them to go with Him into the house of Jairus, and, more recently, to spend the night with him on the holy mount. And to Peter he had said, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' Was it His intention, then, to make Peter the chief in His kingdom, and to place James and John next to Him? It would be gratifying to these disciples, but not to their brethren, to think of such a pre-eminence as destined for them. And what was at first an animated conversation on this subject seems to have risen into a warm discussion. They did not mean that Jesus should overhear them. But He had taken note of the eager controversy, and now asked them, 'What were ye reasoning in the way?' When at last they reluctantly told Him, He called to Him a little child, and, setting him in the midst, said to them, 'Verily I say unto you, except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.' If they are to make sure of any place, even the lowest, in His

kingdom, they must put away all high thoughts of themselves, and become consciously weak and dependent, like the little child before them. And if they are to rise to real eminence in His kingdom, it will be by humbling themselves until they reach a truly childlike humility. For 'if any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and minister of all.'

But Jesus would make use of the little child as a means of conveying to His disciples not only reproof, but comfort. Putting His arms around him, He said to them, 'Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receiveth me : and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but Him that sent me.' Whatever is done to the little child held in the arms of Jesus will be regarded as done to Himself. And each disciple of His, even the weakest, may think of himself as held in his Saviour's embrace. No one, therefore, need fear lest by humbling himself he should become weak and defenceless, with no protection against insult and injury. For to touch the disciple is to touch the Master, and to touch Him is to touch the Father who sent Him.

One of the disciples, as he listens to these words, begins to fear lest on a recent occasion he and his fellow-disciples have acted in a way which their Lord will not approve. 'Master,' said John, 'we saw one casting out devils in Thy name ; and we forbade him, because he followed not us.' 'Forbid him not,' answered Jesus ; 'for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us.' At present there was no imperative necessity for all who believed in Jesus attaching themselves to His person like the Twelve, and moving about with Him from place to place. He asks, therefore, that every one who favours Him, and shows any faith in His name, shall be regarded as a friend. A time will come, doubtless, when every man will be called on openly to take his side either for or against Him, and to show in the most unmistakable way on what side he is. And to such testing times that other word will

apply, 'He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad' (Matt. xii. 30). Meanwhile Jesus would not like that any one who is disposed to favour Him should have a stumbling-block put in his way by being subjected to a test of discipleship unnecessarily strict.

The consideration of this case leads our Lord to think of the still more dangerous stumbling-blocks that may be set before His believing ones by an unbelieving world. 'Woe unto the world,' says He, 'because of occasions of stumbling, for it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh!' The stumbling-blocks put by the world in the way of believers are temptations to unfaithfulness, whatever form they may assume. It is inevitable that there should be such temptations presented to the believing, as long as there are those who do not believe in their Lord. Yet those from whom such occasions of stumbling come are worthy of the severest punishment. It were better for them that a millstone were hanged about their neck, and that they were sunk in the depth of the sea, than that they should cause one of Christ's little ones to stumble. If a man also has anything about himself that causes him to stumble, it were better that he should be freed from it by an effort of self-renunciation, however painful, than that he should fall over it and be lost (Matt. xviii. 8, 9).

If one disciple become aware that another has committed some serious sin, he must try by all means to bring him to a sense of his sin. First, he should speak to his brother by himself regarding it, and endeavour to bring him to repentance. If this should fail, he should take with him two or more, to add force to his representations. And should the offender still remain obdurate, the Church should take the case in hand, and deal faithfully with him. Only if he despise the authority of the Church, is he to be regarded as no longer a disciple. And in that case the Church has the assurance that the sentence which she is constrained to pass is one that shall be ratified in heaven (Matt. xviii. 15-20).

It seemed, however, to Simon Peter that there must be some limit to such kindly dealings with a sinning brother. 'Lord,' said he, 'how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?' 'I say not unto thee,' answered Jesus, 'until seven times, but until seventy times seven.' He will not consent to it that any limitation should be attached to the duty incumbent on every disciple of His to extend forgiveness to an offending but repentant brother. He sees a sufficient reason for this in the fact that the one who is called on to pardon any number of offences is himself one infinitely indebted to God's forgiving mercy. And He illustrates by the parable of the Unmerciful Servant the baseness of one who, after being so deeply indebted to divine compassion, should be unforgiving.

A king, on reckoning with his servants, finds that one of them has run up a debt of ten thousand talents (£2,400,000), and is wholly unable to pay it. He is at first inclined to deal severely with this unfaithful servant of his, and to give orders that he and his family and effects should be sold in order that some part of the debt may be recovered. But, moved by his entreaties, he relents, and cancels the entire debt. That servant, however, meeting with a fellow-servant who owes him a hundred pence (£3, 2s. 6d.), demands immediate payment, and, not receiving it, casts him into prison. But information of this is conveyed to the king, and, summoning the evil-doer into his presence, he reproaches him with his ingratitude, and hands him over to those who will inflict on him merited punishment.

The disproportion between these two debts gives some idea of the difference between what God has to forgive us, and what we are called on to forgive our brethren. The guilt of the one who, after being forgiven so much, should refuse to forgive a brother, is imaged in the conduct of the unforgiving servant. And the doom to be expected by such a one is foreshadowed in the solemn warning, 'So shall also my heavenly Father do to you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.'

1. *What was the amount of the temple tribute levied from every adult Israelite? And what was the original intention of the tax?*
2. *On what ground might our Lord have claimed exemption from this tax? And why did He not press this claim?*
3. *Mention the different occasions on which Jesus bade His disciples imitate the example set them by little children.*
4. *Show that the apparently contradictory sayings recorded in Matt. xii. 30 and Mark ix. 40 are thoroughly reconcilable.*

LESSON XX.

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

Read John vii. 1-x. 21.

MORE than a year had passed since the last visit paid by Jesus to Jerusalem (John v. 1). During all that time He had remained for the most part in Galilee, even the feast of the Passover having no power to draw Him to the Holy City (John vi. 4). He had taken this course, because the leaders of the people had decided that it was for their interests to make away with Him, and were watching for an opportunity of carrying their designs into effect (John vii. 1). But our Lord had much important work still to do, and hence must avoid the risk of a premature termination to His career. Indeed, even in Galilee there were plots formed against His life, which it sometimes required extraordinary precautions to defeat (Mark iii. 6, 7).

And now, at a distance of six months from the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles has come round (John vii. 2); and the people of Capernaum and its neighbourhood, who mean to take part in it, are about to set out for the capital. But Jesus gives no sign of meaning to join them. His brothers, who up to this time have not come to believe in Him, noticing this, urge Him to go up to Jerusalem, and give the whole world the opportunity of seeing His miracles, and becoming convinced of His Messiahship. But He tells them that, though they have nothing to fear from the world, it is otherwise with Him, engaged as He is in testifying against the world's sin,—and announces it as His

resolution not to go up yet unto the feast. 'And when He had said these words unto them, He abode still in Galilee.'

The festive solemnities, which lasted over seven days, began. The streets and squares of the city were filled with bowers, made of the branches of palm-trees and ornamental shrubs, and the house-tops were covered with them. Sacrifices were offered up every day in the temple. Mirth and feasting were to be witnessed on every side. With joyful heart the people recalled the memory of the time when their fathers, released from the bondage of Egypt, entered on the free life of the wilderness, and began their march toward the Promised Land. Yet the employments of the feast were far from fully interesting many of those engaged in them. They were thinking of Jesus, and wondering what had become of Him. And opinions in regard to Him, favourable and unfavourable, were more or less freely expressed.

At length, in the middle of the festival week, when all expectation of seeing Him had passed away, He appeared. Had He entered Jerusalem at the usual time, surrounded by thousands of Galileans enthusiastically proclaiming Him Israel's long-expected Redeemer, this would have exasperated the priesthood, and stirred them up to take immediate steps against Him. But coming, as He did, when all were busily occupied, and with only His twelve disciples attending Him, He avoided this danger. Hence, without meeting with any hindrance, He went straight to the temple, and was soon engaged in teaching all who gathered around Him there.

Those who listened to Him could not find any fault with His doctrine. The only thing that they could call in question was His right to teach, seeing that He had not attended the schools of any of the Rabbis, and graduated as a teacher in the ordinary way (John vii. 15). But to this objection He replied, that He had received His teaching, not from man, but from God (ver. 16), and that any one who earnestly desired to do the will of God would have no difficulty in recognizing His doctrine as divine (ver. 17). As He continued His address, the boldness with which He spoke

astonished His hearers ; and they began to ask whether their rulers could be permitting Him this freedom of speech, because they had at last come to think of Him as indeed the Christ (ver. 26). Others, as they thought of the miracles of Jesus, asked, 'When the Christ shall come, will He do more signs than those which this man hath done?' (ver. 31).

But the rulers had not changed their opinion regarding Jesus. They had heard of His unexpected appearance at the feast, of the bold stand which He had taken, and of the powerful impression made on the people by His words. And, holding a hurriedly summoned Council, they determined to send their officers to arrest Him and bring Him into their presence. It was necessary, however, for the officers to proceed with caution ; and they had to follow Jesus from place to place, till they should find a convenient opportunity for executing their instructions. They would seem to have been watching Him during the remaining days of the feast, but never to have found an occasion suitable for accomplishing their purpose. Meanwhile they could not but listen to the words of Jesus, and, as they listened, they were strangely moved by them. And, at last, they resolved with one accord to brave the wrath of their superiors rather than touch Him ; and they appeared before an adjourned meeting of the Council to say, 'Never man spake like this man' (ver. 46). 'Are ye also deceived?' asked the Councillors, alarmed to find their own officials not free from the infection of what they regarded as a deadly heresy : 'Have any of the rulers believed on Him, or of the Pharisees?' But at this juncture they were reminded that Jesus had not as yet been put on His trial, and must not be held as condemned. 'Doth our law judge any man,' asked Nicodemus, a member of the Council, 'except it first hear from himself, and know what he doeth?' This intimation of dissent from the views held by the majority was bitterly resented, but had the effect of breaking up the Council and of securing for our Lord freedom to carry on His work for a time.

'On the last day, the great day of the feast,' Jesus felt moved

to bear a very important and solemn testimony concerning Himself. That day was a day peculiarly sacred. The people who, on the evening of the seventh day, took down the booths in which they had been dwelling, and returned to their houses, on the eighth day repaired to the temple, and formed a great worshipping assembly. As they stood there, taking a farewell look of the sanctuary, and knowing that on the morrow they were to disperse again over the wide world, they would be in a mood of mind peculiarly disposing them to receive serious impressions. Jesus saw this to be a singularly favourable opportunity for announcing Himself as the Saviour, and entreating Israel to accept salvation at His hands; and, embracing it, He cried aloud, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink' (vii. 37). The proclamation owed its special form to a ceremony observed every day of the preceding week. Every morning one of the priests went down to the fountain of Siloah with a golden vessel, and, having filled it, bore it to the temple, and, advancing to the altar, poured it into two golden cups, amid great rejoicing. The ceremony commemorated the flowing of the stream from the smitten rock in the wilderness, and gave a prophetic picture also of the salvation which the Messiah was to give to His people thirsting for it. And it was most befitting that Jesus should declare that in Him the fountain of living waters was at length disclosed to view, and should invite every thirsty one to draw near and drink.

On the day following this, He made a similar proclamation in a form equally striking. As He stood in that part of the temple called the treasury, in which were to be seen two candelabra that bore aloft on their branching arms lamps which, when lighted every night during the Feast of Tabernacles, illumined the whole of Jerusalem, He said, 'I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' In giving this representation of Himself, He declared the whole world in a state of spiritual darkness and death, but said that He had come to be the Light that should both illumine and quicken it. And when this high claim was

challenged, He defended it, affirming that even Abraham longed to see His day; that He had come forth from God into this world to be its Saviour; that all who would not believe in Him must die in their sins, and that whosoever should keep His word should never see death.

It may have been towards the close of this festal week, or immediately after it, that there occurred the incident recorded in John viii. 2-11, the bringing to Jesus of a woman taken in adultery. She was brought to Him by the scribes and Pharisees that He might decide whether, in accordance with the requirement of the Mosaic Law, she should be stoned to death. Probably it was expected that He would recommend the adoption of a more lenient course, and would in this way subject Himself to the charge of undermining the law's authority. But declining to act the part of a judge, He said to the accusers of the woman, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,'—a challenge which had the effect of making every one of them hasten out of His presence, leaving behind them the sinner against whom they had manifested such a zeal. And then turning to the guilty one, and learning, that so far as man was concerned, there was no one to condemn her, He said to her, 'Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way, from henceforth sin no more.'¹

Some time after the feast was over, but before our Lord had left the city, the attention of Himself and His disciples was drawn to the case of a man blind from birth, who earned a livelihood by begging. It seemed to Jesus that this case pre-

¹ In the Revised Version of the New Testament, the section extending from John vii. 53 to viii. 11 is put within brackets; and in the margin it is noted that 'most of the ancient authorities omit' the passage, and that 'those which contain it vary much from each other.' Certainly also the passage is marked by peculiarities of style which make it easily distinguishable from anything that can be referred to the pen of John. Yet it may record an actual incident in our Lord's history. And there are strong reasons for believing that it does so. That incident may have occurred at this Feast of Tabernacles, and the narrative of it may on this account have been incorporated with this portion of John's Gospel.

sented Him with a peculiarly seasonable opportunity of showing Himself the possessor of a Divine Power; for He had lately been putting forth high claims on behalf of Himself, and it was befitting that in some signal way He should show Himself to be what He alleged. The Sanhedrim had threatened with excommunication any one who should acknowledge Him to be the Christ; and it was well, therefore, that He should do something to confirm the faith of those who believed in Him. It might contribute materially to the attainment of these objects, if He were to give this blind man his sight. It was the Sabbath day, however (ver. 14); and the Pharisees, who on a former occasion had objected to His working miracles on that day (ver. 10), would be certain to make the most of any repetition of the offence. Yet Jesus felt that He must do this work, and must embrace the present opportunity of doing it (ver. 4). Accordingly He anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay, and bade him wash off the clay in the Pool of Siloam; and no sooner was His command obeyed, than the man returned seeing.

The miracle that had been wrought could not escape notice. Information regarding it having been conveyed to the rulers, a formal investigation into all the circumstances of the case was determined on and made. The man who was affirmed to have received his sight was subjected to a lengthened and searching examination before the Council. His parents also were closely questioned in regard to the matter. And the result of the inquiry was that the evidence for the miracle was found to be unassailable, but that Jesus was pronounced a transgressor of the law for doing such a work on the Sabbath day. The one to whom He had given sight was excommunicated for seeking to vindicate the character of his benefactor, but was more than compensated for this, when, meeting afterwards with Jesus, and learning from His own lips who He was, he believed in Him as the Son of God and worshipped Him (vv. 35-38).

And very appropriately did our Lord close His work at Jerusalem at this time by a discourse delivered in public, in which

He represented Himself as the Good Shepherd, who alone has a right to enter into the sheep-fold ; who, when He leads out His sheep into the pasture-grounds, goes before them ; who knows His sheep, and is known by them ; who is ready to risk His life for the sheep ; who will not only imperil His life, but actually lay it down for their sake ; who has sheep belonging to other folds than that of Israel ; and who will bring all His sheep together at last, so that there shall be one flock and one Shepherd (x. 1-18).

1. *What was the Feast of Tabernacles designed to commemorate ?*
2. *Why did Jesus determine to go up secretly to this feast ?*
3. *What proclamation did Jesus make on the last day of the feast ? and from what usage of the festal week did it derive its significance ?*
4. *How could the disciples fancy that a man might be born blind in consequence of some sin chargeable on himself ?*
5. *What gives to the miracle wrought on the blind man at the Pool of Siloam a peculiar importance and interest ?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. Read chaps. iv. v. vi. of the section of *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, by Dr. Hanna, entitled 'The Close of the Ministry.'

2. The graciousness of such words of our Lord as are given in Matt. xii. 28, John vii. 37, and viii. 12, is well represented in Dr. Bonar's hymn,—

'I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto me, and rest.'

But these utterances have also an unapproachable majesty. They declare Jesus to be One who bears a relation absolutely unique to the whole human race. They represent Him as One to whom all men in every land and in every age can come, and in whom every applicant can find that which will truly bless and satisfy him. They are the words of One conscious of being the possessor of powers that can belong to God alone.

LESSON XXI.

INTERVAL BETWEEN THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES AND THE FEAST OF DEDICATION.

Read Luke ix. 51-xviii. 30.

IT is not likely that our Lord remained for any considerable time in Jerusalem after the close of the Feast of Tabernacles. It was undesirable that He should expose Himself to the risks arising from the undisguised hostility of the rulers. Nor could He with safety have attempted to carry on His ministry anywhere in Judea (John x. 31, xi. 8). It is probable, therefore, that after a few days He returned to Galilee, and that for the last time He took up His abode for a little in Capernaum. His stay, however, must have been brief; as, two months afterwards, He is found again in Jerusalem on occasion of the Feast of Dedication (John x. 22), and as the journey was prosecuted in such a leisurely manner that it must have extended over several weeks. All that we know of our Lord's residence in Galilee at this time is, that at the close of it He was surrounded by a considerable number of followers, out of whom no fewer than seventy were selected for a very important work (Luke x. 1).

St. Luke describes the departure of our Lord from Galilee at this time in terms which show that He knew that He was taking farewell of it. 'It came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem' (ix. 51).¹ Whatever places

¹ It cannot be the journey to the Feast of Tabernacles that is treated of in this and the following chapters of Luke's Gospel. For that was a journey

Jesus might visit on the way, and whatever employments He might engage in, it was toward Jerusalem that He felt Himself drawn, in the knowledge that there He was to die, and that after dying He was to leave earth for heaven.

Taking the road leading southward through the plain of Esdraelon, He soon reached the border-land lying between Galilee and Samaria. And, when entering one of the villages there (Luke xvii. 11), probably on the Galilean side, a company of ten lepers, drawn together by their common misery, standing afar off, supplicated His help. He gave them the significant command to go and show themselves to the priests; and, with faith and hope awakened in their hearts, they immediately set out on the journey. Ere they had gone far, they knew themselves healed. And nine of their number, acting on the letter of the Saviour's instructions, hastened to get themselves legally declared clean; while only one, yielding to a nobler impulse, came back to cast himself at Jesus' feet and give thanks for his cure. That one was a Samaritan; and Jesus, as He looked on him, said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?'

Entering the territory of Samaria, Jesus sent messengers in advance, to make preparations for His reception. But in one of the border villages, in which animosity to the Jewish faith assumed a peculiarly fanatical form, the messengers received a rude repulse, because their Master's 'face was as though He were going to Jerusalem.' When the refusal was reported, it

in which Jesus was accompanied by none but His immediate disciples, and which was executed rapidly (John x. 10-14); whereas on this occasion He was attended by many, and moved onward from stage to stage with great deliberation. The journey is certainly the same as that referred to in Matt. xix. 1, 2, and Mark x. 1. Some of the events which Luke appears to represent as occurring in the course of it, may have happened afterwards, in the interval between the Feast of Dedication and the visit to Bethany (John x. 40-42). And some of them are certainly not narrated in their chronological order (*e.g.* ix. 38-42, and xvii. 11-19). But the bulk of them find their place rightly in this journey.

awakened the indignation of the disciples, and specially of James and John, who would fain that their Lord should have allowed them to bring down fire from heaven to consume these inhospitable villagers. But Jesus, instead of favouring the suggestion, rebuked the brothers for the spirit exhibited in it, and, refusing to imitate Elijah in visiting sin with righteous retribution, meekly endured the insult given Him, and moved onward to another village (Luke ix. 51-56).

Probably, however, after this disagreeable incident, which seemed likely to be followed by others of a similar kind, our Lord, instead of continuing His course through Samaria, turned in an easterly direction, with the view of crossing the Jordan and passing into Peræa.¹ While on the way, He marked out a route for Himself, leading through the towns and villages which it seemed to Him most important to visit (x. 2). And, as He looked over those who were accompanying Him as avowed believers in His Messiahship, He sought to make a selection of those of them who seemed best suited for the purpose, that they might go before Him, and excite an interest in Him and in His visit. He not only summoned suitable men to engage in this work, but considered the fitness of any who were ready to volunteer for it. An interesting illustration of His way of dealing with representatives of both of these classes seems to be given in Luke ix. 57-62. To one who comes forward, offering to be His close and constant follower, He has to say, 'The foxes

¹ On this supposition the accounts of this last journey to Jerusalem presented in the three synoptical Gospels would harmonize. Matthew says (xix. 1) that 'Jesus departed from Galilee, and came into the borders of Judæa and beyond Jordan.' Both evangelists thus represent the route as being through Peræa to Jerusalem. But it has been too easily assumed that Luke describes the Saviour as having *travelled through* Samaria. He certainly describes Him at one time as on the border-land between Galilee and Samaria (xvi. 11), and at another as having entered Samaria (ix. 52-56). But, quite consistently with this, He may have left Samaria after having met with such a discouraging reception in it, and may have passed over into Peræa. And if so, the mission on which the Seventy were sent was a mission, not to the Samaritans, but to the Jews residing beyond Jordan.

have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.' For He knows that the offer is made under a misconception of the future lying before Himself and His disciples ; and He has no wish that any one should follow Him without fully counting the cost. Two, whom He has asked to devote themselves to His service, beg for a little delay ; the one, that he may bid farewell to those at home ; the other, that he may take charge of his father's funeral. But to the one Jesus answers, that no man who has put his hand to the plough must look back ; and to the other, that the care of the dead may be left to those qualified for no higher work, but that he should concern himself for the living, and should 'publish abroad the kingdom of God' (Luke ix. 57-62).

Having secured seventy men suitable for the object in view, Jesus sent them forth two and two, assigning to each pair some special place which they were to visit. They were to spread themselves over the country through which He meant to pass, and to prepare the minds of the people for Him and His Gospel. The substance of the proclamation they were charged to make was this : 'The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.' They were to tell all that they knew about God's kingdom, and to point to Jesus as intimately connected with it. They were to say that the kingdom, long promised and expected, was on the eve of being established, and was to be brought with all its blessings within the reach of the men whom they addressed. Wherever a welcome was given them, they were to heal the sick who might be brought to them. But where their message was rejected, they were to leave that place, after uplifting a last and solemn testimony to the importance of the truth which they had proclaimed. And, when speaking to the Seventy of the terrible consequences of such unbelief, Jesus burst into a loud lamentation over Chorazin, Bēthsaida, and Capernaum, towns which had been favoured above all others, but had failed to appreciate their privileges, and were on this account to be visited with heavier condemnation (Luke x. 1-16).

Having received these instructions, the Seventy went forth on their mission. And, during their absence, the Lord was not idle, but, attended by the Twelve, 'went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem' (Luke xiii. 22). As He moved onward, He came to the various places visited by His messengers, and met with many an evidence of the fruitfulness of their labours. At last He reached the place of rendezvous, at which it had been arranged that they should all gather around Him again; and they came two by two, as they had gone forth, till all were assembled. And the report they had to give was a most encouraging one. They had gone everywhere, preaching the kingdom of God, and their words had awakened interest and eager expectation. But they had been most of all impressed and delighted with the marvellous powers of which they had found themselves the possessors, and with the miracles which they had been able to perform. 'Lord,' said they, 'even the devils are subject unto us in Thy name' (x. 17). On hearing this, Jesus answered, 'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.' Knowing the power of Satan foredoomed to utter overthrow, He had long been looking on this as an accomplished fact, and hence was not surprised at the news that through His name the devils had been cast out by His disciples. Yet He cautions those who are exulting in the possession of such great powers not to find in this their chief joy, but rather to rejoice that they themselves have been delivered from bondage to Satan, and that their 'names are written in heaven.' And, after glancing at such deep truths as these, Jesus poured out a devout thanksgiving to His Father for revealing unto babes what the 'wise and understanding' among men had never been able to discover for themselves (Luke x. 18-24).

1. *What reasons are there for thinking that, after the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus returned for a little to Galilee?*
2. *Show that the journey described in Luke ix. 51-xviii. 30 must*

have been different from and subsequent to that taken to the Feast of Tabernacles.

3. *What supposition as to the route taken by Jesus and His disciples on this occasion harmonizes the accounts given by the first three evangelists?*
4. *What was the mission on which the Seventy were sent? And through what part of Palestine did it probably lead them?*
5. *Why did Jesus in some cases discourage those eager to follow Him, and in other cases stimulate those who were backward to take a place among His followers?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. Farrar and Hanna agree in thinking that, after the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus paid a short and last visit to Galilee.
2. The view presented in the text of the route taken by our Lord in His last journey to Jerusalem is that favoured by Dr. Hanna in chaps. viii. and ix. of 'The Close of the Ministry.'
3. The connection of the incidents related in Luke ix. 57-62 with the mission of the Seventy was first suggested by Bengel (*Harm.* p. 388).

LESSON XXII.

INCIDENTS AND TEACHINGS DURING OUR LORD'S MINISTRY IN PERÆA.

Read Luke x. 25-xviii. 30.

AFTER the Seventy had gone forth on their mission, Jesus 'went through the cities and villages teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem' (Luke xiii. 22). It was His first appearance in Peræa as a teacher; and, wherever He went, great multitudes gathered around Him (xii. 1, xiv. 25). The truths to which He gave prominence were to a considerable extent the same that He had been preaching throughout Galilee; and the words employed to present them were often the same with which His hearers there had been familiar.¹ One truth which at this time He felt it desirable to state with the greatest clearness and impressiveness was this,—that the kingdom which He had come to establish was not an earthly kingdom, and that the blessings which His

¹ The greater part of the teachings recorded in Luke xi. xii. may be found in Matthew in a different historical connection. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that what is correctly represented by Matthew as spoken in certain circumstances, is for some reason assigned by Luke a different place in the history, or *vice versa*. It is quite possible, indeed, that the one evangelist may aim at following the order of time, and the other rather at presenting the sequence of thought in connection with our Lord's utterances. But it is possible also, and highly probable, that Jesus, when He had left one field of labour for another, on finding a new audience before Him, would address to it truths which He had already been inculcating, and would do so in the words which He had originally chosen as the fittest and the best.

followers might expect to receive from Him were spiritual blessings to be enjoyed in their perfection in 'the world to come.' So pervadingly was this the theme of His teachings, and with such earnestness did He insist on it, that men were stirred up to come to Him with the question, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?'

The first who came with this question was a lawyer, who put it, not from any anxiety to make sure of eternal life, but simply from the wish to ascertain what the teaching of Jesus in regard to this important matter was. Being referred by our Lord to the law, and asked what it declared to be essential to entering into life, he answered, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.' 'Thou hast answered right,' said Jesus: 'this do, and thou shalt live.' But when, conscious of having failed to keep the Lord's requirements, and yet unwilling to admit the failure, he started the difficulty, 'Who is my neighbour?', Jesus, instead of answering the question, showed in the parable of the Good Samaritan what it is to be a neighbour to a brother-man, and bade him go and seek to fulfil a neighbour's part (x. 25-37).

At a subsequent stage of His journey the same question was addressed to our Lord by another who had an intense personal interest in getting it answered. A rich man, held in such honour by his fellow-townsmen as to have been at a comparatively early age chosen president of their synagogue, came running to Him, and, kneeling down before Him, asked, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' When reminded by Jesus that life was the reward promised to obedience, he could testify that from his youth up he had earnestly striven to obey all God's commandments; but, as if conscious that something was still wanting to him, he had to ask, 'What lack I yet?' And 'Jesus, beholding him, loved him,' and answered, 'One thing thou lackest yet: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven;

and come, follow me.' But the price asked seemed too great a one to be paid even for eternal life; and the young ruler, though with reluctance, left the Saviour, and resolved to cling to his worldly possessions (xviii. 18-27; Matt. xix. 16-26; Mark x. 17-27).

Occasionally, in the course of this journey, Jesus was able to spend some quiet hours in company with His disciples. It was at such a time, and in some secluded place, that, after He had been engaged in prayer,¹ one of the disciples who, as he listened, had been greatly stirred in spirit, ventured in his own name and in that of the others to make the request, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' The request was very acceptable to Jesus, and He answered it by repeating in their hearing a prayer which in His Sermon on the Mount He had given them long before (Matt. vi. 9-13), and which, on account of its being commended in this decided way to disciples, has ever since been known as the Lord's Prayer. He gave it to be *both a form of prayer and a model of prayer*,—a prayer the very words of which might appropriately be used by His disciples, and the substance of which presents everything that it is specially important to ask from God.

After granting the request of His disciple, Jesus proceeded to speak in an encouraging way of the efficacy of prayer. The heavenly Father, He said, is sure to give heed to the suppliant cry of His child, though He may not at once vouchsafe an

¹ The subject of prayer has a special interest for St. Luke. And it is from him, more than from any other of the evangelists, that we learn the important place which prayer had in the life of our Lord. It is he who tells us that, on occasion of our Saviour's baptism, it was as He prayed that the Holy Spirit descended on Him (iii. 21); that, immediately before the selection of the Twelve, Jesus 'went up into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God' (vi. 12); that, before the confession of His Christhood by the Twelve, 'He was alone praying' (ix. 18); that it was 'as He prayed' that His transfiguration took place (ix. 29); that at one time of His life 'He was withdrawing Himself into wilderness places and praying' (v. 16); and that in His agony in Gethsemane 'His sweat became as it were great drops of blood' (xxii. 44).

answer. Just as one going at midnight to the house of a friend for bread, if he continued knocking, would certainly obtain at length all that he desired, so God might be relied on to give His Holy Spirit to those earnestly and persistently pleading for this blessing (Luke xi. 1-13).

Generally speaking, the feeling manifested toward Jesus by the population through the midst of which He passed was decidedly favourable. One enthusiastic woman, as she listened to His teachings, broke forth into the exclamation that happy must be the mother who had such a son, and had to be told that more blessed still were they 'who hear the word of God and keep it' (xi. 27, 28). Mothers brought to Him their babes, that He might lay His hands on them and bless them, and, though rebuked by His disciples for doing so, had the joy of hearing the Master say, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God' (xviii. 15-17). Such was the confidence reposed in Him, that He was even asked to interpose between two brothers, and to prevail on the one of them who had obtained the larger share of the family inheritance to give to the other something more than had been bequeathed to him; a request which He declined to entertain, warning the one who urged it on Him against covetousness, and showing by the parable of 'The Rich Fool' how sad is the condition of him 'that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God' (xii. 13-21).

It was soon seen, however, that the same parties that had shown hostility to Him elsewhere stood equally opposed to Him in Peræa. His disregard of the ceremonial observances prescribed by religious tradition and punctiliously practised by the Pharisees, and His unsparing exposure and condemnation of the righteousness which they made their boast, powerfully contributed to this. Thus He healed on the Sabbath day a woman who for eighteen years had been under the dominion of an evil spirit, and had been reduced to a state of pitiable debility; and when the ruler of the synagogue in a tone of irritation charged

the people to come on any other day rather than that for healing, He denounced him as a hypocrite, who would refuse to a daughter of Abraham the consideration which any one would show to an ox or an ass (xiii. 11-17). Seated at dinner in the house of a Pharisee, and noticing that His host was dissatisfied with Him for not taking the precaution to free Himself from possible ceremonial defilement by washing His hands, He ventured to say that it was possible to make clean the outside of the cup or platter and to leave the inside of it full of pollution, and that this was what the Pharisees did,—that they gave much attention to the cleansing of the body, but were content that the heart should be defiled by many a sin (xi. 37-52).

On another occasion, being invited by a Pharisee of distinction to dine with him on the Sabbath, His sayings and doings gave manifold cause of offence. In addition to the guests, there were others present who wished to listen to the conversation, and among them there was a man afflicted with dropsy, whose case appealed to our Lord's compassion. 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day or not?' He asked of those around Him; and, when no answer was given, He at once healed the man. In the course of the entertainment He directed attention in a delicate but significant way to the excellence of self-denying humility. To His host He spoke of the desirableness of seeking to benefit others, rather than to please himself, recommending him to make a feast for the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, who had not wherewith to recompense him, but for his kindness to whom he would be amply rewarded at 'the resurrection of the just.' At this point one of the guests, who held the ordinary Jewish belief that, when the Messiah had set up His throne on earth, the saints of former days, rising from their graves, should share in the glories of His kingdom, exclaimed, 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!' And this led Jesus to hint in the parable of 'The Great Supper' that the long-expected kingdom of the Messiah had already been set up, that the Feast which was to follow on the establish-

ment of it had been spread, but that those in the first instance invited to it would not come, and that their place had to be filled up by others who had seemed little likely to be so favoured (xiv. 1-24).

On being asked afterwards by certain Pharisees when the kingdom of God might be expected to appear, He answered that its coming would not be marked by the accompaniments that usually attend the establishment of an earthly kingdom,—that, in point of fact, though they wot not of it, it had already been set up in the midst of them. ‘The kingdom of God,’ said He, ‘cometh not with observation ; neither shall they say, Lo, here ! or there ! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.’ And then, directing His discourse to His disciples, He told them that there would be another coming of the Son of man ; but that ‘first He must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation ;’ that His second coming would be unexpected and sudden, like the lightning that in an instant flashes from one end of heaven to the other ; and that it would be fraught with salvation to His waiting people, but with destruction to His foes. And He followed up these disclosures by the parable of ‘The Importunate Widow,’ with a view to stimulating His disciples to pray without ceasing for that day of deliverance, in the assurance that God would bestir Himself at length to avenge the cause of His elect (xvii. 20-xviii. 8).

A still plainer statement in regard to the moral corruption pervading Israel as a nation, and the judgments which it threatened to bring, was made by Jesus on occasion of His hearing of certain Galileans having been slaughtered in the temple by command of Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. What provocation had been given by these Galileans we cannot tell. But atrocities of this kind were committed by Pilate with little scruple (Joseph. *Antiq.* xviii. 3. 2, and 4. 1). In all likelihood, they had either assumed an attitude of revolt, or had come into violent collision with some other section of their fellow-worshippers, and soldiers sent in among them to suppress the

riot had mingled their blood with that of the sacrifices they had been offering. Jesus, when He had listened to the sad news, said to those who had brought it, 'Think ye that those Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they have suffered these things? I tell you, nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish.' Just as little, He declared, were the men who had recently been crushed by the fall of a tower in the Siloam quarter of Jerusalem to be regarded as greater sinners than their fellow-citizens in general. But the nation as a whole was corrupt, and, unless it repented, was doomed to destruction. It was like a fig-tree that for three years had borne no fruit, and had been spared only on account of earnest intercession made for it; but that, if it continued fruitless, must be cut down as a cumberer of the ground (xiii. 1-10).

At one time the Pharisaic party in Peræa showed open hostility to Jesus, and sought by ensnaring questions and provoking speeches to lead Him to say something that might put Him in their power (xi. 53, 54). But finding their opposition ineffectual, and likely only to harm themselves, it occurred to them that they might attain their object by posing as His friends, and leading Him, out of a regard for His own safety, to leave their country. Accordingly some of their number came to Him, as if to communicate important information of which they had become possessed, and said to Him, 'Get thee out, and go hence; for Herod would fain kill thee.' But Jesus was not to be deceived by their cunning device, and with grave irony gave them a message to carry to the monarch with whose designs they seemed so well acquainted. 'Go,' said He, 'and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected. Howbeit I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.' The words have an intentionally enigmatic character. But their meaning appears to be, that the work of Jesus on earth has its various stages, and that there will be given Him a time proportioned to each of these, which

neither Herod Antipas nor any other can abridge; and that therefore He will calmly journey and labour on till He completes it. For He is to finish His life and His work in Jerusalem,—in Jerusalem in which the prophets, as a rule, have met their fate, and in which it is befitting, therefore, that He, the greatest of the prophets, should perish (xiii. 31-35).

As our Lord proceeded on His way, He rose steadily in popular favour, till wherever He went He was followed by enthusiastic multitudes, just as in the palmy days of His Galilean ministry. But these crowds were composed of miscellaneous elements, and embraced many who, while thinking of becoming His disciples, had no conception of what discipleship really meant. And Jesus wished no man to follow Him without knowing what was implied in being a true follower of His. Hence He felt it necessary at length to turn to the multitudes thronging after Him, and to say, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.' In these words Jesus declared the fundamental requirement of discipleship to be self-sacrifice. The disciple must prefer his Lord to every one and everything, and must be ready to renounce whatever is dearest to him, and to act as if he hated it, when loyalty to his Lord makes of him this demand. The one who should enrol himself among His followers, without making up his mind to this, would, He declared, be like a man who should begin to build a tower without counting the cost of it, or a king who should enter on war without considering whether he had sufficient forces to put into the field (xiv. 25-33).

But among those who flocked around Jesus at this time there were many who listened with eager interest to His teachings, and were powerfully moved by them, and led to turn with penitent heart from their sins unto God. A large proportion of these consisted of the social outcasts known as 'publicans and sinners.' And Jesus welcomed them, and with all the earnestness of

tenderest love pled with them to leave the paths of sin, and to accept Him as their Saviour. But to the scribes and Pharisees, whose only way of dealing with sin was to outlaw it,—to drive it out from the heart of the sinner by the threatenings of law, or to drive the sinner himself outside the pale of the community of saints,—such conduct was incomprehensible. And unable to account for the love shown by Jesus to such persons, unless by supposing that he had no very deep dislike for their sin, they murmured, ‘This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.’ He heard the taunt, and triumphantly answered it in the three parables of ‘The Lost Sheep,’ ‘The Lost Piece of Silver,’ and ‘The Prodigal Son.’ Just as a shepherd who, out of a flock of a hundred sheep, loses one, will go after the wanderer, and seek it until he find it; just as a woman who loses one silver piece out of ten, will busy herself in searching for the missing coin, and will rejoice over it when it is found; just as a father who has but two sons, if one of them, leaving the home of his childhood, should plunge into a life of profligacy, but afterwards repent of his undutifulness, will pardon him, and fondly clasp him to his heart: so is it that Jesus concerns Himself most with deeply sinful men who most need His help. And His joy over the repenting sinner is a joy in which all Heaven shares (xv. 1–32).

In the parable of ‘The Pharisee and the Publican,’ spoken for the benefit of those ‘who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others,’ Jesus went still further, and declared that one who, thinking of himself as the greatest of sinners, should cast himself for help on divine mercy, would be far more acceptable to God than one who should seem to himself a just man needing no repentance (xviii. 9–14).

But if Pharisaic self-righteousness led many to think that they had no need of Jesus and of the salvation which He offered to men, worldliness exercised an influence quite as decided in indisposing others to the earnestness and self-denial requisite to following Him. And, knowing this, He strove to convince men that even self-interest should lead them to cast in their lot with

Him, as by doing so they were certain to be, on the whole, not losers, but gainers. By the parable of 'The Unjust Steward' He sought to show them the desirableness of making wise provision for the future; and, calling on them to extend their forethought beyond time into eternity, He assured them that the best thing they could do with wealth was to use it for the benefit of their fellow-men, and in this way to attach to themselves friends who would one day welcome them into 'the eternal tabernacles' (xvi. 1-9). And, in the parable of 'The Rich Man and Lazarus,' He asked even self-indulgent sensualists to consider whether a brief lifetime of worldly pleasure would not be purchased at too dear a price, if followed by the irretrievable loss of the soul (xvi. 19-31).

The apostles could not but feel that they had acted a very different part from those who allowed the possessions or pleasures of this world to come between them and the Saviour. And, on Peter's venturing to refer to this, and saying, 'Lo, we have left all and followed Thee; what then shall we have?' Jesus replied that, in 'the regeneration,' when He should sit on the throne of His glory, they also should sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Nor would any who should make the same sacrifice as they lose their reward; but every such one would receive the utmost good that this world could yield him, 'with persecutions,' and in the world to come eternal life. Yet Jesus would have liked had there been less of self-consciousness and self-confidence in His disciples, and less concern about the recompense they were to receive for their sacrifices; and therefore He added to His promise the significant word of warning, 'But many shall be last that are first, and first that are last;' following this up by the parable of 'The Labourers in the Vineyard,' the main purpose of which is to give lifelike illustration of this truth (Matt. xix. 27-xx. 16; Mark x. 28-31; Luke xviii. 28-30).

1. *How do you explain the fact that great part of the teachings which Luke connects with the Saviour's ministry in Peræa find a quite different place in Matthew's Gospel?*

2. *Which of the evangelists takes a special interest in the subject of prayer? Give instances.*
3. *How was Jesus generally received on His journey through Peræa?*
4. *What statements made by our Lord during this journey testify to the moral corruption pervading Israel as a nation?*
5. *How did Jesus differ from the Pharisees in His treatment of the openly and notoriously sinful?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. See Dr. Hanna's remarks on the distinctive tone of our Lord's teachings during His Peræan journey, in chap. ix. of *The Close of the Ministry*.

2. In Sermon II. of his University Sermons, entitled *The Pharisees*, Canon Mozley shows that whereas 'the Gospel was an active religion founded upon love, Pharisaism was an active religion founded upon egotism.' He finds in the fact that Pharisaism was 'a new form of evil in the world,' 'evil which was the parent of outward discipline and goodness,' the secret of our Lord's stern and uncompromising condemnation of it. In pp. 34-38 he presents with great clearness and power the reasons which led Jesus to prefer the publicans and sinners to the Pharisees.

LESSON XXIII.

FEAST OF DEDICATION AND RETURN TO PERÆA.

Read Luke x. 38-42, and John x. 22-42.

LEAVING the scene of His labours in Peræa, and crossing the Jordan, our Lord moved onward to Jerusalem. The Feast of Dedication, at which He desired to be present, commemorated the reconsecration of the temple to God by Judas Maccabæus in the year 164 B.C. It began on the 25th day of the month Chisleu,¹ the day on which the heroic champion of Jewish independence swept away from the temple every vestige of the worship of Jupiter Olympus, set up in it by Antiochus Epiphanes, the most impious and tyrannical of all Israel's oppressors, exactly three years before, and dedicated anew to Jehovah the sanctuary which had been so wantonly profaned. It lasted for eight days, and was celebrated with great rejoicings.

But, when near to the city,² He turned aside to the village of Bethany,³ to visit a family with the members of which He would

¹ Chisleu was the ninth month of the Jewish year, and embraced part of our November and December. It has been calculated that the 25th day of that month would in that year fall on the 20th December. This would be during winter (John x. 22), the rainy and cold season in Palestine.

² There is no reason for doubting that Luke has rightly given this visit to Bethany a place in this journey. He may have given it the precise place which it occupies because of the connection between the 'good part' chosen by Mary and the lawyer's question as to eternal life (Luke x. 25).

³ The modern village of El Azariyeh (so named from Lazarus) is situated near the foot of the eastern slope of Olivet, a little to the north of the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and is acknowledged by all travellers to occupy the site of the ancient Bethany (Herzog, vi. 563; Smith's *Bib. Dict.* i. 195).

seem to have on some former occasion made acquaintance. The family would appear to have been in easy, if not in affluent circumstances, and to have been held in high consideration by many of the leading residents in Jerusalem. It consisted of two sisters, Martha and Mary, and a brother named Lazarus, all of them believers in Jesus, and all of them bound to each other by ties of tenderest love. Martha, as being the elder sister, and the mistress of the household, wished to give so distinguished a guest a worthy reception, and set about preparing a suitable repast for Him and His disciples. But, in her anxiety to do all that her sense of propriety dictated, she became agitated and ‘cumbered about much serving.’ Mary, on the other hand, knowing that her sister was well able to do all that was required, seated herself at the Saviour’s feet, and eagerly drank in His words. But the burden laid on Martha seemed greater than she could bear, and she broke in with the remonstrance, ‘Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me,’—a complaint which drew from Jesus the gentle but faithful rebuke, ‘Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.’ To learn of Him was the one thing needful, and to make choice of that was to choose the good part.

After a short stay at Bethany, Jesus entered Jerusalem; and soon He was to be found walking in the temple, in the colonnade that ran along the eastern side of the outer court, to which, from its being in whole or in part a relic of the first temple, there was given the name of Solomon’s Porch (Joseph. *Antiq.* xix. 9. 7). This was a favourite resort of the people during winter; and Jesus, as He moved about in it discoursing with His disciples, could not but attract general notice. On one of the Feast days, accordingly, a considerable number of the leading men of the nation gathered around Him, saying, ‘How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly.’ The complaint would seem to have come, not from men who had

taken up an attitude of uncompromising hostility to Jesus, but rather from those favourably disposed towards Him, who would have been gratified had He openly declared Himself the Messiah. The Feast which they were engaged in celebrating, bringing up before them memories of the great deliverance from Syrian oppression two centuries ago vouchsafed to their fathers, would naturally awaken within them the longing for a similar emancipation from the yoke of Rome. They knew Jesus to be the possessor of supernatural powers, for they had got many an evidence of this. Might He not be stimulated to take up the rôle of the hero whose deeds they were commemorating, and to become another Hammerer, smiting and shivering Israel's enemies? If so, He must openly proclaim Himself the Messiah, and raise aloft His standard, and enter on His career of victory. It seemed to them that, if Jesus were the Christ, He *must* do this, and yet that He was not disposed to do it. But they were weary of delays, and could brook no further prolongation of their anxieties, and must insist on it that He should at once answer the question, 'Was He the Christ, or was He not?'

But Jesus could not answer the question when put to Him in this form. For He knew that His questioners had the most erroneous ideas as to the deliverance which the Christ was to achieve; and it was most undesirable that these ideas should come to be connected with Him. Hence He answered them, 'I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me.' He had in the most emphatic manner declared Himself the Christ; for what the Christ was *really* to be He had announced Himself as being. He had proclaimed Himself 'The Light of the world,' 'The Bread of life,' 'The Door into the sheepfold,' 'The Good Shepherd;' and, in saying that He was all this, He had affirmed Himself the Christ. But they would not believe in these declarations of His; for they had no wish for a Messiah of this kind. And just as little would they receive the evidence of His Christhood furnished in His works.

Having given this answer to the demand made of Him, Jesus reminded His hearers of what He had said at the Feast of Tabernacles about His sheep ; and, after telling them that their unbelief proved them to sustain no such relationship to Him, He declared of those who had Him for their Shepherd, 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.' The guarantee of their safety is this, that no one is able to pluck them out of His hand, or out of His Father's hand ; for 'I and my Father,' said He, 'are one.' And, in saying so, He claimed for Himself omnipotence, and based the claim on the unity subsisting between Himself and God.

But even those of our Lord's hearers who were disposed to think of Him as a prophet, or as the Christ, were taken aback by such a claim as this. It seemed to them that He stood convicted of the greatest crime that could be laid to the charge of an Israelite, the crime of blasphemy. And, seizing on stones that seem to have been lying at hand in connection with some repairs upon the temple, they were about to give Him His deservings on the spot. But with perfect calmness He asked them for which of the many good works that He had done they were about to stone Him. And the unexpected question arrested their proceedings ; for it was difficult for any one to deny that the works of Jesus were good works, and proved Him a true benefactor of mankind. So that they had to turn away from His works to His words, and to say, 'For a good work we stone thee not ; but for blasphemy ; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.' The objectors plainly thought of God and man as separated from each other by an impassable gulf, so that one who was man could not possibly be also God. But Jesus reminds them of the words of Ps. lxxxii. 6, addressed to the judges of Israel, 'I have said, Ye are gods,'—that name being given them because of their being called in God's name and by His authority to dispense justice. And He asks whether, in view of these words of Scripture, it can be said that the One whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is

chargeable with blasphemy for calling Himself the Son of God. Again also He appeals to His works as proving the intimate union subsisting between Him and His Father, saying, 'If ye believe not me, believe the works.' The stones meanwhile had fallen from their hands ; and, though they were still disposed to lay hold on Him, and drag Him before the authorities, His look of majesty kept them from doing so, and He passed out of the midst of them unharmed.

This was the last public appearance of Jesus at the Feast of Dedication. It showed Him that it was impossible to remain longer in Jerusalem without precipitating a collision with the priesthood, and bringing His work abruptly to a close. Hence, leaving the city and its neighbourhood without delay, He once more sought the country beyond Jordan, where He had recently been so favourably received. Fixing on Bethabara, the scene of His baptism, as His headquarters, He laboured there with much acceptance, probably for not less than two months.¹ The memory of the Baptist's earnest teachings had not as yet passed away. And it was felt that in Jesus there had appeared the One to whom John had so often pointed, and of whom he had spoken as far greater than himself. Men, as they listened to the words of Jesus, and looked on His mighty works, said, 'All things that John spake of this man were true.' And 'many believed on Him there.'

¹ Between the concluding day of the Feast of Dedication and the 15th of Nisan, the first day of the Passover week, there intervened a period of three and a half months. During a considerable part of this time Jesus was engaged in active labours in Bethabara and its vicinity. Yet, with the exception of the brief notice in John x. 40-42, there has been preserved no record of these labours. With the view of filling up the gap, many have supposed that in the section of Luke's Gospel, extending from x. 1 to xviii. 30, there is presented an account of the sayings and doings of our Lord during both the first and the second Peræan ministry. And the conjecture is quite permissible. But, even if it be accepted, we have no means of deciding what portion of the material should be assigned to the first of these periods, and what to the second. So that it has seemed to us better to treat this section of Luke's Gospel as giving a continuous narrative of what took place during the journey preceding the Feast of Dedication.

1. *When was the Feast of Dedication observed? And what did it commemorate?*
2. *What was there in the memories awakened by this Feast fitted to lead to the demand, 'If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly'?*
3. *Why did Jesus not at once comply with this demand?*
4. *Explain the argument used by Jesus on this occasion to justify His claiming God as His Father.*
5. *How long did our Lord probably remain at Bethabara after the Feast of Dedication?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. For the history of Judas Maccabæus, see Joseph. *Antiq.* Book XII. chaps. vii.–xi. The institution of the Feast of Dedication is narrated in chap. vii. 6, 7.

2. In Sermon XXII. vol. III. of Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, entitled 'The Good Part of Mary,' Martha is taken as representative of the life of active Christian service, Mary as illustrative of the life of contemplation.

LESSON XXIV.

FROM THE FEAST OF DEDICATION TO THE LAST PASSOVER JOURNEY.

Read Matt. xx. 17-34; Mark x. 32-52; Luke xviii. 31-xix. 27; John xi. 1-57.

OUR Lord had been for some considerable time at Bethabara, busily engaged in teaching the multitudes that resorted to Him there, when He received from the sisters of Bethany the touching message, 'Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.' Having dismissed the messenger with the comforting assurance, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby,' He continued for two days quietly prosecuting His work. But on the third day He made to His disciples the unexpected intimation that He was about to set out for Judæa again, following that up by the explanatory statement, 'Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep;' and, when they failed to understand that, adding in plain terms, 'Lazarus is dead.' After in vain remonstrating with Him concerning the risk He must run in again venturing among those who so recently were on the point of stoning Him, they declared their willingness to accompany Him, though it should be to certain death, saying with Thomas, 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him.'

It was probably on the very day that Jesus received this message, that Lazarus passed away. His interment would, according to Oriental usages, take place a few hours after death. The journey to Bethany, undertaken after two days' delay, would occupy another day. So that, on His arrival, He found that

Lazarus 'had been in the tomb four days already.' On the news of His approach spreading through the village, Martha at once went forth to meet Him, and gave plaintive utterance alike to her faith and sorrow in the words, 'Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.' 'Thy brother shall rise again,' said Jesus ; and when Martha, but little comforted by the assurance, said that she knew that he would rise again on the resurrection-day, He added, 'I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' When Mary had followed, attended by a company of weeping friends, Jesus, who could not refrain from mingling His tears with theirs, went with them to the grave. Arrived in front of it, He bade the bystanders remove the stone which closed it ; and then, after offering a few words of thanksgiving to God for hearing His prayer, He cried with a loud voice to the sleeper, 'Lazarus, come forth.' And the summons was instantaneously obeyed. The body, which had become a prey to corruption, was delivered from its power ; and the soul re-entered it, to animate it as before ; and Lazarus was seen coming forth from the doorway of the tomb, bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face bound about with a napkin. At the command of Jesus his eyes were unbandaged, and his limbs unfettered ; and he who for four days had been a tenant of the tomb, accompanied his sisters to their home. Thus the sickness of Lazarus was not 'unto death ;' for it did not end in death, but in life. The result of it, as Jesus foretold, was to bring glory to God ; and the Son of God was glorified thereby (John xi. 1-44).

It was desirable that the leaders of the Jewish nation should be informed of the resurrection of Lazarus. For, of all the proofs given by Jesus of His sustaining a close relationship to God, and of His being charged with some high and important mission, there was none so well fitted to produce overpowering conviction as His having brought back from the unseen world a departed spirit, and having reunited it to the body which it had left, a

body that had actually become the prey of corruption. It would seem, however, that it was by those who were hostile to Jesus that information of this startling event was brought to the authorities; for it is said that many who beheld what Jesus did, believed on Him; 'but some of them went away to the Pharisees,' and told them of what He had done. The intelligence excited and alarmed the priesthood. They had thought that Jesus, terrified by their threats, had withdrawn Himself to a safe distance from Jerusalem; and that the ban of excommunication, suspended over all who might avow their belief in Him, would effectually deter men from becoming His disciples. And they learn that the Mount of Olives is all that separates between Him and them, and that He has but now wrought a miracle far surpassing anything previously attributed to Him. They must get the Sanhedrim immediately assembled to decide on what is to be done. A meeting is forthwith convened, and on every side there is put the question, 'What do we? for this man doeth many signs.' It is felt that, if He be let alone, He will come to be universally believed in as the Messiah; that the people will gather around Him and seek to force Him to head a national rising against Rome; and that any such revolutionary movement must end in Israel's ruin. After much discussion of the matter, and the making of endless proposals, the Council finds itself in a position of utter helplessness; when the high priest Caiaphas, its president, impatiently ejaculates, 'Ye know nothing at all, nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.' The suggestion is, that the Council, ruled by considerations of political expediency alone, should ask itself this one question, 'Is the nation to be sacrificed, or should Jesus rather perish?' Thus, whatever might be said of His miracles, and whatever His character might be, or His claims, for expediency's sake He must die.

The counsel was that of a crafty, unscrupulous worldling, and should have been abhorrent to every member of the Sanhedrim

within whom there was a conscience. But it had the merit of suggesting an outlet from perplexing difficulties. Hence it was adopted ; and, in conformity with it, an edict was issued that, if any man knew where Jesus was, he should forthwith give information of it, in order that He might be seized. Yet, though this was the meaning of the counsel given by Caiaphas, the words in which he embodied it, taken in another sense, state the real cause and object of the death of Christ. Being high priest that year, he unconsciously prophesied that 'Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad' (John xi. 47-52).

Knowing the designs that were harboured against Him, our Lord felt it desirable to withdraw to a safe distance from Jerusalem, and, turning His steps in a northerly direction, found for Himself and His disciples a secluded retreat in the little town of Ephraim.¹ His stay in this quiet resting-place must have extended over about a month. He would seem to have during that time avoided publicity, and to have devoted His attention in a peculiar manner to His disciples. It was well that they should be prepared for all that was before their Lord and them. And this could best be done if He drew them very close to Himself, if He made full revelation of Himself to them, and if, in the plainest terms, He told them of the strange and sad events on which they were soon to look. Doubtless, also, during His stay at Ephraim, Jesus was in frequent and close communion with His heavenly Father. Just as, when He was on the point of entering on His public course, He withdrew Himself into the wilderness of Judæa to spend forty days in meditation and prayer ; so, when nearing the close of His ministry, He must have felt it desirable to have a like season of solitude, and to employ much of it in a similar way. Thus both He and His disciples would go forth

¹ Ephraim is probably the same as Ophrah or Ephraim mentioned in 2 Chron. xiii. 19, which lay five miles east of Bethel, and about twenty north of Jerusalem. Its site is occupied by the modern village of Et-Taiyibeh.

from their retirement, the better braced for the terrible ordeal through which they were to pass (John xi. 53, 54).

At last, however, the Passover Feast drew near, on occasion of which the Lamb of God, laden with the sin of the world, was to be offered up in sacrifice; and Jesus and His disciples, issuing from Ephraim, passed along the northern border of Judæa to the point at which it is crossed by the road leading southwards to Jerusalem. At times He pressed onward in advance of the Twelve, like one whose eye is on a goal that cannot be too speedily reached; and it was with amazement and awe that they followed Him (Mark x. 32). And then He would take them aside, and with deep solemnity tell them, 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit upon Him, and kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again' (Mark x. 33, 34).

On their descending from the hill country into the valley of the Jordan, they would seem to have fallen in with the caravan of Galilean pilgrims going up to the Feast, and to have prosecuted the journey to Jerusalem in their company. And among these there must have been hundreds who viewed the claims of Jesus with favour, and not a few who acknowledged themselves His enthusiastic admirers. To such it would be a welcome surprise to meet with Him; and with joy would they accompany Him to the holy city, to look on the honours anticipated for Him there. And their fond expectations would do much to dissipate the anxieties of the disciples, and to re-ignite their hope of seeing their Master enthroned as Israel's king. It would appear to have been in these circumstances that James and John, at the instigation of their mother Salome, asked Jesus to promise that, when He should be invested with kingly power, they should be seated, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, as the most honoured of all His servants. But the foolish request was refused; and it was intimated that there would be given to

the two brothers a distinction of a very different kind, that of drinking of the cup which He had to drink of, and of being baptized with the baptism wherewith He must be baptized (Matt. xx. 20-28 ; Mark x. 35-45).

Jesus and His disciples, accompanied by the great crowd of Galilean pilgrims, were drawing near to Jericho,¹ when two blind men, seated not far from the city-gate begging,² on learning that He who had given sight to many, and of whom they had come to think as the Messiah, was passing by, cried aloud, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David !' and, being given an opportunity of stating their request, asked that their eyes might be opened, and obtained the blessing craved (Matt. xx. 29-34 ; Mark x. 46-52 ; Luke xviii. 35-43). As He passed through the city, Zacchæus the chief of the publicans stationed there,³ who had obtained for himself a most unenviable reputation on account of his rapacious exactions, but had been led to take a deep interest in Jesus, having climbed up into a sycamore tree⁴ to get a sight of Him, was to his amazement addressed in the gracious words : 'Zacchæus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house ;' and, instantaneously transformed into a

¹ Jericho, the city of palm trees, was distant about fifteen miles from Jerusalem, in the Jordan valley. The modern village of Er Riha is generally recognised as standing on its site. But Tristram (*Land of Israel*, p. 214) favours rather the claims of Âin Sultân, situated a short distance off.

² Mark gives to one of the blind men the name Bartimæus. Luke represents the miracle as taking place when our Lord was entering Jericho ; Matthew and Mark, when He was leaving it. Trench (*Miracles*, p. 428) supposes the application to have been made when He was entering, and to have been renewed and granted when He was leaving.

³ There must have been a considerable body of custom-house officials permanently stationed at Jericho to gather the revenue derived from the produce of the balsam trees which abounded in its neighbourhood, and also from the stream of merchandise perpetually flowing through it. Zacchæus was the superintendent of this army of tax-gatherers.

⁴ The tree into which the publican climbed must not be confounded with the Oriental plane, common by the streams of Northern Galilee, but was the sycamore fig (*Ficus Sycomorus*). It is not yet extinct in the Plain of Jericho (*Tristram*, p. 216). It is an umbrageous and low-branched tree, very easy to climb.

lowly penitent, did His bidding, and had the joy of receiving the Saviour, and of hearing from His lips the welcome truth, 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke xix. 1-10).

Either at the table of Zacchæus that day, or when He was about to resume His journey, for the sake of all who were expecting His immediate enthronement as the Messiah King, Jesus sought in the significant parable of The Pounds to warn His hearers, that first He must take His departure from the midst of Israel, and that only on His return could He make full assertion of His sovereignty, and give both to friends and foes what they had merited at His hands (Luke xix. 11-27).

1. *Mention, and distinguish from each other, the various instances in which Jesus raised the dead.*
2. *Was the counsel given by Caiaphas justifiable? Give reasons for your opinion of it.*
3. *Where is the town of Ephraim? And why did Jesus withdraw to it?*
4. *What miracle did Jesus work at Jericho? And what differences appear in the accounts of it given by the first three evangelists respectively?*

LESSON XXV.

ARRIVAL AT BETHANY, AND ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

Read Matt. xxi. 1-11, xxvi. 6-13; Mark xi. 1-11, xiv. 3-9; John xii. 1-19.

THE journey from Jericho to Jerusalem was usually accomplished in one day. And, as the country lying between the two places was well-nigh uninhabited, it may be regarded as certain that on the evening of the day on which our Lord left the house of Zacchæus, He and His disciples reached the foot of Mount Olivet. Arrived there, they turned aside to Bethany, while the great body of the Galilean pilgrims, in whose company they had been travelling, pressed on to the Holy City. It was 'six days before the Passover'¹ (John xii. 1) when Jesus arrived at the little village, and proceeded to the house of Martha and Mary, to make it His home during the last week of His earthly life. It was probably before sunset on Friday when He entered Bethany. With sunset of that evening the Jewish Sabbath began, a Sabbath which He would seem to have spent in quiet in the society of His disciples and other beloved friends.

It was customary for supper, the evening meal, to be spread when the Sabbath had closed. And supper accordingly was prepared for Jesus and His disciples.² It was in the house of

¹ The paschal lamb was killed 'at the going down of the sun' on the 14th Nisan (Deut. xvi. 6). And the Feast began 'in that night' (Ex. xii. 8), *i.e.* after sunset, and therefore on the 15th Nisan. The first day of the Feast in that year fell on a Friday. And it seems, therefore, that it must have been on the Friday of the preceding week that Jesus arrived at Bethany. The Saturday would be the Jewish Sabbath.

² Matthew and Mark have been regarded as putting this supper only two days before the Passover. Really, however, they do not assign it a date, but

‘Simon the leper’¹ (Matt. xxvi. 6) that Jesus was invited to sup; Lazarus being present, not as the host, but as ‘one of them that sat at the table with Him’ (John xii. 2), and Martha being occupied in ministering to the guests. Mary also entered the chamber as the feast proceeded, carrying in her hand an alabaster jar full of spikenard, one of the most precious of ointments. Coming behind the couch on which Jesus reclined, she began to pour the fragrant unguent on His head (Matt. xxvi. 7), and afterwards on His feet (John xii. 3), and then wiped His dripping feet with her hair. It was the work of a few moments, and was so manifestly the expression of an impassioned love, that ere a word could be interposed, the deed was done, and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. But Mary’s deed was offensive in the extreme to one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was soon overheard murmuring, ‘Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence,² and given to the poor?’ (John xii. 5). And so plausible did the objection seem, that many of the disciples were carried away by it, and angrily asked, ‘Why was this waste of the ointment made?’ (Mark xiv. 4). The real cause, however, of the dissatisfaction of Judas was, that had Mary’s ointment been sold for its worth in money, and had the money been given to Jesus for distribution to the poor, it would have been handed to *him* as keeper of the common purse, and he could have pilfered a portion of it and applied it to his own uses (John xii. 6).

But Jesus, hearing what was said, defended Mary’s deed. He declared that she had come beforehand to anoint Him for His burial; that since He was to be but a short time now with His

merely mention it in connection with the traitorous proposal of Judas, which the anointing at Bethany did something to originate.

¹ Simon the leper had, of course, been cured of his leprosy before this, and probably by Jesus. He has been thought of as the husband of Martha, or as her father; but all that is certain is that he was either a kinsman or intimate friend of the family.

² The value of the Roman penny, or denarius, being $7\frac{1}{2}$ d., the quantity of spikenard in Mary’s possession, if worth 300 pence or more (Mark xiv. 5), must have cost about £10.

disciples, it would have been well if, instead of chiding Mary, they had been giving evidences of their love such as hers; and that, wherever His gospel should be preached throughout the whole world, what she had done should be told for a memorial of her. Judas, however, instead of profiting by the rebuke administered to his avarice, resented it; and, convinced more deeply than ever that worldly gain was not to be the reward of those who followed Jesus, began, from this time, to entertain the thought of deserting Him.

Besides the disciples of Jesus, a good many of His Galilean adherents would seem to have remained in Bethany over the Sabbath, in order to be near Him. And, when the news of His arrival had been carried to Jerusalem, a large accession was made to their numbers; pilgrims from all parts flocking to the little village to get a sight both of Him and of Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead (John xii. 9). Hence, on the following day, when Jesus and His disciples appeared, they were surrounded by an eagerly expectant multitude, desirous to accompany them to the city. Out from the gates of Jerusalem also there began to stream crowds of men, moved partly by curiosity, and partly by fervent Messianic hopes, to welcome the approach of One of whom many were thinking as the Christ (John xii. 12, 13).

When Jesus and those with Him had gone some part of the way on foot, and were now within sight of the village of Bethphage,¹ He sent on toward it two of His disciples, to bring to Him an ass with her colt which they would find 'tied at a door without in the open street' (Mark xi. 4, Rev. Ver.). The colt was one on which never man had sat; and, when it had been brought to Him, and His disciples had covered it with their garments, He took His seat on it, and rode onward to the city, while the mother of the colt moved on quietly by its side. He wished to bring under the eye of the onlookers a picture which

¹ Bethphage (*i.e.* house of figs) appears to have been at no great distance from Bethany, on or near to the southernmost of the three roads crossing the Mount of Olives (Luke xix. 23).

prophecy had painted long before in the words, 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass' (Zech. ix. 9). The disciples do not seem to have remembered this prediction at the time, or to have seen in what their Lord was doing the fulfilment of it (John xii. 16). But they felt that in the style in which He proposed to enter Jerusalem there was something profoundly significant; and, interpreting it as meaning that He was at last about to proclaim Himself the Messiah, they were filled with joy. And they and the multitude accompanying them began to strew the road before Him with their garments and with palm-branches, as if auguring for Him a career of victory. When they had reached the crest of the hill, they were met by those coming forth from the city to give welcome to Jesus; and, their enthusiasm kindling at the sight, they broke forth into a loud shout of triumph. The shout was caught up and re-echoed by those whose coming had evoked it; and now on every side there were to be seen palm-branches waving, and the air was filled with tumultuous and jubilant rejoicings. And, the two companies uniting, 'they that went before, and they that followed' (Mark xi. 9), formed one great procession, and 'the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, saying, "Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest"' (Luke xx. 37, 38). 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they shouted again and again, giving Him the name familiarly applied to the long-expected Redeemer, and expressing the joyful assurance that the kingdom of their father David was now about to be restored.

Many of those who took part in this demonstration did so from a deep conviction that Jesus was indeed the heaven-anointed King. Others, as they listened to the exultant acclamations rising all around them, were carried away by the electric power of sympathy. There were comparatively few who were able to

remain unmoved amidst this display of enthusiasm. But there were some; and these, coming to Jesus, asked Him to restrain and quiet His disciples. It was an ill-timed interposition, and brought on those who made it the indignant rebuke, 'I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out' (Luke xix. 40). Thus Jesus declared the testimony borne to Him by His disciples to be no more than the simple truth, and to be a testimony that had been withheld long enough,—so long that, if men could not be found to bear it, it were not wonderful if the very stones by the wayside were endowed with vitality and voice to make proclamation of His Christhood.

At length the procession reached a point at which Jerusalem in all its glory burst upon the view. Looking across the valley of the Kedron, Jesus and the multitudes accompanying Him saw the city of God sitting queen-like on her throne of hills, her palaces glistening in the sunshine, and her pinnacled temple rising majestically towards heaven. And every footstep was for the moment arrested, and every voice hushed; and to those who surrounded the Saviour it seemed as if the august city which stood before them were worthy to be the dwelling-place of the King whom they were about to introduce to her. But Jesus Himself had very different thoughts, and was mastered by emotions of a very different kind. As He beheld the city, He wept over it,¹ saying, 'If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!'—and, unable to finish the sentence, He added in faltering accents, 'But now they are hid from thine eyes.' For He well knew that Jerusalem would give Him no such reception as His enthusiastic followers were reckoning on, that it was but a transient applause with which He was now being greeted, and that the blessings which He yearned to bestow on Israel were certain to be cast contemptuously away. He saw also that Jerusalem's crowning sin

¹ The exact spot on which our Lord stood when He burst into this funereal wail over Jerusalem seems to be that described in Dean Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 193.

would bring on her a terrible retribution. And in a few pregnant words He foretold what that retribution should be: 'The days shall come upon thee,' said He, 'when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee,¹ and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation' (Luke xix. 41-44).

The tears and lamentations of Jesus, coming in so strangely in the midst of a scene of tumultuous rejoicing, must have deeply impressed and awed the more thoughtful of His followers, and probably did something to moderate the enthusiasm of all. Yet the procession moved onward again, and, crossing the Kedron valley, entered Jerusalem with many a demonstration of joy. The unusual stir made by the entrance of such a band of pilgrims, and by their shouts of 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' drew general attention to the One whose coming was heralded in a manner so remarkable. 'All the city was stirred;' and men, gathering around, eagerly asked, 'Who is this?' and got for answer, 'This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee' (Matt. xxi. 10, 11). But it was not the desire of Jesus to excite a popular commotion, and in this way to provoke a conflict either with the religious or the civil authorities. Though He meant to make proclamation of His Messiahship to all Israel assembled at this Passover Feast, He would do so in such a manner as to show what kind of Messiah men were to expect in Him. The necessity for selecting a lamb suitable for the Paschal Feast on this day, the 10th of Nisan (Ex. xi. 3), may have furnished Him and His disciples with a plea for going apart by themselves, and may also have facilitated the breaking up of the multitudes that hung upon His footsteps. In whatever manner it came about He was able in the course of the day to enter the temple without any attendant throng. Nor did He engage in teaching or in works of any kind fitted to attract to Himself public notice. All

¹ See Joseph. *Bell. Jud.*, book v. chap. vi. 2.

that He did was to make a calm, keen inspection of everything, the results of which were afterwards to appear. 'And, when He had looked round about upon all things, it being now eventide, He went out unto Bethany with the Twelve' (Mark xi. 11).

1. *What reasons are there for thinking that it was on Friday, and a week before His death, that Jesus arrived at Bethany?*
2. *Show that the 'two days' mentioned by Matthew (xxvi. 2) and Mark (xiv. 1) do not come into collision with the 'six days' spoken of by John (xii. 1).*
3. *What prophecy found its fulfilment in the mode of our Lord's approach to Jerusalem on Palm-Sunday?*
4. *How do you account for the enthusiasm displayed by the disciples and the multitude on this occasion?*

LESSON XXVI.

SECOND DAY OF PASSION WEEK.

(*Monday, 11th Nisan.*)

(Read Matt. xxi. 12-22 ; Mark xi. 12-24 ; Luke xix. 45-48 ; John xii. 20-36.)

DURING His last week on earth it was our Lord's custom to spend the day at Jerusalem, and at nightfall to leave the city for Bethany or some still more secluded spot. 'Every day,' Luke tells us (xxi. 37), 'He was teaching in the temple ; and every night He went out and lodged in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives.' He chose this quiet retreat, partly for safety's sake, and partly because it gave Him the opportunity of much confidential converse with His disciples, and of lonely meditation and prayer. Some of these nights He may have spent in the bosom of that family, the members of which were peculiarly dear to Him ; others of them He may have spent in such solitudes as the olive-grove of Gethsemane.¹

On the morning after His triumphal entry into the city, He and

¹ Matthew (xxi. 17) and Mark (xi. 11, 12) speak of Bethany as the place to which Jesus was wont to retire at evening during Passion Week. Luke says that every night He abode in the Mount of Olives (xxi. 37). It is possible, however, that the mention of Bethany is not to be held as stating that Jesus stayed in any house in that village, but rather as indicating in a general way the locality to which He betook Himself. The word *αὐλιζομαι*, used both by Matthew and Luke, and translated 'lodged' or 'abode,' often means to bivouac in the open air. It would have been perilous for Jesus to lodge constantly in any one house. It is noteworthy also that, in speaking of Gethsemane, Luke says (xxii. 39), 'He went, *as He was wont*, to the Mount of Olives.'

His disciples were at an early hour on the way to the temple. And, as they passed over Olivet, they saw at a distance by the wayside a fig-tree covered with a profusion of foliage. Though it was not as yet the time of figs (Mark xi. 13), yet as the fruit forms itself on the fig-tree before the leaves come out on it, it seemed as if something might be expected on this tree. And Jesus, not having as yet broken His fast, and being hungry, drew near to it, 'if haply He might find anything thereon;' but when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves. 'No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever,' said He, as He looked on it; and immediately His word took effect, and the fig-tree withered away. So suddenly and so thoroughly did decay pass over it, that the next morning when Jesus and His disciples again came to it, they saw it 'dried up from the roots' (Mark xi. 20). A fruit-tree capable of producing nothing but leaves was not worth preserving. It was better that it should at once be sentenced to death, than that it should stand by the wayside with all the appearance of luxuriant fruitfulness to mock the hopes of the fainting traveller. Such a tree also, belying its fair promise by its shameful barrenness, brought before the disciples the lifelike image of a man or nation that has the form of godliness without the power thereof; and its fate foretold the doom which in every case a showy but empty religious profession might expect. And the swiftness with which, in the case of the barren fig-tree, judgment followed on the word of Jesus, said to those who had chosen Him as their Lord, and were fellow-workers with Him, 'Have faith in God' (Mark xi. 22).

When He and His disciples had entered the city, the children of Jerusalem, who had been greatly struck by the triumphal procession of the day before, began to follow in their train, and to raise anew the jubilant shout, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' For they had often heard of the rod that should come forth from the stem of Jesse (Isa. xi. 1), and should bring redemption to Israel, and it had gladdened them to learn from the lips of their

seniors that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth this long-expected deliverer had come. Venturing to follow Jesus even within the precincts of the temple, they made its courts resound with their joyous cries. But to the grave priests and learned scribes this shouting seemed a violation of all decorum. It annoyed and chagrined them also, that even the children should be acknowledging the Messiahship of one whom *they* had resolved to reject. So they came to Jesus, and in tones of reproof asked Him, 'Hearest thou what these say?' 'Yea,' answered He, 'did ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?' And in the answer there was more than met the ear; for it reminded them that David (Ps. viii. 2) had spoken of God as sometimes using the adoring acknowledgments of children for the purpose of silencing His enemies (Matt. xxi. 15, 16).

But Jesus feels it incumbent on Him to brave the displeasure of the temple officials in a still more decided way. The desecration of His Father's house, which three years ago he had stopped, is now going on as openly as ever. Great part of the Court of the Gentiles is used as a market for the sale of the animals to be offered in sacrifice. The money-changers are seated at their tables as before. There is much unseemly noise accompanying the transactions engaged in. And the eager appetite for gain, which has in all ages characterized the Jew, leads to not a little fraud. This part of the temple has also become a common thoroughfare; and people going from one part of the city to another pass through it for the purpose of shortening their journey, carrying with them any bundle they may be charged to deliver. Things are in a worse condition now than at any former time. And Jesus, as He looks on the scandalous scene, cannot restrain His indignation. He drives forth cattle-dealers, cattle, and money-changers as before. Those who are making a thoroughfare of the temple He treats with less severity, but with equal firmness, since their offence sprang rather from thoughtlessness than from contempt for the sanctity of God's

house : ' He would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple ' (Mark xi. 16).

After cleansing the temple of those whose deeds had been thus polluting it, He vindicated His conduct to those whom such an extraordinary occurrence brought crowding around Him. ' He taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers ' (Mark xii. 17). God had said through Isaiah (lvi. 7), ' Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.' But the part of it expressly set apart for the nations outside of Israel, ' the sons of the stranger,' had been turned to very different uses ; and from it there ascended, not the voice of Gentile prayer, but a noise as of robbers wrangling over their booty. The state of things had been reached, described in the words, ' Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?' (Jer. vii. 11).

Thus, as at the first, so at the last Passover of His ministry, Jesus takes up the position of one who has a right to preside over the house of God, and authoritatively to determine what may be permitted, and what may not be permitted, within its courts. He announces Himself to be One who has a closer relationship to God than priest or high priest ; and, in doing so, He seeks to lead all men to understand that He is the Christ.

Close on this manifestation of His majesty there followed many a touching evidence of His tender mercy. ' The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple ; and He healed them ' (Matt. xxi. 14). Many such were brought to Him to get His help, and all who sought it obtained it. Probably some hours were spent in such works of healing. And even the most unfriendly of critics had to keep silence, as they looked on and ' saw the wonderful things He did.'

Among those who had come up to worship at this Feast, and who gathered around Jesus as He stood in the Court of the

Gentiles, there were certain Greeks,¹ proselytes to the Jewish faith, who had become deeply interested in the promises pointing to a Saviour who should be, not only the glory of God's people Israel, but a light to lighten the nations lying in darkness, and had been led to think that surely that Saviour had at length appeared. And they wished to get closer to Jesus, to look on Him, to speak to Him, and to satisfy themselves that the Saviour He really was. Accordingly they communicated to Philip their desire, saying, 'Sir, we would see Jesus.' And he, after mentioning the request to Andrew, in company with him, brought it before the Saviour. The stage which our Lord's work had now reached, however, forbade His granting to these interesting strangers the private interview which they wished. But their request greatly moved Him. For it had a significance which the two disciples who reported it wot not of. It marked the first occasion on which Gentiles had come to Him, revealing an anxiety springing from a purely spiritual source. It was the first indication of that deep and universal interest which should be taken in Him throughout the Gentile world. It showed, as nothing else had previously done, that He was indeed 'the Desire of all nations,' and that the hour was close at hand when He should be presented to the whole world as its Saviour. And Jesus, recognizing this, said with deep emotion, 'The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.'

But as He thinks of the glory that lies before Him, He is reminded of the cost at which it must be purchased. And He says that, just as a corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, ere it could produce fruit, so He must yield up His life ere the world can find in Him its Saviour. This brings clearly before Him the sacrificial sufferings through which He must pass, and, as He looks at them, He shudders. 'Now is my soul troubled,' says He, 'and what shall I say?' He feels pressed to speak to God, but knows not well what to say, and with

¹ They were "Ἕλληνες, not 'Ἑλληνισταί,—Greeks, not such Greek-speaking Jews as are referred to in Acts vi. 1, and elsewhere.

childlike simplicity confesses it. At last He says, 'Father, save me from this hour!' or rather, He has a strong inclination to say this, but will not say it, for He remembers that He has come to this hour for the very purpose of passing through it to the glory to which it is to lead Him. And therefore He substitutes for this cry of the flesh the very different petition, 'Father, glorify Thy name!' And to this prayer the Father, who has been looking on the conflict that has been brought to such a triumphant issue, cannot refrain from giving audible answer. He does so in the words of majesty that reverberate through the temple courts, 'I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The words fell distinctly on the ear of Jesus, and of some at least of the disciples, and were recognized as the words of God. To others of the bystanders, however, it appeared but like the noise of thunder, or, at the most, as if an angel had spoken to Him.

And now Jesus expressed the confident assurance that judgment had been passed on the one who had too long been the Prince of this world, and that he was on the eve of being dethroned. He added also that He Himself would obtain the dominion which was about to pass out of Satan's hands. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth,' said He, 'will draw all men to myself.' The cross would lead Him to the throne; the manifestation of His love for men in offering Himself up a sacrifice for them would win for Him their love and willing submission.

But the priesthood and the leaders of the people, as they listened to these words, regarded Jesus with a deeper dislike; and 'He departed, and did hide Himself from them' in the solitudes of the Mount of Olives (John xii. 20-36).

1. *What considerations favour the supposition that our Lord spent the nights of Passion Week in the open air rather than under any roof?*
2. *What lessons was the curse pronounced on the barren fig-tree designed to teach?*

3. *Point out the differences between the first cleansing of the temple by Jesus and the second.*
4. *Why was our Lord so much moved by the desire expressed by certain Greeks to see Him?*
5. *Mention the different occasions on which Jesus was declared by a voice from heaven to be One very dear to God.*

LESSON XXVII.

THIRD DAY OF PASSION WEEK.

(*Tuesday, 12th Nisan.*)

Read Matt. xxi. 23-xxv. 46 ; Mark xi. 27-xiii. 37 ; Luke xx. 1-xxi. 37.

ON the day following that signalized by the cleansing of the temple, Jesus had no sooner appeared within its courts than He found that He must face a day of conflict. He was at once met by a deputation of the chief priests and elders, and asked, 'By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?' It would have been easy for Him to answer that He had divine authority for doing all that they were disposed to call in question. But the answer would only have led to the further demand, that He should give proof of possessing such an authority; and no evidence which He might have adduced would have been accepted as satisfactory. Hence, instead of answering their question, He intimated His willingness to do so on condition of their first giving Him an answer to this question: 'The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men?' If they acknowledged the divine mission of the Baptist, Jesus would remind them of the emphatic testimony borne by John to Him, and could call on them to receive Him as the One to whom such unimpeachable testimony had been borne. They saw this clearly enough: and yet it did not suit them to deny the Baptist's mission; for to have done so would have been to forfeit the confidence of the people, who were agreed in regarding John as a prophet. And they had no resource but to avoid both horns of the dilemma by giving the humiliating

answer, 'We cannot tell.' It would have been idle to waste further words on men who could not tell whether one who had done such a work as the Baptist was, or was not, a messenger of God; and therefore the Saviour answers them, 'Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.'

Then in the parable of The Two Sons, the one of whom, when bidden to work in his father's vineyard, at first refused, but afterwards repented and went, while the other answered, 'I go, sir,' but went not, He contrasted their attitude towards God with that of the publicans and sinners. These latter, though at first openly disobeying God's commandments, were brought through John's preaching to true repentance; whereas they, with all their professions of obedience, were of those who said, but did not. 'Verily I say unto you,' said Jesus, 'that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you' (Matt. xxi. 28-32).

This was followed up by the parable of The Wicked Husbandmen, who, being put in charge of a vineyard, come to regard it as their own, and maltreat the servants sent from time to time by the owner of the vineyard to bring him his due share of its fruits, and who, when at last he sends his beloved son, in the hope that they may reverence him, resolve to kill him and seize on the inheritance, and carry their resolution into effect. 'What, therefore, will the lord of the vineyard do?' He asks; and the answer given to the question is, 'He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others.' And clenching the parable by a reference to Ps. cxviii. 22, 'The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner,' He added the solemn warning, 'Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof' (Matt. xxi. 33-44).

Yet another parable is added, with the view of showing these priests and rulers the real character of the proceedings in which they are engaged, the parable of The Marriage Feast.¹ The son

¹ This parable has many points of resemblance to that of the Great Supper (Luke xiv. 16-24), but has also well-marked features of its own.

of a great king who has powerful armies at his command is to be wedded, and the marriage day is fixed. Invitations have previously been issued to the more prominent of his subjects residing in the capital of his dominions. When the preparations for the feast are well advanced, each of the expected guests is reminded of what is to take place. But those invited bear no love to their sovereign, and have no liking for his son or for this marriage. And they refuse to come, and even lay hold on his servants, and treat them shamefully and kill them. And the result is that 'the king was wroth, and sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city,' and gave orders that every one should be welcomed to the feast who would appear in the wedding garment provided (Matt. xxii. 1-14).

'When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them' (Matt. xxi. 45); and they would at once have arrested Him, and inflicted condign punishment on Him, had not the fear of a popular disturbance prevented them. Yet they felt that something must be done, and done at once, to displace Him from the position of influence which He held; and, after earnest consultation in regard to the matter, it was resolved to put a number of ensnaring questions to Him, in the attempt to answer which He must expose Himself to a variety of risks. First of all came certain members of the Pharisaic party, along with some who were known as Herodians,¹ and, under the pretext of asking Him to give His decision on a matter that pressed heavily on their consciences, asked Him, 'Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?' If He said that it was not lawful to give tribute, their intention was 'to deliver Him up to the rule and to the authority of the governor' (Luke xx. 20), as one inciting the people to revolutionary practices. If He said that tribute might lawfully be paid, this would go far to alienate

¹ The Herodians were rather a political than a religious party. They looked with special favour on Herod Antipas, and had no higher hope for their nation than that the Herod family might continue to exercise a kindly influence over its destinies.

from Him the favour of the populace, to whom the taxes levied by the Roman Government were odious. It seemed as if there were no escape from the necessity of affirming the payment of tribute to be either right or wrong. 'Show me a penny,' said Jesus to His questioners; and when they had handed Him the coin, He further inquired, 'Whose image and superscription is this?'¹ 'Cæsar's,' replied they; when He immediately answered them, 'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' The answer confounded them, and all the more, that it was felt to present a real and thorough solution of the difficulty on which He had been asked to decide (Matt. xxii. 15-22).

This attempt having conspicuously failed, some Sadducees were ready with a question which, they felt sure, must puzzle even Jesus. Referring to the permission given in the Mosaic law (Deut. xxv. 5) to a man to marry, in certain circumstances, his deceased brother's wife, they pretended that a woman had come in this way to be married to seven brothers in succession, and asked which of them would be entitled to claim her as his wife on the resurrection day. But He answered that their question showed them to be ignorant both of the Scriptures and of the power of God. Marriage, He informed them, was a relationship peculiar to this world, and had no existence in the case of those raised from the dead. And as to there being a life to come (which they denied), it was proved even by such words as were spoken by God to Moses, when He announced Himself as the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 'He is not the God of the dead,' said Jesus, 'but of the living; for all live unto Him,'—*i.e.* the being whom God draws so near to Himself as to say to him, 'I am thy God,' is a being who shall not die, but shall live in union with God for ever (Matt. xxii. 23-33).

The Sadducees having been silenced, the Pharisees put up a

¹ The denarius put into our Lord's hand had the image and name of Tiberius Cæsar imprinted on it.

lawyer belonging to their number to ask, 'Which is the great commandment of the Law?' The question was probably one much discussed at that time in the schools of the Rabbis. But Jesus, utterly disregarding the answers usually given to it, replied, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first and great commandment; and a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' 'On these two commandments,' added He, 'hang all the Law and the Prophets.' And even the lawyer who put the question had to admit that the right answer had been given to it, and was told by Jesus that he was not far from the kingdom of God (Mark xii. 28-34).

Having thus foiled all His adversaries, Jesus will now put some questions to the teachers of the Law gathered around Him, with the view of showing how little insight they have obtained into the meaning of those Scriptures of which they would fain be considered the only competent interpreters, and also of bringing before the people an important truth of which they have been kept in ignorance. 'What think ye of the Christ?' He asks; 'whose son is He?' 'The son of David,' they at once answer. 'How then,' continues He, 'doth David in the Spirit call Him Lord? saying, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand, till I put Thine enemies under Thy feet." If David then calleth Him Lord, how is He his son?' He refers to Ps. cx. 1, and asks how it is that David there speaks with the deepest reverence of that One as his Lord, who is confessed to be his son. And not one of the scribes present can answer His question; for the only answer that can be given to it is, that the Christ is not only the son of David, but the Son of God. Jesus directs attention to this all-important but neglected truth, knowing that they who get sight of it will be ready to welcome such a Redeemer as Himself, and such a redemption as He has come to give (Matt. xxii. 41-46).

Then, availing Himself of what He knows to be His last oppor-

tunity of speaking to the people, He makes a withering exposure of the character of the leaders who are so fatally misleading them, and who are bent on crushing the best friend they have (Matt. xxiii.). They sit in Moses' seat, he admits; but they are very unworthy of the place they occupy (ver. 1). They make stringent demands of men, but are lax in their personal performance (vv. 3, 4). They are ostentatiously religious, but it is that they may secure for themselves honour (vv. 5-12). They use the knowledge of which they have the monopoly, not for the benefit, but for the injury, of their disciples (vv. 13, 15). They draw subtle but untenable distinctions between duties that are equally binding (vv. 16-22). They give themselves infinite trouble about little things, while neglecting matters of such consequence as judgment, mercy, and faith (vv. 23, 24). They cultivate ceremonial purity, while tainted with the foulest moral pollution (vv. 25-28). They mourn over the treatment given to the prophets of old, and yet walk in the footsteps of their murderers (vv. 29-31). And when they have filled up the measure of their fathers, they may look for the vengeance of heaven (vv. 32-36).

It is in sorrow, as much as in indignation, that He utters this impassioned invective; and at the close of it, He turns to Jerusalem, and takes solemn farewell of her and of her temple, testifying that it is only after doing His utmost to save her that He now leaves her to her fate (vv. 37-39).

In leaving the temple, as He passed through that part of it called the treasury, He saw the rich casting into the money-chests stationed there their large contributions, but bestowed His special approbation on a poor widow who gave only two mites,¹ saying that her gift was really greater than theirs, because she had given all that she had (Mark xii. 41-44; Luke xxi. 1-4).

And now Jesus left the temple behind Him, never again to return to it. The disciples, however, could not but cast a last admiring look on it; and as they did so, they tried to direct

¹ The mite or *λεπτόν* was the smallest copper coin in use. Two of them would scarcely equal half a farthing of our money.

the attention of their Lord to the magnificence of its buildings. But His only answer was, 'Behold, the days come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down' (Matt. xxiv. 1, 2).

The same evening, when He and His disciples were seated on the Mount of Olives, over against the temple, at the special request of James and John, Simon and Andrew, He proceeded to speak more fully of the coming judgments, at which He had more than once cast a prophetic glance. First He mentioned signs which may be expected to usher in the close of any great period of the world's history, when God, in His character of Righteous Judge, interposes for the purpose of giving His decision on the actions of men in some unmistakable way. Then He described the events leading up to the work of judgment that should be accomplished on Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, and portrayed in graphic outline that work itself. And from that He passed on to the time when all the tribes of the earth 'shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,' to gather His elect around Him, and to consign His adversaries and unfaithful servants to that place where there shall be 'the weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matt. xxiv. 3-51; Mark xiii. 3-37; Luke xxi. 7-36).

Further on in the evening Jesus reverted to the subject of His Second Coming. In the parable of The Ten Virgins, He represented it as occurring unexpectedly, and sought to impress on all who longed for His appearing the necessity of preparing for it and watching for it. In the parable of The Talents, He emphasized the fact that His coming should be followed by a day of reckoning, and showed what the faithful and the unfaithful among His servants might then expect at His hands. And, last of all, He told His disciples that on that great day He should be seated on the throne of His glory, and all nations should be gathered before Him, and He should separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats (Matt. xxv.).

1. *What connection is there between the demand made on Jesus to show His authority for cleansing the temple and His answer—
'The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men?'*
2. *What was the snare laid for Jesus in the question put to Him regarding the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar?*
3. *Show the force of the answer given by our Lord to the question of the Sadducees as to the post-resurrection state.*
4. *What important truth in regard to the Messiah is taught by Ps. cx. 1?*
5. *How do the parables of 'The Ten Virgins' and of 'The Talents' connect themselves with the discussion reported in Matt. xxiv.?*

LESSON XXVIII.

FOURTH AND FIFTH DAYS OF PASSION WEEK.

(Fourth day—Wednesday, 13th Nisan.)

Read Matt. xxvi. 1-5, 14-16; Mark xiv. 1, 2, 10, 11; Luke xxii. 1-6.

AFTER such a day of prolonged and varied conflict, Jesus needed rest. And He found it, either in the home at Bethany to which He was ever welcome, or in some safer retreat. For almost two days He enjoyed a period of uninterrupted repose, during which He sought to prepare Himself for an ordeal more terrible than any through which He had ever passed. He felt it desirable also to give His disciples clear forewarning of all that was before them, that, when the hour of trial burst on them, they might not be taken by surprise. Thus, at the beginning of this quiet breathing-time, we find Him saying to them, 'Ye know that after two days is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified' (Matt. xxvi. 2).

But meanwhile the forces opposed to Him were mustering for a final and deadly struggle. Either on the Tuesday evening, or at an early hour on the Wednesday, the chief priests and scribes, and elders of the people, assembled at the palace of the high priest Caiaphas, to consult as to the means that should be adopted to put effectual arrest on His career. And, as the result of their deliberations, it was resolved to take Him by subtilty, and get Him put to death. But knowing the favour with which He was regarded by the Galileans, and by many besides, they concluded that it would be dangerous to attempt this on the

Feast-day, lest a tumult should be excited among the people. If possible, before the Feast-day arrived, and with the greatest secrecy and caution, they must contrive to seize Him. And they trusted to it that, if He were once fairly in their power, and seen to be helpless to deliver Himself, the popular delusion as to His Messiahship would be dissipated for ever (Matt. xxvi. 3, 4).

And in a very unexpected manner the instrument suitable for the accomplishment of their designs was provided them. While Jesus was resting on the other side of Olivet in the midst of His disciples, one of their number had stolen away for the purpose of entering into negotiations with the enemy. This was Judas Iscariot. He had become a follower of Jesus because thinking of Him as the Messiah who should deliver Israel from Roman oppression, and set up anew the kingdom of David, and reward with the highest honours all who aided Him in His enterprise. He had hoped also in this way to rise to the possession of wealth, the thing which beyond everything else had a charm for him. He had been animated, no doubt, by higher and worthier aspirations also, and had felt the beauty and attractiveness of the Saviour's character, and had been led to value His teachings; and on this account he had been given a place among the chosen Twelve. Being a man of decided business talent, and with a peculiar aptitude for managing money matters, he had been entrusted with the charge of the common purse. But avarice, his master passion, had in course of time subdued everything to itself, and he had begun to apply to his own use the funds confided to his keeping (John xii. 6). And the more insatiable his desire for gain became, the less seemed the likelihood that discipleship to Jesus would bring it any considerable gratification. Great opportunities, as it seemed to him, had been deliberately thrown away by the One on whom his hopes had been set. And now He had fairly broken with the leaders of the people, and was likely to bring on Himself and on all who clung to Him condemnation and death. Judas saw nothing but ruin in store for him if he remained longer with Jesus; and in the bitterness of his dis-

appointment he determined to leave Him. But could he not do so in such a way as to benefit himself? The tempter whispered to him that the priesthood and elders would not fail to reward him if he delivered up into their hands One who had but yesterday so humbled and exasperated them, and of whom they would thankfully be rid. And he listened to the suggestion, and set out to act on it.

Soon Judas was closeted with some of the leading priests and officers of the Levitical guard in charge of the temple, and explained his relation to Jesus and the purpose with which he had come. And they were glad, and promised him thirty shekels¹ should he succeed in his project. It was a poor reward; but the bargain was struck, and from that time Judas 'sought opportunity to deliver Him unto them in the absence of the multitude' (Luke xxii. 3-6).

(Fifth day—Thursday, 14th Nisan.)

Read Matt. xxvi. 17-35; Mark xiv. 12-31; Luke xxii. 7-38;
John xiii. 1-xvii. 26.

The Thursday of this week was the day 'when the Passover must be killed' (Luke xxii. 7). It was 'between the two evenings' (Ex. xi. 6), *i.e.* between 3 and 6 P.M., that the Paschal lamb had to be slain. It was also the day on which leaven had to be carefully removed from every house, and which had on this account come to be called 'the first day of unleavened bread' (Matt. xxvi. 17); though, in point of fact, it was only when sunset announced that the 14th of Nisan had closed and that the 15th had been entered on, that the Feast of Unleavened Bread began. On that day, accordingly, the disciples asked their Lord where He desired that He and they should partake of the Paschal

¹ The sum equalled £3, 15s. of our money, and was the recognised value of a slave (Ex. xxi. 32).

Supper.¹ The Passover could only be observed at Jerusalem, as the seat of the sanctuary (Deut. xvi. 2). The lamb had to be taken to the temple, and slain by the Levites, that its blood might be sprinkled on the altar of sacrifice (Deut. xvi. 5, 6 ; Ezra vi. 20). Our Lord therefore requested Peter and John to go to the city and make all necessary preparations for the supper. He gave them also a sign by which they were to be guided to the house selected by Him as best suited for the occasion. They went on their errand, and, meeting with the promised sign, were led by it to the house intended, and found there a large upper room furnished, which was at once placed at their disposal. Then seeing to the slaying of the lamb, and procuring the unleavened cakes, and bitter herbs, and wine, and whatever else was required, they made everything ready for the evening meal. Jesus, with the other disciples, took the way across Olivet at a later hour ;

¹ If we had only the first three Gospels, there could not be a doubt entertained that the supper of which our Lord partook on the evening before His death was the ordinary Paschal meal. Matthew speaks of it three times, Mark four times, and Luke five times as the Passover. Mark speaks of the day preceding the meal as that on which 'they (*i.e.* the men of Israel generally) sacrificed the Passover ;' while Luke describes it as the day 'on which the Passover *must be sacrificed.*' But John, though, equally with the other evangelists, he represents our Lord as sitting down to a meal on that evening along with His disciples, appears to distinguish between it and the Passover Feast. He says of the priests and others who led Jesus to the palace of Pilate, that they would not themselves go in, 'that they might not be defiled, but *might eat the Passover*' (xviii. 28). And, speaking of the day on which Jesus was crucified, he says (xix. 14), 'It was the preparation (*παρασκευή*) of the Passover.' Now there could not be one Passover meal observed by Jesus and by people generally on the night preceding His death, and another held by others on the night following. Hence it has been thought by many, that the supper of which our Lord and His disciples partook was not the Paschal Supper, though a most important and solemn feast. This is the view taken by Neander, Ebrard, Farrar, and others. It does not, however, explain the fact that the synoptic Gospels expressly represent our Lord as holding the Passover at the same time at which all other Israelites were holding it. It is better, therefore, to seek an explanation of John's words which may harmonize with this representation. And this seems given by Dr. Robinson (*Harmony of the Greek Gospels*, pp. 211-224) and by Andrews (*Life of our Lord*, pp. 367-397).

and entering the city without attracting observation, at the same time at which the various family groups gathered around the supper table, He sat down along with the Twelve, saying, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'

The feast began with thanksgiving over the first cup of wine sent round (Luke xxii. 17, 18), and then took its usual course. But at various points there were introduced into it new features suited to the special circumstances in which Jesus and His disciples were placed. Thus it did not escape the Saviour's notice, that, as the disciples were taking their seats at the table, there was some competition for the places regarded as most honourable (Luke xxii. 24). And when supper had been served,¹ He rose from the table, laid aside His upper garment, and, girding Himself with a towel, poured water into a bason, and, stooping down, began to wash His disciples' feet. The action filled them with amazement; but, heedless of the remonstrances of Peter, and perhaps of others, He washed the feet of all, and wiped them with the towel wherewith He was girded; and then said to them, 'If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you' (John xiii. 1-20).

When Jesus had again taken His seat at table, the meal was resumed. But it soon became evident that He was sorely troubled in spirit; and, unable to conceal His agitation, He said to the Twelve, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.' He did not name the traitor, or give any hint that would lead to the detection of him. And so each of the disciples, looking around on his brethren, and unable to think of any of them as capable of committing so foul a crime, was visited with a dread lest he himself should be the one aimed at, and asked in trembling tones, 'Lord, is it I?' To these questions, coming from every side, He merely answered, 'He that dippeth

¹ Δείπνου γινομένου, not γενομένου; 'during supper' (Rev. Ver.), not 'supper being ended.'

his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me,'—a statement that again marked out the traitor just as one of His disciples, seated at the same table with Him, and taking part in the same feast. But Simon Peter, unable to bear any longer the strain of suspense, motioned to the beloved disciple, John, to ask the name of the one referred to; and he, leaning back on Jesus' breast, whispered, 'Lord, who is it?' and got the answer, 'He it is for whom I shall dip the sop, and give it him.' Saying so, He dipped a morsel of the bread in the sauce called Charoseth, and handed it to Judas Iscariot. Such an act on the part of one presiding at a feast was wont to be regarded by the one who was the object of it as a mark of special favour; but doubtless a look accompanying the act revealed the significancy of it to Judas, and showed him that his treachery was fully known. But, making a poor attempt at bravado, he ventured to ask, 'Rabbi, is it I?' and was answered, 'Thou hast said.' The answer dispelled any remains of hesitation that may have kept him back from the full disclosure of his villany. And Jesus, marking the complete mastery that Satan had now obtained over him, and unable any longer to endure his presence, said to him, 'That thou doest, do quickly.' Nor had he any wish to tarry, but went forth straightway on his fell errand; and, as St. John significantly adds, 'it was night' (Matt. xxvi. 21-25; John xiii. 21-30).

No sooner had the door closed on him, than Jesus, as if relieved from an intolerable and distressing burden, said to the true-hearted ones now alone left with Him, 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; and God shall glorify Him in Himself, and straightway shall He glorify Him' (John xiii. 31, 32). He speaks of a glory on which He has *already* entered, and of a glory on which He shall enter *soon*. When Judas left Him, to set in train the events that should issue in His crucifixion, He entered on the glory that appears *in* His sufferings, the glory of self-sacrificing love and filial submission. *In consequence of* His sufferings, His Father will glorify Him by raising Him from the dead and setting Him at His own right hand.

Then,¹ lifting up one of the loaves of unleavened bread and blessing it, He broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, 'Take, eat: this is my body.' And, when they had eaten, taking the wine-cup² in His hands, and giving thanks, He bade them all drink of it, telling them that this was His blood, shed for many for the remission of sins. In doing so, Jesus assured His disciples that the death which He was to die was not forced on Him, but was freely and willingly accepted; that He was about to offer Himself up as a sacrifice for them and for many; and that His body and blood were thus to become meat and drink for men, bringing them spiritual life and blessing (Matt. xxvi. 26-29; Mark xiv. 22-25; Luke xxii. 19, 20).

Afterwards Jesus entered into familiar converse with His disciples, speaking to them of the dangers with which they were threatened as well as He. To Simon Peter, in particular, He addressed a very earnest warning, telling him of fierce temptations by which he was to be assailed, and which would certainly succeed in overwhelming his faith unless for special intercession made for him (Luke xxii. 31-34). The disciples generally were reminded of the time when they were sent forth on their apostolic mission, without purse, or wallet, or any provision for the journey, and when the good-will of those to whom they were sent supplied them with all that was needed; and were told that, so different would be the reception given them now, that it were well to have a sword wherewith to defend themselves against their enemies. And so little did they understand the warning as to say, 'Lord, behold, here are two swords,' as if that were equipment enough for any contest to be expected (Luke xxii. 35-38).

But after this disclosure of the dangers lying before them,

¹ There is great difference of opinion as to the point in St. John's narrative at which the institution of the Lord's Supper should be regarded as coming in. Most harmonists place it between chaps. xiii. and xiv. We have followed Neander in introducing it at the end of chap. xiii. 32.

² Four cups of wine passed round at the Passover Feast. The third was specially termed 'the cup of blessing,' and was probably that to which our Lord gave a new meaning, by representing it as symbolizing His blood.

He addressed to them words fraught with sweetest consolation (John xiv. 1-xvi. 33). He was going to the Father's house, He told them, to prepare there a place for them, and would return by-and-by to receive them to Himself. Meanwhile they were to cling in faith to Him as their Saviour, and to see in Him their way to heaven. Though about to be bereft of Him, they were not to be left helpless; for the Father would give them whatever they had need of, and would endow them with spiritual powers such as they had never before possessed. Specially would there be sent to their aid a divine Paraclete or Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who would bring to their remembrance all that He had taught them, and would draw them into intimate spiritual union with Him, so that they should feel that, though after a spiritual fashion, He was as near to them as ever. Though he was henceforward to be an unseen Saviour, this would not separate between them and Him; but they would be in Him as the source of their spiritual life, just as the branches are in the vine, and would derive from Him true power and fruitfulness. Though the world would hate and oppose them, the Comforter would give them effectual aid in their conflict with it, and would so convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, as to lead it to abandon its attitude of unbelief, and to accept of Him instead of Satan as its Prince. And whatever sorrow they had would last only for a little while, and would be turned into joy when at length they should see Him again. 'In the world,' said He, with the calm confidence of a conqueror, 'ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.'

Then, lifting up His eyes to heaven, He appealed to the Father to bear witness that He had finished the work given Him to do; and asked that, in acknowledgment of this, He should be enthroned in the glory that had been His before the world was. And He asked for His disciples that they should be divinely guarded, kept from the evil, and sanctified through the truth. He prayed also for all who should believe in Him, that they might be one with Him and with each other, and might give

impressive evidence of this to the world,—and that they might be with Him for ever, beholding and sharing in His glory (John xvii.). After offering up this prayer, He and His disciples, ‘when they had sung a hymn,¹ went out unto the Mount of Olives’ (Matt. xxvi. 30).

1. *Where was Jesus, and how was He employed, during Wednesday and Thursday of Passion Week?*
2. *What are the different views that have been taken regarding the last meal partaken of by Jesus and His disciples?*
3. *What preparations had to be made for the Passover? and what ceremonies accompanied the observance of it?*
4. *State the points of resemblance between the Paschal meal and the Lord's Supper.*
5. *Mention the chief points of conversation between our Lord and His disciples at the supper-table.*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. For a full and beautiful delineation of the closing events of our Lord's career, see *The Passion Week*, and *The Last Day of Our Lord's Passion*, by Dr. Hanna. A condensed but very powerful description of these events is given in the chapter, entitled ‘The End,’ in *Stalker's Life of Christ*.

2. The motives that led Judas to betray our Lord have formed the subject of keen discussion in recent times. It has been found difficult to believe that one of the Twelve could be induced by a paltry bribe to give up Jesus to His enemies. Hence the conjecture that Judas was one in whom Jewish views of the Messiah assumed a very pronounced form, and that his object in bringing about the arrest of Jesus was to compel Him to put forth His power and to establish a visible Messianic kingdom. This is the view taken by Whately, Hanna, and others; but it receives no countenance from the Gospel narratives.

3. On the last discourses of our Lord and the Intercessory Prayer, see Neander's *Life of Christ*, part ii. chaps. iii. iv., and Bruce's *Training of the Twelve*, chaps. xxiv.—xxvi. Archbishop Trench has an excellent sermon on ‘The True Vine’ in his *Five Sermons Preached before the University of Cambridge*; and Goulburn, in his *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, part i. chap. iii., treats the same theme in an interesting way.

¹ The Hallel (embracing Ps. cxiii.—cxviii.) was sung at the Paschal Feast. So that the hymn sung by Jesus and His disciples was probably the second part of it (Ps. cxv.—cxviii.), customarily sung at the close.

LESSON XXIX.

THE ARREST AND TRIAL OF JESUS.

(*Friday, 15th Nisan.*)

Read Matt. xxvi. 30-xxvii. 31 ; Mark xiv. 26-xv. 20 ; Luke xxii. 39-xxiii. 25
John xviii. 1-xix. 16.

IT must have been near midnight when Jesus and His disciples, passing through the streets of Jerusalem, left the city by the gate leading to the valley of the Kidron, and took the way to Olivet. Very few were the words exchanged between them, as they moved onward to the chosen spot to which, 'as His custom was' (Luke xxii. 39), He bent His steps. Anything that He said was with the view of preparing these sorrowing friends of His for what was about to happen. 'All ye shall be offended in me this night,' said He; 'for it is written' (Zech. xiii. 7), 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.' 'If all shall be offended in Thee, yet will not I,' protested Peter. And the protest led to the solemn warning, that that very night, before the second cock-crowing, he would thrice deny his Lord.

At last, crossing the dry bed of the Kidron, they entered a garden or enclosed space bearing the name of Gethsemane,¹ and

¹ Gethsemane, *i.e.* 'the oil-press,' was the name given to the garden, in consequence of its containing a press for crushing the oil out of the berries borne by its olive trees. A garden bearing this name has from the earliest times been pointed out as the scene of our Lord's agony. There are eight trees of great age to be seen growing in it, one of them called 'the tree of the agony.' These trees are, however, probably the successors of those under the shadow of which our Saviour prayed. Stanley (*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 455) says

probably belonging to some devoted adherent of Jesus. Leaving the other disciples, and, taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He sought a retired part of the garden, that He might pour forth His soul in prayer. And, when alone with these beloved friends, on whose sympathy He could count, and in whose presence He could fully unbosom Himself, He said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; abide ye here, and watch with me.' Saying this, He went from them about a stone's cast, and, falling on His face, prayed, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee; remove this cup from me; howbeit, not what I will, but what Thou wilt.' This was the substance of the prayer, expressed again and again in varying words, 'with strong crying and tears' (Heb. v. 7). Strengthened by an angel from heaven sent to support Him in His distress, 'being in an agony He praycd more earnestly; and His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground' (Luke xxii. 44). This was the supreme moment of conflict; but it passed by, and was succeeded by a comparative calm; and when again He drew near to the Father, it was to say, 'O my Father, if this cup cannot pass away, except I drink it, Thy will be done' (Matt. xxvi. 42).

The cup which Jesus would fain have escaped the necessity of drinking is to be thought of as embracing all the sufferings that found a place in the last day of His Passion, and specially His death on Calvary. Probably death, viewed simply as the rending asunder of soul and body, awakened in Jesus, on account of the exquisite sensitiveness of His physical organization, a feeling of revulsion which no one but Himself ever experienced in looking toward it. Its connection with sin, also, must have made it peculiarly loathsome to Him. Nor could He come under it without feeling Himself 'numbered with the transgressors,' as no other had ever been, as being the Lamb of God laden with and of them: 'The most venerable of their race on the face of the earth, their gnarled trunks and scanty foliage will always be regarded as the most affecting of the sacred memorials in or about Jerusalem.'

called on to expiate the sin of the world. Yet, bitter as was the cup put into His hands to drink, Jesus had no wish that it should pass away from Him, if His Father saw that in no other way could men be saved than by His drinking it. While there was in Him a natural desire to be exempted from this sore trial, there was in Him also a perfect willingness to accept whatever His Father might appoint to Him. Hence, no sooner was it finally intimated to Him, that only by dying for men could He be their Saviour, than He took the cup, that He might drink it to its dregs.

Three times over did our Saviour, after being engaged in earnest prayer, come to the disciples whom He had chosen to be with Him in this hour of spiritual conflict, to find them asleep. But, as He knew well that they were 'sleeping for sorrow' (Luke xxii. 45), on each occasion He found excuse for their infirmity. But the third time that He came to them, after saying, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest,' He suddenly added, 'Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners; arise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me' (Matt. xxvi. 45, 46).

The words had scarcely been uttered, when the traitor appeared. He came as guide to a considerable body of men sent for the purpose of arresting Jesus. In addition to a portion of the Levitical guard and other officers in the employment of the priesthood, there would seem to have been a band of soldiers from the fortress of Antonia (John xviii. 3-12), sent perhaps for the purpose of quelling any tumult that might possibly arise. They came armed with weapons, as if apprehensive of encountering resistance, and with lanterns and torches to enable them to search in the shady parts of the olive grove, or in any cave in which the One whom they were seeking might try to secrete Himself. Judas had made sure of finding Jesus here, and had given those who came under his guidance a sign by which they might at once recognise Him. But there was no necessity for all these precautions; for at the entrance of the garden Jesus pre-

sented Himself to His captors, and, after undergoing the humiliation of receiving the false disciple's kiss, said to those who crowded behind him, 'Whom seek ye?' 'Jesus of Nazareth,' was the reply,—which He calmly met by saying, 'I am He.' But simple as were the words, those who listened to them, awed by His air of majesty, went reeling backwards to the ground. Again He asked them, when they had somewhat recovered themselves, 'Whom seek ye?' and, having received the same answer, after stipulating for the safety of His followers, He gave Himself up into their hands. Thus, in the very act of surrendering Himself to His enemies, He showed how true were those words of His, 'The good Shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep' (John xviii. 1-9).

He thought it well, also, to make it evident that His power had undergone no abatement, and might easily have been used in such a way as to secure His safety. For, when Peter had foolishly drawn his sword, and cut off the ear of one of the high priest's servants, Jesus instantaneously healed it. He declared also that one word from Him, if only He chose to utter it, would at once bring more than twelve legions of angels to His help.

But now the officers in charge of the party sent to arrest Him, having pinioned their prisoner, led Him off to the city. And the disciples, when they saw it, forsook Him, and fled. The only one who followed Him was a young man of whom nothing is known, except that he too was glad to make his escape, leaving his only garment in the hands of those who would fain have seized him (Matt. xxvi. 47-56; Mark xiv. 43-52; Luke xxii. 47-53). Two of the disciples, however, Peter and John, had not fled far till the shamefulness of their conduct became manifest to them, and brought them to a halt. And, turning, they followed in the direction taken by the armed band, concern for their Lord impelling them onwards, while fear tended to keep them back.

Immediately on entering the city, Jesus was taken into the presence of Annas or Hanan,¹ the father-in-law of the high priest

¹ Annas had himself been high priest, and had been deposed from his office twenty years before this by the arbitrary act of the Roman Procurator,

Caiaphas (John xviii. 13), and subjected to an examination by him as to His disciples and His teaching. The examination was one of a preliminary kind, intended to bring out the leading points to which the attention of Caiaphas and of the Sanhedrim should be directed. But to the questions put to Him, Jesus simply replied, that He had not any secret doctrine communicated confidentially to His disciples, but that in private and in public He had taught the same truths, the character of which could easily be ascertained from any who had been accustomed to listen to Him. The fearless reply, however, brought Him a blow from one of the officers standing by, of which the only notice He took was with dignity to protest: 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?' And now Annas, since he had failed to elicit any information disadvantageous to Him, had no resource but to send Him at once to Caiaphas¹ (John xviii. 19-24).

The palace or official residence of the high priest, if not the home of his father-in-law also, no doubt contained apartments which he, as the high priest's Sagan or deputy, was accustomed to occupy. So that the prisoner had simply to be taken from the chamber in which the preliminary examination had been held to another under the same roof with it. When this had been done, Jesus found Himself face to face with the high priest and the Sanhedrim. It might have been expected that one arrested by express order of the Council would have had some distinct accusation brought against him, and that evidence would have been at hand to substantiate it. This, however, was far indeed from being

Valerius Gaius. He was still recognised, however, especially by the stricter party in Israel, as high priest by Divine right. And, after the elevation of his son Eleazar, and subsequently of his son-in-law Caiaphas, to the priesthood, he held the position of Sagan or deputy to the occupant of that office.

¹ The Authorized Version of the New Testament makes John say (xviii. 24), 'Annas *had* sent Him bound unto Caiaphas,' as if this preceded the examination recorded in vv. 19-23. The Revised Version correctly renders the words used, 'Annas therefore *sent* Him bound,'—representing this as occurring *after* the examination.

the course followed. Instead of this, the leading members of Council had given it to be understood that they were willing to look at any charge that could be advanced against Jesus, and to give it favourable consideration. Some of them had even sought to suborn witnesses, ready to come forward and pledge themselves to statements containing little or nothing of truth (Matt. xxvi. 59). Much testimony of a dubious character, accordingly, was volunteered and eagerly listened to, but was seen to be so utterly worthless, that decency forbade the acceptance of it. The only thing alleged against Him that seemed to merit the slightest attention was that on one occasion He had said, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.' The words attributed to Jesus were an egregious caricature of a statement of His recorded in John ii. 19. But though the two witnesses, who took oath that they had heard Him uttering these words, were far from fully agreeing in their testimony, the high priest, turning to Jesus as if a most serious charge had been brought against Him, of which it would be difficult for Him to clear Himself, said, 'Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?' But Jesus would give no countenance to proceedings evincing such a shameless disregard for truth and justice, and therefore held His peace (Matt. xxvi. 60-62; Mark xiv. 57-60).

And now, every attempt to prove anything against Him having failed, He must be induced, if possible, to criminate Himself. Hence, the high priest with the greatest solemnity said to Him, 'I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.' He knew that the question was put to Him in order to draw forth a declaration that might be used for the purpose of crushing Him. But He was asked either to affirm or to deny an all-important truth. And this demand was made of Him in the presence of the elders of Israel, by the one chosen to preside over God's heritage. Such a question put in these circumstances He must answer; and He could answer

it only in one way. He must make declaration of His Christ-hood to those whom it most concerned to be made aware of it. And therefore to the appeal made to Him He answered, 'Thou hast said : nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.' Caiaphas had now obtained the desire of his heart ; but, with a great show of grief and abhorrence, he rent his garments, and said to his fellow-councillors, 'He hath spoken blasphemy ; what further need have we of witnesses ? behold, now ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye ?' From every side there came the answer, 'He is worthy of death.' And now the Sanhedrim adjourned, to meet again at daybreak to give legal validity to their judgment (Matt. xxvi. 63-66).

During these proceedings other events of great interest were occurring close at hand. John had obtained admission into the palace for himself and his friend Peter ; and the latter had gone forward to a fire in the middle of the court, at which the high priest's servants and others were standing warming themselves. But the portress who had admitted him, coming forward, and looking at him, said, 'Art thou also one of this man's disciples ?' and got the answer, 'I am not' (John xviii. 17). She communicated her suspicions to others, however, and after a while returned, in company with another maid-servant (Matt. xxvi. 71) and a man (Luke xxii. 58), and repeated the question, only to get another denial, confirmed by an oath (Matt. xxvi. 72). But about an hour afterwards (Luke xxii. 59), a kinsman of Malchus, that servant of the high priest whose ear Peter had cut off, after looking narrowly at him, said, 'Did not I see thee in the garden with him ?' (John xviii. 26), while others, pressing around, made remarks on his Galilean dialect (Matt. xxvi. 73). Agitated and panic-stricken, Peter now altogether forgot himself, and began to curse and to swear, saying, 'I know not the man' (Mark xiv. 71). At that moment the cock crew, reminding Peter of his Lord's warning word, and opening up to him a sight of his sin

that well-nigh plunged him into despair. But just then Jesus passed through the court on His way from the Council-chamber to the room in which He was to be detained till next meeting of the Sanhedrim ; and He 'turned and looked upon Peter' with a look of reproachful but forgiving love that awoke in his heart the fountains of penitential sorrow, and 'he went out, and wept bitterly' (Luke xxii. 61, 62). But those to whose keeping the Saviour had meanwhile been committed, proved themselves singularly unworthy of their charge. They subjected Him to every species of indignity and wanton outrage, spitting in His face, and buffeting Him, blindfolding Him, and then bidding Him name the one who was smiting Him (Matt. xxvi. 67, 68 ; Luke xxii. 63-65).

When it was morning, the Sanhedrim again met ¹ (Matt. xxvii. 1 ; Mark xv. 1) for the purpose of disposing of the case in a regular and legal manner. It had become obvious that the only charge against Jesus that could be sustained was that of blasphemy, and that the only evidence capable of establishing it was to be found in His own declaration that He was the Son of God. Accordingly, He was again brought before the Council, and asked whether He adhered to His former confession ; and on His intimating that He did so, was formally condemned as a blasphemer, deserving of the penalty of death (Luke xxii. 66-71). Then, when the prisoner had been removed, the question arose, How was it possible to give effect to this sentence ? For the Sanhedrim had no longer the power to inflict capital punishment. The only course open to them was to carry Jesus before the Roman Governor, and to bring such an accusation against Him as would secure His being condemned to death. They could charge Him with calling Himself the Christ, and stimulating the people to

¹ The fact that a second meeting of Sanhedrim was held in the morning is expressly stated by Matthew (xxvii. 1) and Mark (xv. 1). This would seem to be the meeting which Luke describes as occurring 'as soon as it was day' (xxii. 66), and the proceedings of which he narrates. 'The first meeting of Sanhedrim he passes over, preferring to give an account of the subsequent one, which was legal and decisive.

follow Him in a revolt against the authority of Rome. This, accordingly, was the course determined on ; and immediately 'the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate' (Luke xxiii. 1).

By this time all Jerusalem was astir, and was startled by the intelligence that the prophet of Nazareth had been arrested and condemned to death. One of the first to hear the news was Judas, who would seem never to have anticipated such a result, and who, rushing into the presence of the temple authorities, threw from him the foul bribe by which he had been induced to betray his Lord, and then, maddened by a sense of his guilt and infamy, went away and hanged himself (Matt. xxvii. 3-5).

Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator, before whom Jesus was now taken, usually resided at Cæsarea, but was wont to come to Jerusalem on occasion of the great Feasts, for the purpose of checking or quelling any popular disturbance. Probably he occupied the marble palace erected by Herod the Great on Mount Zion, a building that in magnificence rivalled the temple itself. One of the spacious chambers of the palace would form for the time the prætorium or judgment-hall. It was still early morning when the priesthood and elders, with a miscellaneous rabble at their heels, presented themselves before the palace, with Jesus in their custody. They would have contracted ceremonial defilement by entering the building, and hence they rather sent the Governor intimation of their presence. He must have been expecting some such message ; for, at the request of the priests, he had on the preceding evening placed a band of soldiers at their disposal to aid them in effecting the arrest of Jesus.

Hearing of the arrival of an influential deputation from the Sanhedrim, Pilate immediately went forth to receive them, and, glancing toward the prisoner whom they had brought, asked, 'What accusation bring ye against this man?' They would seem scarcely to have expected such a question, but to have thought that, in consideration of the sacred character and high

dignity of those who presented themselves before him, he would at once have granted them what he knew to be their wish. And, drawing themselves haughtily up, they made answer, 'If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee.' In doing so, however, they overshot the mark. For the Roman was too proud to consent to be a mere executioner for the Jewish priesthood. And, in mockery of their powerlessness, he said to them, 'Take ye him, and judge him according to your law.' But well did they know that they had no power to inflict the only penalty that would satisfy them; and they had to make the humbling confession, 'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death' (John xviii. 28-32).

Forced, therefore, to make a formal accusation against Jesus, they said, 'We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that He Himself is Christ a king' (Luke xxiii. 2). The charge was one to which Pilate could not attach much importance. He must have known enough regarding the character and claims and teachings of Jesus, to satisfy him that He was no political agitator. In point of fact, he knew well that the real cause of the dislike manifested toward the prophet of Nazareth by the priesthood and elders of Israel was not to be found in any revolutionary schemes which He was suspected of prosecuting, but in the powerful religious influence which He had begun to exercise over the people. 'He knew that for envy they had delivered Him up' (Matt. xxvii. 18). Still, the high position and great power of the accusers of Jesus made it necessary for him to listen to them with deference. And it was also a matter requiring attention, that in a country subject to Rome any one should claim to be a king. Hence he thought it well to take Jesus apart into the palace, and to put to Him the question: 'Art thou the king of the Jews?' And, after a preliminary inquiry as to the meaning of the question, Jesus declared Himself a king, but added, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' He pointed to the fact that no resistance had been made to His arrest, to show that it was no earthly kingdom that He was

seeking to set up. And, in explanation of what the sovereignty that He claimed for Himself really was, He went on to say, 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.' He is a king, inasmuch as He is One who has come from a higher sphere to make revelation of truth to men, and to secure their submission to the truth which He reveals. And the power which He exercises over the souls of men through the truth, is a power going deeper, and taking thorougher grasp than any which earthly monarch can wield. 'What is truth?' said Pilate, as he turned away with the air of one who had long since seen truth to be a thing unattainable (John xviii. 33-38).

Convinced that Jesus is only a religious enthusiast, intensely earnest, but perfectly harmless, Pilate goes forth to the Jews to report to them the result of the examination he has held, in the words, 'I find no crime in him.' The statement calls forth a passionate protest to the effect that over the length and breadth of the land, from Galilee to Jerusalem, He has been stirring up the people to revolt. But the mention of Galilee suggests to Pilate the happy thought that Jesus, as being a Galilean, might be regarded as coming under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, who had come to Jerusalem to be present at the Passover, and might be sent to him. If Herod should take up the case, this would extricate him from an unpleasant dilemma. It would release him from the necessity of either displeasing the Sanhedrim, or violating his own convictions of right. And no sooner does the thought occur to him than it is acted on, and the accusers of Jesus are bidden take Him before the Tetrarch. Nor is Herod unwilling to do what is asked. He is pleased with the tribute of deference paid him by the Roman Governor, which goes far to heal some quarrel they had previously had. He has longed to see Jesus, and to witness some exhibition of His wondrous powers. But now that the long-sought opportunity is given him, his expectations are doomed to disappointment.

Jesus will not so much as answer any of the questions that he puts, nor will He condescend to take any notice of the charges pressed against Him by His accusers. And Herod takes his revenge by making sport of Him, and causing his soldiers to array Him in kingly apparel, as if His pretensions to sovereignty were only worthy of being treated as a jest (Luke xxiii. 4-12).

Pilate, having now no alternative but to accept the full responsibility devolving on him, had to come out and take his place on the judgment-seat¹ erected on the tessellated pavement in front of his palace, and give his decision. He says that neither he nor Herod has been able to find any criminal charge proved against Jesus. Yet he does not propose to acquit Him as an innocent man, but rather suggests a compromise. It has been customary to release at the Passover any prisoner for whom the people had a special favour. If they are agreeable to it, he will first condemn Jesus, and cause Him to be scourged, and then release Him at their request (Luke xxiii. 13-17; John xviii. 39). While he is making the suggestion, an incident occurs that makes him more than ever desirous to save Jesus. An attendant approaches him with this message from his wife,² 'Have thou nothing to do with this just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him' (Matt. xxvii. 19). But meanwhile the priests and elders had passed round the watchword that the people should demand the release, not of Jesus, but of 'a notable prisoner' called Barabbas, who had been one of the ringleaders in a recent insurrectionary movement, and had been found guilty both of robbery and murder (Mark xv. 7; John xviii. 40). So that when Pilate again asked whether they consented to the release of Jesus, there came from every side the

¹ Pilate's taking his place on the judgment-seat (*βῆμα*) indicated that in the most formal and solemn manner he was now about to pronounce judgment. It was essential that this tribunal should be erected on the pavement (Heb. Gabbatha) in front of his official residence.

² Tradition gives her name as Claudia Procula, and represents her as a proselyte to the Jewish faith.

cry, 'Not this man, but Barabbas.' And, when he further asked, 'What was to be done with Jesus,' the equally ready answer was, 'Let him be crucified.'

Instead of resisting at whatever cost this iniquitous demand, it seemed to the Governor that, rather than brave the consequences of a popular tumult, he must consent to it, and that all that he could do was to show in the most significant way his disapproval of it. With this view, taking water, he washed his hands in it, and solemnly protested, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it,' to which the multitude with one voice answered, 'His blood be on us, and on our children' (Matt. xxvii. 24, 25). And now Jesus was given up to the soldiers, to be led away and scourged, as one condemned to death. He was stripped, and tied to a pillar, and lashed with a knotted scourge, the blood streaming forth at every stroke. And, when this was over, the soldiers, taking the red cloak worn by one of their number, threw it around Him as if it were a royal robe; and, having plaited a crown of thorns, pressed it down upon His brow; and thrust a reed into His hand in mockery of a sceptre; and, bowing the knee before Him, saluted Him as King of the Jews. To other shameful indignities also they subjected Him (Matt. xxvii. 26-30; John xix. 1-3).

It seems to have occurred to Pilate at this stage that a last attempt might be made to save Jesus. Accordingly, he ordered Him to be brought forth before the people; and, as he pointed to Him, with the blood trickling down from beneath the crown of thorns, and with many a mark of suffering and enfeeblement, he said to the crowd gathered before him, 'Behold the man!' But the appeal to their compassion was made in vain, and only excited again the shout, 'Crucify him, Crucify him!' 'Take ye him, and crucify him,' said he, 'for I find no fault in him.' And this leads the chief priests to state what hitherto they have kept concealed, 'We have a law,' said they, 'and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.' But this, which seemed to them a conclusive reason for dooming

Jesus to death, made Pilate for the moment more disinclined than ever to lend himself to those who were driving things to such an issue. He felt as if there were a halo of mystery surrounding this strange man, that marked Him off from all others. And, taking Him again into the prætorium, he asked Him, 'Whence art thou?' Getting no answer to the question, he reminded his prisoner that it rested with him to determine whether He should live or die. But Jesus calmly answered, 'Thou wouldest have no power at all against me, unless it were given thee from above.' And to this he added a word fitted to show the proud Roman that, with all his boast of power, he had shown himself very powerless: 'Therefore,' said He, 'he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin.' Jesus sees in Pilate a mere helpless tool in the hands of Caiaphas, the man really answerable for His death.

A few more attempts, seemingly strenuous, but vain and futile, were made by the Roman Procurator to escape from the humiliating position in which he stood. But the mere suggestion, 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend,' effectually put an end to them. And, consoling himself with some cutting gibes directed against those who had proved themselves his masters, he at last resigned himself to his fate, and delivered up the One whom he had pronounced innocent to the most shameful of deaths (John xix. 4-16).

1. *Mention any other occasion on which our Lord passed through a spiritual struggle like to the agony in Gethsemane.*
2. *In what relation did Annas and Caiaphas stand to each other?*
3. *In what respects was there a flagrant disregard of justice in the mode in which our Saviour's trial before the Sanhedrim was conducted?*
4. *Give a narrative of Peter's threefold denial of our Lord, embracing all the particulars recorded by the four evangelists.*
5. *What was the charge advanced against Jesus before the Roman Procurator? And what was the basis of fact on which it rested?*
6. *In what sense did Jesus acknowledge Himself to Pilate to be a king?*

7. *What seems to have been the real opinion entertained by Pilate in regard to Jesus?*
8. *What attempts did the Roman Governor make to escape the necessity of condemning Jesus? And how were they foiled?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. The facts in regard to Annas and Joseph Caiaphas are given in Joseph. *Antiq.* Book XVIII. chap. ii. 1, 2. The leading events in Pilate's Procuratorship are narrated in *Antiq.* XVIII. chaps. iii. iv.

2. Read Sermons XIX. and XX. of first series of F. W. Robertson's sermons, entitled *The Kingdom of the Truth*, and *The Scepticism of Pilate*.

LESSON XXX.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF JESUS.

(Friday, 15th Nisan.)

Read Matt. xxvii. 31-61; Mark xv. 20-47; Luke xxiii. 25-56;
John xix. 17-42.

IMMEDIATELY on the sentence of death being passed, Jesus was handed over to the Roman soldiery, to be led to His doom. The arrangements requiring to be made for the crucifixion were few, and occupied but little time. After being divested of the purple robe and clothed again in His own garments, the cross on which He had to suffer was laid on His shoulder, that He might carry it to the place of execution (John xix. 17). But the agitation and suffering and sorrow through which He had passed had sorely enfeebled Him. And soon it became manifest that He was unable without help to bear up under so heavy a burden. Seeing this, the soldiers seized upon a bypasser, Simon of Cyrene,¹ who was coming in from the country, and laid the cross on him (Matt. xxvii. 32).

Probably the most of those who followed Jesus to the place of crucifixion had but little sympathy with Him. Many of them doubtless exulted over the fate awaiting Him. And many, also, were of the class that in any country will crowd to look on the

¹ Simon, though born in Africa, was probably a Hellenistic Jew. He is spoken of by Mark (xv. 21) as 'the father of Alexander and Rufus,' two well-known disciples of the Saviour in apostolic days. Whether he was himself a disciple when called on to bear our Lord's cross cannot be known.

spectacle of a fellow-creature wrestling with death. But there were others, to whom the shame and suffering heaped on Jesus caused the deepest grief. Among these, there was a considerable company of women,—not from Galilee, but from Jerusalem,—who again and again burst into tears and lamentations over His sad fate. To these women, when a halt had been made in the journey (probably on the occasion of the cross being transferred from Him to Simon), He turned and said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children.’ He told them that calamities so terrible were coming upon Jerusalem, that not the mothers, but the childless would be thought of as happy. And, to show how inevitable these calamities were, He said, ‘If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?’ *i.e.*, ‘If I, sinless as I am, have to suffer so, what must the doom of sinful Israel be?’ (Luke xxiii. 27–31).

Jesus, however, was not the only one appointed to be crucified that day. There were two others who were to suffer the same death, and who are described as ‘malefactors’ or ‘robbers,’—possibly members of the insurgent band of which Barabbas had been the captain.

At last the mournful procession, in which Jesus held so prominent a place, reached the knoll outside of the city set apart as the scene of public executions, and to which was given the name of Golgotha.¹ And then each of the three victims was dealt with in the same way. First of all the cross—consisting of two beams, the one meant to stand upright, and the other laid across it near the top—was stretched upon the ground. Then the body of the condemned person, divested of nearly every vestige of clothing, was placed on it; and, the arms having been distended at full length, nails were driven through the hands and

¹ The Hebrew name Golgotha is rendered by Matthew, Mark, and John, ‘the place of a skull’ (*κρανίου τόπος*); by Luke simply ‘a skull’ (*κρανίου*), for which the Authorized Version substitutes Calvary, the English form of the Latin ‘calvaria.’ The name seems to have been given to the place on account of its being a skull-shaped knoll.

fect. And now the cross, with its living burden thus attached to it, was lifted up and let down into the deep socket dug for it.

Crucifixion was the most painful of all deaths. The unnatural distension of the arms, the strain upon the wounded hands which had to sustain in great measure the weight of the body, the inflammation which set in around the wounds and spread gradually through the frame, the impeded circulation of the blood, the fever and burning thirst which supervened on all this, combined to produce intolerable agony. The torture was prolonged for hours, and sometimes for days. On this account, and also on account of the circumstances of shameful exposure connected with it, crucifixion was the death reserved for slaves and for felons chargeable with atrocious crimes. And hence it was the death appointed to Jesus. It seemed to His enemies that, if once the stigma of crucifixion could be associated with His name, His pretensions to Messiahship would be disposed of for ever.

It was at the third hour of the day¹ that our Lord was crucified. The cup of wine mingled with myrrh² (Mark xv. 23), usually given to those subjected to this frightful punishment, for the purpose of stupifying them and dulling their sense of pain, was offered to Him, but refused. He desired no artificial mitigation of the sufferings appointed Him, but would rather bear the extreme of human agony, and with unclouded mind enter into conflict with death.

He was crucified between the two robbers, having the one of them on His right hand and the other on His left. And above His cross there was fixed by Pilate's command a superscription, written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the

¹ John (xix. 14) mentions the sixth hour as the time of our Lord's condemnation by Pilate. If he counts from midnight, this would be 6 A.M., and would permit of an interval of three hours between the condemnation and the crucifixion,—which, according to Mark (xv. 25), took place three hours after sunrise, or at 9 A.M.

² Matthew speaks of the wine as being mingled with gall (xxvii. 34), accommodating the language of Ps. lxi. 21 to the circumstances of the case.

King of the Jews.'¹ The terms of the superscription could not but be extremely offensive to the chief priests and others, who bitterly complained of them as being, not so much a description of the crime for which Jesus was doomed to death, as a wanton insult offered to the Jewish nation; but on this very account Pilate refused to alter them, saying, 'What I have written, I have written' (John xix. 18-22).

A guard of four soldiers, under the command of a centurion, kept watch by the cross, to see to it that the sentence passed on the sufferer was faithfully carried out. And, since His clothes fell as a perquisite to them, they divided them into four parts, as nearly as possible of equal value. But His inner garment or tunic, which was 'without seam, woven from the top throughout,' they did not divide, but rather determined by lot who should be the possessor of it (John xix. 23, 24).

Either as Jesus was being nailed to the cross, or at the moment when the lowering of the cross into its socket sent through His frame a pang of intolerable agony, He cried aloud, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Luke xxiii. 34). It was a prayer for the soldiers and others who, without any malice to Him, were at the command of their superiors subjecting Him to acute suffering. It was a prayer also for the great mass of those who had clamoured for His death, because instigated by those who knew better than to regard Him as a great sinner. And it was a prayer even for many of the rulers of Israel, who honestly thought of Him as chargeable with blasphemy in calling Himself the Son of God. It embraced all to whom Peter afterwards said, 'I wot, brethren, that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers' (Acts iii. 17). For

¹ According to Matthew (xvii. 37), the superscription ran thus, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews;' according to Mark thus (xv. 26), 'The King of the Jews;' according to Luke (xxiii. 38), 'This is the King of the Jews.' John is the only one of the evangelists who saw the superscription, and his version of it may therefore be accepted as the correct one. But all the evangelists, however they differ as to *the words*, give an accurate idea of *the substance* of the superscription.

all who had no suspicion, or but a dim suspicion, that in inflicting injury on Him they were acting wrongly, Jesus pled, 'Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.'

The crucifixion was witnessed by a great multitude of people (Luke xxiii. 35), conspicuous among whom were men seldom present at such a spectacle, the leading representatives of the Sanhedrim and of the priesthood (Matt. xxvii. 41 ; Luke xxiii. 35). They were there to make sure of the death of Him whom they had long feared, but over whom they had at length triumphed. Nor could they conceal their joy, as they marked every circumstance of shame in the fate of the sufferer. Contrasting His present helplessness with the mighty powers of which He had formerly shown Himself the possessor, they said, 'He saved others ; himself he cannot save.' They challenged Him to give proof of His being the Messiah by coming down from the cross. They gloried in the evidence seemingly furnished, that God, whom He had claimed and trusted as His Father, had utterly disowned Him. They uttered their bitter scoffs in tones loud enough for Him to hear. And some of the bystanders, and even of the bypassers, were heartless enough to go in front of the cross, and, with derisive gestures, to address to Him who hung on it such cutting words as these, 'Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself ;' 'If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross' (Matt. xxvii. 39-43 ; Mark xv. 29-32 ; Luke xxiii. 35-37).

The soldiers also could not be withheld from flinging their rude jests at the one who, as they understood, had brought Himself into so pitiable a plight by raising the standard of revolt against Rome and calling Himself 'the King of the Jews' (Luke xxiii. 36, 37).

Even one¹ of the malefactors crucified along with Him sought

¹ Matthew (xxvii. 44) and Mark (xv. 32) say that 'the thieves who were crucified with Him' reviled Him. From this some have inferred that both of the malefactors at first joined in mocking our Lord. It would seem, however, that what these two evangelists state in general terms, Luke gives

to get some relief from his own miseries by pouring contempt on this Jesus of Nazareth, who, after all His pretensions to Messiahship, had been nailed to the cross, and still thought of Himself as the Christ. 'Art not thou the Christ?' said he—'Save thyself and us.' But the other, who had learned to regard Jesus with different feelings, amazed at the reckless audacity of his companion, silenced him by declaring that, while they were receiving the due reward of their deeds, their fellow-sufferer had done nothing amiss. And then, directing his words to the Saviour, he presented the earnest petition, 'Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.' For all that he had formerly heard and known regarding Jesus, and all that he had now seen in Him, convinced him that He was indeed the Christ; and that, few as were the hours He had to live, He was certain to return to earth as a King, and that in that day it would be well with those whom He remembered for good. And with joy unspeakable did Jesus hear Himself in His hour of deep humiliation recognised as a King; and to the lowly appeal addressed to Him He gave the right royal answer, 'Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' Instead of having to wait till He returned in glory to reign over a subject world, ere getting any token of being graciously remembered by Him, the suppliant was that very day to enter along with Him into everlasting bliss (Luke xxiii. 39-43).

But there were others, besides the enemies of Jesus and the fickle Jewish populace, in the neighbourhood of His cross; 'All His acquaintance, and the women that followed with Him from Galilee' (Luke xxiii. 49), were there, 'beholding afar off' (Matt. xxvii. 55). They were kept at a distance rather by horror than by fear. They could not look on the pain and distress of the Holy One whom men had nailed to the accursed tree. They could not deepen His grief by bringing under His eye their own.

a more minute and exact account of. They mention *the various classes* that joined in the mockery; Luke tells us that of the thieves crucified with Jesus, only one reviled Him,

They could not mix with those who were outraging and insulting Him, and filling the air with their scoffs and blasphemies. But in an hour or two the crowd around the cross began to thin, and the tumult to subside somewhat. The priests and rulers, having obtained their desire, could go away satisfied; and the mob would gradually follow their example. And the friends of Jesus then drew nearer, love to their Lord conquering all other feelings, and leading them to press as close to the cross as they could get. Most prominent among them were His broken-hearted mother, and Salome the wife of Zebedee, and Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene, and John the beloved disciple. The eye of Jesus alights on this little company, and He marks their deep distress. Most of all is He moved by the sight of His mother, and He would fain give her a last and touching evidence of His love. The cross is raised but a foot or two above the ground, so that the gentlest tones of His voice can reach those standing below, and the direction of His every glance can be observed by them. And very gently, as He looks on Mary, and draws her eyes away to John, He says to her, 'Woman, behold thy son.' Then to the beloved disciple He says, 'Behold thy mother.' What He wished was that John should give His mother a home, and should be a son to her after He was gone. And most willingly did John accept the charge,—'From that hour that disciple took her to his own home' (John xix. 25-27).

It was now the hour of noon-tide,—the sixth hour,—and all who were not kept in the neighbourhood of the cross by some strong necessity had sought shelter from the scorching heat. But just when the sun had climbed to the height of heaven, a strange funereal gloom spread over earth and sky. 'A darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, the sun's light failing' (Luke xxiii. 44, Rev. Vers.). And during that time a darker shadow still rested on the Redeemer's spirit. From the sixth hour onward to the ninth He was engaged in a spiritual conflict too absorbing to permit of His thinking of anything that was going on outside. And it was only when the ninth hour had

come, that what during all that time had been occupying His soul revealed itself in the loud cry, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' It was, of course, only the sensible comfort of the divine presence and favour that was at this time withdrawn from Jesus. Yet was this unspeakably the sorest trial that had ever come to Him—the bitterest drop in the bitter cup given Him to drink. But this moment of deepest darkness and intensest agony in our Lord's experience passed by; and with it also the darkness that had settled down on nature gave place to returning light (Matt. xxvii. 45, 46; Mark xv. 33, 34).

It was in the Hebrew tongue that Jesus uttered this mournful plaint, the words used by Him being those of Ps. xxii. 1, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' Some of the bystanders, amid the terror and bewilderment caused by the supernatural darkness that reigned around, mistook the cry of Jesus for a summons to Elijah to come and address himself to the work to be accomplished by him before 'the great and dreadful day of the Lord' (Mal. iv. 5). But, when the sun shone forth again, their courage revived, and they began to bandy about the jest, 'Let be, let us see whether Elijah cometh to save him' (Matt. xxvii. 47-49).

Meanwhile, Jesus had emerged from the deep sorrow in which He had been plunged, and became sensible of that burning thirst which is one of the unfailing accompaniments of crucifixion. And, longing for something wherewith to wet His parched lips, He said to those near Him, 'I thirst.' The appeal touched the heart of one of the guard; and, dipping a sponge in a flagon of wine that stood at hand for the refreshment of himself and his comrades, he put it on a stalk of hyssop, and held it up to the sufferer. Nor did Jesus refuse the relief, though the rough soldier, in the very act of offering it, lest he should be charged with soft-heartedness, took up the sorry jest that for the time found currency around him, and said, 'Let be, let us see whether Elijah cometh to take Him down' (Mark xv. 36; John xix. 28-30).

As soon as Jesus had tasted the wine,¹ He said, 'It is finished.' His life was now over; and, though He might seem dying in the midst of His days, His work was completed. All the prophecies regarding Him had been fulfilled, and man's redemption had been achieved (John xix. 30). And now, turning to His Father, He said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,' and, bowing His head, He gave up the ghost (Luke xxiii. 46).

At the moment at which Jesus died, the thick veil of purple and scarlet cloth, suspended in front of the Holy of Holies in the temple, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, as if by an unseen hand, to intimate that the true High Priest had then entered into the presence of God, carrying with Him tokens of the atonement which He had made for sin. An earthquake also cleft the rocks asunder, and opened wide the tombs,² as if the dead were about to issue forth to judgment. And such was the impression made by these events, that the centurion who kept watch beside the cross declared his conviction that Jesus was not only a righteous man, but the Son of God; and that many of the spectators returned to the city, smiting their breasts, as if bewailing the commission of a signal crime (Matt. xxvii. 51-54; Mark xv. 38, 39; Luke xxiii. 45-48).

It was the Jewish custom that those executed for any crime should be taken down and buried before sunset (Deut. xxi. 22, 23). This was specially desirable in the case of Jesus and His fellow-sufferers, since at sunset the Sabbath began, and 'that Sabbath was an high day,' signaled by the solemn presentation of the first-fruits of harvest in the temple (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11). Pilate was accordingly requested to give orders that the death of Jesus, and of those crucified along with Him, might be hastened in the usual way. This was granted; and the legs of the two male-

¹ The *posca* given to soldiers was a weak, sour wine, mixed with water. Jesus partook of this, though He had refused to partake of the medicated draught, designed to stupify Him.

² The opening of the tombs, signifying that the power of death was overcome, took place when our Saviour died. The rising of the saints who lay asleep in them took place 'after His resurrection' (Matt. xxvii. 53).

factors were shivered by blows of a heavy mallet. But when those charged with the performance of this work came in front of Jesus, a glance sufficed to show them that He was dead already. One of the soldiers, however, to make sure of His death, pierced His side with a spear, and out from the wound there flowed a mingled stream of blood and water. Thus, the direction with regard to the Paschal lamb, 'Not a bone of him shall be broken' (Ex. xii. 46), was fulfilled in the case of Jesus, the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sin of the world. And that other prophecy received its fulfilment, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced' (Zech. xii. 10).

The bodies of those condemned to death were usually buried in a spot set apart for the purpose, and regarded as polluted ground. But God would not permit the body of His Son to be cast into a felon's grave. It had been foretold that He should be 'with a rich man in His death' (Isa. liii. 9). Accordingly, Joseph of Arimathea, an honoured member of the Sanhedrim, who had secretly been a disciple of Jesus, asked the Governor for the body of the One whom he had revered and loved, and obtained it. Assisted by a brother councillor, Nicodemus, he carried the body to his own garden, which was close at hand, that he might bury it in a rock-hewn tomb there, in which no one had ever lain. Lovingly and tenderly the two wrapped it in fine linen, in the folds of which there had been put myrrh and aloes and other spices, the special gift of Nicodemus, and then laid it in the tomb, in the presence of some of the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee. And then, having rolled a great stone to the grave's mouth, they went their way to keep the Sabbath's rest (Matt. xxvii. 57-61; Mark xv. 42-47; Luke xxiii. 50-56; John xix. 38-42).

1. *Where was Golgotha? And how did it obtain its name?*
2. *What symptoms of exhaustion appeared in our Lord as He moved onward to Calvary?*
3. *Reconcile the statements made by the different evangelists as to the time of day at which the crucifixion took place.*

4. *What miracles accompanied and followed the crucifixion?*
5. *What prophecies found fulfilment in some of the circumstances of our Lord's death?*
6. *Where and by whom was Jesus buried?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. For information regarding the form of the cross on which Jesus suffered, and the death which He died, consult the articles 'Cross' and 'Crucifixion' in Smith's *Bib. Dict.*, and those headed 'Kreuz' and 'Kreuzigung' in Herzog.

2. There is no better book on the sufferings of our Lord than Rambach's *Betrachtungen ueber das ganze Leiden Christi*, A.D. 1730.

3. In a treatise on *The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*, by Dr. Stroud, it is ably argued that He died in consequence of the rupture of the heart, caused by agony of spirit. The chief evidence of this is found in the stream of blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of Jesus after His death (John xix. 34). Dr. Hanna also advocates this view in chap. xiii. of *The Last Day of Our Lord's Passion*, and gives in an interesting appendix medical testimony confirmatory of it.

4. George Herbert tells in his own quaint way the story of the Saviour's sufferings in his poem, entitled *The Sacrifice*, each verse of which ends with the touching refrain, 'Was ever grief like mine?' Some of the mediæval hymns on the death of Christ are very striking, specially 'Stabat mater dolorosa,' and 'Salve, caput cruentatum.' Among modern hymns on this subject may be mentioned those in Keble's *Christian Year*, Toplady's 'Rock of Ages, cleft for me,' and Faber's 'Oh! come and mourn with me awhile.'

LESSON XXXI.

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD.

Read Matt. xxvii. 62-xxviii. 15 ; Mark xvi. 1-8 ; Luke xxiv. 1-49 ;
John xx. 1-23.

THE day after our Lord's passion was the saddest that His disciples had ever seen. Probably up to the moment of His death, there had lingered in the hearts of some of them the hope that by a display of that wondrous power of which He had often shown Himself the possessor, He would rescue Himself from His enemies, and cover them with confusion. But all such hopes had been dissipated. And other hopes cherished with regard to Jesus would seem to have well-nigh vanished too. 'We hoped,' said they in despondent tones, 'that it was He which should redeem Israel' (Luke xxiv. 21). They would fain have retained their faith in Jesus still as the Redeemer ; but how could they do so, now that He was dead ? Yet was there greater difficulty in coming to the conclusion that Israel's Redeemer He was not, after all that they had seen in Him, and all the blessings which they owed to Him alone. All that they could do in this dark hour was to wait and pray for light.

The priesthood and elders of Israel, on the other hand, moved about with an air of triumph. For they had suppressed a formidable revolt against their authority, and had conquered a foe whom they had begun to dread. Yet, as the Sabbath wore on, a feeling of uneasiness took possession of them. Some of their number remembered having heard that Jesus had not only foretold His death, but had declared that on the third day He would rise from the grave. They mentioned this prediction of His

to others ; and the news regarding it spread, and excited deep apprehension. No one would acknowledge that he had any fear of Jesus rising from the dead ; but all felt that something might take place, fitted to awaken the belief that this had actually happened. Might not some of His disciples remove His body, and then point to the empty tomb as evidence of His resurrection? So great did the risk of such an occurrence seem, that at last they sent a deputation to Pilate to state their apprehensions, and ask him to take the precautions which the circumstances of the case imperatively required. And they at once obtained their request, having a guard placed at their disposal, and getting permission to take whatever measures appeared desirable. Accordingly, ere nightfall, a cord was passed round the stone at the grave's mouth, and fastened at either end to the rock with sealing-wax having the seal of the Sanhedrim impressed on it, and a detachment of Roman soldiers entered on sentinel duty beside the tomb. It was hoped that, in the face of such a demonstration of ecclesiastical and civil power, the most daring of intruders would be deterred from drawing near.

The hours of night passed by ; no sight or sound of any kind disturbing the guardians of the sepulchre. The welcome morning was at hand ; and it seemed as if they would soon be on their way to the Sanhedrim, to tell that the grave remained closed, and that the body of Jesus lay untouched within it. But, while it was yet dark, the shock of an earthquake was felt ; and an angel, descending from heaven, rolled away the stone from the tomb's mouth, and sat down upon it. ' His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow ; and, for fear of him, the keepers did shake and became as dead men.' And no sooner was the stone rolled away than the grave gave up its dead, and the Lord Jesus came forth from it, to enter on an immortal life. No one saw Him emerge from the tomb ; for those who alone could have been the spectators of it were prostrated and blinded by the splendour of the angel's advent. But so many saw Him after He had risen, and have left on record their testimony to

this effect, that it may be safely affirmed that no fact that has had a place in this world's history is better authenticated than the resurrection of Christ.

It was to the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee, and had been witnesses of His crucifixion and burial, that His resurrection first became known. Some of them, among whom Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, Salome, and Joanna, are mentioned by name, having prepared spices and ointments for the purpose, set out from Jerusalem on the first day of the week at early dawn, to embalm the body of their beloved Lord.¹ They knew nothing of the precautions that had been taken to prevent approach to the tomb, but thought of the great stone at its doorway as the only obstacle to their entrance. No sooner, however, had they come within sight of the sepulchre than they saw that the stone had been rolled away;² and, on pressing forward to learn the cause of this, a glance sufficed to show them that the body of Jesus was no longer there. Immediately on making this discovery, Mary Magdalene fled from the spot to communicate the startling news to the Eleven (John xx. 1, 2). The others, entering the sepulchre, and looking around in their perplexity, found themselves in the presence of two angels, one of whom addressed them,³ calming their fears, and telling them that their Lord was risen, as He had Himself foretold; he

¹ The expressions, 'As it began to dawn' (Matt. xxviii. 1), 'At early dawn' (Luke xxiv. 1), 'While it was yet dark' (John xx. 1), all indicate that the visit to the tomb was made at a very early hour. The words used by Mark (xvi. 2), 'When the sun was risen,' must therefore be understood, not as referring to sunrise in the strict sense, but to the first appearance of morning light.

² *The only thing* that the women are reported as having noticed outside of the sepulchre is that the stone had been rolled back (Mark xvi. 4; Luke xxiv. 2; John xx. 1). It does not appear that they saw the Roman soldiers; for the latter had reached the city and delivered their account of matters to the Sanhedrists, when the women were as yet only on their way to the tomb (Matt. xxviii. 11). Nor does it appear that the angel who rolled away the stone from the door was seated on it when they came. The incidents recorded in Matt. xxviii. 2-4 took place *before the arrival* of the women.

³ Matthew and Mark speak of only one angel as seen by the women, Luke

gave them a message to the disciples also, and specially to Peter, to the effect that He was going before them into Galilee, and that there they would meet with Him. And with feelings of awe and of ecstasy they left the tomb, and sped towards the city, telling no one whom they met of what had happened, but reserving the glad tidings for the disciples alone (Matt. xxviii. 5-8; Mark xvi. 5-8; Luke xxiv. 3-9).¹

Before their arrival, however, the disciples had learned from Mary Magdalene, if not of the resurrection of Jesus, yet of the disappearance of His body from the tomb. Having found Peter and John, she had told them of this; and, immediately on receiving the information, they were on their feet to accompany her to the sepulchre. John, as being the youngest and fleetest of the three, was the first to reach the spot, and, looking in, could see nothing but the winding-sheet. Peter was the next to arrive, and with characteristic impetuosity pushed past his brother disciple, and went into the tomb. John followed him; and, as they looked around, they saw not only the shroud, but the napkin

of two. It might easily be that some of the women in their bewildered excitement noticed only one of the two angels present, the one who addressed them. The statement of Luke (xxiv. 4), that the angels 'stood by them,' does not ascribe any special attitude to these heavenly beings, but merely means that they presented themselves to view, and is quite reconcilable with the representation given of one of them as 'sitting on the right side' (Mark xvi. 5).

¹ It is said in Mark xvi. 9, 'He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.' Even if the section extending from ver. 9 to ver. 20 of this chapter be referred to another authorship than that of Mark, it is unquestionably of great antiquity (see Irenaeus, iii. 10. 6). So that it proves the belief of apostolic times to have been, that the Risen Saviour appeared first to Mary. This is manifestly also what John xx. 1-18 is designed to teach. But, if so, Matt. xxviii. 9, 10, does not contain the account of a different and prior appearance of the Saviour. Rather Matthew is to be regarded as giving a compendious account of the proceedings and experiences of the Galilean women generally, without specializing what happened to one of their number as an incident in which she alone had part; while John brings into special prominence Mary Magdalene and the fact that she was the first to whom Jesus appeared. This is the view taken by Ebrard (*Evang. Geschichte*, pp. 574-578) and by Keil (*Comm. über Matth.*, p. 601). It brings Matthew, Mark, and John into harmony, and solves in the only satisfactory way the greatest difficulty in this portion of the Gospel narrative.

that had been wrapped round the head folded up and laid in a place by itself. It looked as if the sleeper had arisen from His slumbers and gone forth from His chamber with calm dignity, and as if His attendants had come and taken up His sleeping attire, and with gentle and reverential touch had smoothed it and laid it down. And John at least, if not Peter also, 'saw and believed.' He believed, and rejoiced to believe, that Jesus had risen from the dead. Having made this survey of the sepulchre, the two disciples took their way homewards, to meditate on what they had seen.

But Mary Magdalene, who had reached the tomb somewhat later than they, remained when they had gone, weeping over the outrage seemingly done to her Lord's body. And, stooping down, she looked into the empty sepulchre, in the hope of getting some insight into what had really taken place. Nor did she look in vain; for she saw something that Peter and John with all their keenness of inspection had missed. She saw two angels seated, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. It seemed as if these were the guardians who had kept watch and ward over the body of the Lord, to secure that it should remain unharmed, and should not see corruption, and as if they still kept their post, to show that they had discharged the trust confided to them. Getting sight of the tear-bedewed face of Mary, as she looked into the tomb, these heavenly watchers asked her, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' and got the answer, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.' At any other time it would have entranced Mary to find herself in the presence of angels; but even beings so glorious were as nothing to her in comparison with the treasure which she had lost, and which she must try to regain. She turned away, therefore, from the angels; but, as she did so, got sight of a seeming stranger, who asked her, 'Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?' Concluding that this was the gardener who, acting on his master's orders, had removed the body of Jesus from what was only meant to be its

temporary resting-place, she said, 'Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.' But the speaker was Jesus Himself, who, unwilling to prolong her grief, said to her, 'Mary.' And that one word, uttered in the old familiar tone, drew forth from her the instantaneous response, 'Rabboni,' or 'Master.' She would seem to have at the same time sunk on her knees before Him, as if to embrace His feet. For He had to say to her, 'Touch me not,' and to intimate that, now that He was about to ascend to His Father, the old relationship between them must give place to one of a more spiritual kind. Then, charging her with an affectionate message to His brethren, He disappeared; and Mary went to tell the disciples that she had seen the Lord (John xx. 1-18). Further on in the day Jesus appeared to Simon Peter, and had an interview with him, of which nothing save the fact of its occurrence is recorded (Luke xxiv. 34; I Cor. xv. 5).

Noon was now past, and two disciples of Jesus were travelling along the road leading from Jerusalem to Emmaus,¹ a village about sixty furlongs distant. As they moved onward, they communed and reasoned about all that had befallen their Lord. So absorbed were they in their theme, that they failed to note the footfall of one who had been gradually gaining on them, and who was at length at their side. With an air of interest He made inquiry as to the subject of their conversation, and was informed of it by Cleopas,² the more communicative of the two. They had been speaking, he said, about Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, of whom they had thought as Israel's Redeemer, but whom their priests and rulers had crucified. And, to add to their perplexity, that very day they had been assured that His tomb had been found

¹ This village of Emmaus is not to be confounded with the town of the same name, twenty-two miles west of Jerusalem. It is mentioned also by Josephus (*J. B.* vii. 6. 6), and is described as only threescore furlongs from the capital.

² This Cleopas is not the same as the Clôpas or Alphæus mentioned elsewhere. He is as entirely unknown as his unnamed companion.

empty, and that angels had declared Him risen from the dead. Their companion, after listening to their story, chid them for their ignorance of Scripture ; and, carrying them with Him down the stream of Messianic prophecy, He showed them how the idea of a suffering Saviour came ever more clearly out. As they listened, they saw that all that had seemed to them incompatible with the Christhood of Jesus went to prove it ; and that, if He had really risen from the dead, it would be put beyond a doubt that He was the Christ.

In the meantime, however, the two travellers had reached their destination, and their companion looked as if meaning to continue His journey. But they had got much enlightenment and comfort from Him, and they would fain get more. So they besought Him to stay with them, and He consented, and by-and-by sat down with them to the evening meal. But as He took bread in His hands and blessed it and gave it to them, something in His words or in His manner showed them that it was Jesus who had appeared to them ; and, immediately on their recognising Him, He vanished out of their sight. And at once they arose, and set out for Jerusalem, to tell their fellow-disciples all that they had heard and seen (Luke xxiv. 13-35).

When Cleopas and his companion reached the city, they proceeded to the house known as the rendezvous of the Eleven, and, though the doors were closed for fear of hostile intrusion, were at once admitted. With the exception of Thomas, all the apostles were there, and received them with the joyful greeting, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.' Brimful of what had happened to themselves, they then told their own story, which to some seemed almost too strange to be credited (Mark xvi. 13). But just at this point Jesus stood in the midst of them, and, looking around, said, 'Peace be unto you !' It seemed to the disciples, who as yet had but an imperfect conception of the transformation which had passed over the Saviour's body, and of the glorious powers with which it was now invested, as if it must be a disembodied spirit that had so suddenly appeared among

them. But showing them His hands and feet, with the marks of recent crucifixion on them, and His side with the gash made in it by the soldier's spear, He graciously dissipated their fears. And, to strengthen their faith still further, He partook of some food which at His own request they set before Him. Then He showed them, from Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms, that all that had happened to Him was foretold, and that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer as He had done, and to rise again from the dead. And once more looking around on them all, and saying to them, 'Peace be unto you,' He breathed on them to intimate that His Spirit would now enter them to make them true representatives of Him, and to enable them to preach in His name repentance and remission of sins. Having given His assembled disciples this gladdening evidence of His resurrection, He left them as mysteriously as He had come (Luke xxiv. 36-48; John xx. 19-23).

A blessed day this first day of the week was to the disciples of Jesus. But to His enemies it was a day of deep anxiety and dread forebodings. It was, indeed, easy for them to give hush-money to the soldiers who had kept guard beside the tomb, and to set in circulation the falsehood that the disciples of Jesus had stolen away His body when the sentinels were overpowered with sleep (Matt. xxviii. 11-15). But however they may have tried to suppress the conviction, they must have felt that they had been fighting against God, and that for them there was certain defeat, but for the One whom they had crucified, victory.

1. *To whom did it first occur that Jesus had spoken of rising from the dead on the third day? How do you account for this?*
2. *What measures were taken by the Jewish authorities to secure that the tomb of Jesus should not be entered? And what good purpose did these precautions serve?*
3. *Narrate the circumstances connected with our Lord's resurrection.*
4. *What are the chief proofs by which the resurrection of Jesus can be substantiated?*
5. *Give reasons for regarding the resurrection of Christ as a fact of vital importance.*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. The actuality of our Lord's resurrection has from the beginning been recognised as an essential part of the historical basis on which Christianity rests. 'If Christ hath not been raised,' says Paul, 'your faith is vain' (1 Cor. xv. 17). Hence the opponents of Christianity have always felt themselves under a necessity of disparaging the evidence adduced in support of this fundamental truth. The argument on the Christian side is well stated by Neander, and the leading objections to it satisfactorily disposed of (*Life of Christ*, Book v. part ii. chap. viii.). The criticisms of Strauss and Bauer are subjected to a searching examination, and their worthlessness unsparingly exhibited by Ebrard (*Evang. Gesch.* pp. 573-583). More recently Keim, while admitting the reality of the appearances of the Risen Saviour attested by Paul, explains them as merely visions due to the influence which the personality of Christ exercised over their minds (*Gesch. Jesu*, pp. 354-368). But this view fails to account for the sudden transition from deepest despondency to hopeful and joyful enthusiasm in the case of the disciples, to which all the evangelists bear testimony, and the only explanation of which is, that the One over whose death they mourned had been restored to them.

2. Among hymns commemorative of the Saviour's victory over death may be mentioned: G. Herbert's exquisitely beautiful one, beginning, 'Rise, heart; thy Lord is risen;' C. Wesley's 'Christ the Lord is risen to-day;' and Haweis', 'The happy morn is come.'

LESSON XXXII.

FROM THE RESURRECTION TO THE ASCENSION.

Read Matt. xxviii. 16-20; Mark xvi. 17-20; Luke xxiv. 49-53;
John xx. 26-xxi. 25; Acts i. 1-11.

THE apostles did not understand their Lord as meaning that they should set out for Galilee at once. So they remained in Jerusalem till the Passover week was over. The day immediately following on it was the Sabbath, and was not a day suitable for starting on a journey. The next day was the first day of the week, which brought to mind the Saviour's resurrection, and was held sacred on that account. There might be an expectation also that on the evening of that day He might appear to them again, and make some fuller disclosure of His purposes with regard to them.

Accordingly the second Lord's Day saw the apostles assembled in the same room as before, Thomas being on this occasion with them. The intervening week had to this disciple been a week of profoundest misery. He had loved his Lord with an intense and tender affection. He had once said to his fellow-disciples, when Jesus seemed to him about to set out on a most perilous adventure, 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him' (John xi. 16). And when the One whom he so loved actually died, it seemed as if life had lost for him all its desirableness. He withdrew himself from every one, and wept for his Lord, and refused to be comforted. When the first rumours of the resurrection reached him, he treated them as fond delusions. Even when his brethren sought him out, and with united voice assured him that Jesus had appeared to them, and had bidden them handle Him and

certify themselves that it was no phantom on which they were gazing, but Himself, Thomas refused to believe. The news seemed to him too good to be true. And his answer to all their representations was, 'Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' Yet was he most desirous to believe, if he only could, that Jesus had actually risen. And so he was prevailed on to add himself to the number of those who met on the evening of the second Lord's Day, in the anticipation that their Master might again appear to them.

And once more, at about the same hour as before, the doors being again shut, Jesus stood in the midst of the Eleven, and, looking round on them, said, 'Peace be unto you!' But after this salutation to all, turning to Thomas, He said to him, 'Reach hither thy finger and see my hands, and reach hither thy hand and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.' Thomas felt as he listened, that the One who so addressed him must have been near him when he knew not of it, must have heard his unbelieving words and made acquaintance with his inmost thoughts, and could therefore be no other than the Omnipresent and Omniscient One Himself. Yet the pierced hands and wounded side showed the speaker to be Jesus. And he gave utterance to both these convictions in the adoring exclamation, 'My Lord, and my God!' The confession was a welcome one to Jesus, though in accepting it He could not but add the gentle reproof, 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' The chief, if not the only object of this appearance of our Lord, was to bring His chosen Eleven to be of one mind; and it was gained. And, banded now in a closer union than ever, they could set out hopefully for Galilee, to wait for the further revelations that had been promised them, and that were in due time to be given (John xx. 26-29).

It was not long ere the Eleven were once more in Galilee, moving about amid scenes hallowed by memories of their Lord. Taking up their abode in some of the towns or villages by the

side of the Lake, they supported themselves by such manual labour as was familiar to them. The most of them had been fishermen, and resumed their old occupation. On one occasion seven of them were together—Simon Peter, the sons of Zebedee, Thomas, Nathanael, and two others whose names are not given. A fishing expedition being proposed by Peter, they all joined him in it; but after being out the whole night, they found their labours fruitless. But a stranger, whom in the grey dawn they saw standing on the beach, after inquiring as to their success, bade them cast their net on the right side of the boat; and no sooner had they done so, than the net was full. The remembrance of a former miracle very like to this flashed across the mind of John; and, recognising the same Being as the doer of both, he whispered to Simon, 'It is the Lord.' And that impulsive disciple, girding his fisher's coat about him, and plunging into the sea, swam ashore, and threw himself at the Saviour's feet. The others followed in the boat, drawing the net after them, full of great fishes, which, when counted, were found to be a hundred and fifty and three. A fire of coals, with fish laid on it and bread, had been prepared for the hungry and weary fishermen; and, at the invitation of Jesus, all gathered around it, to break their fast; nor did any one think of asking who had provided this repast for them, or who it was that presided at it; all of them knowing well that it was the Lord.

At the conclusion of the meal, Jesus, turning to Simon Peter, said to him, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?' There was a time when Peter would have given to this question the prompt answer, 'Yes.' But he can make no such boastful declaration now, and merely says, 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' The answer pleases Jesus, and He says to him, 'Feed my lambs.' Yet He again inquires, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' and again gets the answer, 'Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee;' and the answer is followed by the charge, 'Tend my sheep.' But, as Peter had three times over denied his Saviour, he must three times over confess

Him ; and so Jesus once more asks, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' And this third putting of the question deeply grieves Peter, and with a throbbing heart he answers, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things : Thou knowest that I love Thee.' Jesus is fully satisfied, and, after again saying to him, 'Feed my sheep,' tells him, in the hearing of his brethren, that in his old age he shall die such a death as to bring glory to God. And after thus solemnly reinstating this apostle in his office as one of the shepherds appointed to watch over and tend the sheep and lambs of His flock, and predicting that he should be found faithful unto death, the Lord closes and clenches His dealings with him by saying to him, 'Follow me.'

Suiting the action to the word, Jesus arose and began to move away, accompanied by Peter. But the disciple whom He specially loved followed closely in their footsteps ; and Peter, anxious to get some glimpse of the future that lay before his dearest friend, could not refrain from asking, 'Lord,—and this man, what of him?' 'If I will that he tarry till I come,' was the answer, 'what is that to thee? Follow thou me.' Instead of making anxious inquiry as to the appointments of God in regard to others, Peter is bidden throw himself with undivided interest and energy into the work to which he is himself summoned. And yet with this admonition there is combined the hint that John's earthly course may be expected to stretch far beyond his own, and to end only when his Master's cause has visibly triumphed (John xxi. 1-23).

It was probably on occasion of His interview with these seven disciples that our Lord made arrangements for a still more important meeting which He desired to hold. Matthew describes the Eleven as going to Galilee, 'unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them' (xxviii. 16). And Paul tells us that the Risen Saviour 'appeared to above five hundred brethren at once,' of whom the greater part remained till his day (I Cor. xv. 6). It was very desirable that our Lord should show Himself after His resurrection, not merely to the Eleven, or to a

few outside of their number, but to His disciples generally. It was desirable that a general assembly of believers should be gathered around Him and get demonstration of the reality of His resurrection, and should be constituted into a Church, and should learn from His own lips what He expected His Church to do. And it is scarcely possible that such a meeting should have been held, and that there should have been left no record of it. Yet no record of it has been left, unless it is to be identified with the meeting described in Matt. xxviii. 16-20. Matthew, it is true, only mentions the Eleven as present on that occasion. But he *hints* the presence of others, when he states that of those to whom Jesus then appeared 'some doubted.' For by this time there was no doubter among the Eleven. The one of their number whom it had been hardest to convince of the resurrection of his Lord had been fully convinced of it. So that the doubters of whom Matthew speaks must be looked for outside the circle of the Eleven.

But such a meeting as this needed to be arranged for. The place at which it was to be held, and the day for which it was to be summoned, had to be previously fixed. This would seem to have been done at some such preliminary meeting as took place between Jesus and the seven. Accordingly, on the mountain which Jesus had appointed, and on the appointed day, there gathered a great company of disciples. They had been cast into perplexity and dismay by the Saviour's death; but they had been aroused from their stupor by the news of His resurrection. The greater part of them, influenced by the testimony of the Eleven and of other trustworthy witnesses, had believed the welcome tidings. But some, like Thomas, felt it difficult to pass from deep despondency to faith. Yet the doubters, as well as the believers, have responded with alacrity to a summons purporting to come from Jesus Himself, and inviting them to meet Him. And they are met together, more than five hundred in number, in a state of eager expectation; the eleven apostles occupying the most conspicuous place among the waiting crowd.

At length Jesus appears, and all fall down before Him in silent adoration, even the doubters yielding to the general impulse. And soon doubt has disappeared ; and Jesus, looking on His assembled disciples, speaks to them. 'All authority,' says He, 'hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you : and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' In these few words Jesus marks out for His Church its work upon this earth. His servants, acting under Him as the One invested with supreme rule, are to proclaim the good news of salvation throughout the whole world, and are to follow up this evangelistic work by patient instruction of the believing in truth and duty. And they are encouraged to address themselves to this great enterprise by the assurance that He will ever be with them, to countenance and help them.

When this important meeting was over, the chief purpose for which the Eleven had come to Galilee was seen to have been fulfilled ; and they returned to Jerusalem. It would seem to have been after this that Jesus appeared to James (1 Cor. xv. 7), —probably that James who is known as 'the Lord's brother.' There may have been other appearances also, besides those narrated by the evangelists or alluded to by Paul ; for Luke says that He 'showed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs during the space of forty days' (Acts i. 3).

But our Lord had another object in remaining so long behind on earth, besides that of proving the reality of His resurrection. He was preparing His disciples for the new relationship in which He and they were to stand towards each other, when He had fairly left them and entered on the unseen state. The sudden and unexpected way in which, at any time and in any circumstances, He sometimes appeared to them, showed them that He might be near while there were no outward signs of His presence. Thus they learned to think of Him as looking on them and

listening to them, and as ready at any moment to interfere for their help. And by the time that it became necessary for Him to leave earth for heaven, they had so profited by their training as to be able to lean on Him and commune with Him as an unseen Friend and Saviour.

But the day at last arrived when Jesus must take farewell of His disciples. He appeared to them that day in Jerusalem, in the upper chamber in which they were wont to assemble. And after speaking to them of the work which lay before them, and of the baptism of the Spirit which they were soon to receive, and by which they were to be fitted for it, He led them out of the city, He Himself going before them, and, crossing the Mount of Olives, reached the point at which Bethany appears. Something unusual in His manner inspired them with the conviction that something extraordinary was about to happen, and they asked Him, 'Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' The question showed an ignorance which Jesus could not hope by any words of His to remove. And, merely telling them that it was not for them to pry into what the Father had not been pleased to reveal, He bade them wait for the Holy Spirit, and for the power with which He should endow them, that they might then go forth and be witnesses for Him 'both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.'

Having spoken thus to His disciples, He lifted up His hands to bless them. And, while He blessed them, heaven began to draw Him towards itself, and He gradually ascended towards His Father's home above. The disciples felt it befitting that now the sojourn of the Son of God on this earth should end; yet with wistful eye they followed Him, till at length a bright cloud received Him out of their sight. While they stood gazing into heaven two angels stood beside them, and said to them, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This Jesus which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven.'

Thus, when His work on earth was over, Jesus left it, and re-entering heaven, 'sat down at the right hand of God.'

1. *How was the unbelief of Thomas removed?*
2. *What was the object of the question three times put to Simon Peter, and of the charge three times addressed to him?*
3. *What prophetic intimation did our Saviour give regarding the future of Peter and of John respectively?*
4. *With which of the Saviour's appearances is that to 'above five hundred brethren at once' (1 Cor. xv. 6) to be identified?*
5. *What was the Great Commission given by Jesus to His Church?*
6. *What made it expedient that Jesus should ascend from earth to heaven?*

HINTS TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

1. The concluding part of Dr. Hanna's *Life of Jesus*, entitled 'The Forty Days after the Resurrection,' is specially worthy of study. In pp. 592-594 he seeks to answer the question, 'Why did Jesus tarry so long upon the earth when His work appeared to have been finished?' and he finds the key that unlocks this mystery in the necessity for training the disciples to think of Him and deal with Him as a Divine Person, and yet as a brother alive to all human sympathies.

2. 'The doubt of Thomas' is the subject of one of F. W. Robertson's Sermons (Second Series).

3. The ascension of our Lord forms the theme of some noble hymns,—such as Toke's 'Thou art gone up on high,' and Kelly's 'Look, ye saints, the sight is glorious.'

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