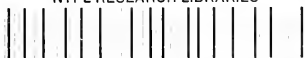


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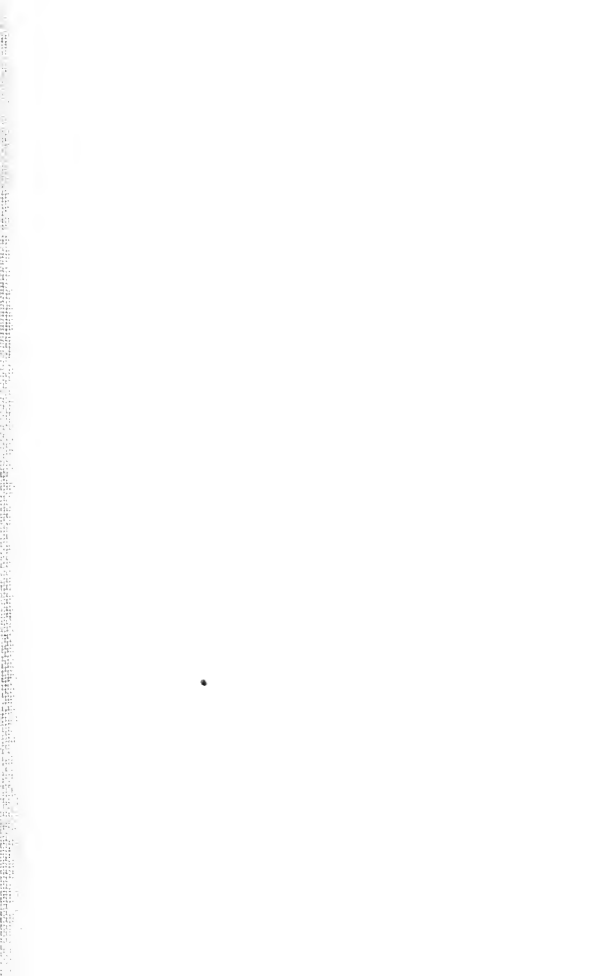
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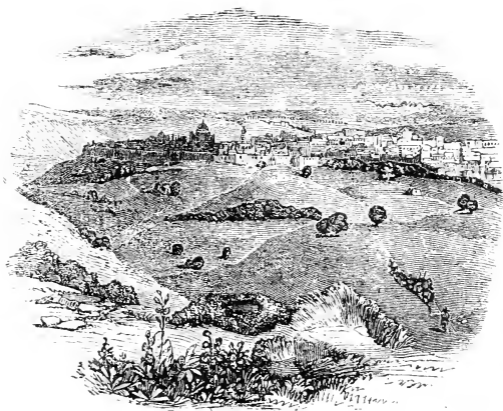
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MODERN JERUSALEM.



# THE LIFE

OF OUR

BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR

## JESUS CHRIST.

It was no path of flowers  
Through this dark world of ours,  
Beloved of the Father, thou didst tread ;  
And shall we, in dismay,  
Shriek from the narrow way,  
When clouds and darkness are around it spread ?  
O thou, who art the life,  
Be with us through the strife,  
Friend, Guardian, Saviour, which doth lead to thee.

VOLUME I.

REVISED BY D. P. KIDDER.

**New-York :**

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FOR THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL  
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1915



## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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IN this work the reader is presented with a most discreet and valuable classification of all the events in our Saviour's life and history when upon earth.

The style is simple and chaste. Much pains have been taken by the author to embody all those facts respecting geography and modern discovery which throw light upon the sacred narrative.

This is another of the issues of the

Religious Tract Society of London, which, like its predecessors upon our list from the same source, will be read, and indeed studied, with general interest and profit.

*New-York, March 15, 1847.*

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L I F E  
OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR  
J E S U S C H R I S T.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS—HEROD—ZACHARIAS—ANNUNCIATION TO MARY—BIRTH OF JOHN—BIRTH OF JESUS AT BETHLEHEM—SIMEON AND ANNA.

IN writing, as in reading, the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ upon earth, it is especially needful that the mind should seriously and deeply reflect upon the vast, the infinite importance of the subject under consideration. It is not the biography of a man, although it is an account of Him who was in the form of man, partaking of all the circumstances of human nature—even tempted in all points as we are, but wholly free from sin. He was also God, one with the Father, (John

x, 30; see also ch. xvii,) thinking it not robbery, nor any derogation from the glory of the almighty Divinity, that he should be partaker thereof, as one with the Father. Phil. ii, 6, 7, 8. Especially should it be remembered, that this wondrous union, this manifestation of God in the flesh, was for us men, and for our salvation; that a way of access, a way to heaven and everlasting happiness, should be opened and assured to the guilty race of Adam, ruined by the disobedience of their first parents, and having sealed that ruin by their own sins. Thus those who by reason of sin are made subject to death, become partakers of eternal life, as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus, through his free mercy.

It is plain, therefore, that the life of Jesus, or, as it has been denominated, "the acts of the days of the Son of man," must be widely different from the biography of any other being who ever appeared or existed in human form. It was so; for it not only shows his divine power, but it presents the model of a perfect man



—a model for all to have continually in view ; for all to seek, as the apostle taught, that the mind may be in them which was also in Christ Jesus. Of this life full and minute particulars are recorded, though by no means all that might have been written. John xxi, 25. Yet there is so much as God the Holy Spirit saw to be needful for our instruction ; and this has been preserved, and is now made more accessible than in former ages, in spite of all the efforts of Satan and his emissaries : so that of almost every nation under heaven it may now be said, as on the great day of the pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, “ They do hear, in their own tongues, the wonderful works of God.” The more closely this record is studied, the more shall we learn to admire and to love Him who first loved us ; and whose wondrous deeds and words are related by the four evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—in that blessed book, the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is not requisite here to enter minutely

into an account of these four histories to show how they agree, and how each one is amplified, and made more complete by comparing it with the others. They agree and confirm each other in a remarkable manner; far more than the leading historians of Rome, or England, as Hales well remarks. It is sufficient to notice, that the Gospel written by the evangelist Matthew is considered to have especial interest for the Jewish Christians, while that of Luke would interest the Gentiles. The evangelist Mark somewhat condenses the narrative of both, with a few additional facts and circumstances. The beloved apostle John, writing the last in order, was inspired chiefly to record particulars in addition to those of the other histories; especially to present most important matter in reference to the divinity of our Lord and Saviour. He shows that the Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God, the Creator of all things, was made flesh, and dwelt upon earth, full of grace and truth.

There is no occasion in this place to go

into arguments to prove the divine authority of these Gospels. Many books have been written expressly on these points. It may suffice here to quote a remark of Hales, proving the wide distinction between these and ordinary writings:—

“Our Lord’s biographers, while they were ready to do justice to distinguished merit, to signalize the exemplary faith of a Roman centurion, or of a Syrophenician woman, carefully avoided naming any one without necessity, of whom they had nothing to say that was not to his discredit. They direct our admiration and our hatred to virtues and vices, not to persons. They do nothing, they assume nothing, in their own character. In the Old Testament, indeed, the sacred penmen were the voice of God to the people; and they not only exhorted and rebuked with all authority, but even delivered their own opinions without restraint or reserve. But the evangelists, like the Baptist, acted merely as deputed heralds of Christ; and, deeply impressed with a sense of his pre-eminence

as the Oracle and Son of God, and of their own insignificance, they sink themselves in the shade, to place him in the foreground, in the most conspicuous light; they even, as it were, annihilate themselves, that Jesus may be all in all! Never could it more truly be said of any historians, that they published not themselves but Christ the Lord, reporting, in singleness of heart, what was said and done by him, and to him, throughout the whole course of his ministry, and nothing else, without partiality or prejudice, and without disguise, ‘sacrificing to the truth alone,’ according to a precept given for writing history.”

Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, in Gaul, writing about A. D. 178, thus speaks of the four evangelists:—

“Matthew published a scripture of the Gospel among the Hebrews, written in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel and establishing the church at Rome. And, after their decease, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also delivered to us in writing the things preached by Peter. And Luke,

the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by him. Afterward John, the disciple of the Lord, who leaned on his breast, also published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus, in Asia.”

The intention in these pages is to pursue the course marked out by the best Harmonies; to notice the events and discourses recorded in the four Gospels, in what appears their natural order, incorporating the whole into one narrative. Some reflections are added that may tend to direct the reader to consider minutely the sacred records, while their peculiar excellences are pointed out. If the reader wishes for further reflections on the circumstances narrated in the Gospel history, he can refer to the Commentaries of Clarke and Benson, or to other similar works. Let it never be forgotten that the inspired writings are not human histories. It has been truly remarked, that “the apostles (and evangelists) were fully gifted for the business of their mission; they worked miracles, they spake with tongues, they explained mysteries, they interpreted pro-

phacies, they discerned the true from the false pretences to the Spirit; and all this for the temporary and occasional discharge of their ministry. Is it possible, then, to suppose them to be deserted by their divine Enlightener when they sat down to the other and more important part of their work, to frame an infallible rule of faith for the lasting service of the church? Can we believe that the Spirit, who so bountifully assisted them in their assemblies, had withdrawn himself when they retired to their private closets; or that when their speech was with all power, their writings should convey no more than the weak and fallible dictates of human knowledge? No candid man, therefore, will be backward to conclude, that whatever powers the apostles (and evangelists) had for the temporary use of their ministry, they had, in at least as large a measure, for the perpetual service of the church."

The sacred narrative is, in a few places, connected with the common histories of the period. The names of the Herods, Pilate, Caiaphas, and some other notices,

give opportunity for searching out human testimony concerning the sacred records; although any who examine the Gospels in the spirit for which the Bereans are commended, will know that there is not the least need of this testimony for confirmation; and to have attempted to carry the matter beyond these brief notices would uselessly interfere with the simple integrity of the Gospel narrative.

The history of Herod, falsely termed the Great, is closely connected with the birth of Christ, from the circumstances related in the Gospel by the evangelist Matthew; and the leading facts of the life of that tyrant should be known by any one seeking for information in addition to the sacred record. These particulars are related in the preceding portion of these histories—that which connects the Old and New Testament—and need not be repeated here. It is evident that what is stated relative to this Herod confirms the Jewish and other histories. The tyrant, troubled at the mention of another king,

acknowledging the authority of the ancient prophecies, yet thinking he could annul them—fearful of an infant, yet venturing upon a deed of atrocity in the murder of the infants around Bethlehem—seeking to deceive the eastern sages, although fully aware they were under heavenly guidance—all these, and other traits, show the identity of the Herod of the New Testament, with the Herod of Josephus and of other historians.

But a deeper lesson is also conveyed; they exhibit mortal man in opposition to his Maker—another Pharaoh, yet without the excuse of the Egyptian of old! He could not say, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?—I know not the Lord!” *Exod. v, 2.* He well knew that Christ should be born, yet thought that he could make void all that had been recorded concerning him, of whom Moses and the prophets witnessed. The crimes and awful death of the tyrant need not be repeated in this place. We may turn to the little flock who are described by *St. Luke* as “waiting for the Consolation of



Israel," and looking "for redemption in Jerusalem."

When ignorance and sin are most prevalent, God still preserves a little flock who know and do his will; like the few scattered leaves or fruits in the last days of autumn, or the faint twinkling stars of a cloudy winter's night. These remind us of past brightness, and encourage hopes of returning sunshine, while they are rendered more precious by the dreary scene around. When the birth of Christ took place, the world at large were heathens: the Jews, the chosen people of God, for the most part were living in carelessness or self-righteousness, as Sadducees or Pharisees—as worldlings only desirous of the enjoyments of this life, or as formalists laying stress upon outward profession and ceremonial observances, without desiring renewal of the heart, or giving the just place to spiritual services. A few praying believers were waiting for the Consolation of Israel, the long-promised Messiah, of whom divinely inspired kings and prophets had long since foretold. These needed,

and they received, special blessings and consolations from Him who never said "Seek ye me in vain." Among the most remarkable were Zacharias the priest and Elizabeth his wife, who seem to have been well acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures, and to have been very pious, consistent characters. Luke i, 6. Zacharias is described as performing the public duties of his office, offering incense, the emblem of prayer, Psa. cxli, 2; Mal. i, 11; for in that dispensation the temple ritual was for the most part ceremonial, performed by the priest, and not, as now, a service in which the minister and people are united together, though the synagogue worship was more of this description. It was at the time of the evening oblation in the temple at Jerusalem, the people in the temple-courts were accompanying his ministrations by their prayers, when an angel from heaven approached him. Zacharias was terrified; the best of men, even of ministers, have reason to be cast down and alarmed by a sense of their unworthiness before a just and holy God. Yet the

address of the heavenly visitant showed "thoughts of peace, and not of evil," a like message to all those who draw nigh to God in his appointed way : " Fear not, thy prayer is heard." Such is ever the gospel message of glad tidings. Does this refer to his actual public duties at the moment? or had he, with his wife, like other believers, earnestly desired children, as a gift from God, to be trained up for his glory? And is there not here a reference to one of the latest and clearest prophecies of the Old Testament? Mal. iv, 6.

The communication was so astonishing that the aged priest questioned it, and demanded a sign. The messenger reproved his unbelief, declared himself to be Gabriel, the same glorious being who had been sent to foretell the coming of Christ to Daniel nearly five hundred years before, Dan. viii, 16; ix, 21—also at the time of the evening oblation; and added a token which should be instantly fulfilled. Zacharias should be dumb till the event took place. The most common blessings, such as speech and hearing, are gifts from God;

they call for a grateful acknowledgment of his mercies in continuing them.

Another visit of the same angel is next stated. These glorious beings take a deep interest in the concerns of sinful mortals; they are creatures of the same heavenly Father, and desire to look into the mysteries of his redeeming grace. The purport of the angel's errand to Mary is recorded Luke i, 26-38; it pointed to the speedy fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. She was a youthful female, descended from King David, the intended wife of a carpenter at Nazareth, an obscure town in the remote district of Galilee. Its situation is described by a recent traveler as "beautiful—a rich and verdant field surrounded by barren mountains, which rise like the edge of a shell to guard it from intrusion. It abounds in fig-trees, small gardens, and hedges of the prickly pear: the dense rich grass affords abundant pasture." It stands about thirty miles from the Mediterranean Sea, and from Mount Carmel, a spot celebrated in the history of Elijah. 1 Kings xviii. Such is the situation of Nazareth,

so often mentioned in holy writ: it was then a border town, mean and despicable in the character of most of its inhabitants. Travelers also compare the village to a crown set on the summit of a hill, and say that it affords a very extensive prospect. The modern name is Nazera. A spring in the neighborhood is called the Fountain of the Virgin; and most likely it was that which she and her neighbors used, as there seems no other at hand. The Greeks have a tradition, that here she received the salutation of the angel. This, of course, is mere conjecture.

The Papists dwell on the visit of Gabriel to Mary as the reason for the worship they offer to her. They point out a dwelling where they say it took place, with a pillar by which they say the angel stood! It is needless to add, that their ideas and statements are unscriptural and false. There is nothing to confirm the belief that she lived in the habitation pointed out; there is absolutely nothing to authorize any worship to her, or any more adoration of her than of thousands who have been mothers

in Israel. All are sinful mortals, of like passions with their sisters of the human race. Having the assurance, "With God nothing shall be impossible," Mary listened in humble faith, not doubting or questioning. We are not told how she was employed: painters have depicted her on her knees; but she might, as a pious minister says, have been engaged in works of charity, or in the daily duties of domestic life. "We are," he adds, "acceptable to God while in the path of duty, whatever that duty may be." Let us, like Mary, "commit our way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass."

A pleasing picture of friendly intercourse is next presented. Anxious to obtain the confirmation to which she had been referred, Mary left her abode in Galilee, and journeyed southward to visit her relatives in the hill country of Judæa; probably a rare occurrence, being a long distance for a young and lonely female. The spot to which she journeyed was most likely Hebron; a city famous in Old Testament history, and then the residence of many

priests and Levites. It has been minutely described as covering with its suburbs the sloping sides of the hill, and surrounded by the vineyards and fruitful trees for which Judæa was famed. Here the spies entered the promised land. Num. xiii. Here Isaac, the type of Christ, was born; and David, another typical character, began his reign. She was kindly received by Elizabeth and Zacharias, and doubtless their discourse was highly interesting and profitable. Some particulars are recorded, Luke i, 40-56. How many pious women in far distant lands delight to talk of Jesus and his salvation, and apply to themselves this truth, "Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord!" The duties and difficulties of females are peculiarly their own; faith only can support in every circumstance, whether comparatively small or great. Often youthful Christians, like Mary, are enabled to exercise stronger faith than others more advanced, like Zacharias. Young people in this happy land are little aware of the

blessings conferred on females by true religion; look at Gal. iii, 27-29. While Mohammedans and heathens assert that women have no souls; and their females are despised, neglected, or, at best, merely occupied in attending to outward things, let those who receive a Scriptural education say, with Mary, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." An eminent writer has judiciously drawn a parallel between Eve and Mary, the two females most prominent in the history of the human race. The one lost the advantages of a most exalted and happy state; the other was chosen in her humble path to receive the special manifestations of the love and favor of God to the ruined race of Adam.

After Mary returned home, it is supposed Joseph the carpenter received the message stated in Matt. i. Every circumstance attending the birth of Christ shows the humility and lowliness of the earthly lot he took on himself. Let not his followers covet earthly riches, honors, or human praise.



About the same time we read of the birth of John, afterward called the Baptist. His name, signifying "the grace and favor of God," had been given by the angel; and his parents, by assigning it, showed their obedience and piety. It was not unusual among the Jews to call children by the names of their parents or relatives: that of Zacharias, signifying the "memory of the Lord," would not have been unsuitable to the circumstances which attended the birth of his son. Again Zacharias "spake and praised God." His language showed a deep and clear insight into the gospel plan, while his phraseology, as well as that of Mary, before alluded to, appears to be derived from many passages in the Old Testament; particularly the Psalms, and the song of Hannah. 1 Sam. ii. One spirit animates all true believers, and the devotional parts of the Bible have supplied stores for their use in every age.

Little is said of the early life of John: it seems to have been spent chiefly in retirement and devotion, which prepared him to instruct others. He was the forerunner

of the Messiah, who went before him in the spirit of Elijah the prophet. Mal. iv, 5; Matt. xi, 14; Isa. xl, 3. In eastern lands it is necessary and customary for a herald to announce the expected approach of his sovereign, and direct preparations for his arrival. Is not this the office of every Christian minister?

The sacred narrative proceeds to unfold the event so long expected. Of all the prophecies which foretell it, none perhaps is more striking than that beautiful passage, Micah iv, 5. One verse may be especially noticed, chap. iv, 8:—

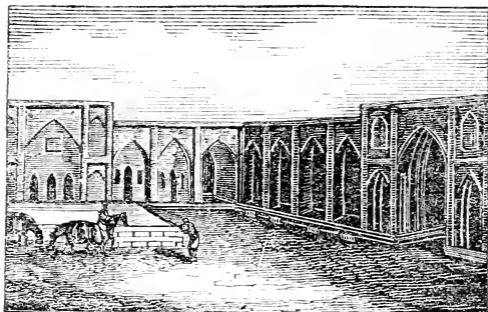
“ And thou, O tower of the flock, (or of Edar,)  
The stronghold of the daughter of Zion,  
Unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion;  
The kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.”

Edar is about a mile from Bethlehem. Gen. xxxv, 21. The Jews had a tradition that King Messiah should appear there: cattle were brought there from the numerous pasture-fields around Bethlehem for selection for peace-offerings, and there the shepherds, mentioned in Luke ii, are supposed to have fed their flocks. Christ is

sometimes spoken of as a tower. Prov. xviii, 10. He watches over and protects his people. Micah v, 2, is often quoted as pointing out the very place "where Christ should be born." Matt. ii, 6; John vii, 42. Joseph and Mary dwelt far off, yet an edict from a heathen prince required their attendance at Bethlehem. The Lord, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things, can thus direct the most arbitrary plans and designs of man. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord." This is the more remarkable, as the "taxing" occupied several years in carrying out. It was not finally enforced till some years later, either before or during the government of Cyrenius, when it caused strong opposition. Acts v, 37. The reference to his government would be fresh in the memory of those living when Luke wrote. The inhabitants of the whole world, that is, of the far-extended empire of Rome, must be enrolled—their names were recorded previous to a general taxation. This brought Joseph and Mary just at the appointed time to Bethlehem, for them a distant and

expensive journey, which probably they would not otherwise have attempted; but when urged by such an edict they dared not refuse or delay. Does not this enrolment for taxation by a foreign power prove that the sceptre was fast departing from Judah, and now Shiloh was to come? Gen. xlix, 10. The national repugnance to such a measure caused some delay at the time, but it was carried into effect a few years later.

Arrived at Bethlehem, they found the place full; there was no room in the inn, or caravansary, and they were glad of the shelter of a stable—a frequent case with travelers in eastern lands, where the manners have little changed, and the accommodation of inns is very different from those in this country. One who visited the East in the sixteenth century has minutely described the larger sorts of these lodging-houses. He says: “It is all under one roof, and has no partitions; all travelers and their cattle are admitted promiscuously. The only division in it is an area in the middle for the servants, the beasts,



EASTERN CARAVANSARY.

and the baggage, inclosed with a parapet three feet high, so broad as to reach the wall on every side, and form a stone bench all along the walls, for accommodating the travelers, and raising them above the horses, camels, and mules. There are chimneys at proper distances. Every little party has a proportion of this bench. They use the provisions they bring with them or purchase in this place. At night the saddle-cloth and their upper garments serve for bedclothes, and the saddle for a pillow." Perhaps in one of these inns Joseph and Mary found shelter. The larger ones are called caravansaries, while others, with

private apartments and moderate supplies of food, are to be found at only a few places.

Angels again received a commission to foretell the glorious news, not to the princes or rulers of the land, but to men engaged in an humble and useful calling—"shepherds watching their flocks by night," probably with pious and prepared minds, yet far from expecting the visible appearance which they beheld of the glory of the Lord. They were, like others of our fallen race, alarmed at the thoughts of an invisible world; but the message of salvation through Christ was made known as fitted to compose every troubled mind. Not only one angel was present—a multitude of the heavenly host united in the joyful song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." Luke ii, 14. In proportion as men feel this spirit, they taste the happiness and prepare for the joys of angels.

The Rev. P. Fisk, an American missionary, thus describes the spot:—"Bethlehem itself is on a hill which seems like

a pile of rocks, with here and there a patch of verdure. Between the rocks, where it is cultivated, vines, figs, and olives appear to grow in luxuriance. On the right, as we descended, was a little mean-looking village, in which it is believed the shepherds dwelt. All at once a delightful valley, covered with green fields, opened to our view. Near one side is a field of olives, inclosed by a wall, with a subterranean church in the centre. This is pointed out as where the shepherds were. Our guide told us the Greeks and Catholics had a long dispute about the possession of this place; and the Greeks, by dint of money, gained their cause. Under an olive-tree, near by, we sat down, read Luke ii, and, after a season of devotion, gathered some flowers of the field, and returned to Bethlehem." The face of the country and the natural productions remain the same, whatever may be said of the works or words of men.

Often had David kept his flocks in those very pastures, perhaps exclaiming, "The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not

want;" or when gazing on the wonders of those very skies, some clear moonlight night, he inquired, "Lord, what is man that thou visitest him?" Jehovah was now indeed come down to dwell among men, even to be their Shepherd, and give his life for them. Since then the Christian traveler has tried to realize the truths of Scripture in the same interesting spot, while his companions have exclaimed, "In yonder sky the angels probably appeared." But what is head knowledge, what are the most exalted endowments, compared to this one thing needful—to go by faith to Bethlehem, and look on the infant Saviour as Emmanuel, God with us?

"The crowded inn, like sinners' hearts—  
O ignorance extreme!—  
For other guests of various sorts  
Had room, but none for him.  
In swaddling clothes the babe behold,  
Let none his weakness scorn;  
The feeblest heart shall hell subdue  
When Jesus Christ is born."

The shepherds hastened to visit the town of Bethlehem; they found the babe



lying in a manger, and returned to publish what they had heard and seen. The neighbors wondered; but Mary thought on these things in silent recollection. She seems to have been an humble, serious, and contemplative character; and such the Lord takes pleasure in. "He will beautify the meek with salvation." Psalm cxlix, 4. There is nothing in Scripture to point out the exact date of the birth of Christ; but by a number of circumstances Greswell is led to calculate it was early in April, B. C. 4. The observance of the festival at the end of December, there is full reason to believe, resulted from there being a heathen festival at that time.\*

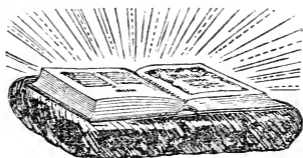
Though without sin, the child was circumcised according to the divine law. The name Jesus was given to him, (in Hebrew Joshua,) meaning a deliverer or saviour. Never let any shrink from Christ on account of their unworthiness. The very

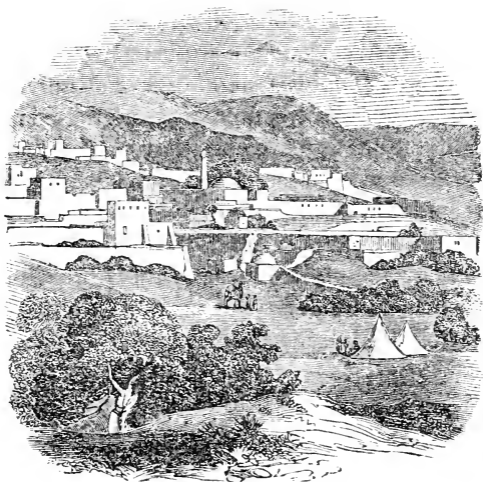
\* The particulars, and also how the Christian era came to be dated after the birth of Christ, are explained in the Commentaries printed by the Methodist Book Concern.—ED.

name tells that he came to save his people from their sins. "Were you only the semblance of a sinner, you would have but the semblance of a Saviour," said a friend to the good reformer Luther, when he was distressed by conviction of sin: let every true believer remember this.

Every incident in the Redeemer's earthly life proves at once his humiliation and his glory. His mother appeared in the temple with the offering assigned by law to the poorest worshipers. "If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering." Lev. xii, 8. Two aged believers then present, by the leadings of the Holy Spirit, knew and acknowledged the promised Child, and spoke of his redemption to those around them. The records of Simeon and Anna, though short, are deeply interesting. The one, an aged prophet, warned and encouraged Joseph and Mary respecting the light of the gospel day. The other, a pious widow, whose chief solace was in prayer, (1 Tim. v, 5)

associated with those like-minded ; for, as Campbell says, “the expectation of the Messiah, though general, was not universal.” Many were, doubtless, engrossed by follies and trifles of the day, or by their farms and merchandise ; yet “they that feared the Lord spake often one to another” of Christ. And of such it is said, “They shall be mine, saith the Lord God of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.” Mal. iii, 17.





Nazareth.

## CHAPTER II.

THE EASTERN MAGI—THE MURDER OF THE CHILDREN IN AND ABOUT BETHLEHEM—THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT—RETURN TO NAZARETH—JESUS IN THE TEMPLE—EARLY LIFE OF JESUS.

THE next event connected with the Saviour's birth is, that "wise men" came from the East to worship the King of the Jews. The original word "magi" signi-

fies "divines," and was applied to the priesthood of the Persian empire. Their original founder is supposed to have been the first Zerdusht, or Zoroaster, and to have lived before Abraham. Another, or the second of the name, was the great reformer of the Magian religion. He is supposed to have been the servant or disciple of the prophet Daniel. He is said to have left a record foretelling of the miraculous birth of Christ, of the star, and ordaining the gifts that should be offered; but the antiquity of this is not without doubt: it may be a legend of the Christian era. A general expectation then prevailed among the eastern nations, perhaps originating in patriarchal traditions, and kept alive by the predictions of Balaam, such as Numbers xxiv, 15-19; and in later times by Daniel, who lived among the inhabitants of those regions. The plains of Chaldea early furnished ample opportunities for observing the heavenly bodies, and the appearance of this star seems to have been unusual. By some it has been regarded as a bright meteor, the reflection

of the divine glory which the shepherds had seen.

These learned men set out, and asked at Jerusalem for the object of their journey. The strangers were under heavenly direction in their course; but the Jews felt alarmed and surprised at their questions, so little were many of them acquainted with their own Scriptures. The news that the King of the Jews was born was indeed agitating. Herod and his supporters deemed him, by anticipation, the formidable rival of the reigning family of the Roman polity, while the Pharisees would rejoice in the anticipation of their temporal or worldly Messiah. The Sadducees would be angry at anything confirmatory of spiritual truth, and the pious news already noticed would brighten with the belief that redemption was drawing nigh. Herod assembled the chief priests and the scribes, those best acquainted with the letter of the Scriptures. They at once cited the prophet Micah, v, 2. Herod sent the travelers to Bethlehem; and again the star appeared, and became

their guide. They worshiped the infant Saviour, presenting as gifts, gold frankincense and myrrh; thus accomplishing the prophecies in Isaiah xlix, lx, and Psalm lxxii; though the fuller accomplishment is to be looked for in the calling of the Gentiles in the latter days. These promises are now fulfilling; Gentiles, as well as Jews, are learning to obey the divine requirement, "My son, give me thine heart!" "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit."

Some early writers have traced an emblematical signification in the gifts brought by the wise men: the gold, as due to him who was a King; the frankincense, an offering made to God, showing forth his divine nature—sweet odors are often mentioned as accompanying sacrifice and acts of worship; myrrh, used in embalming dead bodies, and thus betokening his human nature, perhaps also testifying his bitter sufferings. All this may be fanciful; certainly it is not so evident as the fact that they looked on him as a royal child; and in acting up to the light they

had, they might receive further intimations from God as to the real nature of his kingdom.

Their gifts must have proved seasonable assistance to Joseph and Mary, especially in their flight to Egypt, which soon followed, as calculated by Greswell in August, B. C. 4. Herod, the wicked tyrant who ruled Judæa, excited by envy and rage, and fearing lest some one should arise to dispute his government, sought to know from the wise men the birthplace of the new-born king, hypocritically pretending a desire to worship him. This attempt failing, as the wise men received divine direction to proceed homeward another way, he sent forth and slew all the children in Bethlehem and the coasts thereof, from two years old and under. This shows the oppression and arbitrary cruelty under which the Jews then groaned. Still, let it be remembered, these children were removed from the evil to come, and exalted to heaven, to praise the Saviour whom on earth they never knew, and whom the greater part of their countrymen



who lived to a mature age despised and neglected.

Joseph and Mary received timely notice to flee, probably the very night in which the eastern sages were warned; the angel of the Lord directed their instant departure to Egypt: they escaped by night with the infant Messiah, as directed. How vain are all attempts to oppose the will of God! His counsel must stand. This was not a journey void of hazard and fatigue:—

“ ’Tis noon—the sun is in the sky,  
And from his broad and burning ray,  
To groves and glens the shepherds fly,  
Where welcome shades exclude the day.  
Behold yon scatter’d group recline  
Beneath a tall oak’s ample shade ;  
A form of manly port benign,  
And one who seems the loveliest maid,  
Save that within her arms is laid  
An infant like his mother fair ;  
Though never earth-born babe display’d  
Such beauties as are blended there.”

But they would have to walk many a weary mile through the sands and rocky paths of the desert. Matthew, a Jew himself, who wrote his Gospel for the use of his countrymen, especially dwells on

the fulfillment of their ancient and highly prized prophecies. Sometimes, as in that here referred to, Hosea xi, 1, the application does not immediately strike; yet, if rightly viewed, the analogy is seen; and even the deadly wrath of man shall praise God: thus the slaughter of these poor infants precluded any impostor afterward arising from Bethlehem to assume the character of the Messiah. Josephus does not notice this slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem. It is however recorded in a Jewish rabbinical work: "And the king (Herod) gave orders for putting to death every infant to be found in Bethlehem, and the king's messenger killed every infant, according to the royal order." A Roman author, Macrobius, also speaks of the children slain in Syria by Herod's order; though he confounds the death of Herod's grown-up son, by his father's orders, with this event.

Then was fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah xxxi, 15, in which Rachel is addressed. It has been beautifully given in the words of a Christian poet, beginning—

"O, weep not o'er thy children's tomb!"

The history of those times fully agrees with the brief notice of the evangelists. Archelaus, the eldest son of Herod, reigned in his father's room, by the will of Herod, confirmed by the Roman emperor Augustus. His reign commenced with a tumult, quelled by his troops by the slaughter of three thousand of the people, and the prohibition of the passover. His whole reign was a turbulent period, as it is described by Josephus. Archelaus was deposed and banished A. D. 6, when Judæa was annexed to the Roman province of Syria, and the assessment made under Cyrenius was enforced.

The modern Jews, and enemies of Christianity, have described Jesus as learning heathen arts during his early sojourn in Egypt. Such blasphemy is hateful even to think of; it is only mentioned as showing the abuse which despisers of the truth may try to make of statements they dare not deny. Turn to the words of a Christian writer of the present day, on the "Childhood of Jesus:"—"Say not that we know little about his childhood or

youth; what a tale we have to tell on this subject to the young! It is this: the Saviour in his boyhood never once uttered a false, foolish, pert, unkind word to his mother, or to any one; he was never once seen angry, or peevish, or sulky, or dissatisfied; he never once made his mother unhappy, or Joseph angry, or any of the neighbors displeased with him: no one at home complained of him at night, or in the morning; nor had any one aught to find fault with him all the day. All this we know is true. We are sure of it, both from his own perfect nature, and from the fact that no charge was ever brought against his character and spirit in childhood. He 'increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.' It is the finest and most direct way of leading the young mind to distinguish between the Saviour and all the apostles and prophets, to show his infinite superiority, even in youth, to the greatest and best of mankind. This is a proof of his being more than man, which comes home to

children, and prepares them to believe his Godhead and mediation."

Truly does the apostle say, that if the things Jesus did were written every one, the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Hereafter we shall know as we are known; meanwhile it is sufficient for us that he feels for the youngest and weakest of his followers, having been "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

The very silence of Scripture as to the particulars of the union of the two natures, God and man, in one Christ, should be a check, not an incitement, to our curiosity. How vain, how utterly useless, must all inquiries on this subject be!

The only anecdote recorded respecting the youth of Christ is replete with instruction. A modern writer says: "We see a very large company traveling northwardly, in early summer, through a lovely country, the abode of peace and plenty; friends and acquaintances mingled in groups, until the approach of evening warned

them to make preparation for rest. While families were drawing off for this purpose, a female went anxiously and sorrowfully from group to group, inquiring with deep solicitude, 'Have you seen my son?' He was twelve years old, and she supposed that he had been in the company; but now night had come, and she could not find him. No one had seen him; and the anxious parents, inquiring carefully by the way, went slowly back to the city whence they had come. The city spread its edifices over the broad surface of the hill, one extremity of which was crowned with the spacious walls and colonnades of a temple, the whole pile beaming in the setting sun in all the dazzling whiteness of marble and splendor of gold. The parents, however, could not have thought much of the scene before them—they had lost their son."

After a long search elsewhere, Joseph and Mary found our Lord in this temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, or expounders of the law, not, as some have supposed, disputing with them, but "hearing and asking them questions." His

wisdom excited astonishment, yet seemingly had no permanent effect on his hearers; so slow are men to value the blessings placed within their reach. To the tender inquiries of his supposed parents, he answered, "Wist ye not that I must be at my Father's," or "in my Father's house," as it is rendered in several of the ancient versions, or "about my Father's business?" an answer to them unintelligible, but clearly supported by the whole tenor of his future life, showing that "God was his Father;" to whose courts the tribes were wont to go up to worship at their solemn feasts, assembling in large companies, and probably chanting those sacred psalms, (cxx—cxxxiv, inclusive,) called the Songs of Degrees, frequently used for this purpose. Thus our blessed Lord came suddenly or unexpectedly to his temple, as the Angel of the covenant. Mal. iii, 1. Be it observed, that a Roman local governor, or procurator, Coponius, had then been appointed to rule Judæa; the sceptre, or the civil government, had departed from Judah

Again the Scripture is silent for about eighteen years of the Redeemer's earthly course, except by the important announcement, that he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." The announcement is very important; it seems to describe a gradual development of powers, both mental and bodily, human and divine. It is likely that he again continually resorted to Jerusalem with his earthly parents at the festivals, and there would again be in his heavenly Father's house, about his heavenly Father's business. The Jewish young men did not appear as public teachers till they were thirty years of age; and even those who received a learned education were also taught the exercise of some handicraft or trade. Thus St. Paul learned the trade of tent-maker, or a sort of upholstery business; and some Jewish rabbins have been distinguished as the shoemaker or the baker. Our Saviour was called by the inhabitants of Nazareth, Mark vi, 3, "the carpenter:" it is generally thought that he worked at the trade of Joseph. His time



was not consumed in the vain-glorious and traditional studies of Pharisaic teachers; but while he has left an example of humble diligence, his leisure hours (if we may so speak) were probably passed in observing those of his Father's heavenly works, placed so abundantly within his reach, to which his discourses contain such instructive references. Here is a lesson for all in similar circumstances. Wisely do the Moravians teach their children to say,—

My Saviour learned Joseph's trade,  
Was call'd a carpenter ;  
And therefore that he earn'd his bread  
We justly may infer.  
Often oppress'd with human care,  
He to his Father sighs ;  
Or spends the night in fervent prayer,  
And offers tears and cries.

As John Bunyan tells us, "In the Valley of Humiliation our Lord had his country house; here also he loved to walk. This is a valley that nobody loves but those who choose a pilgrim's life." Many of the followers of the Redeemer have found this valley comparatively free from the noise and hurryings of this life.

## CHAPTER III.

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST—  
JESUS IS BAPTIZED BY JOHN—THE TEMPTA-  
TION IN THE WILDERNESS—THE FIRST DIS-  
CIPLES—THE FIRST MIRACLE OF JESUS.

THE particulars recorded by Luke, chap. iii, 1, fully agree with uninspired records. Pontius Pilate was procurator or governor of Judæa, having been appointed in the preceding year, A. D. 25, the year before John began his ministry. Three had ruled in Judæa, between Coponius and Pilate, namely, Marcus Ambidus, Annius Rufus, and Valerius Grotus; but of their administrations, though doubtless of interest at the time, there is nothing to record.

John the Baptist, the great forerunner of the Messiah, having likewise attained the age of thirty years, had shortly before entered on his ministry. He resided in the uninclosed wild country in the south of Judæa, many miles from Nazareth, and does not appear to have been personally acquainted with the Saviour, though in-

formed as to his character by the teaching of the divine Spirit, John i, 33; and though, doubtless, many had continued to reflect, "What manner of child shall this be!" Luke i, 66.

John preached in the "wilderness" of Judæa; an expression which often means, not a district wholly uninhabited, but a country fitter for pasture than agriculture, mountainous, woody, and thinly inhabited. Luke xv, 4. Formerly there were many such localities in England. Thus Campbell says, "The original word is used in three senses in Scripture: 1. Ground unfit for tillage and pasture, like the deserts of Arabia, usually distinguished by some epithet, as howling, terrible, or, wherein is no water. 2. Low pasture lands. 3. Hilly pasture lands, something like our highlands. In this application it often occurs in the Gospels."

The wilderness of Judæa is mentioned Psalm lxxiii, in the title, and seems to have been that mountainous district east of the Jordan, referred to in the narrations of 1 Sam. xxiii, xxiv. His habits were

simple and self-denying; his raiment of camel's hair was doubtless not the fine and splendid cloth sometimes made from the smooth small hair of the camel, but that rough cloth, resembling sackcloth, composed from its long and stiff bristles. The sash, or girdle, is a usual part of eastern dress, and generally is much decorated, made of silk, and sometimes adorned with embroidery or jewels: it has often been an article of ruinous extravagance. That of the Baptist was nothing more than a strap of untanned leather, like that sometimes worn by Mohammedan dervishes or saints. Though some have regarded the locust as the fruit of a particular tree, the insect of that name is a common article of food among the poor.

John appeared about October, A. D. 26, preaching the great doctrines of repentance and remission of sins; administering the rite of baptism from the waters of the Jordan, already distinguished by so many interesting events, yet proclaiming baptism, and all other outward observances or privileges, to be useless, unless accompanied

by a change in heart and life. He resembled Elijah, not only in his garb and manner, but in the power to convert imparted to him, and the spirit of reproof he was enabled to minister. Mal. iv, 5; Matt. xi, 10. Crowds flocked to hear him from cities and villages; they received admonitions suited to their characters and circumstances. Some of these are recorded, Luke iii, 7-14: and he administered a rite symbolic of purification; from whence he is named the Baptist. What would John the Baptist have said to a congregation of the present day? Let us, without censuring others, ask whether we need not the solemn remonstrance, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand?" If we have not a prophet like John, whose food and clothing bore signs of patriarchal simplicity, whose retirement from the world was itself a reproof to the earthly-mindedness of his hearers, let us take the Scriptures for our guide, and consider how far we come short of their plainest requirements. Let us picture John, pointing to the neighboring forest, (historic report describes him as a

woodman by trade, but at least there were perhaps many around him pursuing this occupation,) while he declared, "Now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." He foretold the approach of Christ: "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Fire is a frequent Scriptural emblem for the enlivening, quickening, cleansing, yet consuming nature of the divine influence. Mal. iii, 3. May we, under Almighty guidance, be led at once to put away every rebellious thought, every sinful inclination, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. John was a burning and a shining lamp. Elijah is spoken of under the same figure in the book of Ecclesiasticus.

Two important objects were attained by the public ministrations and baptizing of John. He proclaimed the approach of Christ, the Messiah, and pointed out Jesus, personally, as this Christ, so long foretold

by the prophets. See John i, 6-28 as to the first, and i, 29-37 as to the second. It is concluded that John must have long known Jesus, from the intimacy between their parents, and thus would be aware of the wondrous circumstances concerning his birth and childhood, and his constant holiness of conduct. But John himself declares that he knew him not as the Christ, the Son of God, till it was made known to him by the Holy Ghost that such a personage would speedily appear, and a sign was given, by which to recognize him, i, 31-33. He knew the person of Jesus, but was not till now made fully acquainted with his office.

Much pains has been lately taken by Greswell, to ascertain the particular dates of the events recorded in the gospel history, and it is purposed to notice some of them, as they may render this narrative more clear. But as to these dates, and any remarks not drawn at once and plainly from the New Testament itself, the reader will bear in mind, that they are not of any importance in themselves; whether they

are correct or not, the truth of God, what is written in the Bible, standeth sure.

According to these calculations, John began his public ministry early in October, in the year A. D. 26. It may be here mentioned, once for all, that the birth of Christ is ascertained to have taken place about four years earlier than what is called the first year of the Christian era, which is the year from which all the years that follow are numbered to the present time, 1847; so that Christ was born 1851 years ago.

When baptized, Jesus was about thirty years of age, (Luke iii, 23,) John being about half a year older. It is calculated, that about the end of January, A. D. 27, Jesus appeared among those who came to be baptized. John, knowing the holiness of his character, expressed surprise, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee." Our Lord's reply showed his meekness and lowliness: "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." A wondrous circumstance then took place, which realized the sign pro-



mised to John. The Holy Ghost descended in a visible shape : some suppose, a bright lambent flame, like that which descended afterward on the apostles, on the day of Pentecost ; this would have the appearance of a milk-white dove, such as were common in Palestine, and are frequently mentioned in Scripture ; or, it came down like a dove, with a hovering, dove-like motion. The fruit of the Spirit is meekness and gentleness ; it tends to make men dove-like, harmless, and tender, like the blessed Saviour himself, on whom the Spirit was poured without measure. Not then for the first time ; far from us be such a thought ; long ere this “ the grace of God was upon him :” but this took place when Jesus was baptized, and praying. It made him known to John as “ the Christ ;” and to us it also points out, that an earnest spiritual use of the means of grace will ever bring down blessings from heaven. “ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” The prophet Isaiah thus declared the mighty power and wide extent of this spiritual unction :—

“The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The Spirit of counsel and might,  
The Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.”

A voice from heaven proclaimed, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” By Christ alone can sinners find acceptance with God. Here the doctrine of the Trinity is fully displayed; and well may the mind be filled with awe and reverence in thus contemplating Him with whom we have to do.

Thus was the mission of our blessed Lord distinctly made known to John by a voice from heaven, which afterward bore a similar testimony in the midst of our Lord's ministry, and when it was nearly closed. Before that time, John had known Jesus personally, as a man, but knew him not in his office of the Messiah till this manifestation. John i, 31-33. At this time, perhaps, John alone was present, for no mention is made of any others being with them, or influenced by the sign; yet it is evident that John usually had many around him. But the great adversary of souls

could not be indifferent to what then passed. An English poet has said,—

“The adversary, roving still  
About the world, at that assembly famed,  
Would not be last.”—MILTON.

And what then occurred may be connected with his special watching of Christ, and his efforts to tempt him, which followed.

It is recorded, that immediately after his baptism, Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan, and was led, or influenced by the Holy Spirit, to go alone into the wilderness. There he continued forty days; a preparation for his ministry like that of Moses and Elijah, who herein, as in many other respects, were types of Jesus. Here he was in a dreary, terrific solitude, without the company of any human being; and, as Mark notices, “with the wild beasts.” The desert tract toward the centre of Judæa is by many thought to have been the place of our Lord’s abode during this period, wherein he took no food.

After this fast, in which he was supported by miracle, he was hungry; this feeling

of human infirmity was regarded by the tempter as an opportunity to assault him—to stop, if possible, his divine mission. It was probably, in some assumed or disguised human form, that the tempter came to him, and said, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Satan often presents this sort of temptation—to doubt the fatherly care of the Most High. He induces one when in worldly difficulties to seek gain by sabbath-breaking; another, by stealing; he tempts even the children of God to repine at their lot, and to wish for something more, or something different from the portion assigned by God, or even to distrust his love and goodness: and too often they yield. The Saviour was proof against this temptation; yet he answered, not from the stores of his own hidden wisdom, but from the written word, the Old Testament, thus leaving us both warning and encouragement, agreeably to Prov. iii, 5, 6. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Matt. iv, 4; Deut. viii, 3. Alas,

how often is this forgotten! though the true Christian will at all times be desirous to enter into the exalted attainments of the prophet Habakkuk, ch. iii, 17, 18; and of St. Paul, Rom. viii, 36-39.

But men, in general, think more of bodily indulgence than of spiritual strength; or, while daily repeating, "Give us our daily bread," they need to be reminded that God alone can give opportunity or strength to procure, or to use, the least as well as the greatest of blessings. Equally this applies to spiritual things; bread, the food needful for the soul, is assured to the servants of God, though they seem for a time deserted, and ready to ask, If I am a child of God, why are my comforts so few, my supports so weak? Then, "cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Psa. lv, 22.

The Son of God could not doubt or question his Father's care, but continued to trust where all seemed dark and dreary. The answer expressed firm reliance on his heavenly Father, and was given in the words of Holy Scripture; let the believer

ever meet tempters by reference to the written word.

Satan returned to the encounter in another form. He "still will be tempting him who foils him still." He conveyed or led Jesus to Jerusalem; there placing him on a pinnacle of the temple, he urged him to make a display of supernatural power, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down,"—himself adding a passage from Psa. xci, misquoted and misapplied; urging our Lord to presumptuous vain-confidence; perhaps to give the Jews the sign for which they looked, (Mal. iii, 1,) that the Lord would suddenly appear in his temple; misapplying it to their carnal ideas of the earthly glory and power of the Messiah. Such a manifestation our Lord always refused to give, in this his time of humiliation; though he has declared that some such manifestation shall accompany his second coming in glory. Matt. xxvi, 64. Thus Satan can still assume the form of an angel of light, inducing many to quote Scripture partially, and take blinded or partial views of Christian duty; saying,

“Peace, when there is no peace.” “He shall keep thee;” but omitting to add, “in all thy ways.” Reader, ever beware of those who would mutilate the word of God, and quote passages of Scripture imperfectly. Here we see that Satan can tempt, but he cannot compel. How gladly would he have thrust our Lord from the pinnacle on which he stood! He who then continued steadfast, can keep his followers in “the hour of temptation.” Our Lord immediately replied, “It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” The adversary was again baffled, but not yet wholly defeated.

It is not needful here to ask precisely in what order the third, or the preceding temptation took place, it is enough for us to mark what they teach. Ambition, perhaps the most powerful temptation to a mind above the common lusts and vanities of life, was the point at which Satan aimed. He offered to Jesus unlimited power over the kingdoms of the earth, or rather those of the land so dear to every descendant of Abraham; but was at once disappointed

and effectually foiled. Notice the malicious skill of Satan in contriving seeming impossibilities for our ruin ; and the exceeding grace of Christ, triumphing over them. Many of his devoted servants have, like him, turned from the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches ; saying in spirit, if not in words like their Master, “ Get thee hence, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

Some lofty mountains in Palestine (one in particular, named Quarantania) have been distinguished and pointed out as the place near where Satan uttered the words of daring, horrid impiety : “ All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Rich and varied is the prospect these eminences afford of the land which was the glory of all lands, with its surrounding scenes, “ all nature’s beauty ; all art’s magnificence ;” hills and vales, woods and pastures, vineyards and cities. It overlooks a vast expanse,—the mountains of Arabia, the country of Gilead, and



of the Ammonites, Moab, the plain of Jericho, Jordan, and the Dead Sea. But it is more instructive to reflect upon the need of guarding the bodily senses, as inlets to sin; of praying, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," remembering that this drew Eve aside from her duty and her God, when the forbidden fruit "was pleasant to the eyes." Satan thus, without success, tempted the Redeemer to sensuality and vain confidence; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; those three allurements in his first temptation, by which he has ever since beguiled every individual of our fallen race. How poor and paltry must these enticements have been to one who has just been "filled with the Spirit," in whom the Godhead dwelt with the human nature, who was God manifest in the flesh! Then the devil departed for a season: the sequel shows that he continued to watch and harass the earthly career of our Lord. Observe, however, that though our Lord silenced Satan, and repelled his falsehoods, he did not question

that power which the great adversary of souls claimed to have over the world. Nay, he afterward spoke of it, see John xii, 31 ; xiv, 30 ; xvi, 11 ; Luke xxii, 53 : and the Holy Spirit, speaking by the apostle, styles Satan "the God of this world." 2 Cor. iv, 4. Yes, worldlings and all that they most highly prize, are the property of Satan ; they are his, and what they fondly count their own is only lent them for a season—golden baits to draw them onward to everlasting ruin ! And they worship him !

Angels appeared again, sent from above, to honor and attend upon their mighty King, and ministered to his human wants. Some, indeed, have supposed that Satan had taken the appearance of an angel of light ; but these were true servants of the Most High, who came to minister, not to destroy. Let us, from this important narrative, remark, that it is no new or rare case for Satan to be specially active with those who have just made a public religious profession, or received distinguishing marks of the favor of God. Let Christians

remember that thus their Lord was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us then turn to him in every time of need, as able to succor them that are tempted; sympathizing with our distresses as man, yet as God resisting the enemy before whose malice the first Adam fell. He was of the earth, earthy: the second Adam, in whom we are made alive, was the Lord from heaven; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Much has been said on the subject of our Lord's temptation; and many erroneous notions have been formed respecting it. Perhaps a more correct summary cannot be given than in the words of President Edwards: "Satan made a violent onset upon him at his first entrance on his work; thus he had a remarkable trial of his obedience; but he got the victory. The tempter, who had such success with the first Adam, had none with the second." Another thus writes: "Did not Satan know that our Lord was the Son of God? and if so, what hope could he have of succeed-

ing in his attempt? Perhaps he had no hope of success, and his motive was merely to disturb and distress his spotless spirit, which was permitted, as a part of the Lord's humiliation. Or he might not know the mystery of the union of the divine and human natures, or might vainly hope to break that union, and frustrate the intent of the incarnation."

Observe, also, that our Lord did not deny that Satan possessed the power he claimed for worldly sway. He spoke of him as the prince of this world. John xii, 31; xiv, 30; xvi, 11. Also, St. Paul was inspired to style Satan "the god of this world," (2 Cor. iv, 4,) while John speaks of him as ruling in this world. 1 John iv, 3.

The angelic appearance after the temptation marks another important period—the entrance of our Lord on his public work. The first event in order of time seems to have been his return to Bethabara, where, during his absence, John had been visited by the priests and Levites sent by the sanhedrim, or great council of

the Jews. It was usual to examine all who seemed to claim to be inspired by prophetic powers, or charged with a special mission from on high. Their inquiry, and the declaration of John, in general terms, that "he that should come," was actually come, is recorded, John i, 19-28. The following day John saw Jesus, and said to some who were with him, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." This declaration was repeated the next day, more particularly to two of the disciples, Andrew and probably John, which caused them to follow Jesus. John i, 35-42. Those who are themselves acquainted with Christ, will always strive to draw others to him who is the Saviour promised from the beginning. Happy are they whose consistent piety leads them to gain the company and fellowship of their own household; like Andrew, who "first findeth his own brother Simon." The remainder of this chapter gives a somewhat similar account of Philip, and his near countryman, Nathanael, apparently also called Bartholomew, a character of pecu-

liar interest, for the Saviour, who knew what was in man, declared him to be "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Nathanael was not without faults; he was prejudiced, suspicious, and on some points ignorant; but he was honest, open, and sincere; guileless, though not guiltless. Commendations were bestowed on him, and gracious promises of further increase of knowledge were given to him. He seems to have been convinced of Christ's divine knowledge of all things, and to have reflected thereon; the place of his religious retirement is mentioned—the fig-tree; under the shades of which, pious Jews often sheltered themselves for meditation and prayer. He was not alone there, though Nathanael then knew it not; never was any spot unseen, or any sigh unheard by the Saviour.

Much need not be said on our Lord's meeting his earthly friends and connections at the marriage feast in Cana. In the description we find customs still used in the East. There is no ground for the degraded idea of some who say that he

encouraged excess ; nor for those who look upon the word “woman,” addressed by Jesus to his mother, as implying disrespect. The same term, in the language spoken by our Lord and his disciples, was at that time commonly used to express respect and tenderness, even to females of the highest rank. But here is a clear reproof to the blasphemous prayers of the Papists, who speak of the Virgin Mary as “Holy Mother of God,” and who address her as having power over Christ, beseeching her to cause him to be favorable to them ; even in their liturgies and services applying to her names and terms that can only belong to the most high God and Saviour himself, who is one with the Father. Thus, as in many other ways, do they seek to make the grace of God of none effect, substituting their own devices in place of the plain declaration of Holy Scripture.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST PASSOVER IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY—THE BUYERS AND SELLERS DRIVEN FROM THE TEMPLE—NICODEMUS—JESUS AT THE WELL—HIS DISCOURSE WITH THE SAMARITAN WOMAN—THE NOBLEMAN'S SON HEALED—CHRIST'S MINISTRY—JESUS VISITS NAZARETH—HE RETIRES TO CAPERNAUM—DISCIPLES CALLED—MIRACLES.

OUR Lord is described as going to Jerusalem, to keep the feast of the passover. As a Jew, he was bound to keep the ceremonial law, and fulfill all righteousness. This was the first passover in his public ministry: it probably was celebrated in April, A. D. 27. When there, he drove the buyers and sellers from profaning the temple of God, commanding them, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." John ii, 16. How many, in the present day, enter the sanctuary with hearts engrossed by the cares and pleasures of life! It may seem strange that a single individual, of obscure rank, and little known, should once and again, during his ministry, (Matt. xxi, 12,) thus exercise au-



thority and receive obedience from a multitude : but the divine power was with him ; a sense of guilt would make the profaners cowards. The Saviour here left us an example to be bold and fearless in the defense of the honor of God, who can at once, by his almighty power, stop all opposition. The Jews, according to their custom with all who claimed more than human authority, asked for some sign or miracle to prove his mission. His answer, " Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," was afterward shamefully perverted by his enemies. At the time it was misunderstood, both by the Jewish leaders and his disciples : they thought it applied to the vast pile of building before them ; but, as the hearers did not show a teachable spirit, further explanations were not given. Many of our Saviour's discourses, and many of his miracles, are not particularly recorded, yet they were so numerous at this early period as to awaken general attention, and to satisfy many as to his character. See John ii, 23 ; iv, 45 ; xxi, 25.

One result of this visit of our Lord to Jerusalem is minutely detailed. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to him by night. He was a sincere inquirer after truth, for a time restrained from open avowal by the fear of man, or the influence of popular opinion; yet afterward he heartily came forward, when others more enlightened stood aloof, and shrunk back from owning their belief in Jesus. His interview with the Saviour manifested ignorance of the very first principles of religion, though he possessed much of the knowledge and learning prized by the Jews. Here we read, in our Lord's own words, the plainest statement ever given of the three great doctrines of the New Testament:—1. The need of inward renewal of the heart. 2. Free salvation through the atoning death of the Son of God. 3. That men perish by their willful rejection of the truth. The Saviour's words, as given in John iii, 1–21, speak plainly to the simplest understanding. But, alas! if our Lord were to come upon earth again, he would still find many wise men, as they are called,

and public teachers, ignorant and mistaken as to the great first principle—man's need of regeneration by God the Holy Spirit, and, consequently, of those truths which arise from it. Do not many now, who speak of regeneration as possessed by all baptized persons, say with Nicodemus, "How can a man be born when he is old?" The true doctrine has ever been clear to real believers, for it was set forth under the Old Testament dispensation, as in Ezek. xxxvi, 25-27; Isa. xlv, 22. The figures used by our Saviour would all be familiar to an attentive reader of Scripture. Observe, also, the declaration of the power of his death. None can be saved without knowing Christ to be the Saviour; and to know him as such, we must know ourselves as sinners. "I need not argue to prove to you that Christ is God," said a Christian to a friend in error; "if you will once receive what the word of God says of our depravity, you will at once admit that nothing but the death of Christ could save us."

Christ's public labors now attracted

many followers, and John the Baptist again bore testimony to his superiority. John iii, 22-36. Not every public or even private character is willing, like John, to decrease in order that the Saviour's glory should increase; neither is every Christian zealous, like him, to declare, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Our Saviour went about doing good; and we find him, probably in about a month's time, again traveling from the proud and self-conceited Jews to the poor, despised Galileans. We see him resting on his journey through Samaria, near a reservoir of water known as Jacob's Well, faint, weary, and thirsty: being weary, he sat "thus," as one spent with fatigue, which shows the reality of his human nature. He sat thus, awaiting the return of his disciples from the purchase of necessary food, but improved the time by conversing with a poor Samaritan woman who came to draw water; one by no means an unblemished character. There were other

wells and fountains nearer the city of Sychar, but perhaps she did not live within its walls, or may have come for that water from the well of their father Jacob, for some special reason. Jesus directed her attention to the gift of the Holy Spirit, often set forth in Scripture under the figure of spring, or running water—cooling, refreshing, and reviving—and sent her to call others to learn the same glad tidings. Here the Saviour's history tells his followers to be instant in season and out of season; to count it their meat and drink to do the will of God; nor to hesitate to fill up leisure moments with efforts to do good for his sake. He talked with the woman: this surprised the disciples, for the Jewish doctors and teachers gave instructions only to men; this is usual still in the East; but the privileges of Christianity are open to all, without distinction of sex. Gal. iii, 28. Our Lord plainly told her of the error in substituting Gerizim for Mount Zion. He thus settled this dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans, but at the same time declared that both would soon

be superseded by a more spiritual worship.

This woman was living in sin, without a thought beyond her temporal concerns ; dull and slow in comprehending spiritual things, and disposed to ask caviling questions about religion, rather than to listen to its heart-satisfying truths ; yet to her was the word of salvation sent ! Our Saviour revealed himself to her more plainly than he had done to any previous inquirer, and when she spoke of the Messiah, declared, " I that speak unto thee am he." At once

" His words her prejudice removed,  
Her sin she felt, relief she found ;  
She saw and heard, believed and loved,  
And ran to tell her neighbors round."

Such is still in our day the constraining effect of divine grace, and this narrative shows that the ignorant and wretched are invited to partake its blessings.

The situation of what is pointed out as Jacob's Well has been described by travelers, and is now distinguished by the ruins of a Christian church. M'Cheyne describes it as covered with a low vault

built over the well, which is sunk through the earth; it is about seventy-five feet deep, with ten or twelve feet of water in it. While pressing through the narrow aperture into the vault, one of his companions dropped his Bible into the well; they could not recover it; the guide made signs that the well was too deep. The book, however, has since been drawn out by a later visitant. The town of Shechem, or Sychar, now Nablous, is situated between craggy hills, among which the most remarkable are Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritan temple was built, and Mount Ebal, mentioned Deut. xxvii, 13. Dr. Clarke says, If no tradition pointed out the spot, it could hardly be mistaken by any one who attentively reads the fourth chapter of John. This place is also frequently mentioned in other parts of Scripture, and perhaps alluded to by Jacob. Gen. xlix, 22.

Here our Saviour sat, and gazing on the fields thronged with those coming to hear him, said, "They are white already to harvest."

After two days spent in instructing the

anxious inquirers among the Samaritans, our Saviour proceeded to Galilee. Here he was gladly received by those who had heard and seen his miracles, and eagerly besought by a man of wealth and dignity, a father, who urged Jesus to "come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death." Jesus spake as one having authority over pain and grief, and dismissed him: "Go thy way, thy son liveth." The father departed homeward, a distance of about fifteen miles, in the confidence of faith, and ere his arrival received the joyful news of his son's recovery at the very time Christ spoke to him. His conduct evidenced real belief; he walked by faith, not by sight, taking Christ at his word, though no present proof was given; and confided fully in his power and willingness to help, which at this early period of our Saviour's course could not have been generally known. The name or office of this nobleman is not stated: some think it was Chuza, Herod's steward, or Manaen, his foster brother, Luke viii, 3; Acts xiii, 1; but, whoever he might be, his faith is



recorded for the instruction of professed Christians who enjoy a brighter light, yet too often question the plainest declarations of Scripture! The nobleman and his whole house believed; they learned to look upon Jesus as the promised Redeemer. Thus families and individuals were gathered into the field of Christ during his earthly sojourn.

Jesus now publicly appeared among his countrymen in Galilee. John, his forerunner, was cast into prison about this time. John's faithful testimonies led to his imprisonment. The word "cast," (Matt. iv, 12,) denotes also, transmitted or delivered; and it is thought that the envious Pharisees treacherously delivered him up to the power of Herod, who was a Sadducee. John is supposed to have been imprisoned in the castle of Macherus, on the borders of Arabia, a gloomy fortress surrounded by dreary hills, of which it is said that none ever desired to enter, and, if once shut up there, no hope of release could be entertained.

The same enmity against the truth was soon directed against the Saviour, though

his first preaching was accompanied with honor and popularity. Its theme was comprehensive. "The time" (that pointed out by the prophets) "is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." Now was come the time pointed out by the prophecy of Jacob—he was the promised Shiloh—the time of which Daniel spoke, when the Messiah should appear and be cut off. His harbinger was come, as declared by Malachi; and he was come to the Galilee of the Gentiles, as prophesied by Isaiah. Other prophecies will also occur to the reader. Also he urged, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Mark i, 15. He thus took up the word preached by John, and expressed it more fully.

Jesus then visited Nazareth, the scene of his youthful days, where he attended the public ordinances of religion, and was solicited to address the people, which was customary with any respected visitors: see Acts xiii, 15. He selected a striking passage, probably in the course of reading for the day, describing the Messiah's advent, and called their attention to its accomplish-

ment, giving clear instruction respecting his own office, to those who had witnessed the spotless purity of his previous course, and could best attest his freedom from imperfection, weakness, or worldly-mindedness. They listened with eager attention, but were offended at his obscure parentage. He alluded to their expectation of miracles; pointed out that these were by God's special direction, not by man's appointment, and therefore not always to be looked for, proving this by well-known histories of Elijah and Elisha. At this intimation, illustrated by examples, that there were sheep of another fold besides Jews, the angry hearers rose and attempted to destroy the life of their instructor, who miraculously passed from them and went to Capernaum, where some believers were already found. Luke iv, 29-31. So early was our gracious Saviour assaulted in his public work. Let his followers remember, "the servant is not greater than his Lord." No wonder that he seldom afterward visited Nazareth, which appears to have merited the reproach so often cast on it. It is

described as a border town, the frequent haunt of evil-disposed characters, being at once accessible to the Samaritans and to heathen occupants of the seacoast. A spot about two miles from the present town is now pointed out as the Mount of Precipitation, the precipice to the brink of which they hurried him, but were baffled: this was an ancient mode of destroying offenders, used by the Romans and others.

Our Lord's abode at Capernaum accomplished a prophecy, (Isa. ix, 2,) and extended the light of divine truth to the numerous strangers and foreigners who visited these parts. This town stood on a hill near the sea of Galilee, called the Sea of Tiberias, a large lake, said, in some respects, to resemble the Lake of Geneva, except that it is of smaller size, being about six miles broad, and sixteen in length. The banks are rocky, covered with rhododendrons and other similar plants. It has a beautiful and calm aspect, with the River Jordan in the distance, though at times subject to sudden storms like that described in the Gospel history; but the surface is

not now enlivened by vessels or even boats. By these the Saviour was enabled to visit all parts of its well-peopled shores, and to withdraw at once from the crowds when he pleased.

Here Christ, by a miraculous draught of fishes, manifested his divine power to four plain, unlettered fishermen, Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John. They had already expressed willingness to become his disciples; he now invited them to follow him, and henceforth become fishers of men. Divinely taught, they "forsook all" their earthly possessions, and "followed him." Here, as in other passages, the natural character of Peter, a man of ardent, strong feelings, is clearly marked. He says, "Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net." Luke v, 5. Again, impressed by the miracle, he exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"—possessing at least a deep sense of his own infirmities, and of the holiness and dignity of his guest, however mistaken in his application of

these truths. Peter did not enter on the service of Christ from mere curiosity, ignorance, or worldly-mindedness, like many who have falsely called themselves his successors, though these for a time mingled with his better views. And, doubtless, the circumstances of this call were fresh in his recollection when he saw multitudes flocking into the church of Christ on the day of Pentecost. Acts ii.

About this time our Lord cured a demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum. It is not for us to say how or why Satan was permitted to afflict the bodies and souls of men, at this period, in an especial manner. That it was so, and not merely the madness we now witness, is evident from our Lord's address to the evil spirit, "Hold thy peace, and come out;" and the wretched tormentor's own words, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Mark i, 24, 25. Thus devils believe and tremble, nor are the holiest spots or moments secured against their presence; but at that time the openly driving out one of

these mysterious beings must have impressed the spectators with awe.

The power, the malice, the subtilty of all his enemies, fall at once before him when he speaks the word of his power. Our Lord thus joined private works of mercy to the public observances of religion, leaving an example that all should follow. He cured Peter's wife's mother of a fever, and she hastened to employ her renewed strength in his service. At sunset, the close of the Jewish sabbath, multitudes of diseased persons were brought to him: it was considered unlawful to carry burdens on the sabbath, even to take a sick or dying person to be cured. He healed them all. St. Matthew here cites a well-known prophecy, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt. viii, 17. This encourages us to spread before Christ our own temporal wants and those of others.

Early on the morrow Jesus rose "a great while before day," and retired alone for prayer, till urged by Simon and his neigh-

bors to comply with the general wish for his return. "All men seek for thee." "I must preach to others also—therefore am I sent forth," he replied; and traveling from city to city, resumed his labors of love. Thus Christ has taught us to be unwearied in well doing, and at the same time with care and diligence to secure time for devotional retirement. Many say they have no time for prayer, which is as needful to the soul as rest or food for the body: there is no doubt that spiritual concerns are the most important. Religious declensions begin in the closet, but they do not end there.



## CHAPTER V.

THE LEPER HEALED, AND THE MAN SICK OF THE PALSY—MATTHEW CALLED—THE SECOND PASSOVER IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY—THE MAN AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA HEALED—JESUS ACCUSED BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM—HE RETURNS TO GALILEE—THE DISCIPLES PLUCK CORN ON THE SABBATH—THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED HAND HEALED ON THE SABBATH—THE TWELVE APOSTLES CHOSEN.

IT is not always easy to ascertain the precise order in the events occurring in the life of Christ. The time of the delivery of the sermon on the mount is thought by some to be just after the preceding events: others fix it at a later period. It is probable that our Lord delivered the substance of this discourse more than once, with variations according to the circumstances of the time and places. It will be noticed in the next chapter.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all give an account of a man afflicted with leprosy, whose earnest language was, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!"

Some still come to Christ assured of his ability, yet doubting his willingness to save. How many can testify of their own hearts and lives—

“ Oft as the leper’s case I read,  
 My own described I feel;  
 Sin is a leprosy indeed,  
 Which none but Christ can heal.  
 Awhile I would have pass’d for well,  
 And strove my spots to hide,  
 Till it broke out incurable,  
 Too plain to be denied.”

The poor leper was an outcast, afflicted with a loathsome, incurable disease, considered as under the special displeasure of the Almighty. His condition has been thus graphically portrayed:—

“ ‘Room for the leper!’—and aside they stood,  
 Matron, and child, and pitiless manhood—all  
 Who met him on his way, and let him pass.  
 And onward through the open gates he came,  
 A leper, with the ashes on his brow,  
 Sackcloth about his loins, and on his lip  
 A covering; stepping painfully and slow,  
 And with a difficult utterance, like one  
 Whose heart is with an iron nerve put down,  
 Crying, ‘Unclean! unclean!’ ”

**God comforteth those that are cast down,**

and bids his people show kindness to the poor and outcast. Fearless of contagion, Jesus touched the leper, and in words responding to the request, spoke without reference to any other power than his own, "I will; be thou clean:" an instant cure was effected. The leper was then sent to the priest, whose business it was to examine and declare him healed, and was directed to present the thank-offerings appointed by the law of Moses. Many conjectures have been formed why Jesus enjoined secrecy on this man, and some others whom he healed. It may be observed, that already he was a man of sorrows; his enemies were seeking his life; and it seems also to have been the fulfillment of a distinct prophecy, quoted Matthew xii, 17-21. From the surprise attending his first miracles, we perceive how humbly and unobtrusively the Lord Jesus had passed the previous part of his life. We may also consider that he wished his miracles not to become the subject of special inquiry, till they were too numerous to be gainsaid. The envious priests also

might have refused to attest the cure of the leper, had they known how it had been wrought.

The next miracle recorded gives a delineation of eastern manners. Crowds of people thronged to the house where the Saviour taught; they surrounded even the doors leading into the court or open area in the centre of the house, where he sat and preached. Meantime, some, who had heard of the fame of Jesus, brought a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed. Unable to press through the crowd, they mounted the steps, which are often in those countries outside the houses, and, standing on the flat roof, removed the covering where Jesus was; (probably an awning over the central court, which, thus sheltered from the sun, is from its size frequently used for a principal room;) and they then lowered the bed to the spot where Jesus was. To the eye of a person familiar with such buildings the narrative is clear and easily understood: how unreasonable then is it to make this description a ground for unbelief and misrepresentation! The Saviour,

knowing the thoughts and feelings of those who sought him, spoke the comfortable declaration, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Matt. ix, 2. Some cavilers present asked, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" Jesus then, by bidding the sick man arise and walk, manifested his divine power, in the sight of multitudes, who could not be mistaken about a miracle so public. How different from the secret, mysterious, and pretended miracles of the Church of Rome! Let us make daily application of this cheering truth, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," by earnestly striving to bring others to him.

An event which took place almost immediately afterward, showed our Lord's power over the hearts of men. Levi, or Matthew, a publican, or tax-gatherer, was sitting at the receipt of custom, deeply engaged in the routine of his business, so odious to the Jews, from its showing their submission to the Roman governors, and from the oppressions of those who usually held the office. He was probably a covet-

ous, grasping man, like others of the same class.

“ To win the world’s wealth, with the groveling crew  
Who quench the immortal spirit in the chase  
Of riches, bent the ever-swelling hoard  
To accumulate. But when he Jesus saw,  
A nobler being dawn’d upon his soul ;  
Messiah call’d ! he follow’d, and resign’d  
To earthly hearts the lust of gold.”

It was some time afterward he made a great feast, (Matt. ix, 10,) perhaps on finally taking leave of former friends. Jesus was there, surrounded by some of depraved or doubtful character, and pronounced the never-to-be-forgotten words, “ They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick : I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Mark ii, 17. Thus he still deals with men ; as he said to his disciples, “ Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” John xv, 16. It was the Holy Spirit that changed Matthew’s heart and disposition, convincing him of the sin of his former practices, and showing him the righteousness to be found in Christ.

Jesus again visited Jerusalem to attend

some solemn feast, probably the second pass-over of his ministry. How few are the accounts of his life, yet how varied the instruction afforded! The evangelist John describes a pool, called Bethesda, or the House of Mercy, where the sick are placed, waiting for a miraculous periodical cure. It is not possible to ascertain how the healing virtues of the pool were imparted. Some persons, prone to dwell on secondary causes, speak of it as effected by other matters, rather than spiritual agency; but it is wiser to look upon it as a type of the gospel pool, appointed for the poor, and available to those who seek it without delay; for now is the day of salvation. Sometimes Christians attend the means of grace, and feel as if they derived no benefit thereby; they see others relieved, but feel themselves unchanged. They are like the poor man in our Saviour's time, for thirty-eight years the victim of helpless disease; unable to reach the pool of mercy himself, or to procure help from others. A pool, surrounded with some ruinous buildings, is still shown to strangers for the

place of this miracle; below is a steep descent, difficult to reach. The man did not wait in vain: Jesus asked him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" and instantly restored him to health and strength. Afterward meeting him in the temple, the place of public resort and thanksgiving, Jesus bade him "sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." This history teaches us that none ever waited upon the Lord in vain. Baxter says, "What a mercy to this man, to be forty-eight years under God's gracious discipline!" and he adds, "I bless God for fifty-eight years of the same." Many others can testify, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Bethesda's pool has lost its power!  
 No angel by his glad descent  
 Dispenses that diviner dower  
 Which with its healing waters went;—  
 But HE whose word surpass'd its wave  
 Is still omnipotent to save.

And what that fountain once was found,  
 Religion's outward forms remain;  
 With living virtue only crown'd,  
 While their first freshness they retain;  
 Only replete with power to cure,  
 When, spirit-stirr'd, their source is pure.



Saviour! thy love is still the same,  
As when that healing word was spoke;  
Still in thine all-redeeming name  
Dwells power to burst the strongest yoke!  
O! be that power, that love display'd;  
Help those—whom THOU alone canst aid.

“This is my lesson for this day,” said a Christian under trial—“humiliation, not despondency; resignation and silence, not impatience; a calm waiting upon God, not quarreling with his dispensation, though it be ever so painful. Not, because it is night, to say it will never be morning; but to say to my soul under all, Hope thou in God.” Such is the experience of God’s servants, when under long-continued afflictions they find the Lord gracious to them, although earthly friends and helpers are withdrawn.

This cure being performed on the sabbath, occasioned the Jews to question the man, and to persecute him for his bold testimony to the power of Jesus. They then summoned our Lord himself before their sanhedrim, or public council, on two accusations: 1. Of breaking the sabbath. 2. Of making himself equal with God.

Our Saviour's answer is given, John v, 19-47. He supported his authority by the testimony of John the Baptist, prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures, and his own miraculous works. He plainly declared his own dignity as the Son of God, and showed the cause of their unbelief—their pride, and desire of a temporal king for their Messiah. How many now neglect evidences equally convincing! Over these the Saviour still declares, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

Jesus now returned to Galilee, where, as in the former year, he chiefly resided in Capernaum, situated on the Lake of Tiberias, the shores of which were covered with towns and villages. He had access by water to many places where he preached, and manifested his power, while by the use of a boat he was able to withdraw when unduly pressed by the crowd, and also to go from place to place on his heavenly mission. This boat it seems had been retained for his service, being noted

in the Greek language, in which the Gospels were written, as "the boat."

While on his way back to Galilee, another charge of breaking the sabbath was alledged against our Lord. He and his disciples early one sabbath, probably the first sabbath after the second day of unleavened bread, passed through the corn-fields, when the disciples satisfied their hunger by plucking and tasting the ears of corn while they passed, as allowed by the Jewish law—a law of liberality and kindness, (Deut. xxiii, 25,) in this and many similar respects. The Pharisees censured them, not for injuring another's property, but for breaking the sabbath; or rather for acting in opposition to their vain traditions, which forbade gathering corn, or even plucking a single branch or leaf on the sabbath, that being a kind of reaping. The Saviour answered by appealing to the rites of the temple, and proved, by David's taking the shew-bread, that the ceremonial law was to give place to acts of mercy and necessity. Let it be

remembered that the Lord, the Giver of all, had, when on earth, no store, even of the commonest necessaries of life. He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor.

We next find Jesus in one of the Jewish synagogues, addressing a man whose hand was withered, by bidding him stretch it forth. In faith he made the effort, and, in so doing, received strength, and a perfect cure. The Redeemer put to the surrounding throng a plain and easy question: "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" (Mark iii, 4,) referring to their own practice with the brute creation. Enmity against the truth, with jealousy at the growing influence of Jesus, kept the lips of his adversaries closed; they refused to answer, and left the assembly filled with madness, and communed how to destroy Jesus. On this occasion, and this only, we read that Christ was moved with anger; observe wherefore—not at the unjust treatment he had received, but at the hardness of their hearts,

their determined opposition to the ways and will of God.

Jesus now being again in Galilee, chose twelve disciples to be his constant companions and assistants in the great work of preaching the kingdom of God. Three of these, James the Less, Thaddeus, or Jude, and Simon, were brothers, and related to our Lord according to the flesh, or what we should term his cousins. The twelve are called apostles, from a Greek word, meaning "one that is sent;" in fact, a missionary. Most likely they did not enter upon their public work till some time later, when Christ addressed them in a most important discourse, (given in Matthew x,) pointing out: 1. The conduct they were to pursue, by uniting the prudence of the serpent with the meekness of the dove. 2. The trials and difficulties they must expect. 3. The consolations and rewards that awaited them. This chapter contains instruction suitable for Christians of every description; but it is peculiarly suitable for those called to contend with trials and persecutions. "How

Jesus loved those twelve persons!" exclaimed a Mohammedan translator, to the active and devoted missionary Henry Martyn. "Yes," replied that pious Christian, "and not only them, but all who believe through their word." A German poet imagines an angel addressing his fellow-beings:—

I now proclaim, I would that I were born  
Of Adam's race ! yea, subject even to death,  
Could death be sinless ; then more worthily  
My Saviour should I honor, dearer love  
My mortal brother.

We are told that our Saviour, as a man, was much affected by the desolate state of the Jewish people, like sheep having no shepherd; coming so far to hear the words of life, that many fainted; or, as the margin renders it, were tired, and lay down in consequence. Their appointed teachers were chiefly hireling shepherds, who fed themselves, not their flock: the teaching of such men never conveyed comfort or instruction in any age.



Eastern Funeral.

## CHAPTER VI

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT—THE CENTURION'S SERVANT HEALED—THE YOUNG MAN AT NAIN RESTORED TO LIFE—INQUIRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST—THE PENITENT ENCOURAGED—THE BLASPHEMY OF THE JEWS REPROVED—VARIOUS DISCOURSES.

OFTEN has it been said that those who would preach Christ to others, must first

learn of him themselves; the apostles had many and varied opportunities for this, before they were sent forth to instruct the world. One of his early discourses, preached on the summit of a lofty hill, is given at some length, Matt. v–vii. This sermon on the mount, as it is called, seems afterward to have been repeated in substance on a plain, (Luke vi,) but with some variations. Its truth set forth, in clear and simple language, the conduct God requires of us, being his creatures—a purer morality than that of the scribes and Pharisees, universal in extent, free from worldly motives, in all respects seeking the divine approval, not the praise of men. The gracious regard of our heavenly Father is spoken of throughout, no less than the high vocation to which his people are called, and the rich blessings laid up for them, however poor and despised in the eyes of men.

The Mount of Beatitudes, being so called from the blessings set forth in the beginning of this discourse, is a high hill near the Sea of Galilee. It is pointed out



for the spot where this discourse was pronounced, but it is impossible to say if the tradition be correct. One thing is certain; Jesus referred to many of the common objects around as illustrations of his doctrine; the city set upon a hill, the lilies of the field, the sun and rain, vines and thistles, and many others. Similar objects are always within reach, and suggest important lessons.

Ye lilies of Jerusalem !

Through every change ye shine ;

Your golden urns unfading gem

The fields of Palestine.

Fresh springing from the emerald sod,

As beautiful to see,

As when the meek, incarnate God,

Took parable from ye.

Two remarkable miracles now claim attention. A centurion or captain of one hundred Roman soldiers, having a servant sick, applied to Jesus to cure him. He avowed his belief that a word from Christ would be sufficient; that all things were subject to him, in the same manner as a military officer received submission from those he commanded. He humbly de-

clared, " Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." Matt. viii, 8. His friends and neighbors, though of the Jewish race, commended his uprightness and benevolence; and the most excellent persons are always the most aware of their own deficiencies before God. Doubtless, this centurion already possessed some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel. Jesus healed his attendant, though absent and unseen, and declared his approval of this man's faith, in opposition to the unbelief of the Jews. Yes, and at the present day the truths of the word of God are often less welcomed by those who from their birth have been professed Christians, than by those brought up heathens, whether in the East or West, in India, Africa, or the isles of the Pacific.

In one of his journeyings, our Lord and his disciples came to the gate of a city called Nain, just in time to meet the funeral of a youth, the only son of a widowed mother. Jesus had compassion on her, and said, " Weep not;" for it was his special work to comfort all that mourn.

Then, by his own mighty word, he restored the young man to life and strength, amid the thankful exclamations of the admiring multitude. This was the first time the Saviour raised the dead to life. He did it by his own name and power; not so his ministering servants: it was a sign which he had himself foretold, as showing his divine authority, and an emblem of the future resurrection. John v, 25-28.

The fame of this miracle quickly spread; John the Baptist, then in prison, sent two of his disciples to ask of Christ, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Perhaps in the hour of trial his faith was weak. There are seasons of desertion, when some of the most eminent believers feel wavering and drooping, and needing to have their belief strengthened:—

‘And of their scholars gladly learn  
Their own forgotten lore.’

Probably John designed his disciples' encouragement and instruction more than his own. Jesus directed their attention to the prophecies of Isaiah, applying them to

himself, and thus declaring that he was the promised Messiah. When they were withdrawn, he severely condemned the manner in which John's message had been slighted by the Jews; and pointed to the tall reeds waving in the wind, which grow plentifully near the swelling streams of Jordan, and in other moist places; observing that such was not the character of John:—

“Is the reed shaken? And shall we be so  
With every wind? So, Saviour, must it be,  
Till we can fix our eyes alone on thee.”

Jesus afterward rebuked those who had seen his miracles, and repented not; and pointed out the nature of his gospel, hid from the wise and prudent in their own eyes, but revealed unto babes, made known to simple and humble minds, though ignorant of human learning. He concluded this testimony to John, by welcoming all the weary and heavy laden, inviting them to bear his yoke, and thus to find rest to their souls. Perhaps the nature and effects of the gospel ministry are nowhere delineated in a smaller compass, nor yet

more forcibly, than in this passage. Matt. xi, 20-30.

An event, recorded at the close of Luke vii, illustrates this subject. A woman, formerly notorious as a sinner, came when Jesus was the guest of a rich Pharisee, washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with her hair, worn long in a past life of vanity, but now flowing loose, in the way usual with mourners. Who she was is mere conjecture; neither proof nor reason justifies the idea that she was either Mary Magdalene or the sister of Lazarus. The gracious manner in which Christ contrasted her humble, penitent behavior, with the self-righteous, proud spirit of the Pharisee, affords his followers a lesson, not to despise the day of small things, nor the meanest or vilest of their fellow-creatures. "And I bless his holy name," says a female writer of the present day: "I dare not pass a sister of my own vile race without remembering that touching scene, and feeling as though to me was addressed the appeal, 'Seest thou this woman!'"

The manner in which eastern houses

are often open during meals to others than the guests is here exemplified. A traveler was reminded of this narrative by finding persons enter while their host was at table, who, sitting down behind the guests, entered into conversation with them.

Christ about this time cured one who was dumb, described to be a sufferer from the agency of some evil spirit. The astonished multitude exclaimed, "It was never so seen in Israel;" but the willfully blind Pharisees attempted to weaken the powerful impression such a miracle must have produced, by representing that Jesus worked miracles by the power of Satan. He, well aware of their secret malicious insinuations, at once condemned them, exposed their falsehood, and asserted his own character and authority, by the striking yet simple parable of the strong man armed. He further reprov'd the unbelief of the nation at large; and warned them to repent and believe, lest the example of Gentile sinners, like the Ninevites and the queen of Sheba, should condemn them in

the day of judgment, for slighting their greater privileges. He told them of the manner in which our words as well as our actions will be judged hereafter, a truth which some of the Jewish learned men then doubted; and he gave a gracious promise, that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" adding an awful threatening with reference to the sin of which the cavilers near him were guilty, "The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven."

All resisting of the Holy Spirit is not here meant, for who then should be saved? This sin is marked, not for any defect of mercy in God, or merit in Christ, but because it leaves the sinner in hardened impenitence and unbelief. There is no reason to suppose that any one thus sinning ever feels the guilt and burden of sin, or desires to be saved. Some humble and conscientious believers are at times tempted to think they have committed this sin: but those who come the nearest to it have no fears about it. Many interpretations that have been given tend to increase the

difficulties; but none sincerely asking for forgiveness in the name of Christ need fear that they shall be rejected. Such a desire is itself a proof that they have not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. It is ever a mark of that sin to be accompanied by an impenitent heart, while the real desire to be saved is the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart.

Our Saviour proceeded with solemn denunciations against the rebellious Jews, describing the increased violence of an evil spirit, could he obtain entrance into the heart whence he had once been expelled. Privileges misused only harden the heart: perhaps this accounts in part for that enmity to good sometimes awfully manifested by the ungodly children of pious parents. But the Lord knoweth them that are his: no evil spirit shall pluck out of his hand the sheep who confide in him, their heavenly Shepherd: let these take the comfort of looking upon God in Christ, as one whose love exceeds that of the tenderest earthly parent.

These remarks may be connected with



two expressions uttered by our Saviour about this time. During this very discourse, his mother and other near relatives sent for him, while instructing his followers. By looks and gestures, strengthening his words, he declared that those who followed the will of God were dear to him as his brother, sister, or mother. This passage has proved a source of strong consolation, both to the young, who feel the warmth of parental love, and to the more mature, when deprived of the stay and support of earlier days, having no human friend or helper. The love of earthly relatives is employed throughout the Scriptures to illustrate divine compassion. "Can a woman forget her child?—yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Isaiah xlix, 15. See also Isaiah lxvi, 13.

Another time, a woman who heard Christ preach uttered an exclamation of admiration and envy of her who was the mother of such a son. That worship, or undue honor to the Virgin Mary, was even then beginning, is a quaint but a true remark. Jesus, by his answer, "Yea, rather,

blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it," (Luke xi, 28,) clearly showed that the advantages of his kingdom spring from inward sincerity, not outward circumstances, and are free to all his followers, even those who are least known, or hidden from the world; and thus by anticipation he rebuked this idolatry.

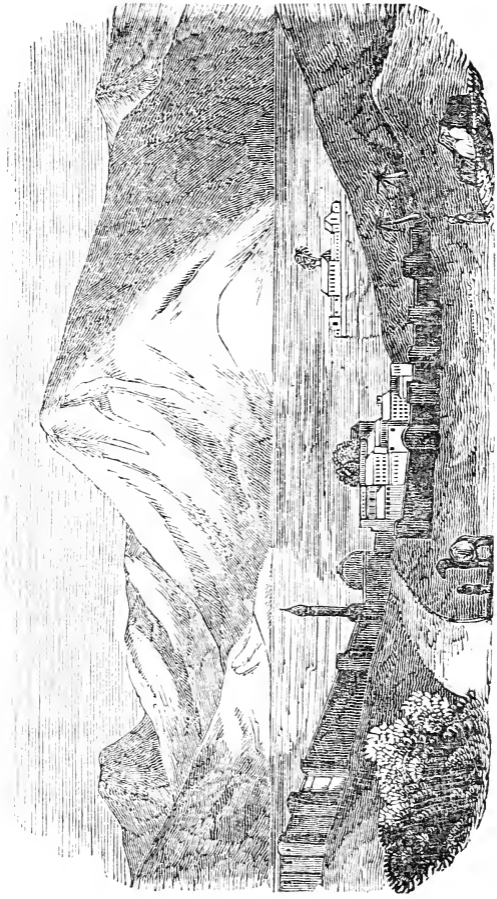
Some of Christ's discourses follow next in order. The first arose from the remark of a Pharisee. Luke xi, 37, etc. That sect was particularly noted for strict observance of outward ceremonies, and neglect of real duties. Present times, as well as those gone by, show how frequently these are combined. Christ plainly exposed their sins, and warned them of their danger. But, urged by envy and malevolence, they caviled at all that fell from his lips, and tried to provoke him to say something rash or unadvised, which they might afterward alledge against him. No mortal could have stood such a test; but Jesus, in this, and all his discourses, preserved meek and firm self-possession.

It is not certain who was the Zacharias

mentioned in this discourse, but it is generally supposed that he was the Zachariah stoned by command of the ungrateful Joash. 2 Chron. xxiv, 21. Though obscure now, the allusion was doubtless clear to the Jews, with the accompanying reference to the death of Abel. Who can attempt to estimate the amount of martyred witnesses for God?

“The numbers all our thoughts surpass  
Of Abels whom the Cains have kill’d.”





SEA OF TIBERIUS.

## CHAPTER VII.

JESUS TEACHES BY PARABLES—DESTITUTE STATE OF THE SAVIOUR—JESUS ON THE SEA OF TIBERIAS—REBUKES AND STILLS THE TEMPEST—THE DEMONIACS HEALED AT GADARA—THE SWINE DESTROYED—THE PEOPLE REQUEST JESUS TO DEPART.

WHEN the malice of the Jewish leaders appeared more evident, the Saviour taught mostly in parables; that is, by instructive narratives, or allegories, a method common in the East, in which figurative language is constantly used, both by those who amuse, and those who seek to instruct. Many curious circumstances are narrated respecting eastern story-tellers—so they are called; but widely different was the design of the Saviour. To make his followers understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, he described them under familiar figures and metaphors, in all ages deeply interesting to humble learners of his will, while the careless and hardened pass them by, or despise them as

mere tales for amusement. Still it is not easy for us to enter into the fullness and liveliness of these parabolic narratives; nor into the easy leisurely manner with which an inhabitant of the East would sit down and hearken to them. The call, "Listen to a parable," would excite his interest and attention; but one of us, intent on the pursuit of business, would either turn away at once, or hurry onward to the end. The parable or allegory of "Bunyan's Pilgrim" has lately been read with attention by the natives of India, through the efforts of the Religious Tract Society.

Parables were, and still are, common in the East; but Christ spake as never man spake; and though there are many parables among the works of Jewish uninspired writers, though some of these have a good moral, and others express beautiful sentiments, they cannot be compared with those of our blessed Lord even for literary composition, and not for a moment for the doctrinal truths they teach. Though less impressive to us than to those who heard

them, none, unless willfully, can be insensible to the truths they set forth.

A parable is mentioned, (Luke xii, 13-21,) suggested by a request from one present, founded on the injustice of a brother and co-heir. Jesus refused to interfere, for his kingdom was not of this world; he came not to execute earthly justice, but he warned the thronging crowds to beware of covetousness and forgetting God; adding the striking history of a man whose soul was neglected, while his worldly affairs prospered, but whose life was suddenly closed. Were a sense of the pressing realities of eternity constantly before the mind, earthly pleasures and pursuits would appear comparatively trifling. How unwise to neglect the soul for the trivial concerns of a life which passes away like a shadow, or a flower of the field!

Most of the warnings and exhortations in Luke xii, are also given by the other evangelists. Instead of the fowls of the air, (Matt. vi, 26,) the ravens and sparrows are distinctly specified; birds of no value, commonly despised or disliked by man;

particularly the former, which are heedless of the cries of their own offspring, and are said to turn them out of the nest to provide for themselves, even when they are unable to do it. See Psa. cxlvii, 9; Job xxxviii, 41. The "lilies" are again named; not highly prized, as with us, but being common flowers of the field—weeds of that country; and since these often give a better idea of a place than its more valued productions, it may be well to mention some of the wild flowers of Palestine, varying, of course, in different months, but probably similar now to what they were eighteen hundred years ago. It is difficult to mention the more abundant varieties which the summer months afford. Many travelers have observed, even in the cold month of January, when the climate resembles that of our March or April, the groves and meadows of Palestine, adorned in great profusion with the blossoms of different species of anemone, ranunculus, crocus, tulip, narcissus, hyacinth, lily, and violet. The red tulip is very abundant; the blue grape hyacinth is found in vineyards and arable



land. Nor is the daisy unknown. The plain of Sharon, a district near Samaria, has been compared to an enameled carpet, decked with thousands of gay flowers, crimson and white asters, asphodels, and lilies, the pink phlox, and the blue iris. The common trees are equally conspicuous, with others more rare to us; thus the apricot, plum, and almond, the citron, orange, and lemon, all blossom in the open ground. Among such scenes our Saviour addressed his hearers, and taught them useful lessons from the Creator's works.

Eight parables seem to have been delivered on one occasion, when he sat in a vessel or small ship, and his attentive hearers lined the shore, probably in October or November, A. D. 28. St. Matthew recorded seven, and St. Mark three, of these. Matt. xiii; Mark iv. Jesus afterward more fully explained to his disciples the doctrines they contain; adding, "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of

his treasure things new and old." Matt. xiii, 52. Here seems a reference to the Jewish custom of storing the produce of their trees and fields, Deut. xxviii, 8; Sol. Song vii, 13; with a hint to be ready always to find materials for the instruction of those whom we may have to teach. Thus the Saviour translated heavenly truths into the language of earth: many of the common objects around them must afterward have reminded his followers of the instructions of their Master.

The first and most striking parable, and one which was most fully explained by our Lord himself, is that of the sower. The classification is plain:—The hard ground, the beaten highway where the seed has no entrance, denotes the scribes and Pharisees of that day, the infidels and those who live without God in the world in later times. The stony ground, the Herods, the rich rulers, (Matt. xix, 22,) those who follow for loaves and fishes, the fickle multitude who first uttered, "Hosanna," and then cried out, "Crucify him;" the lukewarm outward nominal Christians:

such abounded then, and in every age. The thorny ground, the worldlings, who will abound even till the second coming of our Lord. The good ground, the little flock, those given him of his Father, whom neither earth nor hell shall pluck out of his hand.

Of all these parables, perhaps, none sounds more strange to us than that of the grain of mustard seed; and writers find it difficult clearly to identify the large tree springing from the small seed. Of the southern district, a traveler says: "A botanist would have a fine treat in this delightful spot. There was one curious tree in great plenty, which bore fruit in bunches, resembling the currant, with the color of the plum. It has a pleasant but strongly aromatic taste, exactly resembling mustard; the leaves have the same pungent flavor, though not so strong. We think this the tree our Saviour alluded to, not the mustard plant we have in the north, for though we met with the mustard plant growing wild, as high as our horses' heads, still, being an annual, it did not

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deserve the appellation of a tree. The other is really such ; and birds might and do take shelter under its shadow." Jewish ancient writers speak of a mustard-tree, common among them, in terms like those used by our Lord ; showing that some plant existed in Palestine with which we now are not well acquainted.

Further explanations of these interesting parables may be sought elsewhere. Sometimes Christ taught from passing events : see Luke xiii, 1-9. It has been well said : " If we were always on the watch for improvement, even the common news of the day would furnish it. The slaughter of the Galileans, and the fall of the tower of Siloam, were the news of that day." Some think these were the followers of Judas of Galilee. Acts v, 37. A similar death was experienced by the impenitent Jews, at the destruction of their city and temple, forty years later, when some were buried in the ruins, and others slain in the act of sacrificing. The Jewish history, like that of every nation, sets forth the long-suffering

and the judgments of the Almighty. The parable of the barren fig-tree illustrates this, both of public bodies and of private individuals. A tree that bears no fruit must perish; the vineyard, or cultivated ground, is no place for an unfruitful plant; yet it had been spared three years, the usual time for decision; and now the laborer earnestly pleads with his master to spare it but one year more. "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant." Isa. v, 7. Because of unbelief they were removed. Rom. xi, 20. And every one in the true church of God stands only by faith in the tender mercy and love of Christ, constraining the soul to live on him and to him.

Jesus continued his journeys for the edification of many, attended by his disciples, and assisted by a few truly pious women: see Luke viii, 1-3. In one of his removals he was accosted by a scribe, a man of education, with the words, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou

goest." Matt. viii, 19. Probably this man, like others, hoped soon to see him the Prince or Ruler of the land in a worldly sense. Did Jesus gladly welcome this man of rank, and look for advantage from his support? No; his plain and simple answer testified that he was himself a stranger and pilgrim on the earth; destitute even of that regular lodging which the mere tenants of earth and air possess. Never did Jesus lead his followers to rely on the enjoyment of earthly comforts; and never was any Christian placed in circumstances respecting which his Redeemer could not be touched with the feeling of his infirmities, having suffered the like during his abode on earth in human form.

Still Christ would not discourage any sincere but timid follower, although, like every wise teacher or governor, he used neither bribery nor compulsion, but, stating the truth, left his hearers to try their own state of mind by judging for themselves. One of his own disciples hesitated, it seems, on account of an aged father's

death ; another, till he could take leave of his friends and connections. Luke ix, 59-62. These were told in strong, though metaphorical language, that the service of God must precede every other claim. Eastern natives have always been accustomed to lay great and undue stress on funeral rites. The words, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father," were sometimes used to express that an act would be painful to a parent, and must not be attempted in his lifetime. The Jews and early believers often spoke of those living in sin as dead to God ; such may well mourn when earthly ties are broken, but those more enlightened should seek, especially at such times, to be alive to the glorious realities connected with following Christ. Remember, also, he is the good Shepherd, and his sheep follow him ; they need fear no evil.

Jesus now embarked on the Sea of Tiberias : he was calmly asleep in the more sheltered part of the vessel, apparently fatigued by intense and prolonged exertions. He may sometimes appear to leave

his people to struggle alone, but he never utterly forsakes them. Alarmed by a violent storm, the disciples awoke their Master with earnest prayers and loud complaints: "Master! Master! we perish." He gently blamed their unbelieving terror, and at once stilled the raging winds and waters.

It is well remarked, "How concise, how abrupt, how ardent their exclamation, strongly significant of imminent danger, and of the utmost distress!" And, "Peace! be still!" What majesty in the command! There seems a peculiarly proper word addressed to each element; the first enjoining a cessation of the winds, the second a quiescence of the waters. Silence in all that roared; composure in all that raged. He thus stilled also the troubled minds around him. *Psa. lxxv, 7; lxxxix, 9; cvii, 29.* The disciples, we read, were amazed far beyond the power of language to express. This was the work of God, not of man.

Arrived on the opposite shore, among the Gadarenes, two fierce demoniacs appeared. They no longer dwelt in the

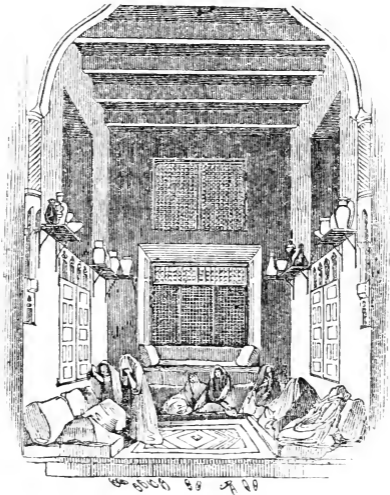


haunts of men, but wandered in the mountains and tombs: the latter were usually in secluded spots, and sufficiently large to serve for purposes of shelter. A full description of one of these wretched beings, and of Christ's dealing with him, is given, Mark v, and Luke viii; and again it is shown that this was not a case of lunacy—not the madness now existing. Nor must the three prayers offered on this occasion be unnoticed. 1. The devils besought permission to enter into a herd of swine, kept probably by or for some heathen foreigners in that region, though contrary to the Jewish law, which forbade the swine, it being an unclean beast. The Romans were partial to these animals for food, but they were prohibited to the Jews by the ceremonial law, which was not done away till the types were fulfilled in the death of Christ. This law was a wall which fenced God's ancient people from the rest of the world. The evil spirits impelled these creatures to hasten down the craggy shores of the lake till they were drowned; but they could not do even this without the

permission of Christ. Here Satan's malice, even in trifles, is shown; how ready he is to destroy all in his power. Thus, too, he prejudiced the minds of the owners; for, 2. The Gadarenes prayed Christ to depart; desiring his presence less than the sensual and sinful gratifications they had lost; and attributing their distress to Jesus, not to Satan. Alas! how many continue to make the same choice, and desire to preserve their swine, rather than to enjoy the presence that reproves their sins! Their impious and hurtful desire was granted; we never read that Christ again visited those parts. Yet he left a witness to his goodness even there; for 3. One of those cured demoniacs, then sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind, earnestly desired to continue with him. Jesus directed him to remain among his friends, setting forth what God had done for him: he did so. The change evident in him must have produced some effect on those who witnessed it; or, if they hardened their hearts, it reproved their sin. Such should be the

aim of all who are brought from the power of Satan unto God. Gladly would they at once leave this world to dwell in the presence of Jesus in his glory; yet they must remain for a while, strangers and sojourners on earth, anxious only to glorify Him, who for their sakes was contemned and despised.





Sleeping Chamber of an Oriental House—Death of an Inmate.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS RESTORED TO LIFE—THE TWELVE DISCIPLES SENT FORTH—JOHN THE BAPTIST PUT TO DEATH BY HEROD—JESUS AGAIN REJECTED AT NAZARETH—TWO BLIND MEN HEALED—FIVE THOUSAND MIRACULOUSLY FED—JESUS WALKS UPON THE SEA.

JESUS left the Gadarenes to their wretched choice, (Luke viii, 37–40,) and again

crossing the lake, found others in a better state of mind, glad to receive him; perhaps some were alarmed with the fear of losing him by the storm to which he had been exposed. It was a sense of their own wants and sufferings which made them anxious for the Saviour's presence. One eager suppliant appeared more pressing than the rest; this was Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, a person of consideration and influence; others seem to have yielded awhile to his urgent claim. He had doubtless heard of the miracles of Christ, and believed that his power would not be unavailing, even though his beloved and only daughter was laid on her death-bed, about to breathe her last; a child of twelve years old, just at that age when the endearments of childhood would mingle with the opening of an intelligent mind, when a parent's tenderest hopes and fondest affections would be called forth. At this time she was suffering under a dangerous disease, and brought near the gates of death. No human art, no parental care could preserve her; well might her father

regardless of rank or dignity, cast himself at the feet of Jesus; he did so with earnest confidence in him, and a feeling of utter helplessness without his aid. Why had not Jairus gone sooner to One who seems to have been no stranger in that place? yet no reproof was given, either for unbelief or delay; the compassionate Saviour spared his weakness, and pitied his distress, rising to accompany him homeward.

An unusual throng followed; one woman, long diseased with an illness which the numerous nostrums of Jewish physicians were insufficient to cure, sought and found instant relief by touching the border or fringe of our Saviour's garment, such a one as was usually worn by the Jews. Num. xv, 28. Trembling and shrinking from notice, she then hid herself among the crowd. Jesus, aware of all that passed, called her to him, and pronounced a special blessing, "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." Luke viii, 48. The mind of Jairus was no doubt busily occupied;

one moment regretting the delay, the next rejoicing at the encouragement afforded by this miracle. But a messenger approached, telling him that he was too late—his child was no more; and when they arrived at the house, the mourners usually hired were already in attendance. This custom prevailed among many eastern nations; it is still frequent. Jesus reassured the sorrowing parent, and declared, “The maid is not dead, but sleepeth.” Scorned by the hasty judgment of the multitude, he caused all to withdraw except three chosen disciples and the afflicted parents of the damsel. He took her hand, and bade her arise; the spirit returned, obedient to the word of Him who has the keys of death and the grave:—

“No, ’tis not on the dead they gaze;  
The wond’ring father looks not now  
On the pale cheek, the still cold brow!  
The mother, rapt in mute amaze,  
No longer turns on that closed eye  
The glance that vainly asks reply!  
For lo! her fringed lids unclose,  
Her eyes with living lustre beam,  
As if she woke from calm repose,  
Or from a bright and blessed dream.

O no !—she rises—she revives !  
'Tis not a dream ! she lives ! she lives !  
'Tis life ! the glad reality  
Beams on her cheek, burns in her eye."

Renewed health and vigor appeared, while the rejoicing parents hastened to provide nourishment for her, at the command of Christ ; thus an undeniable proof of renovated health, as well as of restored life, was given. Scripture is silent as to the circumstances which immediately followed this joyful event, also as to the future history of this damsel : let it be hoped that her life, whether long or short, was spent in the service of Him by whom it was restored, as well as given at first ; and let those who have received merciful restorations from sickness, remember in health the gratitude they owe for such deliverances.

Jesus sent his twelve disciples forth, to teach and work miracles in his name, addressing to them the charge already noticed. Matt. x. This seems to have been before the third passover of our Lord's ministry ; Greswell places it in February, A. D. 29. The events they met with are not recorded,



but their own testimony records that they lacked nothing, (Luke xxii, 35,) being specially watched over by divine Providence.

This extension of the ministration of our Lord seems to have been soon after the death of his forerunner, John. What circumstance first introduced John to Herod's notice does not appear. One striking coincidence between profane and sacred history may be noticed; the marching soldiers, referred to Luke iii, 14, seem to have been part of Herod's army on their way through Galilee to repel Aretas, the king of Arabia, just at the period then alluded to; and the Jewish historian, Josephus, looked on their overthrow as a divine judgment on Herod for his conduct to the Baptist. However this may be, Herod often heard John gladly, it is said, and had more than a general respect for him; he did many things, he even altered some of his usual habits in consequence. But one favorite sin, one indulged lust, Herod would not forsake. John faithfully reproved him for this, for taking Herodias, his brother's wife, and was therefore im-

prisoned. John was "strong in spirit," vigorous in duty, committing the event to God, whatever might befall him. Carnal reason might have said, "Be prudent, be cautious, you may gain credit with the king, and through him with his courtiers;" but John did not shrink from boldly admonishing a flagrant offender, whatever his rank. Thus did Latimer venture to reprove his royal master, Henry VIII.; and though we do not find his message was attended to, yet Henry honored his reprover, who lived also to warn the sensual and covetous courtiers of the next reign.

Instead of being again at liberty, a popular, admired, and useful preacher, John was to bear testimony as a suffering martyr. After languishing in prison, probably for a period of eighteen months, he was beheaded about this time, in consequence of a promise by Herod, from pleasure at witnessing an idle dance. He consented to gratify a wicked woman, who tempted her young and thoughtless daughter to deliberate impiety and cruelty; and thus completed, by an act of blood, the sinful

celebration of a festive day which commemorated the close of another of the years of his short abode upon earth. For their sakes which sat with him, Herod would not refuse ; the ruler of Galilee was himself the slave of profane and regardless nobles, as well as of a vicious and artful female, nor could he afterward silence the reproaches of his conscience. Matt. xiv, 1, 2. Such is the bondage in which the world enthrals its votaries. Let us, with the apostle, call upon all to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free.

John, trained in the path of self-denial, qualified for eminent piety by early instruction and self-dedication to God, even in his prison was enabled to direct others to his Lord ; and was, after his death, honored by his followers, and lamented by them in their intercourse with Jesus. Probably many of them were numbered among Christ's followers. His dying words are not recorded, but his life speaks far more powerfully, and assures us that to him to live was Christ, and to die, gain ; gladly

would he resign his head to the murderous blow, that his soul might at once join the sinless inhabitants of a better world. He is not to be sorrowed over; pity must rather be felt for those who plotted and consented to his imprisonment and death. Most of the family of Herod, except Philip, here mentioned as being injured by his brother, were violent characters, and suffered premature deaths. Tradition relates that Salome, this daughter of Herodias, crossing a frozen lake, fell in, and the broken ice then closed again in such a manner as to separate her head from her body. This, indeed, rests on mere human authority; but not so the fact that "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Psa. cxvi, 15. "He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eyes," Zech. ii, 8; and soon their enemies will be called to an awful reckoning:—

Where is the love the Baptist taught,  
The soul unswerving, and the fearless tongue?  
The much-enduring wisdom sought  
By lonely prayer the haunted rocks among?

Who counts it gain  
His light should wane,  
So the whole world to Jesus throng ?

Thou Spirit, who the church didst lend  
Her eagle wings to shelter in the wild,  
We pray thee, ere the Judge descend,  
With flames like these, all bright and undefiled,  
Her watch-fires light,  
To guide aright  
Our weary souls, by earth defiled.

There are many ways of putting away the truth without open persecution. Soon after the raising of Jairus's daughter, the inhabitants of Nazareth again received a visit from the Saviour, and once more rejected him, upbraiding him with the poverty of his earthly parents and kinsmen. He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

It is pleasing to contrast a somewhat earlier event,—the cure of two blind men by Christ, in answer to their earnest prayers and avowals of faith, and agreeably to the promise, "According to your faith be it unto you." Reader! if Jesus were now on earth, what would your conduct be? He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for

ever; commit your case into his hands, and fear not. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think, and you shall never regret seeking relief as these poor men did, (Matt. ix, 27-31,) by earnest supplication, in season and out of season.

Once more in company with his followers, now returned, Jesus lent a gracious ear to their account of their mission, and encouraged them to spend a short time in private retirement, again crossing the lake, to visit a district beyond Jordan. Thus should all engaged in active duties choose some season for showing their Lord what they have done and taught, and dearly prized will such moments be. The concourse of people, anxious to hear his words, abridged this longed-for time. He began to teach them many things; and shortly after illustrated his divine power, the control he exercised over so vast an assemblage, and his care for their bodies as well as their souls, by a miracle narrated by all the four evangelists, which must have made a strong impressor on the minds of all

present, as there could be no mistake or misrepresentation about it. A description is given, particularly in Mark vi, 30-44, and John vi, 1-13. The whole scene seems to rise before us; the place itself, a wide, open, uninhabited common, or space suited for pasturage, varied by hill and dale, within sight of the Sea of Galilee, not very unlike the large plains or downs found in some parts of our own land. Five thousand men, besides women and children, sat on the grass, regularly disposed in rows; while the disciples proceeded from rank to rank with abundant supplies of food, miraculously provided, and blessed by their gracious Master; and when all were satisfied, twelve baskets were filled with fragments that remained. Yet all this came from the scanty contents of a single basket brought thither by a poor lad, which contained only five loaves and two small fishes. The date of April the 5th, A. D. 29, is contended by Greswell for the event.

This miracle reminds us of the records in the Old Testament, and proved that the

God of Elijah and Elisha was there. Perhaps some remembrance of the events which had happened, in spots not very remote, now animated the people to pronounce Jesus a prophet, and disposed them to seek by force to make him a king. They followed him back to Capernaum, chiefly from motives of self-interest, desiring to have their worldly concerns superintended by one whose followers were so abundantly supplied; but he exhorted them to the pursuit of spiritual blessings, in a long and precious discourse, (John vi, 26-59,) in which every part of gospel doctrine is touched upon. Here is especially set forth the Saviour's readiness to receive all who come unto him; and the fact that he only is the bread of life, and the food of the soul. This discourse has often been wrongly applied to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, by Romanists, and others who are disposed to adopt some of their views; but, be it remembered, this rite was not then instituted, and the spiritual necessities of man are such that no outward means, however excellent,



can fully supply them. The teaching of the Spirit, and that alone, can satisfy the soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness; this has been enjoyed by believers in all ages, though more fully revealed in later times, as connected with the glorious realities of a future state. Here was reference to the heavenly manna by which Israel had been fed in the wilderness, as illustrating the spiritual feeding upon Christ, and the sustenance of the soul derived from him by the pilgrim, while passing through this barren wilderness world.

Even then, many of Christ's disciples, hard to be convinced of his divine nature and authority, forsook him after this address.

“His doctrines and his grace they spurn'd;  
Mere worldlings as they were before.”

Some suppose they afterward returned; but this is not certain, nor is it probable. The twelve apostles were not among those who left. Peter, in answer to our Lord's question, “Will ye also go away?”

made a firm and noble reply: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John vi, 68, 69. Where such a belief is felt, the soul cannot find rest away from the Saviour: it returns to him like Noah's dove to the ark. It is pleasing to imagine that Peter's faith might have been encouraged by the recent miracle and discourse that followed, though some then rejected it. His character, as displayed on this and other occasions, resembles that of many earnest and sincere, but inexperienced Christians. Observe also how fully Christ called their attention to the necessity for self-examination and watchfulness, plainly declaring that one of them was under the influence of Satan.

To escape from the importunity of the multitudes he had fed, who would have made him a king, Jesus sent his disciples across the lake in a ship, and himself retired alone to a mountain. A storm arose, the wind was contrary; the dis-

ciples, toiling and rowing, could make little progress, till, in the fourth watch of the night, toward morning, Jesus approached them, walking on the sea, dimly visible in the dawning light. Of God it is said, (Job ix, 8,) that he alone treadeth on the waves of the sea. The terror of the disciples, lest this unexpected appearance in the night should be some dreaded supernatural visitant, has been common at all times and everywhere; but the Saviour graciously addressed them, "Be of good cheer—it is I—be not afraid." These words have often been commented on, as well as the circumstances following, connected with Peter; he was ever, as on this occasion, the hasty to speak, and the prompt to act. They may thus be briefly summed up. Doubt said, "Lord, *if* it be thou;" faith added, "Bid me come unto thee." Doubt led Peter to see the danger of the waves; faith enabled him to walk safely for a time upon the waters. Doubt led him to see the wind boisterous, for a moment looking away from his Lord; but faith induced him gladly to accept his ready

relief. He had thought of the dangers of the waters, but he was alarmed by the wind; perhaps he was not prepared for any terror from that cause. Thus the believer, in his passage through the storms of life, is sometimes beset where he least expected: let him then cry, like Peter beginning to sin, "Lord, save me!" Jesus caught his trembling disciple by the hand, gently reproving his unbelief, and was gladly received by the other disciples into the ship; he stilled the wind, and soon brought them to their desired port. Matt. xiv, 22-33.

This instance of Christ's divine power and tender sympathy is deeply interesting, especially to eager, ardent characters; they can most readily enter into the workings of Peter's mind. Painters have delighted to represent the appearance of the distressed vessel, and the figures of our Lord and his trembling disciple; writers have frequently enlarged on it: the following lines by a Christian poetess may here be given:—

“Aid for one sinking!—Thy lone brightness gleam'd  
On his wild face, just lifted from the wave,  
With its worn, fearful, anxious look, that seem'd  
To cry through surge and blast, ‘I perish—save’—  
Not to the winds, not vainly—Thou wert nigh;  
Thy hand was stretch'd to fainting agony,  
Ev'n at the portals of the opening grave.  
Thou art the source of life! Yet thou didst bear  
Too much of mortal wo to turn from mortal prayer.”



## CHAPTER IX.

THIRD PASSOVER OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY—  
HE REMAINS IN GALILEE—HE REPROVES THE  
JEWISH TRADITIONS—HE VISITS TYRE AND  
SIDON—FAITH OF THE CANAANITISH WOMAN  
—RETURN TO GALILEE—FOUR THOUSAND MI-  
RACULOUSLY FED—THE BLIND MAN AT BETH-  
SAIDA HEALED—JESUS VISITS THE SHORES OF  
THE SEA OF TIBERIAS.

IT does not appear that our Lord and his disciples kept all the stated feasts at Jerusalem: no record is given of his attendance at the third passover of his ministry, mentioned John vi, 4, considered by Greswell to have occurred April 16, A. D. 29. It seems that his life being sought by the Jews, he remained in Galilee till the feast of tabernacles, in the October following, mentioned John vii, 1, 2. Some suppose it was owing to his absence at the passover, that his enemies sent deputies to watch him, who were the scribes and Pharisees sometimes alluded to as present with him in Galilee. This is not certain, neither is it probable that,

at this time, the ceremonial law was observed so strictly that all the Jews regularly attended at the three feasts, mentioned Deut. xvi. It seems most probable, however, that Jesus avoided exasperating the malice and contempt of his enemies at Jerusalem by remaining for several months together in Galilee, giving his presence and instructions to those whom the Jews of Judea despised and ridiculed. The Pharisees, sent to watch him, condemned the disciples for not following the traditions of the elders. Let it be observed that we see the undue stress laid upon tradition and traditional observances, in opposition to our Lord himself, still displayed against his gospel and its ministers. But Jesus at once condemned their traditional proceedings; he reproved them for paying attention to the words and usages of men rather than the precepts of God; especially for allowing a man to neglect his aged parents upon the plea that his possessions were corban, or devoted to God. It is plain, that if a man would pay handsomely to the priests and temple

worship, he was not censured, whatever might be his conduct in other respects. Has not this ever been exemplified by the traditions and practices of the church and priesthood of Rome? Much of this traditional spirit may be traced in all ages; and in these latter days it seems to be increasing rather than diminishing. If the washing of cups and pots, tables and couches, is not required by professing Christians as religious duties, there are, nevertheless, those who regard certain places, or articles, or ceremonials, with undue veneration, for which no authority can be derived from the word of God, at the same time that the consciences of others are offended, and the minds of the ignorant misled by such proceedings. Our Saviour has taught us how to look upon these things:—"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Matt. xv, 13. The day is not far distant when the fire shall try every man's work; none shall be left to stand but the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. To all who place undue



stress on outward observances rather than upon that spiritual worship which God requires, it may be said :—

Ah, what will profession like this avail in his terrible day ?

Even now their errors cannot give satisfaction in the hour of real earthly trial.

Our Saviour has left another similitude. Those who laid down these rules were blind leaders of the blind ; left to themselves, till, in the natural course of things, they worked their own ruin with that of all who depended upon them. Mistaken teachers of religion may well be called “ blind guides ;” nor are those who accept their guidance excused. “ Are ye also without understanding ?” was Christ’s gentle remonstrance to one of his followers, to whom he then repeated the all-important doctrine of man’s utter depravity, and his need of spiritual cleansing. Matt. xv, 16–20. How could any conversant with these doctrines misunderstand what had passed ? But present as well as past experience shows how apt even the Lord’s own people are to worship him with matters

of their own devising, even sometimes "in vain teaching for doctrines the commandments of men:" how needful then it is for them, like Peter, to ask the Saviour's guidance!

Jesus turned from these visitants: he next visited the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, the northern districts of Palestine, from whence it is said, (Judges i, 31, 32,) that the Israelites neglected to drive out the Canaanites, but dwelt among them. Among these, the ancient inhabitants of the land, idolaters doomed to destruction, here and there solitary praying souls were found, for no part of the human race is too degraded to share the mercies of God. One poor believing widow had been found in this region by the prophet Elijah, (1 Kings xvii,) and a similar character again appeared. A woman of Canaan left her home, her idols, her family, in a state of bitter distress, to commit her concerns to Jesus, as her Lord, the Son of David; stating, in brief and simple terms, that her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil, desiring relief, yet not requiring from him

any particular mode of cure. Jesus, at first, appeared to disregard, and even to reject her petition, saying, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel; it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Many would have been offended and deterred by such a reply. Even the intercessions of the disciples on her behalf seemed fruitless; but her humility and perseverance still found a plea. "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." It was customary with the Jews to call the Gentiles by contemptuous epithets, as "dogs" or "swine:" the dogs in eastern cities were generally either roaming about, living by plunder, or else chained up, with warnings to beware of them. Thus they were fit emblems of the unclean or profane, and are often named as such. Phil. iii, 2; Matt. vii, 6; Psa. lix, 14. To these creatures the woman of Canaan acknowledged a resemblance; yet still sued for mercy from the Lord of all, conscious that no other could relieve her distress. Jesus then dismissed her, with complete

approval, and the assurance that her petition was already granted. Returning home, she found the evil spirit departed, and her daughter composed and tranquil. Children ! see the influence of a mother's faith and prayer. Learn to prize these blessings ; and observe that no evil is incurable to an almighty and merciful Saviour. "Brethren," says Massillon to those more advanced in life, "here is a model for your perseverance in prayer : if the Lord answer not, repeat your supplications with renewed fervor : if he still seem as though he heard not, plead with louder and more earnest supplications : ask others to pray for you—the disciples, the friends of Christ, they know how to intercede with him ; but do not rely on their petitions as a plea for relaxing your own. The woman of Canaan received the desired answer, but the apostles did not ; yet a certain class think it enough if they invite ministers and others to pray for them, without themselves feeling that earnest preparation of heart which the Lord requires. Pray for yourselves ; for renewal

of heart and life : this is the only means of beginning or of pressing forward in your course heavenward. Pray ; and rejoice that the treasures of divine grace are accessible, yet abundant. The Lord himself bids you to pray ; it is for your interest, not his own ; and can you not spare a few minutes each day to spread before him the wants, the sins, and sorrows of so many hours ? Blessed God, grant thy servants a prayerful spirit, that grace which is the forerunner of every other ; and then satisfy the desires which thyself hast created.”

It is impossible here to enlarge on the numerous miracles of Christ, which the evangelists themselves often sum up in only a few words. Of one, detailed in all its parts, (Mark vii, 31–37,) this paraphrase has been given by a Christian poet :—

“ His eyes uplifted, and his hands close clasp'd,  
The dumb man, with a supplicating look,  
Turn'd as the Lord pass'd by. Jesus beheld,  
And on him bent a pitying look, and spake :  
His moving lips are by the suppliant seen,  
And the last accents of the healing sentence  
Ring in that ear which never heard before.

Prostrate the man restored falls to the earth ;  
And uses first the gift, the gift sublime  
Of speech, in giving thanks to Him whose voice  
Was never utter'd but in doing good."

It is not surprising that many diseased persons should have applied to Jesus to be healed, for the like is common even now, in those countries where there are no resident physicians, when any stranger possesses reputation for wisdom and skill. Dr. Robinson, in the year 1838, says he saw the child of a rich man, on the borders of Syria, wasting away under injudicious treatment, and regretted that his own knowledge of medicine was not sufficient to enable him to provide better means for her. Other travelers have spoken of sick people and their friends, who came to them in crowds. Many of the miracles wrought by Jesus are very briefly summed up, (see Mark vi, 54-56 ; Luke vii, 21,) yet all were interesting and wonderful.

Martin Luther has spiritualized the whole of this passage. Those who brought the poor man to Christ, represent his

preaching and praying servants: the sinner, by nature, is deaf and dumb, unable to praise God for his goodness, or to put faith in his word. Those who would be cured must come with Christ apart from the crowd; then he causes them to receive the gifts of his Spirit, and the blessings of his death, a stumbling-block to the world. Let those who have heard his doctrine seek to bring others to him.

Jesus, returning to Galilee, again fed a multitude "with a few fishes and a little bread." The circumstances were similar to those of the former miracles; the numbers, four thousand men, fed with seven loaves: again most clearly marking supernatural power, by the open repetition of the same miraculous proceeding, while the words of Christ, "I have compassion on the multitude," evidence that he had a human soul susceptible of the same feelings with ourselves. Christian! the Saviour is still touched with your infirmities; and while he is not unmindful of our temporal concerns, the spiritual state of men is still more deeply commiserated by him.

Shortly after feeding the multitudes, Christ sighed deeply in spirit, when the Pharisees and Sadducees, the two great sects among the Jews, answering to the formalists and the unbelievers of later times, joined to ask a sign from heaven, tempting him; that is, wishing to expose him as making false pretensions. He severely reproved their willful blindness, and left them—for theirs was a question arising from malicious feeling, not of honest simplicity or candor—and proceeded northward to Cesarea Philippi, near the springs of the Jordan.

Crossing the Lake of Tiberias with his disciples, Jesus warned them against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The disciples mistook his meaning, and applied it to bodily food. Uneasy at having no store with them, (there was but one loaf, or cake, of bread in the vessel,) Jesus reminded them of the miraculous supply he had twice provided, and explained, that he spoke not of bread, but of the bitter, and even the poisonous, doctrines of the sects referred to. Thus ready are



men at all times to think more about the wants of the body than those of the soul, like the Jews who had just been reprov'd by Jesus in these terms, Matt. xvi, 2, 3:—

“When it is evening, ye say, ‘A calm!

For the sky is red:’

And in the morning, ‘To-day a tempest!

For the sky is red and lowering.’

Hypocrites! the face of the sky ye know how to discern,  
But ye cannot discern the signs of the times.”

Arrived, by a circuitous course, at Bethsaida, the place where many mighty works done by him had been disregarded, (Matt. xi, 21,) Jesus cured a blind man, at the earnest request of those about him. The cure was gradual: at first he was able only to see men as trees walking; afterward he was restored, and saw every one clearly. Perhaps his faith in Jesus was proportionably strengthened. Sometimes now the enlightened soul can thus record the steps by which the change is produced; at others, the cure is instantaneous; the awakened sinner can only say, “One thing I know; I was blind, now I see.” In either case, all the glory

belongs to Christ alone ; nothing short of divine power could effect the change ; our Lord's conduct to men, when on earth, was not less suited to the characters and circumstances of each individual petitioner than his dealings with ourselves by providence and grace : nothing is too great for his control, or too small for his observation.

The region through which Christ traveled at this period included several distinct districts—Magdala, Dalmanutha, Decapolis, Cesarea Philippi ; all bearing the general names of Galilee or Perea, according to their situation upon the eastern or western shores of the Lake of Tiberias, or Genesareth, that sea of which Jewish writers so often speak as preferable to all others, for the mild and sweet taste of its waters. Modern travelers speak of them as remarkably clear, so that small shells may be discerned at some distance below the surface, and the course of the Jordan through the lake appears distinctly visible. The immediate shores are rocky and mountainous, though there are numerous plains in the distance, gradually sloping toward the

valley of the Jordan, which is considerably lower. It is said that nothing can surpass the great beauty and grandeur of the scenery; yet how often do the names of these places recur to us without awakening any lively ideas! At present these parts are dull and solitary. In summer, the wandering Arab removes his tent to more plentiful pasturage; and the numerous varieties of the feathered tribes, especially those which live on fish, are the only occupants. Storms and sudden squalls of wind are still frequent, and suddenly followed by a speedy calm. Fish is plentiful; and recent travelers, desiring to taste the produce of the lake, have sometimes literally dined here on a few loaves and small fishes. The whole scene is calculated to harmonize with the pensive feelings of the Christian pilgrim, when he tries to imagine the busy villages and populous towns which crowded on the view, when

“ Over these acres walk'd those blessed feet,  
Which eighteen hundred years ago were nail'd,  
For our advantage, to the bleeding cross.”

## CHAPTER X.

PETER'S AVOWAL OF JESUS BEING THE CHRIST—HE FOREWARNS THE DISCIPLES OF HIS SUFFERINGS—THE TRANSFIGURATION—A DEMONIAK HEALED—THE TRIBUTE PAID—THE DISCIPLES DISPUTE WHICH SHOULD BE THE GREATEST—FORGIVENESS ENFORCED.

JESUS, when alone with his little band of followers, asked what they heard others say concerning him. All regarded him as a prophet: some thought him John the Baptist, lately seen by them; others Elijah, whose coming was literally expected from their interpretation of the words of Malachi iv, 5; others Jeremiah, the tender-hearted, mournful prophet of old, or some other inspired saint formerly known. None, unless taught from above, could comprehend that mystery, the divinity of Christ. Peter was aware of this great truth, and readily avowed it when asked respecting his own faith. "Upon this rock," said his Lord, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. xvi, 18. This is to be applied to the

frank declaration made by Peter, and not, as the Papists take it, to the personal character of that apostle, whose attainments in true piety were very often counterbalanced by human frailties, especially by the impetuosity of his disposition. Critical writers have proved that the words used in the original show that Peter himself was not meant. Did he not afterward deny that he knew the man, when asked in a different throng concerning him whom he now rightly called "the Christ of God?" Was he not, in a very short time, (verse 23,) severely reprov'd by his Master for a dangerous error? Such failings are found even in the best of men; yet the record shows that Peter was sincere, though often hasty, erring, and faulty. And remember the fullness of that expression, "The Christ of God." Such excesses are not imputed to his fellow-disciple, the traitor Judas. Thus hypocrites sometimes seem more consistent than real Christians; but "the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Job xvii, 9.

Jesus at this time also began to forewarn his disciples of his approaching sufferings, and thus prepared their minds for coming troubles. He enlarged distinctly on the manner of his death.

“None eye but his could ever bear  
To view the future’s drear abyss ;  
Because none ever saw so clear  
The shore beyond of endless bliss.”

The eagerness and warmth may be easily imagined with which Peter responded, “Be it far from thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto thee.” But, “Get thee behind me, Satan ; thou art an offense unto me,” was the reply. When else did our Lord give so severe a reproof to any of his followers ? The reason why is added : “Thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” The words that follow, (Matt. xvi, 24–28,) addressed to the disciples and the people also, set forth the duty of self-denial, and the abundant recompense laid up for all the faithful servants of the Saviour. No doubt this discourse would often afterward support the apostles, when suffering shame and re-

proach for his sake. Little was Peter then aware how closely the sufferings of Christ were connected with the glory that should follow; or where the guilty soul had been if Jesus had not died. And how little we ourselves realize the superiority of the joys of eternity, when compared with the sorrows of time! 2 Cor. iv, 17, 18.

Thus Jesus was a teacher to his own peculiar flock, as well as a healer and benefactor to the people at large. Shortly after, three of these constant attendants were selected to witness a vision or real display of his glory, for a short time, on the summit of a high mountain in Galilee, which Greswell calculates to have taken place the latter end of May, A. D. 29.

Jesus was now in Cesarea Philippi, a district north of the Sea of Galilee. Re-land and Lightfoot have justly considered this as the place of his transfiguration; the tribe of Dan, not of Issachar. If so, as Lightfoot remarks, the Son of the living God was now acknowledged, both on earth and from heaven, in the very spot once famous for idolatry. The belief that

the transfiguration took place on Mount Tabor seems not well founded, and did not arise till the close of the fourth century.

The figure of Mount Tabor hill is round, inclining to oval; its height is thought to be about one thousand feet above the level of the sea; the circuit of its base would take three hours to travel round it; and that of the plain on the summit would be half an hour. The ascent is by rather a circuitous path for nearly an hour, giving, in the course of its windings, a view from all the different sides, extremely varied and delightful. Trees are numerous, chiefly the oak and wild pistachio, sheltering many gazelles and hares, with "birds of every wing." Tradition has long pointed out this hill as the spot where Jesus was transfigured, and being the highest elevation in this district, it has seemed very likely to have been so; but old writers state that it was then a fortified place, which is confirmed by the ruins on the summit, and therefore it could not have been adapted for devotional retirement. It was certainly



used for hostile purposes when Josephus lived, about forty years later; and it may be asked, Would this fertile spot have been secluded at a time when the whole of Galilee was so populous? It was early inhabited. Josh. xix, 22; 1 Chron. vi, 77. Some other hill, as just noticed, more probably was the mount of transfiguration. The place of worship once erected on Mount Tabor, in commemoration, may have been misplaced; like many other commemorations of sites mentioned in Scripture history, which have been erected from superstitious rather than from pious feelings. Still, Mount Tabor brings to mind many sacred records.

In noticing the circumstances of the transfiguration, we find that, exhausted with fatigue, Peter, James, and John, all fell asleep, while the Redeemer was engaged in prayer. When they awoke they saw that his appearance was changed; his face and his raiment, radiant with the reflected lustre of heaven, or with the hidden glory which dwelt in him, shone with a glorious, indescribable brightness. Two

of the blessed inhabitants of heaven, Moses and Elias, were conversing with him respecting his decease at Jerusalem, a subject on which the glorified saints above delight to dwell. Thus the law and the prophets gave witness to the Messiah. Peter, then, with his companions, being "thoroughly awakened," as the words imply, exclaimed, "It is good to be here," and entreated leave to construct three tabernacles, or temporary abodes, for Christ, Moses, and Elias. Some have thought this desire bespoke an earthly mind; but it seems rather the language of a warm and elevated frame, anxious for the continuance of those exalted privileges which are the occasional cordials of believers, not their daily bread. It is sometimes the Christian's lot to take a glimpse within the veil, to feel his heart burn within, to enjoy the society of superior minds, as Peter now did; nay, more, to feel the divine presence like a bright overshadowing cloud, bringing the message, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him:" but "clouds and darkness are round about the throne;" the believer

soon feels himself humbled by succeeding events, perhaps removing his outward sources of enjoyment, and leaving him with "no man save Jesus alone." Well is it for him, if he hears at the same time the Saviour's own words, "Arise, be not afraid!"

Then He who drew that cloud of fear  
Soon mark'd its blest design,  
While accents solemn, not severe,  
Proclaim'd, "The Son of God is here :  
Regard his voice divine."  
Peace, mourner ! though thy joys were cleft,  
Though earth and heaven were gone ;  
Say, wouldst thou write thyself bereft,  
If God, thy covenant God, were left,  
Thy "Jesus found alone?"

The glories of the mount are delightful for a season, but they do not always remain with us ; our present duty consists in glorifying the Saviour among the inhabitants of this lower world.

On descending the hill, Jesus strictly charged his disciples to tell the vision to no man till he was risen from the dead. His ministry did not need such evidence to confirm it to the world, though it mani-

fested to his disciples in some degree the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Peter, in later years, refers to this transaction, (2 Pet. i, 16-21,) for a proof that he and his brethren had not followed "cunningly devised fables." But the surest evidences, the brightest triumphs of Christianity, are accessible to all; the same passage points out these, "a more sure word of prophecy, a light that shineth in a dark place."

When Moses had received the commandments from God, on Mount Sinai, he descended to the encampment to witness the corruptions into which the people had already plunged themselves. Equally repulsive and contrary to the feelings suggested by the transfiguration must have been the scenes that followed. The scribes were questioning with the rest of the "little flock" of disciples; perhaps seeking to pervert their faith, too weak to overcome the struggles of an evil spirit striving to retain his power over one whom he had long held captive; while the surrounding multitude pressed forward to know whether the name of Jesus would prevail in

this instance like in others. Robinson says, "Here was a father with an only son, who, instead of being a comfort to him, was a spectacle of horror, afflicted with lunacy, convulsed with fits, and tortured in various ways, through the possession of an evil spirit." "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us," was the half-doubting address of the sorrowing parent to the Saviour, who answered, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Mark ix, 14-27. How often do Christians thus approach God, saying, in fact, "If thou canst," both for themselves and others, instead of realizing, first, the nature of true faith, and, second, its all-prevailing power!

"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," was the parent's earnest language, with many tears lest his son should suffer from his deficiency. Jesus, with the voice of authority, charged the evil spirit to depart, and return no more. Thus the child was healed, and encouragement afforded to believing parents and friends in all ages. Christians are not straitened in their Lord,

but in themselves; even the apostles were unable to succeed in their efforts for the sake of Christ, unless when diligent in the use of the means of grace.

The divine power of Christ was shown in seeming trifles, as well as in greater matters. Not one concern of ours is small, if we belong to him. Yet, when on earth, he was so poor as to be unable to pay a small sum collected as a tribute; nor, indeed, was there any reason why he should do so, since, whether for religious or civil purposes, he, being the Son of God, and Ruler of his people, was above all such regulations. Careful, however, to avoid all occasions of offense, when the payment was claimed at Capernaum, he dispatched Peter to the seashore, declaring that in the mouth of the first fish he should catch there would be a piece of money sufficient for himself and his Master. Learned men differ whether it was the tax of half a shekel to be paid by every Jew above twenty years old, (Exod. xxx, 13,) or a capitation tax imposed by the Romans. If the latter, the doubtful question may

have arisen from their apprehending him to be a concealed adherent to the views of the Galilean Judas, who resisted the payment of the Roman tax. Acts v, 37. It is remarkable that he caused it to be paid in a Grecian coin, not in Jewish or Roman money. Divine power alone could bring the fish to Peter's hook; the same power could equally cause it to have the piece of money; and that same power daily renews strength, and gives skill for the concerns of life. Even to us,

“All we behold is miracle; though seen  
So duly, all is miracle in vain!”

During their return to Capernaum, the disciples seem to have busily discussed the question, who should be greatest in the kingdom they thought their Master was about to establish? They referred to him, and received an unexpected answer. He called a little child, set him in the midst of them, and declared that those who were humble, lowly, and docile, like this little one, should be the greatest; and that none of other spirit should find entrance into his kingdom. Some writers have said

that this child was Ignatius, afterward bishop of Antioch, who was martyred by being thrown to lions, at Rome, A. D. 107, the pupil of St. John, and friend and companion of Polycarp, another early seeker of the Lord, whose dying words testified, "Eighty-six years have I served Christ." Jesus ever showed a tender regard for children, which would not be easily forgotten; and many of his servants in all ages have been enabled to impress the youthful mind, while elder hearers remained in carelessness. This was a sort of emblem or image of the new birth, or regeneration, (John iii,) beginning a new life, by the change wrought by the Holy Spirit, not by any outward ceremony of man.

One of our Lord's most interesting conversations followed. Matt. xviii. Perhaps no chapter sets forth more clearly his tender compassion to the sinful children of men, and the spirit which should actuate his followers. Observe especially the rebuke to the officious zeal of John, who would not have permitted another to cast out devils, though he did it in the name of



Jesus, and doubtless with belief in him, because he was not of their company. Mark ix, 38, 39. How often is this spirit manifested at the present day! and in these times of superior light and knowledge, doubtless all such exclusive views are still more displeasing to the Saviour. He that is not against us is for us; alas, that Christians should so often appear, every man, or set of men, opposing brethren! How natural the question of Peter, when his temper and character are considered; impetuous in himself, severe to others. "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" "Until seventy times seven," said Jesus. Matt. xviii, 21, 22. A precise number is put for an unlimited one. The parable which follows recommends the practice of cordial kindness and forgiveness to others, from a grateful sense of God's pardoning love. Matt. xviii, 23. Such is the spirit of the gospel of Christ.









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