

THE PUBLIC MINISTRY  
OF JESUS  

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I SHALL try to tell you the story of Jesus, in simple, human terms, having due regard to its historical setting. It is a wonderful life, and has had more power over men and women than any other life ever passed on this earth. To me it is very real, and if I can make it as real to you I shall be satisfied. I shall follow in the main the Gospel of Mark, because it is the oldest, hence the nearest to the facts, the simplest, and has the most continuous story.

### THE GALILEAN MINISTRY

The opening note of time, however, comes from Luke, who begins his narrative in these words: "Now in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being the Governor of Judea and Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee, the word of God came to John, the Son of Zacharias, in the wilderness"—who cried to the people, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

This strange, ascetic preacher appeared on the half-desert banks of the Jordan proclaiming the immediate coming of the Kingdom of

God, warning the people to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. The old prophets had foretold that a time would come when the powers of Heaven would descend upon the Earth and establish the Kingdom of God right here; his enemies, the wicked, would be swept away to destruction, but his loyal subjects, the righteous, would inherit the earth.

This time had come, said John; the crisis was close at hand. "Even now the axe is laid at the root of the trees; every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but the Strong One that follows me shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire, whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing floor and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but, the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

The fierce zeal of the Jewish people was deeply stirred by his preaching; from all parts of the country they poured down to the Jordan in throngs to listen to the appeals of the desert preacher, and thousands accepted his baptism of repentance.

The carpenter of Nazareth heard the stories of those who came back from the Jordan, and he, too, went down to hear the new prophet, being, says Luke, about thirty years old. Of his life prior to that day we know nothing ex-

cept what can be gleaned from the New Testament. His father, Joseph, was probably dead, and his mother, Mary, was left with a family of five sons, of whom Jesus was the eldest, and at least two daughters. He had received such education as fell to a boy in a village like Nazareth. He had read the history of his people and was steeped in the hopes and promises of the grand old prophets whose language he often quotes. His teaching also shows some acquaintance with the Apocalyptic literature so freely floating about Palestine in his day, picturing the sanguine hopes of the pious Jews.

He listened to the fiery appeals of John and received baptism from him in token of his sympathy and his faith in the coming of the Kingdom. Then followed the wonderful spiritual experience so variously told by different evangelists. The heavens opened to his vision and the Spirit of God descended upon him. Mark's language seems to imply that the Spirit of God entered into him at that time, inspiring and controlling his thought and action, and giving him superhuman power. As I read it, this was the crucial moment of his life. As he received the baptism he felt the power of God in his soul calling upon him to devote his life to the service of His Kingdom. "And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilder-

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ness." He wanted to be alone, to look into the depths of his own soul,—far away from the company of men, to meditate on his new hopes and seek strength from God.

Presently he returned to Nazareth, where the call to action soon reached him. John was cast into prison by Herod, and his mission came to an untimely end. Then Jesus felt his own time had come; he went down to Capernaum and began to preach, saying, "The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe in the good news."

He gathered around him a little group of devoted followers, probably men who had been disciples of John the Baptist; they were men from the humble walks of life, but, filled with love of their master and inspired by constant contact with him, they gave their lives to his ideals, and became after his death the germ of the Christian Church.

At Capernaum "he entered into the synagogue and taught; they were astonished at his teachings, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." This is the first note we hear of his preaching; he taught them as one having authority, not like the scribes. The scribes based their religion upon established rules; they appealed to ancient authorities and cited eminent teachers. Jesus spoke fresh from the heart, full of the power of



earnest conviction. It was to him the voice of God in his soul and needed no backing.

His own faith in God was unbounded, and by faith I mean not dogmatic confession nor belief only, but I mean confidence, simple, child-like trust. To him God was as real, as present as the mountain on which he stood. He lived in His constant presence. He often retired to the solitude to pray, and there he felt that God spoke plainly to his heart. He felt that the Gospel he preached had the divine sanction, was the word of God; hence he spoke as one with authority, with the authority of God. He could say with conviction that the man who kept his sayings had founded his house upon the Eternal Rock.

“The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the good news.” The Kingdom of righteousness and peace and plenty we have so long looked for and hoped for is at hand, close at hand. God will establish His reign right here in Galilee and in Judea, but only those who love Him and obey His laws can be His subjects, only those who are His friends and are loyal to Him; the unselfish, those who love and serve their neighbors — they will be His subjects and will enter into the joy of the Kingdom. The disloyal will be cast out into utter darkness. Repent of your sins, accept His love and come in.

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At this synagogue service in Capernaum Jesus effected his first act of healing. In those days all human ailments were popularly attributed to the demons who infested the air. One unhappy lunatic, stirred by his preaching, called out in the name of the demon for mercy. But Jesus replied, " ' Hold thy peace and come out of him,' and the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him." Again the people were amazed, saying, " What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits and they obey him." " That evening after sunset," says Mark, " all the city was gathered at his door and he healed many that were sick and cast out many devils."

During the year or more that he spent in Galilee and the surrounding districts he healed many sick and cured many insane persons, which undoubtedly swelled greatly the throngs that followed him, but interfered with his movements and became an obstruction to his teaching.

This Sabbath Day at Capernaum must have been a trying day for Jesus. The opening proclamation of his message to the people, the discovery of his powers of healing, the unwonted activities of the day all called for rest and reflection. Their possible consequences stretched away forward into the future where

he needed divine help. Early in the morning, long before day, he rose and went out of the town to be alone and to pray to God under the open sky. There the disciples found him. They remonstrated: "Everybody is looking for you," but he would not go back to Capernaum. "Let us go elsewhere, into the next towns, that I may preach there also."

So they went from town to town, "preaching in their synagogues," says Mark, "and casting out devils," till his fame became so widespread that he "could no more enter into a city, but was without in desert places."

After a while they returned to Capernaum, where he came in contact with the scribes and Pharisees, and his open conflict with them broke out, which lasted to the end of his life. It began thus. As he passed along "by the sea side" he met Levi, a publican, and invited him to become one of his intimate followers. Levi arose and followed him and then received him at his house, where many "publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples," thus technically defiling them. When blamed for this, he said, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners." Then followed a complaint that the disciples did not observe the customary fasts of the Jews, but Jesus refused to require it of them. Then they blamed him for healing the sick on the Sabbath. Jesus replied that to

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do good on the Sabbath was always lawful. But the conflict became so sharp he left Capernaum and withdrew to the shores of the lake. His relation to the religious leaders of the towns had become so strained it was unsafe for him to teach within their limits.

The Jewish Church, though it produced many great men and some broad, generous natures, had become bound up in a straight-jacket of legalism. God was a distant monarch hedged in by the stern provisions of the law; and not only the Mosaic Law was to be observed, but the Oral Law, too, which had grown up around it, prescribed a multitude of minute ceremonials and observances which the Jewish leaders of that day insisted upon as equally binding with the Mosaic Law.

These requirements of the Oral Law were so minute and so numerous that only the scribes and the Pharisees knew what they were. And how could the poor peasant, struggling with poverty, just able to maintain his family and keep the wolf from the door,—how could he observe all these lustrations and ceremonials? He had no time for these petty observances: it was as much as he could do to provide bread for his family and keep his head above water; and so he fell under the ban of the Pharisee for his neglect of the law. He was a “sinner,” and, as such, an outcast from the Church, an alien

from God, shut out from all the promises of the Kingdom.

To these poor creatures Jesus came with a new gospel, bright with hope and encouragement. The pure heart was worth more than ab-lution, the loving service of their neighbors availed more than the Temple sacrifices. His great heart overflowed with compassion for these "lost sheep of Israel." Despised, re-jected by the men who should have been their religious guides, they flocked to him to hear his cheering, comforting promises: "Come unto me ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." And so it was, indeed, as compared with the load imposed upon them by the Pharisees.

Jesus was the religious champion of the common people. They came to hear him in throngs, in crowds, so that one day his disciples "had no leisure so much as to eat"; another day he had to provide a small boat to save him from the crush; "he could no more enter into any city," says Mark, "but was without in solitary places," because of the crowds that followed him; again and again he crossed the lake to avoid the press, or to get a chance for rest, so eager were the people to drink in the new doctrine. Here was a prophet of their own

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kind, in full sympathy with them, whose life had been that of a plain carpenter, with no gulf separating him from the poor.

He taught them in pictures drawn from their own experience, the poor woman sweeping the cabin floor to find the lost coin, the fisherman sorting his catch on the beach of the lake, the patch on the old garment, the old and the new wine-skins, the children playing in the market-place, the laborers in the vineyard, the sower going forth to sow, the patient farmer waiting for the sun and rain to bring him a crop, the colors of the lily, the glowing hues of sunset—how freshly all these appealed to their daily experience. He shared their every day homely life. Women pressed through the crowd holding out their babies to receive his blessing, and he took them in his arms and blessed them, “for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Even the fallen woman, seeing the prospect of a new life opened to her through the pitying love of God, came and fell at his feet and heard his benediction: “Daughter, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.”

He walked from village to village throughout Galilee, living upon the bounty of friends, accompanied by the little group of intimate disciples who had left all and followed him. As the field widened he needed helpers and was slowly training them to aid him in his work,

moulding them to the likeness of his own spirit. They were just common, ordinary men, and they tried him greatly with their petty ambitions and selfishness; but he was patient with them, and after a while he felt confidence enough in them to send them out as his messengers, two and two, calling men to repent. On their return, Mark simply records that "they cast out many devils and healed many that were sick."

The mission of Jesus opened bright and cheering. The people were deeply impressed; he healed the sick, he cheered and comforted the sorrowing; the multitude heard eagerly his gospel of the love of God and followed him in crowds; but the religious leaders, the synagogue authorities, were sullen and indifferent. In his youthful enthusiasm he undoubtedly felt that they of all men would help him bring the sinners to a knowledge of God. But their idea of religious duty was very far from his; the worship of the form had obscured the spirit. When he healed the sick on the Sabbath they blamed him for breaking the Sabbath rest. He, on the contrary, would work on the Sabbath if he could help his suffering neighbor. They were conscious that his spiritual gospel undermined their ceremonial legalism: the two could not live together in peace.

When Jesus went from house to house of

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the poor people, giving what comfort he could to their humble occupants, the synagogues authorities sneered at him for keeping company with outcasts; he "eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners." Jesus replied, "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." But the breach between them slowly widened. Even his own family turned against him. One day quite early in his work he was teaching in a house, and there gathered around him a great multitude, "so that they could not so much as eat, and when his relatives heard it, they went out to lay hold of him, for they said, he is beside himself." They had so little sympathy with his work, they thought he must be out of his mind and tried to arrest him and put an end forcibly to his teaching. We have no record of what he said or did on this occasion, but its effect upon him is brought out clearly when shortly after he was again teaching in a house with a multitude sitting about him, "and there came his mother and his brothers, and standing outside they sent unto him, calling him. And the people round him told him, 'Thy mother and thy brothers outside are seeking thee,' and he answereth them, 'Who is my mother and my brothers?' and looking round on them which sat round about him, he saith, 'Behold my



mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother.' ”

From now on he will hold his spiritual kindred as dearer to him than his own family. This saying seems harsh at first sight, but it is not so when we remember that he had just escaped detention at their hands, and knew they would spare no efforts to put an end to his preaching if he placed himself in their power. And when he sent out his disciples to preach, he said, “Do not think I have come to bring peace — not peace but the sword — a man's enemies will be they of his household.” Perhaps these scenes were in his mind when a woman cried to him as he was teaching, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the breasts which thou didst suck.” But he said, “Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.”

A little later he comes in the course of his teaching to Nazareth, his home-town, and preached in the synagogue. The people were surprised at his power. “What is the wisdom that is given to this man? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And just because they had known him all their life they rejected him. Jesus wondered at their unbelief, — and said, “A prophet is not without honor

save in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house."

Disowned by his own blood and rejected by his childhood friends, he could turn with fresh joy and satisfaction to the eager love and loyalty of Peter and his comrades. When we think of this chilling estrangement from all that had been dear to him in his childhood, we feel a new pathos when we read in Luke that not long after this, when an eager convert exclaimed, "I will follow you wherever you go," Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." He, too, was an outcast.

In the face of this opposition by the religious leaders, should he abandon the great message to which he had devoted his life? No, his disciples were true and the common people still clung to him; he must preach the coming of the Kingdom, show them clearly the crisis that was impending. The great day was near at hand. He said to his disciples, "Ye will not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come": God would establish his reign on earth right here in Israel. Who then would be his subjects, his citizens? The Pharisees? No. "Except your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees you cannot enter the Kingdom." Who, then, the rich? the mighty? the learned? the rulers? No! the

gentle shall inherit the earth, the peacemakers shall be called the sons of God, the pure in heart shall see God. Such were the tests of citizenship.

A new order of society was coming in, based not upon force, but upon love. The world was to be reorganized. It was to become a harmonious family. God was our Father in Heaven, and all men were His sons, were brothers in the family. The old conception that God was a jealous monarch, hedged in with ceremonials, jealous of His law, and to be approached by the unhappy sinner only through conciliatory sacrifices, was all wrong. Jesus said, "God is your Father, and you are His children, made in His image. He longs for you to repent and believe the Good News—the Kingdom of Heaven is your home where you belong and the Good Father is ready to meet the repentant son and welcome him home. There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Ceremonial and sacrifice are not needed, but repentance is. You must repent and forsake your evil ways. Only those who are loyal to God can be citizens in the New Kingdom. Set your hearts right and never mind the rest. There are but two laws, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, and above all, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all

thy heart; these two commandments underlie the whole code and our love for God is proved by the service we render our neighbor. Love and not force will be the motive power in the new Kingdom.

Earthly position will avail nothing. Humility is better than ambition. "Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter the Kingdom." "Many that are first here will be last there." Money, raiment, earthly goods are of no account. Throw them overboard if they impede your way. The joy and blessings of the Kingdom will recompense you a hundred fold for all earthly gifts you lose. "Jettison the cargo to save the ship." Such a doctrine as this, of the superiority of the spiritual over the external, the efficacy of a clean heart over outward purifications, undermined not only the tradition but the Mosaic Law itself, which abounded in external causes of defilement.

The report of this dangerous teaching reached Jerusalem, and scribes came down to Galilee to listen to it. They asked him, "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the Elders, but eat their bread with unwashed hands?" Jesus replied, "You hypocrites, you prefer the traditions of men to the commandments of God. You relieve a man from his duty to support his father and mother, if he will give his means to the Temple instead, thus

making void the word of God by your traditions; and many such like things ye do." Then returning to their question he answered with peculiar solemnity: "Hear ye, all of you and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man." For, as he afterwards explained to his disciples, "Out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, covetings, wickedness, deceit, these evil things come from within and defile the man."

In these sayings, while Jesus did not actually abjure the Mosaic Law, he came very near it, and proclaimed a principle which put an end to most of the ceremonial defilements. The scribes saw this and were shocked. To them the law was the Sacred Covenant, established more than a thousand years since. It was the law of God, sanctioned by long years, made holy by the reverence of their fathers; and this new prophet was undermining the whole venerable structure. Jesus had undertaken to modify the rigidity of the Sabbath requirements, he had done away with the prescribed fastings, and now he struck at the root of all distinctions in food. What would he do next? And he a Jew? It must be that an evil spirit possessed him. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth he out devils." This charge coming

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from such a source must have greatly weakened his hold upon the people, who held the church authorities in great reverence.

Jesus saw that the opposition had become too strong for him and he felt obliged to withdraw, at least for the time, from Galilee to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, a pagan district entirely outside of Israel. How long he remained there we do not know. On his return he passed around Galilee, coming down the east side of the lake, still in foreign territory.

After a while the storm seemed to have blown over and he again crossed the lake to Galilee, though not to Capernaum. But the Pharisees were on the alert and immediately sought him out and renewed the attack, demanding a sign from heaven attesting to the authority by which he proclaimed these new doctrines. Jesus "sighed deeply in his spirit," says Mark. "Why does this generation seek a sign?" "There shall no sign be given to this generation." Recognizing the uselessness of further attempts to preach in Galilee, he withdrew finally from that region, and so ended "The Galilean Idyll."

And what had he accomplished? His own family thought he was beside himself. The church authorities said he was an agent of Beelzebub; rejected by all that had been dear to him before he entered upon his mission, hunted from

place to place, he was now a fugitive in a foreign land. We can imagine the disappointment with which he looked back on the cities where he had spent so much of his labor. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes, and thou, Capernaum, thou shalt go down to Hades, for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." His Galilean work was over, and a new field of action and new scenes will occupy our attention for the rest of the story.

#### THE JERUSALEM TRAGEDY

Jesus retired to the mountain region at the sources of the Jordan; there in the quiet seclusion of the hills, out of reach of Herod and the Pharisees, free from the thronging multitudes he could meditate on the situation. Should he go back to Galilee, in the face of the hostility of the Pharisees and the power of Herod? If he did, undoubtedly the fate of John the Baptist awaited him. While thus debating in his mind, a new situation arose. As his work progressed the thought must have arisen in his mind, was he

only a fore-runner like John, or was he the Divine Leader himself, who should establish the Kingdom. His gospel was not the leadership that John expected when from his prison he sent to Jesus the inquiry, "Art Thou He that should come, or must we look for another?" John looked for an avenging angel who should sweep the wicked into hell. Jesus was far enough from that, and in reply simply pointed to his works of charity, making no direct claim to be the Messiah. So when Herod heard of the crowds that followed Jesus, he saw no sign of the Christ about him, but, said he, "It is John the Baptist, whom I beheaded, risen from the dead."

When the Pharisees asked him for a sign from heaven, that is, some proof of divine authority, he only said, "There shall no sign be given them." Even his disciples, when he asked them at Cesarea Philippi, "Who do men say I am," could only reply, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, others again one of the prophets." Up to this time nobody seems to have regarded him as the Christ unless we accept the testimony of the Demons. In no respect did he present the popular idea of a coming leader. The common people looked for a Judas Maccabeus who should hammer the Romans, not for a Prince of Peace. The Pharisees hoped for an Ezra who should reinforce the law, not a reformer. Jesus knew well



enough that he did not fill out their conceptions of a Messiah. His Kingdom of God was a very different one from theirs: but he knew he was right. He knew his soul was in touch with God. He knew his gospel was the only foundation on which the Kingdom could be built, the laws he laid down were the Divine Code.

Then he turned to his disciples with the question, "And whom say ye that I am?" And the impetuous Peter, with a heart overflowing with loyalty to his master, burst out, "Thou art the Christ." Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in Heaven." If this reply, given only in Matthew, is historical, it means that Peter had not gained this conviction from any talk with his fellows, but the truth then flashed upon him for the first time that his Master was the long-hoped-for Christ. It is in full keeping with this view that Jesus then "charged them that they should tell no man of him." He would postpone as long as he could the popular tumult and the possible political consequences which would follow the proclamation of his Messiahship.

And now assured of the confidence and devotion of his disciples, the way was clear. He would go up to Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, the great national gathering, and preach

the coming Kingdom. "He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," says Luke,—steadfastly, resolutely. It needed courage and resolution. He saw clearly the risk. He would meet there the same body of Pharisees who had blocked his way in Galilee, only vastly stronger and more dangerous. In Jerusalem were their schools and the heart of their fraternity. Back of them lay the Sadducees, the temple hierarchy, rich, strong, proud of their position, jealous of the slightest attack on their wealth and their privileges. He was sure to come into collision with them, too,—and over them all was the dreaded Roman power, quick to scent any popular movement, prompt to crush any attack on their authority, and anxious withal to conciliate the Jewish leaders.

It was only fair to warn his faithful followers of their peril, and he frankly told them that he expected to meet the open hostility of the rulers; but there was only one thing for him to do,—he must proclaim the Kingdom, which would arouse the enmity of the authorities as it had done in Galilee. Being stronger in Jerusalem they would seize him and put him to death. The eager Peter protested against this sombre view, but Jesus turned on him with these words: "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou mindest not the things of God but the things of man." I confess it always seemed to me hard that the

affectionate protest of Peter, an outbreak of his implicit faith in his master, should meet with this rebuff, but Jesus' stern determination allowed no veil of sentiment to come between him and the cold facts of his situation. Warned by Peter's mistake he began to prepare them for the worst. His teachings assume a sombre, ascetic cast; they were marching to the Kingdom of God, but it was through the valley of the shadow of death.

The forlorn hope that storms the enemy's fortress must be purged of all doubters,— must cast aside all impediments and enter the fight single-minded, with but one object. No man need follow him unless he was prepared to stake all, yea, life itself, on the issue. Here is his call for volunteers: "If any man would come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me, for whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life, or what should a man give in exchange for his life. . . . Whosoever is ashamed of me now . . . the son of man will be ashamed of him when he comes with the glory of his Father and the holy angels. And I tell you there are men standing before me who shall not taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power." Those

who fell in the struggle would win Eternal Life in the coming Kingdom.

Descending from the mountains he passed through Galilee, but privately, for he wanted nothing to interfere with his plans. It was at this time that he said in the same strain, "If thy hand or thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off; if thine eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out, for it is better to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven maimed, than having two eyes to be cast into hell, into the unquenchable fire; for every one shall be salted with fire."

From Galilee he pursued his way down the east side of the Jordan, avoiding the more travelled routes. On this journey the rich young man met him and asked him what he must do to inherit eternal life. He had lived correctly and kept the commandments, and Jesus, looking upon him, loved him and said, "One thing thou lackest: go sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me;" but his countenance fell "and he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." And Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." The soldier of the forlorn hope must be in the lightest marching order,—he can carry no baggage. Nay, even the sacred ties of family life must give way in a stress like this. In the 14th

chapter of Luke we find the following strange passage, which belongs to this period: "If any man cometh unto me and *hateth* not his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yea, his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." Can this be the gentle Galilean prophet who said, "Come unto me, all ye who are heavy laden and I will give you rest?" who made love the motive power of his Kingdom, who insisted on the sanctity of marriage, who blessed little children and said, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven?"

Yes, but the conditions are reversed. Then all was peace, now it is war; and on the road to battle all hindrances must be cast aside, riches, ambition, even the holy family ties, lest they tempt the soldier to swerve from his duty. The self-sacrifice that faces death endures no hindrances. His disciples could not understand this change in the tone of his teaching. "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem" says Mark, "and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed, and they that followed were afraid." And yet so little comprehension had they of the truth of their situation that on this very journey they disputed amongst themselves which was the greatest

among them, and who had the right to sit next the Master in the new Kingdom.

They passed through Jericho and began to meet the crowds of Galilean pilgrims on their way to the Passover Festival. He was known to most of them as the Galilean prophet, and many must have met him personally. The word was passed from mouth to mouth, "He is the Messiah: He is the Son of David!" And by the time they reached the suburbs of Jerusalem the multitude was worked up to a frenzy of enthusiasm, strewing their cloaks in the road and branches of trees, singing national hymns and shouting, "God save the Son of David. Blessed is he who cometh in the name of Jehovah! God save him from on high." And in this way they entered the city. It was the high tide of his popularity with the people.

He visited the Temple Courts and retired to Bethany at night with his disciples. The next day when he again entered the Courts he was shocked to find them looking more like a market than a place of worship, being filled with hucksters selling all kinds of objects required for sacrifice. Indignant at the profanation and undoubtedly supported by his Galilean friends, he drove out the traders, crying, "You have turned the house of prayer into a den of robbers." This act of purification was fatal to

him, for it made the powerful Temple hierarchy his bitter enemies. He had insulted them and struck at one of their main sources of profit. So far they had been indifferent to him, and do not appear in the story. They hated the Pharisees, and up to this time had taken no part in his contests with them; but from now on we find the "chief priests" steadily working for his downfall.

The Pharisees hated him worse than ever, for he attacked them with fierce denunciation on account of their avarice, oppression and hypocrisy. The Jewish rulers, Pharisees and Sadducees, shook hands over their old differences in this pursuit of a common enemy. They tried to entrap him into a denial of the Mosaic Law; they tried to embroil him with the Roman Power; but all in vain. Jesus was a Jew. He loved his country and never abjured the law of Moses, unconscious apparently that the principles of his Gospel, deep and broad as human nature itself, would inevitably undermine the limitations of Mosaism, as became evident a generation later under his great follower, Paul.

It soon became clear that his Jerusalem mission was a failure. The Jewish authorities utterly rejected his claims and were trying to destroy him. His Galilean following disappears from the story and seems to have melted away, except his immediate disciples and a few women.

His enemies continued to conspire and intrigue against him, but he frustrated their schemes by retiring from the city at night. Being afraid to arrest him openly by day, they had recourse to treachery. They bribed one of his own disciples to betray him into their hands at a time and place where rescue would be impossible.

And when he took his place at the Passover table with his disciples on that last night he knew it was all over, that the end was near at hand. It was a sad meal, for his mind was full of the impending calamity. And yet, if we believe Luke, in the midst of this sad foreboding the disciples were disputing which of them was the greatest. Jesus made this incident the text for a lesson in humility, and then turning to Peter he said, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan asked to have you (meaning all his disciples), that he might sift you as wheat, but I made application for *thee* that thy faith fail not, and do thou, when once thou hast returned, strengthen thy brethren." Jesus seemed to anticipate that they would all desert him, but he had faith that under Peter's leadership, "when once he had returned" to his old faith, the disciples would again be drawn together, and the Gospel of the Kingdom carried on without the Master, and Peter afterwards justified his confidence.



Then followed the agony of the garden. Jesus, knowing his enemies were close at hand and would do their worst, tried to calm his troubled soul in prayer to his Father in Heaven. The disciples, apparently without any realization of the tragedy at hand, calmly lie down and sleep. To me their conduct all through this last day is a paradox.

Hark! the tramp of feet in the still night! "And straightway cometh Judas with a multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders"—not a band of Roman soldiers, as John has it, for he was arrested by the Jewish authorities—"And they laid hands on him and took him." The officers led him to the High Priest's house, where they kept him till morning. Peter followed him afar off, but only to deny him when charged with being his friend. While Jesus was kept in arrest, his guards were allowed to insult him and beat him. When morning came a hasty meeting of the Sanhedrin was called and he was taken before it and questioned, but he refused to make any answer till the High Priest asked him if he were the Christ, when Jesus replied, "I am, and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven." For this they declared him guilty of blasphemy and condemned him to be worthy of death. Then they delivered

him up to Pilate, demanding his death, for only the Roman could inflict capital punishment. Then Pilate questioned him, but he maintained his silence till the Governor asked him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?", when Jesus replied that he was. Still Pilate saw no danger in him and would have released him as a harmless enthusiast, but his vindictive enemies opposed his release vigorously, crying out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" and Pilate, to pacify them, gave his consent. Jesus was whipped and handed over to the Roman soldiers for their amusement, who mocked, insulted and tormented him, until he was led away to his cruel death. Ordinarily the criminal bore his own cross to the place of punishment, but Jesus was too exhausted, and a stranger was impressed to carry it for him.

I need not harrow up your sympathies by any further details. He was crucified at nine in the morning and lingered in agony for six hours, when he broke his silence with a loud cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and yielded up his spirit. His body was tenderly cared for by a friendly hand, and the mission of Jesus seemed to have come to an end.

What do you suppose were his thoughts as he walked in that mournful procession from

Pilate's judgment-seat to Calvary? Perhaps his mind reverted to the beginning of his work for the Kingdom. The cheerful confidence of his first journey from Nazareth to Capernaum, the hope and assurance with which he declared his gospel, the joy with which his message was received by the multitudes, and the gathering and training of his devoted band of followers; at first all seemed bright and encouraging,— then came the gradual overshadowing of his path, the hostility of the leaders of the church, his own church, from which he had hoped for support,— the falling away of his family, the distrust of his friends, the rejection by his townsmen — how his enemies drove him from place to place till he was obliged to leave Galilee forever, and all his work seemed to have come to nothing, all except the love and loyalty of his little band of disciples — they clung to him and followed him to Jerusalem.

Then came the depressing journey to the Holy City. By contrast how well he remembered the Messianic Triumphant Entry, and the cleansing of the Temple — for a moment again all seemed bright and his hopes of the Kingdom were renewed,— but it was only for a day. Obstructions, conspiracies, intrigues followed; his steps were beset with snares. At last came the bitterest trial of all, the break in the lines of his nearest friends; he was betrayed

to his enemies by one of his own chosen, nearest friends; the rest, seeing his fall at hand, deserted their Master and left him alone to his fate.

All his work seemed to have come to nothing, all his hopes of the Kingdom faded away,— the powers of evil had triumphed, and all was over. Worn out by the strain of the past week, deserted by all his friends, with his hopes all dashed to the ground, wrung with the physical agony of his wounds,— do you wonder that he uttered the despairing cry, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And yet the moment of his greatest agony was the eve of victory. Strange providence of God that the best human character must be perfected by suffering. We only admire goodness, but we worship self-sacrifice. Jesus teaching the Gospel of the Kingdom in Galilee claims our love, but we reverence and adore him as his shattered body hangs lifeless on the cross.

The blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the church. The cross was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks; but to the Christians it became an emblem of glory. The legend of Constantine’s vision is a continuing parable to the Christian Church, “*In hoc signo vinces.*”

Jesus died on the cross and was buried. His

disciples, disheartened and terrified, scattered and fled.

#### THE GERM OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The original Gospel of Mark ends with the empty tomb, but Matthew says the eleven disciples went into Galilee.

A month later we find them back in Jerusalem, organizing their little fraternity for the spread of the Gospel of Jesus, full of life, full of hope, full of faith! They had seen their Master, he still lived,—their return to Jerusalem, the devotion of their lives to his Gospel, were invincible proof of their confident faith that they had seen him. Of this we have a contemporary witness in Paul, whose testimony is direct and convincing. He had met the apostles in Jerusalem as an enemy not more than five or six years after the crucifixion,—and again as a brother Christian about five or six years later still. His faith in Christ rested on the Resurrection, and he must have eagerly sought the testimony of those who were eye-witnesses of what took place.

Writing to the Corinthian Church about twenty-five years after the crucifixion, he says that after the death of Jesus on the cross “he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, then he appeared to about five hundred brethren at once of whom the greater part remain until now,

but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, as to one born out of due time, he appeared to me, also." Observe the order of the time — first to Peter, then to the twelve, and so on, last of all to Paul.

A little farther on in the same letter from which the above passage is taken,—chapter 15 of his First Epistle to the Corinthians,—Paul gives us a glimpse of his thought upon the reappearance of Jesus, and he places it in the same category as the promised resurrection of his Corinthian converts. Christ was "the first fruits of them that are asleep," but in due time these sleepers, too, would be raised, not in the "natural body," for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, but in the spiritual body." Listen to his words: "If there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised . . . but now Christ hath been raised, the first fruits of them that are asleep. . . . But some will say, How are the dead raised? And with what manner of body do they come? Thou foolish one, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die . . . but God giveth it a body even as it pleaseth him. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead; it is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption . . . it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual

body. . . . Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption."

Paul, then, who had heard the story of the re-appearance of Jesus from the mouths of eye-witnesses, believed that Jesus appeared to his disciples in the spiritual body, not in the natural body, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." He believed that Jesus had conquered Death, and still lived, a promise of eternal life to his faithful followers.

Such is the testimony of the earliest witnesses, Paul and Matthew; the story of the reanimated earthly body grew up later, and appears only in the later Gospels.

To return to the history, after the crucifixion the disciples went back to Galilee. Peter, filled with the love of Jesus, mourning the loss of his Master, spurred with the shame of his denial, and eager to make amends, was the first to see Jesus. He saw his Master in the spiritual body. The only witness to this vision is Paul, but his evidence is the oldest; it is the testimony of a man who knew Peter well, in person, and outweighs all subsequent secondary testimony; Peter was the link between Jesus and the other disciples. Of the next appearance, to the twelve, we have reminiscences in Matthew and John.

## 36 PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS

The disciples, convinced that their master still lived, ashamed of their desertion, felt a renewal of their faith, their hope, their love; coupling their new hopes with the old prophecy in Daniel, they conceived that he would soon return in the clouds of heaven with power, to establish the Kingdom. In this faith they went back to the Holy City to await his return, and behold! the germ of the Christian Church.













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