Luke - Commentaries by Thomas Leslie Mather

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 9:18-50

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THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION AND END OF CHRIST'S GALILEAN MINISTRY (Suggested Reading: Chapter 9:18-50)

The heart of man remains the same today as yesterday— alienated from God. Some time after the Second World War, I was sitting in a barber shop having my hair cut and trying to reach the barber with the gospel. He said to me, "You remind me of a customer of mine who is always sending money out of the country to support missionaries in the East. My question is, why don't the people in the East send missionaries to us? Isn't their religion as good as ours?" Well, if this man is alive today, which is doubtful, he would see his longing fulfilled, for there is a Buddhist church in his city now. I told him that all the great religions in the world were founded by dead men. Buddha is dead, Mohammed is dead, but Christ— who became dead for our sins, for death had no claim on Him— is alive forevermore and has the keys of death and Hades see Rev. 1:18. Christianity is founded on an empty tomb and an occupied throne. That Man whom sinners crucified is now seated on His Father's throne in glory and will leave it one day to be the Judge of the living and the dead.

Peter's Confession of Christ—9:18-27

The heart of the barber was the heart of the men of two thousand years ago. The Lord said to His disciples, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" Their answers showed that men made no distinction between Him and the present and former religious leaders of the people. But Peter rightly answered, "The Christ of God."

Christ's supreme and overriding claims must be acknowledged. All must bow to Him— there can be no equality to Christ except in the Godhead. Men must acknowledge Him as "The Christ of God" as Peter does here, for God will accept nothing less. When we do, our eyes are opened to see the glory of Christ. Here, however, the cross looms before Him and the Lord tells His Own why His sufferings were necessary before the kingdom can be ushered in in power and glory.

Now the Mount of Transfiguration foreshadows that glory, just before the close of the heavenly part of the kingdom. When the kingdom comes, it will be shared by Moses (representing the law) and Elias (the prophets), which, taken together, stand for the Old Testament saints; and Peter, James, and John, representing the New Testament saints. The saints of all ages who are in heaven will have glorified bodies –bodies suited to men entering the glory of God, of which the cloud is the symbol. The scene also has a present application, that is, it shows us our intercourse now with the Lord on high— calmly in communion with Him on heavenly subjects until the day when the power and the glory, postponed by His sufferings and death, are publicly displayed on earth. Following the transfiguration, and descended from the Mount, the Lord tells His own more about His coming sufferings and death. But it makes no impression (v. 45) as it did on the holy mount. It is only as we are in spirit with Christ in glory and not occupied with ourselves or our circumstances, that the impress of His death comes upon our spirits.

The Holy Mount—9:29-36

The opening and closing of the Lord's ministry is marked by prayer. Indeed, the Lord ascends the mountain for that distinct purpose— that He might be alone with God. At the Jordan, the lowly, depressed place where His ministry began, He prayed; at the mountain, the exalted place where His Galilean ministry formally ended, He prayed. God chose the physical features to portray first His Son's humiliation as a dependent Man at the beginning, and then His exaltation by God at the end. The theme opens up to us in Phil. 2, which is commended to the study of the reader.

Peter, John, and James accompany Him as eye witnesses. Peter writes of the event in his second Epistle. He tells us that he, John and James "were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount." 2 Peter 1:16-18.

And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and effulgent— that is, radiant, giving off light. This is a picture of Christ glorified, when He reigns in the kingdom. Because we belong to Christ, we too shall have bodies of glory like His own body of glory in that coming day.

Moses and Elias talk of the same theme as we shall when we appear in glory. Moses represents the law; Elias the prophets— both of which testified to "the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow." And so they "spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." In another sense, Moses represents the saints who have died; Elias, who was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11), of the saints who will be raptured at the second coming of Christ. Many lines of truth converge on the Mount of Transfiguration, because it is the high point of Christ's ministry and God's verdict of its value. God's sentence on it is deferred, however, until man has the first say. And how unqualified even a great saint like Peter is to have any say! That he was a great saint is shown by his omission of all references to himself when Christ was present. He only says, "it is good for us to be here"— and gives Christ the first place before Moses and Elias. Even so, the inspired verdict is "not knowing what he said." Why? Because Christ must never be ranked with any other man, whether that man be the great of Israel like Moses and Elias, or the great teachers of other countries, whoever they may be. "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence" Col. 1:18 is the great principle. And so the very moment man does this, God begins to speak and put an end to the matter: "And there came a voice out of the cloud saying 'This is My beloved Son: hear Him.'"

The above lines represent the believer's assurance now that the cross is past. Here on the Mount, it is still before Christ, although the very fact He is transfigured shows that His decease was divinely viewed as accomplished already so that God glorified Him in anticipation of it. Still

"they feared as they entered into the cloud." "The cloud" in Scripture is always the symbol of the divine glory and presence. This cloud is the Shechinah glory, the dwelling place of the God of Israel. It is the cloud which guided Israel through the wilderness. They stopped or moved with it. Here the cloud is the entrance to the Father's presence, our eternal dwelling place. IC is from the cloud the Father's voice is heard, for He is our Father by virtue of the death of Christ, and so announced in His resurrection John 20. Man cannot be there without the shed blood of Christ. Moses could not enter into the tabernacle "because the cloud abode thereon and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" Ex. 40:35. No need for three tabernacles as Peter suggested, but of "a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands —that is to say not of this building" Heb. 9:11. No, "by one offering He has perfected forever those that are sanctified" Heb. 10:14. It is for this reason that the Father directs our attention to His Son.

The Father's Voice

At the Jordan— the beginning— the Father's voice had said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." At the end, He does not need to say "in whom I am well pleased," for the Transfiguration itself is sufficient witness of that. Instead, He directs our hearts to the object of His delight, exclaiming, "hear ye Him" as He did to Peter, John and James— men on the earth— not to Moses and Elias. It is not the voice of Moses and Elias— the law and the prophets— to which the Father would open our ears, but the voice of His Son.

The Epistle to the Hebrews begins and ends on this note, which is morally connected with the holy mount. In time past, God had spoken to the fathers by the prophets, but now He is speaking, "in Son"— "who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person, etc." see Heb. 1:1, 2. Then it ends morally in the twelfth chapter "see that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven." V. 25. Then the message continues, "wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." V. 28. It is on this note that Luke's account of the Mount of Transfiguration ends— the kingdom is deferred— the foreshadowing of Christ's glory disappears— and Jesus is found alone. We leave our delightful meditations of the coming glory and walk down from the mountain to serve our rejected King in a world of sin— "and it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met Him." But let us not forget the Lord's words spoken just before the Transfiguration, which had the coming glory of the kingdom in view, "for whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory and in His Father's and of the holy angels." 9:26.

Satan's Power Overthrown—9:37-50

It is remarkable that the Lord's ministry began by his confrontation with Satan in the desert; here it ends with the casting out of demons— Satan's power over man, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8.

The human race is helpless to deliver itself from Satan's power— it stands alone, defenseless against him until Jesus comes. That is why we have an only son-7:12 dead; an only daughter 8:24—dead; and here, an only child 9:39— indwelt by an unclean spirit who tore and bruised him. Our other great enemy is not Satan, but ourselves. So again, Jesus takes a child— this one a living child— and sits him by Him. The child gives us the secret of greatness once we are delivered, as the three other children showed us who our Deliverer was: Christ. Would we be great in God's kingdom— then let us be nothing that Christ may be all— "For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." 9:48.

One more lesson is needed before the curtain falls. The heart of man is always sectarian. Lacking the vision of the whole Church of God in the unity with which God sees it, we champion a cause— part of the whole rather than the whole— "Master, we saw one casting out demons in Thy Name and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us." This was a remarkable prohibition on John's part. Hadn't the father of the child, who was possessed with demons, told the Lord, "And I besought Thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not"? Here is the perfect manifestation of the sectarian spirit which pervades the Church at the present time. Unable to do any work for God themselves, the sectarians forbid others who can, because "he followeth not with us." But the Scripture is our guide— not men. And what saith the Scripture— "we ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29. Now God is speaking in His Son and has told us on the Mount, "Hear ye Him." His closing words, ending His Galilean ministry, are, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us."

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 9:1-17

THE SIGN OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES (Suggested Reading: Chapter 9:1-17)

The Lord is now the Divine Center in Israel, not the Temple, although God still acknowledges it as His Temple. Men have been accustomed to go in and out of the Temple. Now His own come to and go out from Him. He calls the twelve and invests them with His power and authority. But when He sends them forth, their first commission is to preach the Kingdom of God, and secondly, to heal the sick. We can never preach Christ to others unless we have been in His presence. Otherwise, we would not be ambassadors of Christ, but of ourselves.

Herod hears of His power and wonders if John the Baptist, whom he beheaded, is risen from the dead as some thought, or if He were Elias or one of the old prophets, as others thought. God does not relieve his perplexity, because there is no stirring of conscience— only idle curiosity as we learn from his question— "who is this?" Herod's bewilderment is only introduced here to show the moral state of the king among whose subjects the twelve had gone, with the power and authority of Jesus Himself. So they return to Him and account for what the Lord had given them, as we also must do some day, even though what we have received is on a much lesser scale. They are tired, no doubt. The Lord takes them to a desert place near the city of Bethsaida— house of provision.

Who Is This?

Herod's question must now be answered: "Who is this?" He would not have asked it if his subjects had not puzzled him with contradictory reports about Jesus. Therefore, they— and not Herod— must receive the answer to Herod's question, "Who is this?" The Scripture taught that it was the Lord who satisfied the poor with bread. The sign of the loaves and fishes speaks for itself. The underlying moral teaching is what we would seek to unfold here. This teaching is a figure of how Christ, working through His servants in all ages, feeds His Church. It is the Church period which is in question, since the sign precedes the Mount of Transfiguration, the figure of Christ in His glory in His millennial kingdom on

earth. Note, too, that it is not our service for Christ in the gospel which is the point. In the story, that service was over and the Lord took the twelve aside into the desert to rest. The twelve here represent any who seek to feed God's people. It may be a sermon, address, talk to a small group, teaching in a Bible reading, writing an article in a magazine for Christians, etc., etc. It is not the form of things, but their nature. You get the thought in John 21 where the Lord commissions Peter to feed His sheep and lambs but does not tell him how to do it.

The Sign of the Loaves and Fishes—9:12-17

Well, the first thing is, have we faith to serve the Lord in this way in a desert, hidden from the eye of man, relatively speaking, for the feeding of Christ's sheep does not make us stand out like the work of an evangelist. Most of us haven't. True, we go to the Lord about it. But then we ask Him to send the people away and let them get their own food— "for we are here in a desert place." But this does not satisfy the heart of God. Remember that we cannot say we love God if we neglect His people— "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John 4:20. So the Lord tests them— "Give ye them to eat." Immediately they quibble, "We have no more than five loaves and two fishes." They had not yet learned the lesson "little is much if God is in it. "'Hadn't the God of Israel spoken? Was His power less in this command than what they had already proved when they went out in His service and came back victorious?

Well, we think it is. Often we shrink from the task of feeding Christ's sheep, which takes spiritual energy and pioneering. We say to ourselves— but really we are telling the Lord— "What, me?! I have only five loaves and two fishes! So-and-so is better qualified than I am. Let the people go to so-and-so and buy their bread and fish from him."

"No," the Lord says, "the bread and fish isn't to be bought. Go ahead and give it to them— free."

Now the Lord doesn't start you out with nothing you begin with five loaves and two fishes. The five loaves are your preparation for Christ's service. A loaf of bread starts with the plowing of land, the sowing of seed, the patient waiting for the crop, harvesting it, milling it, baking it. It is your education in divine things, the patient waiting for Christ, your testing under adversity— the baking process, etc. Man has five fingers and five toes, so it is the compass of your work and walk with God. The two fishes are entirely God's gift to you— you don't prepare a fish— God gives it to you as it is. Look up the subject of gift in the Bible yourself and see to it that you don't neglect your gift, whatever it is. Well, we take this provision and thank God for it. Effective prayer precedes the feeding of God's people. Suppose you write an article, book or pamphlet about Christ. In that case, look beyond the printing press which is multiplying your few loaves and fishes to the Lord, who gives you multiplied readers.

Everybody is fed fully when we follow God's way, not ours. God does not tolerate waste, either. The fragments that remain are twelve baskets. This means that when Christ has finished the work of feeding the Church and takes us to glory, twelve baskets are left over to feed Israel. What a God! But remember— Israel collects our fragments! We eat the loaves and fishes— we taste the goodness of our Lord's provision for us first. Israel gets the spiritual food that is left over after we are full.

One great lesson in all this is to be thankful to God for His care over us. The crowd ate until they had enough, but there is no record that they thanked God for satisfying their heeds. For some fifteen years I preached the gospel in a jail for young criminals. One Thanksgiving Day, before speaking to the prisoners, I asked them what they had to be thankful for.

"That the Russians haven't dropped the bomb yet," one young man said. "That I'm getting out soon," another said. And so on. The Christian would say, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable free gift." 2 Cor. 9:15. That gift is Christ and all true service for God in the Church is ministry which exalts Christ. The gift is unspeakable, but that does not mean we are to be silent about it. The Lord will multiply our loaves and fishes if we leave them in His hands.

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 4:38-44 - Luke 5

GOD PRESENT AMONG MEN AND

DWELLING WITH THEM

(Suggested Reading: Chapters 4:38-44 and 5:1-26)

It has often been said that the key thoughts of any book in the Bible will be found in the opening portions of that book. So in Luke, when Zacharias' dumbness ended, he was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people." 1:68. In the early part of Luke, the Lord's visiting His people was centered around the Temple. Following His temptation, He visits the synagogues. But now we find Him moving from the House of God— the Temple and the synagogue— to the houses of man. If God would truly visit His people, He must go into their dwelling places. In this chapter we will consider the Lord's dealings with three houses. The important point is that it is Jehovah Himself who is present. He alone could heal the leper and fill the net with fish. But that is the God who became Man that He might dwell with us.

The Lord Visits Simon Peter's House— 4:38-44

It is astonishing to find that the first Pope, as men call Peter, had a mother-in-law and was therefore a married man. But Peter did not know about his promotion at this time and so did not consciously violate the canon law of his Church.

The scene in Simon Peter's house is a remarkable one. It is the first house the Lord enters. And what does He find but Peter's mother-in-law sick with a great fever. He does nothing until those in the house ask Him to take her case in hand. Then He rebukes the fever as He had previously rebuked the unclean demon. Disease, since it is the causative agent of death, is as much a weapon in Satan's army as is an unclean demon. Each is a separate manifestation of Satan's power, and the Lord had overcome Satan in the temptation. So He relieves man of the consequences of Satan's power— a foreshadowing of that blessed day when sin, disease, and death, will be banished from the universe of God. So Peter's wife's mother stands up and serves them.

This first visit of the Lord to a house is full of instruction. The great fever which raged in the body of Peter's mother-in-law is a picture of man's feverish natural state— his excited riotous condition until Christ comes in to cure him. I recall an incident in the days just before the Second World War which brought this home vividly to me. A car was parked in front of the Toronto Stock Exchange. A crowd surrounded it, for it had a long-range radio on, tuned into a Nazi rally in Germany. Hitler was speaking. His followers were completely feverish, punctuating his remarks with thunderous shouts of "Heil Hitler" and "Seig Heil." It was sheer frenzy. That mob no doubt contained many educated men, but education only polishes the outside of the apple, leaving the core rotten inside. Only Christ can still the feverish state of "Peter's wife's mother" a state which can be seen everywhere today, in student riots, street demonstrations, strikes, even in organized sports. "Thou shalt not follow a mob to do evil" Ex. 23:2, is God's warning to us to keep away from this riotous way of life and come aside to the still waters where Christ tends His sheep. But let us not forget our friends and relatives outside of Christ in the feverishness of nature. Beseech Christ for them. Only He can rebuke the fever and cause it to go. It was not the faith of Peter's mother-in-law that raised her up, but the faith of those who implored Christ to heal her. But once she is healed, she arises like the Prodigal Son later. She serves them. Service for Christ is not a yoke He puts on us. When He relieves us of our natural feverishness, the instant desire of the new man is to stand up and serve Him. Once we know Christ, we cannot confine Him in our own house, so to speak, but the blessing overflows from our house to those outside it. So, though the sun goes down here and the natural man rests, the Lord continues to heal the sick.

The Demons Own Christ According to His Dual Character in Psa. 2

We have already pointed out the amazing knowledge of Scripture possessed by the powers of darkness— how they understood Christ to be "the holy One" of Psa. 89. Here, they confess Him in His dual character given in Psa. 2— the Son of God— but also the rejected One. Jesus rebukes them for this as He had previously rebuked them for testifying to Him as "the holy One."

It is striking that following this incident the Lord adopts the title "Son of Man" 5:24. This title always assumes His rejection here, but His Lordship over the world to come. It is this Psa. 2 Character of which the demons were perfectly aware, but of which man was willingly ignorant. We find the title "Son of Man" in 5:24, 6:5, 6:22 and 7:34, after which the unseen world once again grudgingly affirms that He is the Son of God 8:28.

It is a shocking commentary on the fall and depravity of man that the powers of darkness would confess who Christ is but man would not. Dread and fear of the greatness of His power and a desire to avoid it characterized their actions. Man has been a beneficiary of that power, but has gradually hated the source of it.

When I was a young man, I received a salutary lesson of man's willfulness against the Son of God come in grace. I was driving my car along the lake-front beside some factories, when I noticed a shabbily-dressed middle-aged woman soliciting a ride from passing cars. Thinking she was probably a poor widow working hard in the nearby factories, I let her in. After a few remarks as to her destination, she said "I'm a businesswoman. Do you know what that means?" I saw at once that I had misjudged her character for the slang expression stood for a wicked woman of the street. I responded instantly, saying, "Certainly I know what that means. It means that if you were to die right now you would go straight to hell." I began to preach the gospel to her, but she interrupted, shouting, "Not the Son of God, but the sun-god." The evil creature worshipped Baal. My father had once preached to a sun worshipper and he had reacted just as this woman did. She demanded to be let out of the car, for she would not listen to anything about the Son of God. I told her I would let her out as soon as it was practical to do so, but if I let her out in that thick traffic and she got killed, I would be responsible for sending her to hell before her time. When we parted, there was no misunderstanding as to where we both stood. "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" 1 Cor. 14:8.

The Call of Peter 5:1-11

The Lord had gone into a desert place and the people sought Him. But He must announce the glad tidings of the kingdom of God to other cities also. And so we find Him preaching anew in the synagogues of Galilee. He visits the houses of men to bless them, but returns to the synagogue to preach. Then the fifth chapter opens with a most blessed statement— "And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed around Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret." How privileged those people were, not to hear the words of a rabbi like other men, but the words of God Himself. Blessing always flows from listening to and obeying the Word of God— barrenness from despising it. As a young student, I had an ancient history master who despised the Scriptures. In those days it was compulsory to open classes with the reading of the Scriptures; today the reading of secular prose or poetry has replaced this custom. In those days law and order characterized the land; now we have strife, strikes, and riots in the universities. Well, this man always read from Solomon's writings. He prefaced his remarks every morning by saying, "Well, let's see what the old fool has to say today?" and closed them by saying, "Well, that's what the old fool said today." The following summer he was drowned, although a strong swimmer. Not content to lose his own soul, he deluded others into thinking that divine wisdom was folly. Where he now is he will realize that it was he who was the fool.

Well, the Lord, knowing the people's need and longing for the Word of God, preaches from a ready-made pulpit— an empty fishing boat. In the synagogue at Nazareth, He had a full house, but empty hearts; here He has full hearts, but an empty boat to speak from. The Lord fully recognized the Temple first in this gospel, then the synagogue, but neither recognized Him. So, because He is the Son of Man, He reaches out to the people where they are in their daily occupations. A century or more ago, God raised up preachers who followed Christ's example, preaching to coal miners at the pit head as fishers of men. Dr. W. T. P. Wolston was once asked why he preached in public buildings he rented at his own expense, instead of where Christians met. His reply was, "you don't catch fish in a fish shop." Well, Peter was the first fish the Lord caught and He did it in a most unusual way. First of all, let's remember that the Lord really rented Peter's boat. Peter earned his living from catching fish, but hadn't been able to catch any all night. For the use of his boat, the Lord paid Peter a bountiful rent for He will be no man's debtor. Peter demonstrates his faith in Christ by obeying Him against all his instincts as a fisherman. When Peter saw that the catch was so great that the ships began to sink, he fell down at Jesus' knees. Here was the last Adam who had dominion over the fish of the sea— Gen. 1:28— in contrast to Peter, who belonged to the sinful race of the first Adam and could catch nothing. "Depart from me," he cries in his anguish, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

But the Scripture says, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." Joel 2:32. Well, Peter did that. He really admitted that he was a sinner and deserved only to be banished from God's presence. That is the fate of sinners who are unrepentant. Such must hear the Lord's words— "depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Matt. 25:41. But the Lord meets Peter's need because he trusted in Him

and His word of grace was "fear not." Following this, He gave Peter a call as an evangelist— to catch men from now on, not fish. This story brings to mind the Scripture, "whom He called, them He also justified and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Rom. 8:30. We have seen how the Lord called Peter here, and justified him, too. Later we shall see how He also glorified him. What God did for Peter, He does for us, too, for Peter's God is ours. This is a new feature of the Lord's work, associating sinful men like Peter in His dealings with men.

The Cleansing of the Leper 5:12-15

In the Bible there is much teaching on leprosy, which is regarded as a type of sin. It is a loathsome disease. In Old Testament days, lepers were to stay outside the camp and cry "Unclean, unclean," to warn others away from them. Those who touched a leper were defiled. The reason leprosy is such a distinct figure of sin is that the leper is generally without feeling as to his condition, although the ravages of the disease in his body are apparent to all. So it is with sin. A good story illustrating this concerns the late Sir William Osler, who was an outstanding Canadian physician. An old friend paid a social call on Osler, together with his son. It was the days of the British occupation of India. This man's son had come home on leave from a British regiment stationed in India. The three men chatted for some time and smoked cigarettes. Suddenly Osler turned to his friend's son and exclaimed, "Young man, you have leprosy!" How did he know without an examination? Was it suspicion that he had caught an Eastern disease? No, Osler had observed that the young man had not extinguished his cigarette like the others. Instead, he held it while it burned his flesh and he felt no pain. So it is with sin. The Bible never exaggerates, and its use of leprosy as a type of sin fits the case exactly.

But, unlike other men who were defiled by touching the leper, Christ was undefiled, for He was the sinless Man. The leper knew the power was in Christ. Would He use that power on a poor leper? Many a sinner has asked the same question. "I will, be thou clean" is the ready answer. The Lord still works within the framework of Jewish ordinances though, and commands the leper to conform to them while He, the God who gave them, receives no testimony from the leper. The priest will know that it is God who cleansed him. He withdraws into the wilderness and prays in dependence now as ever on His Father. For forty days He had been in the wilderness, tempted alone by the devil; now, having shown His power over Satan's triumph the sin of man, leprosy He retires for fresh communion with His Father before going on with His work.

The House Where the Palsied Man Is Healed—5:17-26

Now He is to be shown, not only as the God who "forgiveth all thine iniquities" —the leper in the preceding verses— but who also "healeth all thy diseases." Psa. 103:3. Should not all the people then have exclaimed, "bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy Name"? Undoubtedly many did— those for example who pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God by the lake of Gennesaret. But not all. A class of people emerge here who are opposed to Christ— "and it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, who were come out of every town of Galilee and Judaea and Jerusalem." The reason we know they were opposed to Christ is that we read "and the power of the Lord was present to heal them." In this quiet remark, Luke unveils their true condition before God— in need of healing— the power of the Lord present for the healing— but no willingness to receive it on their part. So God blesses instead a man who felt his need. A man who is in bed, paralyzed, does not need to be reminded that he can do nothing for himself. Here is an illustration of a sinner and his helplessness. "When we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. 5:6. He is powerless to come to Christ himself. "They sought means to bring him in and to lay him before Him." This is a picture of those who preach the gospel. They know the man's hopeless state and seek to bring him to Christ, who alone can help him. But they are unable to bring him to Christ. Why? Because there are too many people barring the way. This is the external barrier to the salvation of a sinner— the crowd (the world) which keeps us from Christ. But even if this were not so, there is an internal difficulty: pride. Our lofty thoughts of self are offensive to God. Those who would help a sinner must do what these men did— they lowered the paralytic through the roof to where Jesus was. Only if we are humbled and become like little children, can we be saved. Note, too, the faith of these men. Their boldness reminds us of the Lord's own words— "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." Matt. 11:12. It is not when the Lord sees the man's faith, but "their faith" that He says, "man, thy sins are forgiven thee." What an encouragement this is to the preacher of the gospel.

But you say that wasn't the man's immediate need. He still remained paralyzed. For the moment, yes. God is a God of patience and expects us to be patient, too. The lesson the Lord was teaching was that the root of all disease is sin. Men go to surface manifestations— God to the root. Immediately He does that, reason takes over— always the enemy of faith, for the two principles are opposite ones in the spiritual realm. Who is this that speaketh blasphemies?" the Scribes and Pharisees say— "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Thus, they failed to recognize God manifest in the flesh, and the power of the Lord which was present to heal them must be used on another. Reading their thoughts and the reasoning of their hearts, He says, "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins [He said to the paralyzed man] I say unto thee arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house." Immediately the man arose, took up his couch, and went home glorifying God.

Note the contrast between what took place in Simon Peter's house and this house. Peter's mother-in-law and this man were both confined to bed. The Lord entered Peter's house; the paralyzed man was brought to this house. The fever in Peter's house speaks of the activity of the flesh in sin— man's feverish nature; the paralysis of the man here, his powerless state Godward, because of pride which the gospel preacher brings to the Lord's attention for salvation. Blessing followed both miracles.

The House of Levi (Matthew), the Publican—5:27-35

The Lord called Peter away from his fishing, Levi (Matthew) from collecting taxes. He simply said, "follow Me." Levi abandoned a lucrative occupation to do this— "he left all." Should he then be mournful at the loss of his once great income? If he was, he behaved strangely, for he made a great feast for Christ in his own house. This incident ties together the three houses we have been considering. In the first two, the Lord healed and blessed. In this house, there is rejoicing because the bridegroom of Israel has come and all who acknowledge Him should feast because He is present. To fast would be to deny His presence among His people.

Now Levi wasn't content to have the Lord alone with him at the great feast he spread in his house. He invited all his former friends, wicked as they were. In some way it would appear that he invited the scribes and Pharisees too— that they were part of the "others that sat down with them." No doubt they enjoyed Levi's hospitality too, but they resented Christ. Not directly, of course, but by implication— "Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" The Lord makes it clear that the publicans and sinners need Him— He came to call them. Rebuffed, they attack from another angle, reproaching the Lord for not disciplining His disciples like those of John and the Pharisees. The Lord makes it clear that this is a joyous time in Israel for God has visited His people. This being so, it is a time to eat and drink— that is, to rejoice openly at God's

grace. To fast and mourn when God has come to them would be to deny the joy that was to characterize this moment more than any other time. Levi was right in making a great feast in his house.

The Parable of the Old and New Wine—5:36-39

In the old days wine was stored in "bottles" made from the skins of animals. This is only mentioned so the Lord's parable can be readily understood at the present time. Nobody would sew a piece of new cloth onto old cloth, He said, or put new wine into old bottles. The first would tear, the second would spill the wine. What is the force of these illustrations? What are we to learn from them?

In Chapter 5, we have the new wine the divine power of God operating in man. Previous to Christ's coming, old bottles contained the wine—that is, God's ways with man were confined in Judaism. But those bottles had grown old and brittle. God was about to discard this system. He had new wine ready. This new wine was seen in Simon Peter's house, in the house where the paralyzed man was healed, in the joy over God's ways with sinners in Levi's house. But the largeness of these new ways could not be confined in the old bottles of Judaism. New bottles were needed now, for God intended to bless the Gentiles. Alas, "no man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new, for he saith the old is better." That was how the scribes and Pharisees reacted to the new wine Christ brought— "the old is better." They preferred the old wine of Judaism with its dead ceremonies, even if under it a woman's fever remained, a leper's leprosy, a paralyzed man's paralysis. Such is man. Only grace has enabled the believer to drink new wine from new bottles. The unfolding of delivering grace to this world in the Son of Man cannot be confined to the narrow system of Judaism.

In spite of man's natural preference for anything and everything but Christ, God has seen to it that His Son is honored in this world. We are told that 60,000 books were written on the life of Jesus in the last century alone. (2) How true are the words on which John closes his gospel—"and there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written." John 21:25

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 1:1-4

Luke opens his gospel with the following brief preface "since many have undertaken to draw up a narrative concerning the matters fully believed among us, as those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses of and attendants on the Word have delivered them to us, it has seemed good to me also, accurately acquainted from the origin with all things, to write to thee with method, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things in which thou hast been instructed." These four verses tell us a great deal about Luke's purpose in writing his gospel.

A Consideration of Luke's Claim to Accurate Knowledge of the Events Recorded in His Gospel—1:1-4

The question of when the other gospels were written in relation to the gospel of Luke is one for scholars to debate. It is too remote for our purpose to be considered, except to remark that Luke is not referring to the other gospels when he mentions the many accounts of eye-witnesses of the life of Christ which circulated among early Christians. He merely notes their existence good attempts no doubt to record the facts concerning the life of Christ and probably well intentioned, for Luke does not censure them. Since many of these histories were in circulation in early days, Luke explains why he should write another one.

Luke claims that he was "accurately acquainted from the origin with all things." This is a claim which most modern commentators seem to have ignored. Consequently they become involved in controversies as to the sources Luke "drew upon" and end up in confusion. But Luke plainly states that he did not rely on the accounts of eye-witnesses or the writings of others, for he was "accurately acquainted from the origin with all things." Scripture does not disclose the source of his accurate knowledge. It would have been given to us if it contributed to godliness 2 Peter 1:3. But Luke's claim sets aside the verdict of some commentators that he drew on the testimony of eye-witnesses for his gospel. On the contrary it was the other writers who were eye-witnesses and who delivered their testimony "to us" that is to the Christian community. No doubt their works, now lost, comprised all the instruction Theophilus had until Luke wrote to him. But the time had come to replace them with a book inspired by the Holy Spirit that Theophilus might know the certainty of the things in which he had been instructed (1) Need we add that the inspiration of Luke's gospel was accepted in the Church from earliest times.

Luke's Gospel Does Not Contradict the Other Gospels but Is in Harmony With Them

As we have seen, Luke claims authoritative knowledge of the events about which he writes. Why then do we find discrepancies in his gospel compared with the other gospels? As we shall see the answer revolves around Luke's "method" as he calls it. Of course Luke is not the only evangelist accused of inaccuracies. But Luke is the man whose gospel we are about to consider, and an understanding of his guiding principle will throw a shaft of light on the whole question. Furthermore it will help the reader understand why we have generally avoided comparisons with events in other gospels in writing this book. This was not a rigid policy but a flexible one the general thinking being that once Luke's "method" is understood the mind is freed of occupation on trivia and rises into the thoughts God wants to communicate to us through the inspired writer.

First we will consider the principle underlying the variations in the gospels, which are intentional and not random. To illustrate this let us suppose that four men witness a car accident and are each asked to write a report on it. Let us further suppose that one man is an insurance adjuster, another an engineer, another a physician, and still another a newspaper reporter. Although it is the same accident each man is reporting, the specialized viewpoint of the different writers will show through in the arrangement of the facts and emphasis on certain details. The insurance adjuster will be concerned with the costs of the accident, the engineer with how well the materials in the car absorbed the shock of impact, the physician with the injuries to the people in the car, the newspaper reporter with the human tragedy of interest to the paper's readers. It is the same accident, but reported four different ways. If man is permitted to write like this, why not the four inspired evangelists? When critics scorn the gospels for variations in the presentation of events, they forget this principle. John, for example, has arranged the incidents concerning Christ so as to portray Him as the Son of God, and so superior to all His circumstances. Of the synoptic writers, Matthew has arranged everything to present Christ in a Jewish light as the promised Messiah. Mark writes about Christ as the Perfect Servant (note how frequently he uses the word `immediately' for example) and the historical order of events is largely found in his gospel. But

Luke takes up Christ as Son of Man with a universal moral presentation to Jew and Gentile. This is what we mean by calling Luke "the Son of Man gospel." "Son of Man" is Christ's title as the rejected One in this world but the Lord of the worlds to come. Luke's message, then, is universal. As a Greek, he writes to a Roman, but commences with things Jewish, for salvation is of the Jews.

Luke's "Method" Is the Moral Presentation of Events

Luke frequently records events out of their time setting. This is what Luke means by "with method." It is Luke's method. To Luke it is not chronological order but moral order which is paramount. He gives us a wide sphere of moral instruction not found in the other gospels. As to Christ, Luke presents Him as a divine character in the perfect sympathy of man, in personal human conflict and sufferings. He had all the tender feelings of a perfect Man, felt the insults and sufferings of sinners as a Man, but accepted all as from His Father's hand. As we read on in his gospel we appreciate more of Luke's method— an emphasis on moral things— the doing and teaching of Christ and the effect of all that on the lives of men. Luke also gives us the revelation of the Father's heart in an unique way in the story of the prodigal son at the same time exposing our own hearts, for that is the intent of divine moral instruction.

Luke Writes His Gospel to a Lone Individual— Theophilus

Christianity gives dignity to the individual. Christ journeyed to the well at Sychar to seek just one woman who was a sinner. Philip was called away from a great evangelical work to convert just one man— the Ethiopian Eunuch. But God does not end His work with us when we are converted. For Luke writes to just one man— Theophilus— to further his education in divine things. Again, the woman at Sychar's well told the men of the city about Christ and Samaria received a rich blessing; the Eunuch brought Christianity to Ethiopia, and Luke's communication to Theophilus interests us today while the civilizations which nurtured both of them have long since vanished.

Luke and Theophilus were both men of stature in the ancient world. Luke was a physician, and so almost by definition a man of compassion, eminently suited to pen the gospel of the Son of Man. He was a Greek and shared the Greek love of the sea and knowledge of nautical things as we see in his account of Paul's shipwreck. He was widely influenced by Paul and became his traveling companion, His writings, although inspired, mark him as a charming narrator of events. He constantly uses the phrase of a storyteller— "and it came to pass." Theophilus to whom he wrote both in his gospel and the Acts, was a Roman official of standing who had become a Christian. Luke addresses him by his official title "most excellent" in the gospel only. His Roman names are unknown— "Theophilus" —his baptismal name meaning "lover of God." Now picture Theophilus opening and reading this gospel. He finds that although Luke begins with Jewish things he progresses to things of greater interest to him as a Roman and the writer, a Greek. He would be impressed by the universal appeal of Luke's message— to Jew, Roman and Greek who comprised the ancient world in the Mediterranean basin. And he would be impressed by Luke's "method" of presenting the life of the Son of Man morally— so different from the histories of the eye-witnesses he had read before. They left him uncertain, no doubt, but not this manuscript from Luke.

Now let us, like Theophilus, turn to Luke for certain instruction on these matters.

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 18:35-43 - Luke 19

THE KING ENTERS HIS ROYAL CITY IN TRIUMPH

(Suggested Reading: Chapter 18:35-43 and Chapter 19)

The third section of Luke's Gospel opens with the thirty-fifth verse of the eighteenth chapter and continues on to the end. This section gives us the King going to Jerusalem to claim His Kingdom and, instead, being crucified by His subjects. Of course, the Lord knew all this, for in the second section of this gospel, we were given clear indications of the new and heavenly character of the Kingdom of God which should follow His rejection.

In introducing his third section, Luke takes us back to the basic principle he enunciated in the first section— that is, that he was writing "with method." Now Luke's "method" is to emphasize the moral rather than the historical side of things, so that you cannot find the correct order of events in this gospel. Here we have an excellent illustration of this in the story of the blind man receiving his sight. From the other gospels, we know that this happened historically when the Lord left Jericho. Here, except for a misleading translation in the King James' version, we are told that it happened in the general area of Jericho, without saying when. In this, Luke's "method" shines out. He makes the blind man act as the herald of the King, announcing that He is David's son. Then, unbroken by the story of the blind man, he gives us an uninterrupted outline of the two comings of the King. In His first coming it is in grace the— story of Zacchaeus; in His second coming— not for the Church, which is not in question here— but to take His earthly Kingdom, the King rewards His faithful servants and punishes His enemies.

The rest of the chapter is His triumphant approach to Jerusalem and His weeping over the city for the woes soon to come upon it for rejecting its King.

The Blind Man Heralds the Coming of Israel's King—18:35-43

The blind man is a figure of Israel, blind to the glory of Christ— seeing in Him not their Messiah, but just another teacher or prophet. Not until the coming day, when they cry to Him for mercy and acknowledge Him as the Son of David, will they receive their sight. The cry "Son of David" is needful for Israel for their great sin is rejecting Him as the lawful King— the only one entitled to sit on David's throne.

But in the actual story, the blind man is more a herald paving the way for the King by crying out "Thou Son of David." The Lord gives him back his sight, showing that his faith in Him was not misplaced, for "the Lord openeth the eyes of the blind" Psa. 146:8. "And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

The First Coming of Israel's King Characterized by Grace in the Story of Zacchaeus—19:1-10

If Luke's Gospel records the story of a rich man in hell, it also records the story of a rich man assured of being in heaven from the Lord's own lips. Zacchaeus is an example of a child of God in a false position. He was a tax-gatherer for the Roman occupying power. These men thought nothing of putting money into their own pockets which they squeezed from their fellow citizens on top of the Roman tax levies. In the eyes of the Jews, Zacchaeus was an extortionist because they saw him as a member of a class. But we are told "judge not according to the appearance but judge righteous judgment" John 7:24. The Lord saw the good deeds Zacchaeus did too, although He neither praised him for them nor condemned him as occupying a false position.

The beautiful thing about Zacchaeus was that He loved Christ. This is what God values. Jesus has come to His own town, Jericho. This is variously known in Scripture as the city of palm trees 2 Chron. 28:15 that is, a picture of the world in its attractiveness— and the city of the curse Josh. 6:26 the world as a place subject to God's judgment for crucifying His Son. Jesus stood still at Jericho 18:40 a fact more amazing than the sun standing still. Here He had once blessed Rahab the harlot— here Zacchaeus the publican and the blind man. Zacchaeus and the blind man had this much in common— they wanted to see Jesus. Zacchaeus had eyes, of course, but was a short man and could not see because the people in the crowd were taller than he. Never let the crowd keep you away from Christ. The crowd tried to keep the blind man from seeing Christ as he sat by the road asking for mercy. It would keep Zacchaeus from seeing Christ just by its presence. But Zacchaeus found out the route the Lord was traveling, ran ahead, climbed up a tree and waited for Him to walk by. The Lord knew about this. When He came to the tree where Zacchaeus was, He told him to hurry up and come down, for today He MUST stay at his house. Normally we do not invite ourselves to another man's house, but this is the Lord of glory, Who not only made Zacchaeus but was to die to redeem him. He is as much entitled to Zacchaeus' house as to the man's donkey on which He sat 19:29-38.

Zacchaeus received Christ joyfully. Doesn't this remind us of the incident in the fifteenth chapter, "this Man receives sinners, and eats with them." And all because, like Zacchaeus, they received Christ joyfully. This joy on earth was echoed in heaven, for "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner who repents" 15:7. Well, Zacchaeus was one sinner who repented, even though he told the Lord about his good deeds. In the fifteenth chapter, it was the Pharisees and scribes who murmured about the Lord dining with the publicans and sinners— here, it is the crowd. In this third section of Luke, both are to unite against Christ.

Does the Lord care about the murmuring of the crowd when He goes to Zacchaeus' house? No, because He is God's King, not man's King. A President is sensitive to public opinion. He knows that his time in office depends on what the voters think of his administration. Not so with Christ. He extends the royal scepter to whom He will— in this case, a publican. Zacchaeus, the rich man of the nineteenth chapter, is the last man called a sinner in Luke's Gospel, and salvation comes to his house. The "woman in the city" of the seventh chapter, is the first one called a sinner in Luke's Gospel, and she hears the Lord say, "your sins are forgiven... your faith has saved you." Never let us forget that faith and salvation go together. So do obedience and happiness in Christian life.

The Second Coming of Israel's King (to Receive His Earthly Kingdom, Reward His Servants, and Punish His Enemies)—19:11-27

Whenever Christians think of the second coming of Christ, they think of His coming to rapture the Church to eternal glory. It is well that they do, for it is our blessed hope. But when the Church is in glory with Christ, God commences His judgments on the earth— which are given to us in the Book of Revelation. These will subdue Christ's enemies and the kingdoms of this world will become the world kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Then He will reward His people for faithful service while He was the rejected King, and punish His enemies. Now see how Luke has tied the whole narrative together— on Christ's first advent as King— grace, as shown to Zacchaeus— on Christ's second advent righteous judgment on adversaries. Now we will examine the details.

The Lord had begun His entry by Jericho to visit His royal city Jerusalem, accompanied by the crowd. He was the True Son of David, and the crowd thought that He was about to display His royal glory in the world, establish the promised kingdom and expel their enemies. This is the meaning of the eleventh verse. Instead, the kingdom was to be deferred because Jerusalem was about to disown its King. For this reason, the Lord compared Himself to "a certain nobleman" in a parable.

The certain nobleman went into "a far country [heaven] to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return." This indicates clearly that the earthly kingdom was to be deferred until He returned. He entrusted His money— ten minas to ten servants— a mina apiece— and instructed them to "trade until I come." The money speaks of Christ's goods— divine things in general— which each one of us is responsible to use for Him until He comes back. Ten always speaks of responsibility, e.g., the Ten Commandments. Then a new class is introduced: not His servants (us), but His citizens (the Jews). His citizens hated Him and sent an embassy after Him. "After him" means after He has returned to heaven— "the far country— "by way of the Cross where they showed their hatred. The message was "we will not have this Man to reign over us." They delivered this message by stoning Stephen, who saw the heaven opened and testified to them that their King was in glory. So they sealed their sin by rejecting their King in heaven as well as on earth. Now let us see what happens to the two classes the servants with their money, and the citizens who rejected their King— when the King returns from heaven to claim His kingdom on earth.

All the servants appear before the King to give an account of their stewardship. Even so must we appear before Christ to receive reward or blame for our responsible pathway while He was absent. The first servant was a good investor— his Lord's mina had gained ten minas. The most blessed reward he gets is the Lord's commendation: "Well, thou good servant." Then he is given charge of ten cities, corresponding to the increase he brought to his master's wealth. Christian— note this carefully— all rewards for service to Christ are in connection with Christ's earthly kingdom. A city is a system of administration and the rewards for faithfulness here are administrative offices in the kingdom when Christ's glory is publicly displayed. Now it is true that these administrative positions will be exercised through the Church, as we see in Rev. 21, but that is not the point here. Luke is moral and the question of our individual faithfulness is considered here. The next servant receives five cities— excellent— but not the personal commendation of the first servant. The third servant receives the Lord's rebuke. Not only had he not traded with his mina, but he had been too lazy even to deposit it in the bank and get interest. So it is taken from him and given to the man who had given his Lord ten minas of profit.

Next, Christ's enemies are disposed of. Matthew gives us more details than Luke. "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and those who do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire" Matt. 13:41,42. Luke presents their judgment from a moral viewpoint. The reason they are to be brought before the King and slain is exposed— their will was opposed to the grace of God.

They "would not that I should reign over them." "Bring them here and slay them before Me" are the words they must hear because they stopped their ears to the Father's words, "bring the fatted calf and kill it" 15:23. The killing of the fatted calf is the death of Christ. They must be put to death for refusing Christ's death for them.

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Before closing off this section, we need a word of cheer for the discouraging days in which we live. You hear Christians complain that this is a day of small things— cold, dead formalism has taken over, and so on. But the Lord hasn't changed and we must not lose our first love for Him. It is only two years from the time of writing since my old friend, C. B. Jewell, departed to be with Christ, which is far better. After retirement, when most men decide to take things easy, this man dedicated himself to the work of tract distribution in England. As one who supplied him with many tracts, I found his zeal a source of encouragement. Those who received his tracts came from all walks of life and some sent letters of thanks to me. A nurse would write in, "a little old man gave me a tract on the beach. I am a Christian and would like to serve the Lord this way, too." He visited hospitals and on one occasion a patient broke down and cried when he told him of the Lord's love, later accepting Him as Savior. In London he worked at subway stations. Once he boarded a train and handed a tract to a man from my hometown. This man read the tract sitting down, and was astonished to find he needed to be born again. He thought he was a Christian because he was born in "a Christian country," as he called Canada, not knowing there is no such thing. And so, from early morning to late at night, C. B. Jewell labored without pay at his own expense. It was through him giving out tracts to some Indians at a bus stop that my Indian tract ministry started. One of them mailed a tract to Dr. D. Gnanabaranam of Madurai, who wrote me for permission to translate it into Tamil. Later I received a few copies of the tract in Tamil and sent one to Mr. Jewell. One day, Mr. Jewell's young co-worker met an Indian student from Ceylon who wished to be directed to a Christian church or chapel. He was invited to Mr. Jewell's home for tea. On discovering that his own language was Tamil, he was given the gospel tract newly translated into that language. This man returned to Ceylon a Christian, even though he did not entirely shake off his Buddhist training. And so Mr. Jewell labored on and on until his strength failed. Then, in His own good time, the Lord took His old servant home. His son visited him and had a word of prayer. Shortly afterward he fell asleep in Jesus without a struggle. Such are the servants, unknown to man but known to God, who shall be over cities when Christ sets up His earthly kingdom.

The Triumphal Entry of Jerusalem—19:27-48

The Lord now ascends up to Jerusalem, where He will receive a Cross, not a kingdom, although His title to the kingdom will be acknowledged in writing over His Cross. Knowing this, the Lord does not ride a white horse— the symbol of imperial triumph to ancient eyes. When He comes in triumph at a later day as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He will ride a white horse Rev. 19:11-16. But now He sits upon a donkey. The scene described by Luke exactly fulfills the prophecy "rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold thy King cometh unto thee. He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" Zech. 9:9.

As the King approached His royal city, those who accept and reject His claims are brought into focus. First we see His claims over His creation acknowledged. The cattle in the thousand hills are His and it is enough to say "the Lord needs him" and the owners release the colt. The colt has never been broken in it was tied (v. 30) but, contrary to nature, it carries the Lord gently. Then the disciples burst forth into praise, fulfilling Psa. 118:26, "blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." They cry out "peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." This cry, "peace in heaven" at the end is in marked contrast to the angels' cry at the beginning, "glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" 2:14. As soon as the disciples cry "peace in heaven," the Pharisees turn to Christ and ask Him to rebuke them. This is the last mention of the Pharisees in Luke. From now on, they will merge into the general opposition of the religious classes to the King. So there will be peace in heaven now rather than on earth. Man does not want the Prince of Peace on earth, but will send Him to heaven by crucifying Him. The result will be war, not peace, on earth.

The Lord prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem, then, in the coming war with the Romans. This destruction was literally fulfilled forty years later when the Roman armies besieged the city and enacted the most frightful carnage in the long annals of warfare until modern times. The Lord had said that if His disciples did not cry out and praise Him, the stones would. Not one stone in Jerusalem should be left upon another, because the city would not acknowledge Him. The Lord weeps at the prospect. He goes into the Temple already doomed by His sentence, and casts out those who defiled it by their avariciousness. Then He teaches daily in the Temple. The people hear Him gladly, but the religious leaders plot His death. They cannot touch Him until the Passover, when He will fulfill the type of the Passover Lamb sheltering all God's people from the judgment of their sins. God is the Judge of sinners but He is also the One Who said, "when I see the blood I will pass over you.”

The Lord's entry into Jerusalem and His death there fulfilled a striking prophecy in the Book of Daniel: "seventy weeks are apportioned out upon the people and upon thy holy city, to close the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make expiation for iniquity and to bring in the righteousness of the ages and to seal the vision and prophet and to anoint the holy of holies. Know therefore and understand. From the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince are seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. The street and the moat shall be built again, even in troublous times. And after the sixty-two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and shall have nothing and the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary and the end thereof shall be with an overflow and unto the end war the desolations determined" Dan. 9:24-26. This prophecy relates solely to the Jewish people, their Messiah and Jerusalem "thy people," "Messiah the Prince," "thy holy city" and a measurement of time connecting these things together. The entire period of time is seventy weeks, but one week is unfulfilled and need not concern us here.

The sixty-nine weeks are broken down into two periods seven weeks to rebuild Jerusalem and sixty-two weeks until Christ entered Jerusalem and was crucified. Each week represents seven years, so that Christ is clearly shown to be Messiah the Prince. In B.C. 455, Artaxerxes Longimanus, a Persian monarch, issued an order to restore and build Jerusalem. Nehemiah undertook this work which occupied seven weeks— that is, forty-nine years. Then sixty-two weeks elapsed after this event, i.e., 62 x 7, or 434 years until Messiah was cut off. This gives us a total of 483 years. The difference between B.C. 455, when the command to rebuild the city was given, and these 483 subsequent years, gives us the exact year in which Christ entered His royal city to be rejected and crucified.1 As punishment for this crime, "the people of the Prince that shall come"— that is, the Roman people -would destroy both Jerusalem and its Temple. That is why the Lord wept over Jerusalem, for He knew that He was about to be cut off as Messiah and have nothing. If they would not have their King, they, too, must have nothing and become a heap of ruins.

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 18:9-32

THE MORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

(Suggested Reading: Chapter 18:9-34)

What are the moral characteristics of the Kingdom of God? This is the great question taken up and answered here. The self-righteous Jew thought he knew. His life, as a man under law, self-importance, wealth as a mark of God's favor, the present enjoyment of material things in the land of promise. But the King is the only One Who has the right to legislate on this point not His subjects, real or pretended. So the Lord points out the great moral features suited or opposed to the Kingdom during the day of grace. Because those who claimed to be His subjects were unwilling to deviate from their own ideas of what the Kingdom should be like, the Lord unfolds the truth gently— first, in the form of a parable, next, in an incident, and finally, in direct instruction to His own.

The Parable of the Pharisee and Publican—18:9-14

In the parable, two men went up into the Temple to pray—one a Pharisee, the other a tax-gatherer. Both men stand to pray, but the word used to describe the Pharisee standing denotes a formal stance in addressing God. He is full of himself. "I thank Thee." "I am not as other men." "I fast twice in the week." "I give tithes." "I possess." He acknowledges God, but not his distance from Him. Instead of comparing himself with God, he compares himself with other men whose sins, he reminds God, are in marked contrast to his own virtuous, religious life. In so saying, he unmasks his own sins: pride, hatred, and contempt for other men more hateful to God than the carnal sins of others. No wonder that "he prayed thus with himself." God will note such a prayer, as the Lord did here, but will not answer it.

The prayer of the tax-gatherer is short and to the point. He starts with God, like the Pharisee, but immediately asks for mercy, ending quickly with the unpalatable admission that he is a sinner. Unlike the Pharisee, who ended by telling God that he gave tithes of all he possessed, the tax-gatherer, who probably possessed more, admits that he could really give God nothing. How can a sinner give God anything? On the contrary, he pleads with God to give him what he needs so badly— mercy. He beats his breast, hoping that God will hear his entreaty. And Jesus did, saying, "I tell you this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other." This has nothing to do with Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. At this point, the cross is future and Paul nowhere in sight. It simply tells us that the tax-gatherer was justified, not the Pharisee, for his prayer in the Temple. The Lord follows this statement with one of the great principles in the Bible— "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The tax-gatherer "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven"; the rich man lifted them up in hell. The tax-gatherer had humbled himself and the Lord exalted him; the rich man had exalted himself and God had humbled him.

Believers should beware of the spirit of the Pharisee and not think that they are immune to it. An old Christian man, confined to his house, used to ask me for tracts. His neighbor gave him newspapers with people's names, and the old man got great joy from mailing out tracts to them. It was the one thing left that he could still do for the Lord. One day, an astonishing letter was received. A Christian lady was most indignant that a tract was mailed to her. "I'm a born-again believer," she complained. "Our family gives tithes to the Lord's work." Then she concluded, "Besides, tracts shouldn't be mailed. They should only be given out personally." However, there is no indication that she went up to the Temple to pray.

The Confiding Trust of Little Children— the Believer's True Place—18:15-17

The tax-gatherer admitted his lowliness by confessing his sinfulness; little children are not even conscious of their lowliness.

Theirs is the lowliness of insignificance, but confiding trust. The disciples oppose the little children coming to the Lord, showing how slowly they were absorbing His teachings, and why He has to instruct them directly at the end.

The Rich Young Ruler and the Lord—18:18-27

People who travel greatly, see the ruins of great buildings erected by vanished civilizations and with a little imagination can visualize them in their former glory. So it is with man. The fall left him in ruin. Still, in some men we see not good, as the Lord teaches here, but suggestions of man's distant origin from the hand of God. Here is a man who naturally has every advantage. He is rich; he has lived a morally good life under the law. He is a ruler and seeks to improve his life, perhaps that he may rule more justly. Furthermore, he is young, not old, and can enjoy his position and the riches it probably produced, to the full— not wait for gratification until he is older. However, when he approaches the Lord, his questioning about eternal life clearly reveals his groping for something. He cannot maintain his position or hold onto his riches forever, since every man is born to die. Yet he has no sense of personal distance from God, of ruin, of sin.

The two great mistakes of this young man were failing to recognize in Jesus a divine Person, a Savior of sinners, and his own need of salvation. Instead, he approached Christ as man might Ghandi or Confucius, for ethical instruction. Well did the Lord feel the insult to His Person. He concealed it admirably, yet exposed the young ruler's error. He had called the Lord "Good teacher," and so the Lord takes the young man up on his own ground. "Why callest thou Me good?" means "if you think I am only a man like other men why do you call Me 'good teacher' for man is not good at all?" Since the ruler could not respond to such doctrine any more than the Pharisee who prayed in the Temple, the Lord tests him with the law. He is proud to reply that he has kept the commandments from his youth. But he lacked one thing: "sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me.”

If he did that, he would not only lose his wealth, but his position as a ruler. He couldn't rule and follow a King who wasn't allowed to rule. But he would be fully recompensed with treasure in heaven. How this teaching reaches the foundation of our beings! Place yourself in the position of this man. What would your answer be? His answer is given us: "and when he heard this he was very sorrowful, for he was very rich." He is in contrast to Zacchaeus in the following chapter, another rich man, who received the Lord joyfully. Still, one hopes to meet the young ruler in heaven. He will not have treasure there unless he finally obeyed, of which there is no indication. The Lord did not say that a camel could not go through the low gate called "a needle's eye" here, but indicates how difficult it was. Zacchaeus proved it could be done. Just as the disciples were unprepared for the Lord's teaching on entering the Kingdom as little children, so they were not ready for the teaching the Lord gave to the rich young ruler. The Lord must now give them direct instruction.

The Lord Reveals His Death and Resurrection to His Own—18:28-34

Peter was always the leader among the disciples. He reminds the Lord that if the rich young ruler was fearful of leaving his riches to follow Christ, the disciples weren't. After all, he had left a prosperous fishing business, Matthew his tax revenues, etc. The Lord's answer is an indirect reply to the lack of confidence in God displayed by the young ruler. He states that those who left all for Christ, would receive eternal life in the world to come. That was what the young ruler wanted when he approached Christ. But he was afraid to reach out for it, fearing he wouldn't be taken care of in this life if he forsook his riches. So the Lord covers this point, too. God would see to it that those who gave up temporary advantage for Christ, would receive "manifold more at this time." How? Simply that God moves the hearts of His people to open up their houses and treasures to take care of His servants' needs.

Now the Lord never taught others what He did not practice Himself. He began "to do and to teach." He was the rich Man, far richer than the rich young ruler, yet for our sakes, He became poor see I 1 Cor. 8:9. So poor in fact, that He had to say, "show Me a penny," for He didn't have one. He "sold all that He had" Matt. 13:46 and in this way, secured "the pearl of great price"— the Church— His "treasure in heaven" Rev. 21:21. Then, too, He was the Man Who truly humbled Himself. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" Phil. 2:8. But He had taught that "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." So, when He told the disciples of His death, He also told them of His resurrection, for He was to be raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. But the disciples "understood none of these things... neither knew they the things which were spoken." This is the key to why much of the Bible is not understood by believers. The will is working, not obedience to "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

The disciples clung to their Jewish prejudices and hopes of an earthly kingdom. Believers today approach the Bible and take from it what pleases them, forgetting that Scripture is a unity. Not all believers. Some. Those who "understood none of these things.”

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 16:11-31 - Luke 17 - Luke 18:1-8

THE KINGDOM OF GOD PRESENT AMONG MEN

(Suggested Reading: Chapter 17:11-37 and Chapter 18:1-8)

In her book, The End of the Bible, Mrs. J. S. Oliphant tells of a question directed to Moses Mendelssohn— "When will the Jews become Christians?" His reply was "When the Christians cease to be Jews." (8) What truth there was in this rejoinder! I recall a Christian woman saying, "he's such a godly man— he's worth a million dollars"— all in one breath. Another man boasted to me how the Lord had blessed him— by which he meant the size of his bank account. This is all Jewish, and not Christianity at all. Wealth was a sign of God's favor to a Jew, but the Christian is blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" Eph. 1:3. When the Lord unfolded the new principles of the kingdom, they came as a distinct shock to the Jews. A beggar in Abraham's bosom! A rich man in hell! They forgot that they had rejected the King when He was present so that He could not introduce a visible kingdom with earthly possessions and glory. The Kingdom of God must take a temporary form— it must become moral— with the publicly displayed kingdom postponed till a new thing the Church should come and go on and from the earth. In the meantime, the key thought in this chapter is "behold the kingdom of God is within you." "Within you" meant present where Christ then was, as well as inside those who recognized the kingdom as divine power working in and through Christ. So they were not to look for it here or there— for to do so would be to deny that the King was present. This chapter largely centers around this theme.

The Healing of the Ten Lepers—17:11-19

The healing of the ten lepers tells us of the presence of the Kingdom of God among men, because the King— Jehovah Himself— was present. It also brings into sharp focus the contrasting principles of law and grace— the former now receding because the King has been rejected, the latter now emerging as the new principle in God's dealings with man. God, now manifest in the flesh, had taken up "the law of the leper" in Lev. 13 and 14. He had provided an elaborate ritual for the cleansing of the leper and his re-admission to the camp. The leper is a figure of the sinner. He had to go outside the camp and cry "unclean, unclean," so other people would not be contaminated. His clothes must be torn so his leprosy couldn't be hidden— and his head bare— no shelter from divine wrath. In the day of his cleansing, he was to be brought to the priest.

The ten lepers here were nine Jews and one Samaritan. Now the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans John 4:9. To humble them, therefore, all alike contracted leprosy. The meaning of the incident illustrates the characteristic teaching of Christianity— "there is none righteous, no not one" Rom. 3:10. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" Rom. 3:23. The ten lepers stood far away from Christ, as sinners must, whether they are Jews or Gentile Samaritans. They all cried, "Jesus Master have mercy on us." It was not really the cry of faith, but of despair, of pleading. Still the Scripture tells us He is a God of mercy.

So the God who laid down the law of the leper tells them to conform to His own law. Jesus' answer was, "go show yourselves to the priests." But you say the leper could only do that if he were clean. Exactly. That is why Luke writes "as they went, they were cleansed." Obedience to the voice of Christ is what cleanses man of leprosy (sin). When the Samaritan saw that he was cleansed, he also saw who did it. Only God can cleanse a leper. So he turned back to Christ, the source of power, and with a loud voice glorified God. Then he fell down on his face at Jesus' feet and thanked Him. The Lord immediately rebuked the nine who did not return to give glory to God. They were content to return to externals, whereas this man wanted reality. The Levitical cleansing rite looked forward to Christ and His work. Now that He was present, the shadow of things must recede. Great principles emerge here— for the Jew, retention of the law and rejection of Christ; for the Gentile, "thy faith hath made thee whole." Martin Luther rediscovered this truth after the Judaizing of Christianity had returned men to the works of the law. While he was doing penance trudging up steps on his knees, the Scripture came to him "the just shall live by faith." He got up and walked down.

How God Will Eventually Establish the Kingdom of God in the World in Power—a Brief Explanation

A good teacher never teaches his students more than they can absorb at one time. He builds slowly on what he taught them previously, until gradually the subject he is teaching is clearly understood. The Lord is the Master Teacher. The great subject in which He was instructing His

disciples was the Kingdom of God. They were poor students because, being Jews, they only looked at those Scriptures which spoke of Messiah dealing with their enemies in power and setting up a visible kingdom in Israel which would then be the center of glory and government in the earth. They ignored such Scriptures as the 53rd of Isaiah, which spoke of a suffering Messiah. Little did they think that God was about to set up a new thing on— earth the Church— whose tenure on earth has already spanned nearly two thousand years— and that only after the second coming of Christ for the Church would God start to work to set up the Kingdom of God in power. In the meantime, the Kingdom of God would be moral. It would be entered by the new birth John 3. Those who were born again would acknowledge the moral rule of Christ, the rejected King in their lives. Even the Apostles were not ready for such teaching.

So the Lord unfolded only parts of it now, and those parts in easy steps. In Chapter 12, He pointed out the great principles of faith while the King was absent. In Chapter 13, He told them about the government of the earth— of Israel— and of the outward form the Kingdom should take— the great mustard tree, etc. —while the King was absent. Then He showed them that the revelation of the Father's heart— the story of the prodigal son— Chapter 15 was the key to the Kingdom in its spiritual form— "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" from. 14:17. Next, in Chapter 16, He reveals a rich man in hell, a poor man in Abraham's bosom— a complete reversal of things to the Jew, who thought of God's blessing as being material riches. Now in Chapter 17, He heals ten lepers. This proves He is the King present in power. The next lesson is how the Kingdom will finally be established in the world in power. It is not a question of denying the Old Testament Scriptures which speak of that, but of when and how. The Pharisees ask the question "when?" and are only told that the Kingdom of God was present. They needed this instruction, for they were not acknowledging the King. The disciples are separately instructed as to how the Kingdom shall be established that is, by judgment. No curious particulars are given as to how the judgment will fall these are found in prophetic books, such as Revelation. But we are let into the great moral teaching that the world will be purified by the fire of God's judgment preparatory to the setting up of the Kingdom in the world.

The Coming of the Son of Man—17:22-37; 18:1-8

The Lord moves gradually into this final question of how the Kingdom of God shall be established in the world in power. He says "the days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it." In plain language, He is about to leave this world and they will look back longingly to the days when He walked with them, but will be unable to bring them back. He repeats His warning to the Pharisees (v. 21) as to false Christ’s. He knew that warning would fall on deaf ears, but to His own He says, "go not after them, nor follow them." The Son of Man was as the lightning. A brief momentary flash of lightning opens up the night sky revealing the whole countryside in a moment. Then it is gone. The darkness returns, but we remember what was there.

The Lord must "suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." "This generation" means more than the physical generation of the Lord's time. "This generation" is the generation of unbelief— "the seed of the serpent" which will be found when Christ comes back— not for the Church, but as the Judge of the living who reject Him and would resist the establishment of His Kingdom.

The Lord gives two illustrations of the conditions which will prevail in Israel when His judgment falls on it. It shall be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot. The world of Noah's day was destroyed by water; Lot's world was Sodom and it was destroyed by fire. Complete judgment then— in the figures of floods of water and fire from heaven await the Jews who have returned to Israel after nearly two thousand years of unbelief and who remain that way. They are enjoying themselves— eating, drinking, marrying— and going in for this life as though there was no other buying, selling, planting, building. God will visit them with discriminating judgment v. 34, 35 just as He preserved Noah and his house and Lot. Let the godly in that day beware of the example of Lot's wife who looked back, for "whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it." This puzzles the disciples, who ask Him, "where, Lord?" His reply is "where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together." Without satisfying their idle curiosity, the Lord reveals that the executors of God's judgment will swoop down on those, be they men or women, who are moral carcasses. The judgment is discriminating in character with God's true people untouched. They will be spared to enter the world kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

God Will Avenge His Suffering People—18:1-8

The first eight verses of the eighteenth chapter carry on and bring to a conclusion the Lord's teaching we have just been considering— "and He spake a parable unto them to this end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." The unjust judge in the parable would not render justice to a poor widow until she kept coming back to him and annoying him. To get rid of her and have some peace, he gave her what she wanted.

The meaning of the parable relates to the closing events when God's judgments are in the earth just prior to the introduction of the millennium— the Kingdom of God in power. The godly Jews in that day will be outnumbered by their wicked brethren. They will be only a remnant of the nation. Persecuted and helpless— their adversary is the Antichrist— they are compared to a widow who is the picture of complete helplessness. Their only recourse is to go to God in prayer as a righteous Judge. In the parable the figure of an unrighteous judge is given to show that if an unrighteous judge finally takes action when petitioned endlessly, will not God the righteous Judge do more so? The whole is Jewish for the widow pleads for vengeance, as the Jews will. Christians are to forgive and pray for their enemies. Still there seems to be no answer to the prayers of the godly Jews in that coming day. The heavens are as brass to their entreaties. This is because Israel must pass through "the time of Jacob's trouble" Jer. 30:7. Not until Jerusalem has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins Isa. 40:2 can God avenge Israel. Then the eagles will gather together to feast on the bodies 17:37. Although the Lord says this vengeance will be executed speedily, the godly remnant do not think so. Their prayers are in bitterness of spirit, something wrung out of them. Their anguish is given to us in some of the Psalms which has been called "the Book of Common Prayer" of the godly Jews of the future. That is why the Lord says, "when the Son of Man cometh"— not for the Church, but to avenge the godly Jews— "shall he find faith on the earth?”

May He find it now. May our prayers ascend to God at the throne of grace. While the above interpretation is the primary one, we must never forget that Luke is moral and the admonition at the opening of Luke 18 is for us, too. We are always to pray and not to faint.

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 16:19-31

THE RICH MAN IN HADES —

THE REVELATION OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

PART 1

The Apostle Paul tells us that "by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death, and thus death passed upon all men, for all have sinned" Rom. 5:12. God pronounced a judgment on man's body when sin entered the world— "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return" Gen. 3:19. However, God said nothing about man's soul, because He promised One who should redeem it— the woman's seed— that is, Christ.

In the great time interval between man's sin in the garden and Christ's appearance on earth, the Gentiles turned to speculation on what followed the grave. Their funeral customs suggest dread of an after-life. The practice of cremating the body may have grown out of a despairing hope to avoid a future judgment. Vain thought, if such were the case. Man is animated dust. And God commanded the complete return of the body to the dust out of which He formed it— not merely to corruption in the grave or destruction in the belly of a wild animal or sea fish— but a return to dust— the unformed state— however this might occur. Cremation speeds up the process, but the end result is the same. Men generally do not succumb to the idea of annihilation. They know they differ from the beast which perishes. No beast can plan a city, design an airplane, build a bridge. And so we find the early and partial acceptance of two other principles: the unending existence of man, and his accountability to a higher power. The Egyptians built soul boats for their Pharaohs and great pyramids. On the walls of their tombs can be seen a god weighing the heart of the deceased to see whether good or evil prevailed in his life. This is the legal principle man loves, and betrays ignorance of God.

As for the Jews, who boasted in their knowledge of God, we do not find darkness like the Gentiles, but rather obscurity. Jacob, for example, speaks of his gray hairs going down with sorrow to Sheol, which simply means the grave, or the pit. It is the Hades of the New Testament— the state or place of the departed. The Hebrews also spoke of "Tophet" 2 Kings 23:10, Isa. 30:33, and Jer. 19:13. This seems to be the same as "Gehenna"— hell— the place of eternal punishment, which the Apostle John calls "the lake of fire" Rev. 20:11-15. Gehenna, which means "valley of Hinnon," was the place where the Jews passed their children through the fire to heathen gods. A continual fire made it a suited figure of the eternal punishment of the wicked. The Old Testament saints looked for redemption by the coming Messiah from the judgment which would fall on all men apart from that. So they had a hope which the Gentiles lacked, but little real light on the state of the soul after death.

It was not until Christ, the Redeemer God had promised man in the Garden of Eden, had appeared and been rejected, that God revealed to man his eternal destiny— for glory or despair.

The Setting of the Divine Revelation of the State of the Soul After Death

When the Pharisees murmured because the Lord ate with sinners, He revealed to them in the story of the prodigal son why He did so— that is, that God was now dealing with man in grace, not law. When they ignored this revelation and murmured again at the Lord's words— the stage was set for a further and final revelation— that if man refuses God's dealings with him in grace, he must face a future and eternal judgment on his soul.

The time was now ripe for this fresh revelation. The Pharisees had overheard the words of the Lord to His disciples. They were wise in the ways of this world and we may be sure that they silently approved the actions of the fraudulent trustee of whom the Lord spoke. The world values a man for his money— God for his soul. The Pharisees derided the Lord for teaching that we should invest earthly riches so as to promote God's work in this world, awaiting our dividends, so to speak, in heaven. If we fail to do so, how can heaven entrust us with the true riches? While this teaching was a blow to the Pharisees, who were covetous, it was as nothing compared to the final warning they so richly merited and now received. This was the unveiling of another world— of the punishment awaiting those who reject God's salvation in life when they die. Up to this point in the history of the human race, God had little to say about the fate of the soul after death. But now it is appropriate to pull back the curtain and reveal an unseen world. They have derided the only Savior God has for man. For this reason, wrath from heaven is revealed.

Where Are the Dead?

The Certain Answer of Divine Revelation

In the story of Lazarus and the rich man, the Lord establishes the principle of a separation between those whom God has justified and those who die in their sins— "between us and you a great chasm is fixed, so that those who desire to pass hence to you cannot, nor do they who [desire to cross] from there pass over unto us" 16:26. The condition of those on either side of the great fixed chasm is completely opposite. The rich man is "in hades," where he lifts up his eyes, being in torments. Lazarus, on the other hand, is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. This was the strongest figure, to a Jew, of acceptance and delight. Then, on the cross, the Lord turned to the dying thief and used an even stronger expression— "today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Paradise was man's home in the beginning. He lost it through sin, but it was in that earthly paradise that God gave the promise of the coming Redeemer. Now redeemed man is to enter a heavenly paradise when he dies. But what would paradise be without Christ, our Redeemer? He tells us through His Apostle Paul of our crowning joy— that Christ is there. Paul wanted "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" Phil. 1:23. Thus, the Lord, in ever-widening circles, unfolds the blessedness which awaits those who fall asleep in Jesus before the resurrection morn— "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" Rev. 14:13. Little is told us about the state of the lost after death, except for the story of Lazarus and the rich man, until we come to the end of the Bible. In the twentieth chapter of Revelation we are given a brief glance at the awful and eternal doom of the lost.

After This Life— Either Dwelling in the House of the Lord.

Forever—Or Eternal Separation From God

God's righteousness, as made known in the law, consisted of two great principles— giving God what was His due, and the creature what was the creature's due-see Matt. 22:35-40. The rich man committed the lesser sin— sinning against the creature, that is, Lazarus— yet ended up

in Hades; the prodigal committed the greater sin— sinning against God— yet ended up in the Father's House. So a new principle is established: righteousness not based on law— for man could not keep the law— but on grace. The whole Trinity is actively engaged in man's salvation, based on this new principle. The lost sheep found by the Good Shepherd speaks of Christ's work on the cross, for without that He could never seek a lost sheep. Next, the woman with the broom and light is the Holy Spirit in energy seeking the lost and bringing the light of the gospel into man's darkened soul. This makes the prodigal realize his true condition. He exclaims, "Father I have sinned." So he returns and God the Father gives him His kisses at the beginning, His House at the end. The rich man is the lost sheep who was never found. Luke takes up the prodigal's case before the rich man's, because the prodigal sinned against God. His sins, therefore, were greater than the rich man's. When it is proved that God can forgive the prodigal's sins, the rich man has no excuse.

The rich man in our story is the opposite of the prodigal. He is a picture of the man who is a success in "the far country," as the prodigal is a picture of a failure. The prodigal lost everything in life; the rich man everything in death. The prodigal squandered his father's substance on harlots; the rich man on himself. The prodigal asked his father for "the share of property"; the rich man took it. And so Abraham— who speaks of the justifying principle— see Rom. 4— tells the rich man he had received in his life all he was going to get.

The rich man was not received into the houses of others, be, cause, unlike the unjust trustee, he made no provision for the future. He provided only for the present, like the prodigal at first. But the prodigal returned to his father, who saw him a great way off. The rich man never returned. After death, he saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom a great way off. After death, the mask the sinner wore in life comes off. There is reality then— a realization that "I am in hell"— a seeking, too late— the God who in life had been seeking them, hoping they would return. Now it is too late. The great gulf that existed between God and them in life has jelled in death. They are not only lost now, but forsaken. The rich man took three downward steps— first, "the rich man also died"— second, "and was buried"— third, "and in hades lifted up his eyes." Thus, the man who exalted himself was abased. The prodigal, on the other hand, humbled himself. First, he said, "I will arise"; second, "and go unto my father"; third, "and say unto him father I have sinned." This was the man whom the father exalted, restoring him to his place as a son in his father's house.

Why the Rich Man Lost His Soul

Possibly, the rich man was known to the Pharisees whom the Lord addressed, and Lazarus, too... "there was also a certain beggar." The rich man may even have been a Pharisee, for they were covetous. In any case, he died. So, too, did the beggar. Now the curtain is pulled back and the fate of both of them after death is revealed. Since riches were a sign of God's blessing to the Jew, it must have been a distinct shock to the Lord's audience to hear of a rich man being eternally lost and a beggar in Abraham's bosom. What was the crime of the rich man? What had he done to incur divine wrath more than other men? We have already given the reader some hints, but there were three things in particular. First, his sins, second, his rejection of grace to meet his sins, and third, his rejection of the warnings of divine judgment against sinners found in the Holy Scriptures.

... The Sins of the Rich Man— First of all, the rich man disobeyed the injunction that Jews, as God's people, were not to wear a garment of "divers sorts," that is, of different materials. The Scripture said, "thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts as of woolen and linen together" Deut. 22:11. This prohibition did not merely have externals in mind— that is, a man's actual garments— but something more fundamental— governing one's life by a mixture of divine and worldly principles. When this happens, worldly principles prevail and divine things are exploited for self-aggrandizement. It was so with the covetous Pharisees. Garments are often used in Scripture as a figure of our circumstances in life. This is easily understood, for even today the surgeon has a gown, the soldier a uniform, the beggar, rags, etc. The purple cloth by itself did not offend God— it was suitable clothing for a rich man in those days. But the purple and fine linen did— it was a garment of divers sorts. Fine linen was the garment of a priest. God judged King Saul for usurping priestly service contrary to the law. And how many men since have made themselves rich and famous, using Church connections and influence to rise to prominence in the world? God will one day publicly judge this intermingling of the Church and the world— this interplay of the purple and fine linen, as we see in Rev. 17. Here, His judgment falls on just one individual guilty of it.

The point is that when a man so corrupts himself, his conscience becomes dulled. It is a small step then to ignoring the sufferings of his fellow man, for self has become the center of his life. While the rich man dined in luxury every day, poor Lazarus groped in vain for a few crumbs falling from his table. He did not dress his sores or show any compassion to him. All he thought about was himself.

... The Rich Man Rejected the Grace of God During His Lifetime— Luke's "method"— the way he groups his stories together morally— shows up strikingly here. It helps us understand why the rich man lost his soul. If we consider the story of the rich man not as an isolated story, but as part of a broad teaching beginning at the Good Samaritan, the reason the rich man lost his soul becomes instantly apparent. It was because he spurned the invitation to the Great Supper In the Father's House, and chose to spread a lavish supper for himself in this life instead.

Being a Jew, he must have received an invitation to the Great Supper 14:17. The Great Supper is prepared in the evening, after the day's work is done. The fatted calf has been killed. Like the elder son, he does not go into the house. However, he does not make religious claims like the elder son. He has bought land, five yoke of oxen, and married a wife 14:15-20. His thoughts do not rise any further than this life, and enjoying worldly prosperity in it. He is indifferent to grace. Therefore, he cannot come. The prodigal came first and received a portion from his father in his father's house that is, he got heaven. The elder son will come later and will get a portion on earth. The rich man never came he gets his portion in hell.

... The Rich Man Ignored God's Warnings of Judgment on Unrepentant Sinners contained in the Holy Scriptures The Scriptures not only point out the way of salvation, but the eternal consequences of ignoring it. "Behold now is the accepted time. Behold now is the day of salvation" 2 Cor. 6:2. That is a warning for time. There are also warnings for eternity— "it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment" Heb. 9:27. "The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God" Psa. 9:17.

The rich man had forgotten God in life. He is dead now, but more alive than when "he moved among his fellow men, with health and happy fortune crowned." He cries for God's mercy. It is too late for that. Prayers for or to the dead are worthless except to those who profit financially from them. His pleas for personal relief are heard, but not granted. Then the man who thought nothing of his fellows in life remembers his five brothers now that he has left life behind. He has learned his lesson too late. The man who refused the invitation to God the Father's House, pleads that Lazarus may be sent to his father's house to testify to his five brothers. He is told that they will receive the

same warning he ignored— the testimony of the Scriptures, nothing more. He persists. "If one went unto them from the dead they will repent." The rejoinder was— "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

God answered the rich man's closing plea. Christ rose from among the dead. But, as predicted, they did not repent, they were not persuaded. Such are those whose moral state corresponds to the Lord's closing words— "the dead"— for the rich man is a pattern man. How many have followed in his steps? His ending is the universal fate of all who reject the gospel and the warnings of coming judgment contained in the Scriptures. The writer has encountered sad examples of such people during his lifetime. Once, while touring a cemetery, an employee of the burial grounds told me of a woman with a fatal disease who chose her burial plot before death. She bought one overlooking a street light so she wouldn't be lonely in her grave at night, he said. Just as this woman by her actions showed that her thoughts ended with her present body, so others accept a future judgment and are bold about it.

In the Second World War, the heavy bombers at our base were marshaled early in the morning for a strike at a target in Germany. 419 Squadron was the first to take off. In the distance we saw the ground crew's green Verey lights flashing beside the control tower as each bomber received permission to take off. They thundered down the runway, took off, and climbed to altitude. As this was going on, our squadron waited its turn to taxi to the control tower. To relieve the suspense, the air crews and ground crews chatted together on their dispersal areas. Suddenly it was time for partings. The air crews began to enter their bombers, and one by one the engines on both wings were started up. Out of the darkness, the gunner from another bomber ran up breathlessly to our tail gunner and delivered a last message— "So long, so-and-so," he cried, "if anything happens tonight, I'll meet you in hell." Then he ran back to his aircraft and disappeared in the darkness. Here, at least, was a man who knew where he was going when he died, and was honest about it. Few display such candor, especially in the society of the modern West. Men today will deny the existence of hell if the subject is, discussed. Yet, with the same lips, they use the word "hell" in blasphemy. If they believe there is no hell, why do they shriek the word from the housetops— on the printed page, on radio, and television? Surely it is the conscience crying out, as the gunner's did, less clearly because under less danger, more muted because of the conventions of civilian life— but always there, like a flickering flame bursting into fire at unexpected moments.

The Two Resurrections

In the Garden of Eden, God pronounced the judgment of death on man because he sinned. This judgment was on man's body; nothing was said about the soul which was separated from the body on death. The word we translate, "resurrection," is literally "standing up" and means the raising to life of the dead body. There is no such thing as a spiritual resurrection. The New Testament teaches two resurrections of the body. Still, the hope of resurrection is found as early as the Book of Job— generally considered the most ancient book in the Old Testament. Job exclaims, "for I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me" Job 19:25-27. Among the Jews, some held the doctrine like the Pharisees; others rejected it like the Sadducees Acts 23:8. With those Jews who held the doctrine, only a general resurrection was assumed, as we see from Martha's conversation with the Lord John 11:24. The doctrine that God will raise the body in one of two distinct and separate resurrections— one for blessing, the other for judgment— is a New Testament truth. The Lord left us with the rich man in Hades after death— Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. The state of their souls was fixed after death, and so, too, the respective resurrection which will claim their bodies at a later date.

The Lord's people are raised from their graves for blessing in the first resurrection, which the Lord also calls "the resurrection of the just" 14:14 and "the resurrection of life" John 5:29. These three terms all refer to the same resurrection, but we shall use only one of them here— "the first resurrection"— since the other two terms are self-explanatory. In Acts 4:2, we are told that this resurrection precedes the resurrection of the lost, for this passage speaks of "the resurrection from among the dead." In other words, this is a selective resurrection— "from among the dead" literally— that is, leaving the unjust dead in their graves to await a later resurrection. "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection— over these the second death has no power" Rev. 20:6. Since the relevant prophetic considerations are beyond the scope of this book, we might simplify things by saying that the first resurrection precedes the establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom, whereas the resurrection of judgment is at the end of that kingdom.

John tells us a great deal about "the resurrection of judgment"— also known as "the resurrection of the unjust" Acts 24:15. He lay in Jesus' bosom and thus was closer to His thoughts than others. For it is Christ who revealed the eternal punishment of the lost— those who reject Him as their Savior. He writes about a great white throne in space at the close of the Bible. Christ alone can sit on it— read John 5. Heaven and earth flee from His face, for time is about to cease and eternity begin. Those who died without Christ, stand before the throne and the books are opened. The rich man's secrets, an open book to Christ when He was on earth, will be an open book there, too. Death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. As already quoted Rev. 20:6 the second death had no power over those who were raised previously in the first resurrection. But it has here. The first death separated them from creation— the world in which they lived— the second death, more hideous than the first, separates them from God Himself. The rich man the Lord spoke about will have a body once more so he can bow the knee at the Name of Jesus— a tongue, too, to confess Him as Lord before time ends and eternity begins Phil. 2:10-11. After the judgment, the lost are cast into the lake of fire for their eternal punishment.

Eternity is the projection of time. When a man dies, he loses control of his purposes, be they good or bad, but what he was in life, continues in eternity— saved or lost. Believers generally have little in this world— much in the next. Unbelievers have much here, on the whole— nothing hereafter. The prodigal had nothing to lose in this world but his sins— Lazarus, his sufferings. When the rich man died, he lost everything— his riches and his soul.

Part 2

The Son of the Father's Love—

The Bright Contrast to the Other Son of the Father

How disappointing the story of the family of man— the son who ran away from his father's house and sinned in the far country— the son who stayed at home with his father, but embezzled his estate— the rich man who was told to remember how he had wasted a life that was gone. But God the Father had another Son, whose life we shall shortly reflect upon. He is God's beloved Son. He is the One who told us the stories of the sons who didn't love their fathers without vaunting Himself as the Son who did. His life was the witness to His obedience to His Father's

Will.

His people know Him as the Second Man— in contrast to the first man, Adam, who begat sons of disobedience— also as the last Adam, for there shall never be another Head of a race of men— the Man of Glory, in contrast to Adam, the man of dust— the Lord from heaven— in contrast to the first man Adam, who was of the earth earthy.

The Father Loves His Beloved Son, but

Man Hates Him and Puts Him to Death

The Father loved His two sons— the Jew and the Gentile. Did He not shower His erring son with seven marvelous gifts when he returned? Did He not offer the fatted calf to His other son, too, and even when His love was spurned, say, "all that I have is thine"? If He loves such sons, can we imagine how great His love must be to His beloved Son? What depths there are in the following sublime utterance: "the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand" John 3:35. These things He used for good, blessing His enemies as He taught us to do.

“Many good works have I showed you from My Father," Jesus once said, "for which of those works do ye stone Me?" John 10:32. It was to this blessed Man, so dear to our hearts, so much, dearer to the Father's heart, that the children of the first man, Adam, offered every indignity, especially at the Cross, which fully exposed, for the first time, the hearts of God and man. The fragrance of Christ's life spread out in all directions in that dark valley of death, dispelling all the evil of the heart of man which sought to end it on a cross of shame, but could not. He gave His life up voluntarily in love to others, but no man took it from Him. He had power to lay it down and power to take it again. This was a commandment He had received from His Father.

When the prodigal returned to his father, he covered him with kisses; when the True Son was about to return to His Father, Judas Iscariot covered Him with kisses, too the kisses which betrayed Him to those who would crucify Him. The father gave the prodigal the best robe when he returned; man, too, gave the True Son the best robe— a gorgeous robe, in mockery— 23:11 just before He returned to His Father. The father gave the prodigal a ring for his hand and shoes for his feet; as the True Son was about to return to His Father, man nailed His hands and His feet to the Cross, hoping to end His blessed work and walk forever.

While we have compared the True Son with the prodigal, actually both sons were represented at the Cross. We find the younger son, the Gentile prodigal, in the Romans, under whose power the Lord suffered. We find the elder son, the Jewish Trustee, who betrayed Christ to the Romans. "Am I a Jew?" Pilate cried, "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me. What hast Thou done?" John 18:35. It was this saying which Mary Bowly put in verse:

Pilate examined Christ and exclaimed, "I find no fault in Him" John 19:6. But man cried out, "away with This Man." So God must proclaim His glory to His rebellious creature. He was nature's God and the sun must be darkened in the heavens. As for the earth— the rocks, its most stable features— were fractured see Matt. 27:51 for Jesus had said that if men did not praise Him, the stones would immediately cry out. And since He holds the keys of death and Hades Rev. 1:18 the graves were opened, "and many bodies of the saints fallen asleep arose and going out of the tombs after His arising entered into the holy city and appeared unto many" Matt. 27:52-3. But again man rejected the divine testimony, for Isa. 53:9, correctly translated, shows the thoughts and intents of their hearts— "men appointed His grave with the wicked but He was with the rich in His death." Thus God divinely foretold their purpose. After Christ was dead, they planned to bury Him with the wicked— the two thieves. Instead, He was with the rich in His death, for Joseph of Arimathea claimed His body and buried Him in his own tomb. This act was a final witness to divine favor, for riches in Jewish eyes spoke of the blessing of the Lord.

Such was the way the True Son returned to His Father. He is the One who narrated the stories which give us the real history of man ranging from the lost sheep to the lost rich man. It is now appropriate to compare the True Son with each of the other characters whose lives the True Son has described in His stories. We will begin at the rich man. His life makes the first and most logical comparison. For who was ever as rich as Christ who created the world and everything in it, which therefore belongs to Him? The purpose of our comparisons is to enlarge our thoughts as to Christ's greatness. We will see Him as the Father ever saw Him— the Son of His love.

The True Son Contrasted With the Rich Man

In the fourteenth chapter, the Lord had laid down a sweeping principle— "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" 14:11. Now the Lord knew that men use riches to exalt themselves, and so He told us how the prodigal squandered them, the dishonest trustee embezzled them, the rich man spent them for his own enjoyment. The Lord Jesus was richer than all of them, yet humbled Himself by becoming a Man— "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" 2 Cor. 8:9.

Inside and outside his person, the rich man in life stood only for self-gratification. Outside, his body was clothed with splendid garments— inside, his belly was filled with the finest food and drink money could buy. By way of contrast, the Lord wore a robe without seam, and said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work" John 4:34. The rich man showed no compassion to poor Lazarus. Outwardly his body was exposed— full of sores; inwardly his belly was empty. It was in the rich man's power to feed him, but he did not even receive the crumbs from his table. The Lord Jesus fed men's bodies and their souls, be they Jew or Gentile. "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table"— a Gentile woman said to the Lord Matt. 15:27. Nobody ever begged anything from the Lord and went empty away.

When the rich man died, we see the fallacy of a life of self-gratification. In life he had been a success in the far country, just as the prodigal had been a failure. He understood the principles of this world —"while he lived he blessed his soul, and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself" Psa. 49:18. But now the rich man died and was buried and in Hades lifted up his eyes.

“When he dieth he shall carry nothing away— his glory shall not descend after him" Psa. 49:17. The body clothed with splendid clothes, the belly always filled with food and drink only enjoyed by the rich, now lies in corruption in the grave. "Man that is in honor and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" Ps. 49:20. Jesus, too, died and was buried. But His precious body saw no corruption and He Himself committed His spirit to His Father, who on the third day raised Him from among the dead by His glory. Thus we see that Christ, the Rich Man who humbleth Himself to become poor, was exalted by God the Father.

The death and resurrection of Christ and the Holy Scriptures are God's witness to man. In life the rich man ignored the Scriptures, unlike Christ, who lived by every Word that came out of the mouth of God. In death the rich man pleads for his five brothers still alive. Couldn't Lazarus be resurrected and sent back to warn them of the terrible fate of the lost? No, he is told, the Scriptures are all the warning needed. If they ignore the Scriptures, they will not be persuaded "though one rose from the dead." Still, the rich man's plea is heard. One has risen from the dead— Jesus. But the living mockingly reply, "almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian" Acts 26:28. If we are not persuaded in life by the death and resurrection of Christ and the witness of the Holy Scriptures, then it is too late when death comes, for after this, the judgment. On the other hand, "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" 1 Thess. 4:14.

The True Son Contrasted With the Elder Son

The elder son said, "lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." If this were true, why was it necessary for the True Son to drive the moneychangers out of the Temple, crying, "make not My Father's House an house of merchandise" John 2:16. They had "made the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition" Matt. 15:6, so it was useless to claim that they had never transgressed God's commandment. As God's Trustee, Israel had written off half the oil and most of the wheat under their charge. These are figures, respectively, of the light from God and the food for men's souls, contained in the Holy Scriptures of which they were the custodians Rom. 3:2. As God's lighthouse and granary in the world, Israel was responsible for seeing that the Gentile nations attributed what they administered to God only. He was the rich creditor. Instead, by their traditions which choked the Word, they attributed everything to themselves and stumbled the Gentiles. They opposed Paul preaching the gospel in their synagogues in far off Gentile lands, and seized him when he returned to the Temple. What a contrast to the Lord Jesus, the True Son, who administered His Father's things perfectly. We see today with the oil He has given us in the Scriptures and fatten our souls with wheat from them, too.

To protect himself from ruin due to failure in his trusteeship, the dishonest trustee provided homes for himself. Again this is a picture of the elder son, the Jew. Driven from his land and Temple because of his fraudulent trusteeship of divine things, he settled down in homes in far-off Gentile lands, providing for his own needs with natural wisdom. Jacob prophesied that this would be so on his deathbed when he told his sons of what should befall them "in the last days" Gen. 49. The Lord Jesus as the True Son was the opposite of the fraudulent trustee. At the end of His perfect administration, He provided homes for others— an earthly home for a woman— a heavenly home for a man. This was on the Cross when He entrusted the care of His earthly mother to the Apostle John and promised paradise shortly to the dying thief. Note the order— God first provides an earthly home for us— then one in heaven. As the Good Samaritan, the True Son provided an earthly home for man in the inn— as the Good Shepherd, He carried the prodigal sheep to the Great Supper in the Father's House above. Only when His work was finished did the True Son enter into the rest of His Father's House in heaven.

The True Son Contrasted With the Prodigal Son

The prodigal's evil career began by saying "father give me." But the True Son gave Himself, sparing nothing, so that the Apostle exclaims, "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" Gal. 2:20. Then the prodigal wandered off to the far country like a lost sheep, without consulting his father. Well, the Lord Jesus also went to the far country— that is, He came into this world, not because it attracted Him, but because His Father sent Him, "I proceeded forth and came from God neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me" John 8:42.

When the prodigal reached the far country, he wasted his father's substance with riotous living. The True Son was so careful of His Father's things, that He said, "gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost" John 6:12. With the prodigal, nothing remained, and everything was lost. There was, consequently, a great famine in that land and he began to be in want. There was no famine in the far country when Christ was there. Unlike the prodigal who fed the swine, the True Son fed His Father's sheep. He fed men's bodies with loaves and fishes; their souls with such words of life that men exclaimed, "never man spake like This Man" John 7:46.

Then came a time when the prodigal compared the famine conditions in the far country with the bread in his father's house. He will return to his father and the house of bread, for he is in need. The Lord Jesus left His Father and came to Bethlehem, which means "house of bread." He said of Himself, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever" John 6:51. "I perish with hunger," the prodigal exclaims, and then rehearses his apology to his father— "father I have sinned." The True Son said, "which of you convinceth Me of sin?" John 8:46. Only the True Son could say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth"— as for the prodigal, he disgraced his father. The prodigal's thought was that his father should make him like a hired servant. The Lord Jesus, the True Son, took upon Him the form of a servant— Phil. 2:7 because His Father told Him to do so.

The opening cry of the prodigal was "father give me," for at that time he did not know his father's heart. This could only be made known in all its richness at the Cross. There, the opening cry of the True Son was "Father forgive them." "Them" means both sons— the prodigal and the elder. Forgive them for what? Oh, for crucifying Christ, you reply, and we will all agree. But forgiveness was also needed for saying, "Father give me." If man hadn't said, "Father give me" in the garden of Eden, the Lord wouldn't have had to say "Father forgive them" at the Cross. The opening prayer of the True Son then, "Father forgive them" was the answer to the opening demand of the prodigal, "father give me." Then, at the end of his course, the prodigal exclaimed, "father I have sinned." Well, "the wages of sin is death" Rom. 6:23 but, thank God, the True Son accepted those wages for the prodigal. The Scripture teaches that "the body without the spirit is dead" James 2:26. So the True Son's last cry, "Father into Thy hands I commit My spirit" was the answer to the prodigal's last cry, "father I have sinned." In this way the unbounded love of the Father and the Son to man was made known. On the Cross, the Lord prayed for the forgiveness of His enemies and only then commenced the work of dying for their sins, which made it possible for God to answer that prayer and forgive them. The father anticipated that blessed work when he kissed the returning prodigal even before the fatted calf was killed.

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Now we will bring our comparisons into focus. The rich man is a picture of the self-sufficient, self-centered man of the world who rejects the Person and work of the True Son. His life really said to God, "depart from me." When his life is over, he is buried and so banished from the world in which his thoughts were centered. A great gulf separates him from heaven and he finds himself in hell. The elder son— the fraudulent trustee— is a picture of the Jew. Like the rich man, he, too, rejects the True Son, for he will not come into the Father's House and eat the fatted calf. However, there is this difference— he is not cut off like the rich man— his blessing is only deferred. In a future day he will offer as a sin offering the kid of the goats with which he originally hoped to make merry. The Jew will do this in the millennium, on the Day of

Atonement. Only then will God restore the Jew as His Trustee, in charge of His goods on this earth. But to get the blessing he really has to take the same ground as his younger brother. When he offers up a kid of the goats on the Day of Atonement, he will be admitting, like the prodigal, "father I have sinned." The prodigal never covered up his sins and so prospered. He receives the richest portion of all the Father's House, the fatted calf, and the knowledge of His Father's heart.

Part 3

The Revealed Father's Heart

That God is rich and man is poor is a truism to believers only. The man of the world thinks that the property he owns and the money he hoards belongs to him alone. His intelligence tells him that he must leave everything behind when he dies, yet he acts as though he were indestructible. God is in complete contrast to this behavior. He is not only immensely rich, but being the living God, He holds onto those riches forever. He made those mineral deposits and other treasures buried in the earth to possess which, only for a time, men devote their lives. "The cattle on the thousand hills are His-"Psa. 50:10, for He is Lord of life on the earth, as well as what is under it. Man may buy and sell the beast; still they belong to Him, for He created them. "The Lord needs him" 19:31 was the only word spoken to get the colt. Possessing such power, we find Him a lonely stranger at Sychar's well, whose conduct was inexplicable, even to His disciples. Why did He not eat, they want to know? John 4:31-34, not recalling the Scripture—"If I were hungry I would not tell you for the world is Mine and the fullness thereof" Psa. 50:12. Not only the world, but the whole range of the universe is His, for He created it.

However, knowing that a man is rich will not help a poor man unless he knows that the rich man is benevolent. So it is with God. Knowing that He is rich does not help needy man if he does not know that God longs to endow him with eternal riches— "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Both the prodigal and elder sons knew that their father was rich, but they did not know their father's heart. One son said, "father give me" and the other son said "you never gave me." One son suggested that his father was keeping something back from him; the other reproached him for having done so. It did not occur to either son that their father coveted something he didn't have. How could this be, seeing he was so rich? Well, riches can't buy our affections. This was what the father craved— the love of his two sons. He got it from one of them —the prodigal— an unexpected source. The prodigal was ready to give his heart to his father once he learned what was in his father's heart and his own. "My son, give Me thine heart" Prov. 23:26. If we do, we will experience God as a giver in a way we never could when He gave us merely "the share of the property" that is, material things. God's richest gift is Himself. "Fear not, Abraham" He said to His ancient servant, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward" Gen. 15:1.

The Seven Gifts of the Father to the Prodigal

The first gift of the father was what flowed out of his heart his unrestrained love. He fell on his son's neck and covered him with kisses. It is the same expression in the original which is used for Judas Iscariot when he kissed the Lord to betray Him. Judas was probably man at his worst. The Bible paints a picture of man as he really is in the opening of Isaiah— "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" Isa. 1:6. Well, the Lord Jesus, as the Good Samaritan, took care of the wounds and bruises, and God the Father of our lack of soundness. Our Father knew we were unsound from the sole of the foot even to the head, but He reversed all this, starting at our head and working down to our feet in unbounded blessing. He began with His kisses on the prodigal's neck and then worked downward on his body with gift after gift until He reached his feet, on which His servants put shoes. Everything started from the top— where the Father is. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" James 1:17.

The second gift is the best robe. This is a figure of Christ. You cannot have a better covering than Christ— He is the best robe God the Father can provide. The best robe comes out of the Father's House, as Christ did, when the need arises. The Father would call many sons to glory and clothe them with Christ. We receive the best robe in the field before we enter the Father's House. "The field" is a general term for the world here, just as "the far country" in this chapter is a term for a world far away from God. So, when the Father looks at us now, He doesn't see us, but Christ, for we are clothed with the best robe. The best robe was for the elder son, too, if he wanted it, but he didn't. Nor did he care for the father's kisses.

The first two gifts, though separate and distinct, are one in a certain sense— that is, in their meaning— for they bring together what the Father and the Son should mean to the believer. Every returning son receives two gifts first— the gift of the Father's love His kisses and the divine covering— the best robe— the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Father and the Son— this is true Christianity— "if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father" 1 John 2:24. Once we understand this truth, our work and walk must be consistent with the gifts of the Father's love and the Son's covering. The hand speaks of work; the feet, of walk. A ring, then, is put on the younger son's hand. A ring has no beginning or end. It is a token of eternal acceptance. Shoes are next put on his feet. The same feet which once walked away from his father now stand upon redemption ground. They are to walk toward the Father's House. The thought of entering his father's house now comes before his soul. But the father has a thought, too, and that is to bestow three more gifts on his son once he is inside the house. But before this can happen, another must die for the prodigal's sins. And so the command goes out— "bring hither the fatted calf and kill it."

A sinner could never enter the Father's House except by the death of another. The prodigal did not enter the Father's House until the fatted calf was killed. And it is not until the prodigal is given shoes to walk toward the Father's House that the Father issues the command to kill the fatted calf. The fatted calf was slain in "the field"— the world— Christ bought "the field" for the treasure in it— see Matt. 13:44. Only after the fatted calf has been killed can the Father eat and rejoice with the recipients of His grace. The Father's House is the dwelling place of God our Father and His Son Jesus Christ. But it is just that— the divine Presence dwelling there— which excludes man from that house without a sacrifice to make him fit to enter it.

The elder son rejected the fatted calf. Consequently, he neither entered the house, nor did he address his father as his father— "you never gave me a kid" is all he has to say. But the Father does provide a kid for the elder son after all. The story is given to us in Lev. 16, which describes the Jewish feast known as the Day of Atonement. The application of this is future. In that day a kid of the goats will be sacrificed for a sin offering. There can be no making merry with the question of sin unanswered and not met with a sacrifice. The elder son never said, like the prodigal, "father I have sinned," So he will have to admit it by afflicting his soul in the coming day. The sins of the elder son will be forgiven, but the Jew will have lost the portion of the Father's House we will enjoy. The death of the fatted calf divided the Father's gifts into

two groups. The first four gifts are received in this world where Christ— God's fatted calf— was slain. We will receive three more gifts when we get to heaven— of which the Father's House here is a picture. The first of the last three gifts is eating the fatted calf. Certainly we cannot do this in the field. It is the fare of the banqueting house and must be enjoyed there. The last gifts— music and dancing— tell us of the merry-making inappropriate in the field where the fatted calf was killed, but suitable in our Father's House. The Father rejected the thought of making merry with a kid in the place where the fatted calf was killed. His house alone was the place to make merry. Hadn't the elder son heard of the sins of his fathers who made merry in the wrong place and at the wrong time? Israel made merry when they worshipped the golden calf. There was music and dancing then, but it ended in death. In the Father's House, they began to be merry and of this there was no end. Rejoicing in the flesh and rejoicing in the Lord are two different things. Why does the prodigal enjoy the music and dancing of the Father's House? Because he has Christ on the outside— the best robe— and is filled with Christ inside— the fatted calf. Music and dancing are the outer expression of inner joy. While we are in this world, we anticipate these joys in the soul— perhaps we smell the aroma of the fatted calf as we near our Father's House. But it is in the Father's House itself that we will ungird ourselves, our labors over, and enter into our eternal portion of enjoying Christ and the Father. We will begin to be merry. Of the music and dancing, there shall be no end. Now let us review and consolidate what we have learned of the Father's seven gifts in their varied aspects.

The Seven Gifts Viewed As a Reversal of Our Natural State

This view of the seven gifts is the most fundamental. The prodigal is a picture of man in his depravity, but turning to God. Which was the greater sin— devouring the father's living with harlots, or what he did before that: demanding property that didn't belong to him before his father died and then taking that money and virtually deserting his father? The father traced all the prodigal's sins to walking away from him, so he awarded the shoes last of all the gifts in the field. He reserved them until the other gifts showed that he was acting like a father to the wayward son. So his first gift was to cover the prodigal with kisses. This revealed the father's heart and won the prodigal's heart. In the gospel, God starts with Himself— it was God who so loved the world— that is, the father's kisses. Then the measure of that love is giving His only begotten Son. That brings before us the best robe. But the prodigal doesn't put the best robe on— neither does the Father. It is the servants— those who preach the gospel— who do that. It is a figure, of course, but an apt one. When the Lord raised Lazarus from the dead, He also commanded others to take off his grave-clothes John 11:44 here the servants put on the best robe. Man is powerless to take off the grave-clothes he inherited from the fall or to put on the best robe.

The gift the prodigal received from his father by asking for it covered him with shame. All was devoured by harlots. But the gifts the prodigal received from his father without asking for them flowed freely from his father's heart. The hand that had fed swine now displays the ring of acceptance. The body that was covered with shame now is covered with the best robe. The feet that had walked away from his father's house to the pigpen now have shoes on them to walk heavenward— to the Father's House. The spirit of glory and of God rests upon him.

The Seven Gifts Viewed in the Light of Our Fellowship With the Father and the Son

We have considered the seven gifts in the light of God's salvation freely bestowed on the returning sinner. But after God saves us, He wants us to have fellowship with Him. "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" 1 John 1:3. This thought is found in the first four gifts which the prodigal received in the field. That is because this fellowship is now— we do not have to wait until we enter the Father's House to enjoy it.

The first two gifts speak of God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son. The father's kisses speak to us of the revelation of the Father's heart of love; the best robe of Christ, the Son of the Father's love. The next two gifts the ring on my hand and the shoes on my feet— speak of my responsibility as a Christian. The hand is the work— the feet, the walk. My work and my walk must be consistent with what I know of God my Father and Jesus Christ, His Son. I must show in this world that my work and my walk agree with the father's kisses and the best robe which covers me. Then men will know in a practical way what John teaches us as a fact "and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

The Seven Gifts Viewed As an Expression of Sonship and a Son's Place on Earth and in Heaven

I am no longer looked at as a sinner now that I have confessed my sins to my Father. I have been restored to full communion with my Father. Even so, there is one more insight into the seven gifts— the enjoyment of sonship in whatever place we may be— on earth or in heaven. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, `Abba Father'" Gal. 4:6. "Abba" is a word meaning "Father" to both Hebrew and Greek. "Father, Father" then is the universal cry of Jew and Gentile— that is, of all who are redeemed of the human race.

I am to sense— to understand— my new position fully. Also, I am to sense this on earth as well as when I am in heaven. So the seven gifts are broken down into four we receive on earth right now— the field— and three we receive later in heaven— the Father's House. That great Bible teacher of another century, J. B. Stoney, once said (7) "Everything connected with the avenues to the soul of man is under the grace of God." This comment is aptly illustrated here. The father's kisses are felt by the prodigal. The father has come out of his house and kissed him. This is the evidence of restored relationship. He is his father— the prodigal, his son. Then there is what the prodigal can see— the best robe, the ring, the shoes— the visual demonstration of divine grace. There are three more avenues to his soul— smell, taste, and hearing. As the prodigal approaches the house, he smells the aroma of the fatted calf filling it. Later, he tastes the fatted calf. And he hears the music which fills the place. The fatted calf is Christ, on whom we shall feed forever. The music? Well, "they sung a new song saying— Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation" Rev. 5:9.

But what about the dancing? David once danced before the Lord with all his might. It was the outer expression of his inner joy. But the Root and Offspring of David will be in the glory. He is the Lord. No longer will we gird ourselves for His battles, as we did on earth. We ungird ourselves and dance in fullness of joy. Why are we so happy? We are happy because of two of the gifts which have a special meaning. The father only says, "bring" of two of his gifts— the best robe and the fatted calf. To "bring" implies the conveying of something from a distant person or place to a nearer. Where was the best robe kept? Why, in the Father's House. The Father had it brought down to this world so we might be clothed with Christ. But we take it with us to the Father's House. The fatted calf was killed in the field, but eaten in the house. So when we are in our Father's House, we have Christ inside— for we feast on the fatted calf— and Christ outside— the best robe. No wonder there is music and dancing! They began to be merry. Of this joy there will be no end. Hallelujah!

What Was Lost and Found, Stolen and Given

Our review of God's ways has ranged from the lost sheep to the lost rich man. It is appropriate at this juncture to review what was lost and found, stolen and given, for these things provide the measure of God's dealings with man.

Now the lost sheep and the lost piece of silver are unique in that everything that was lost was found. That is because these two illustrations give us the work of God for man, based upon the cross. That work is perfect. The cross has met the question of sin, God has been glorified completely, and everything that was lost was found. The stories of the sons, however, give us man's side of things— not God's— and not all that is lost is found. For example, the prodigal son lost half the property which he squandered in the far country— which amounted to a total loss of his share. His brother kept his half, but embezzled away half the oil and most of the wheat in his unfaithful trusteeship. Half the oil is the New Testament, which he lost by refusing the fatted calf. However, he kept the Old Testament. The prodigal found a place in his father's house; the unfaithful trustee, in the houses of those whom he helped swindle his father. The rich man lost everything, for he ended up in Hades.

As to his state, man is a lost sheep— as to his actions, he is primarily a thief. Man began his thievery in the garden in Eden, stealing the fruit of a tree. And so Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, surrounded by two thieves. Man steals because he does not believe that God is a giver, and will withhold nothing good from him. It took the cross to reveal the Father's heart to the dying thief. He heard the cry, "Father forgive them" and received Christ's personal assurance of being with Him in a paradise which can never be lost. For Christ is there, the Man who never took away God's glory as man did by his thievery, but instead restored what was stolen see Psa. 69:4. With His glory restored by His beloved Son, God the Father can freely give to His erring sons— the Jew and the Gentile— more than they could possibly steal from Him. The younger son was given the Father's House— the elder son, "all that I have." They were never able to steal that much.

God Has the Last Word With Man

Our stories began with man judging God's heart— for the prodigal said "Father give me" and the elder son "thou never gavest me"— and end with God judging man's heart— the rich man in Hades. "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written that Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged" Rom. 3:4. Man is often conscious of his own inadequacy, but fails to come to terms with the God of all grace. Years ago, I attended the retirement of the Internal Auditor of a large corporation. Many important officials rose to their feet and praised this man for his past services to the firm. When it was all over, the old Internal Auditor made a speech in reply. The part of the speech I remember was this— "I have to thank you gentlemen for the many kind remarks you have made— all on the credit side of the ledger." Then he said quietly, "But nobody has said anything about the other side of the ledger."

Thank God He has taken care of "the other side of the ledger" for us, not only paying our debts, but filling our hearts with the knowledge of Himself— always the source of rejoicing for the Christian.

The basis of our praise is our Father's ways with us. God had two great works— creation and redemption. Do we praise God because He is the Creator? Partly— see Rev. 4:11 but not entirely. All we wanted from God was to rob Him of the treasures He planted in this earth. "Father give me" was our cry, or "Thou never gavest me." We didn't care about our Father at all— all we wanted was to steal His bankbook. So God began another work— redemption— because His first work— creation— only aroused our greed and envy. He killed the fatted calf in the field— that is, gave Christ up in death to bring us back to Him. This work rejoiced the Father's heart. The work of seeking the lost sheep and lost silver rejoiced the angels, but the killing of the fatted calf and the feast spread at the banqueting table for the returning prodigal— this rejoiced the Father's heart. When the prodigal said, "father give me," the father did. As a Father, God has not denied man anything in this world. But it brought no joy to the Father's heart and only misery to the prodigal's. As soon as the prodigal's heart turned to the Father, He began giving without being asked to do so. Because God is a Father, He wants children on whom He can shower His affections. This is where we come in— we are adopted children, the objects of His love.

When we understand God's ways, we stop talking. The prodigal started talking at the beginning, for his father's words carried no weight with him. Do unconverted men read the Bible? Certainly, for its cultural value, etc., but not to hear the Father's words. They sit in judgment over the Word of God which, at the end of time, will sit in judgment over them. The first words of the prodigal— "father give me"— led him nowhere; his last words— words which judged his first words— were "Thy son." That expression showed that he finally understood his true relationship to his father. Because the Father wanted to teach him that lesson, He never allowed him to say, "make me as one of Thy hired servants." A son in the house can never drop to a servant's level. As soon as he said "Thy son," the father kissed him. When the son stops talking, he fades out of sight, as it were. Only then does the Father start talking. "But the Father said to His servants" begins the chain of blessing.

When the elder son begins to talk, he asks one of the servants a question rather than his father. He was so angry with his father for blessing his brother that his father had to go out of the house to plead with him. When he begins to talk to his father, he compares himself to his brother and accuses his father of unrighteousness. The father's reply begins where the prodigal's words trail off— only instead of calling the elder son "son," he calls him "child." God always has the last word with man. He reminds the elder son that he is his child, that nothing has been denied him, that his actions toward him were just. The story of the Trustee makes it clear that the elder son was not so different from his brother— his sins only took a different form. The father remained what he always was— a father. There is grace in his heart for both sons, but he calls one "son"— the other "child." One knew his father— the other did not.

The rich man never talks to God in life he— is far removed from Him. In death he starts talking, and his first word is "father"— a recognition of the relationship he has violated. The reply of Abraham— a figure of God the Father here— begins with "child"— his response to the rich man's plea of "father." The rich man began talking to God too late. "Moses and the prophets"— the holy Scriptures— and the resurrection of Christ v. 31 are the twofold witness to the living against joining the rich man in the place of torment. God has the last word with the rich man. He remains in eternal contrast to the prodigal— "this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

"And the Veil Was Rent"

Both the younger and the elder son are guilty of the death of Christ. However, God used their very wickedness as the means of bringing them into blessing. The Gentile, or prodigal son, was present at the cross. He was represented by the Roman soldiers who took the garments of

Jesus and made four parts, to every soldier a part John 19:23. This division of the Lord's garments is a figure of the message of the cross going out to the four corners of the world. Wherever the gospel has been preached, this story has been told. That is God's response to the wickedness of the younger son. The elder son is represented by the High Priest. At the trial of Christ, he tore his garments contrary to the law Lev. 21:10. And so wrath came upon all the (Jewish) people as prophesied Lev. 10:6. God's response to the High Priest's act of tearing his garments was to tear the veil in the Temple. This ended the religious pretensions of the High Priest and the ancient religion of Judaism. But it did more— it opened the way into the Presence of God for the believer in this day, with Jesus as His High Priest. "Having therefore brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say His flesh and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near" Heb. 10:19-22. How marvelous then, the end of God's ways, which bring us into His very Presence in peace, and free.

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 12:54-59 - Luke 13

HOW CHRIST'S REJECTION AFFECTS ISRAEL AND THE WORLD

(Suggested Reading: Chapter 12: 54-59 and Chapter 13)

Everything that Luke has been writing about since the end of the Lord's Galilean ministry 9:50 has centered around the Lord's imminent death at Jerusalem. Our last chapter, for example, gave us the path of faith during the absence of our Lord and the question of faithful or unfaithful service to Him while He is absent. But there is another question related to His absence and that is the effect it has on the world and, more particularly, Israel, the earthly people. They were awaiting the Kingdom of God in visible display in the world. But, because they had rejected their King, the Kingdom must take a spiritual form, for the King was going to heaven. Our subject opens here, then, with what is really a divine warning of the judgment soon to fall on Israel.

The Divine Warning of Coming Judgment on the Jewish Nation—12:54-59; 13:1-5

The weather is always a topic of conversation with men. Recognizing this, the Lord remarked how observant they were in interpreting "the face of the sky." But this only emphasized their hypocrisy, because nature's God was among them and they knew not "this time." Their judgment was perverted. They had made Him their adversary and He would deliver them to the magistrate for sentence. They could still be delivered if they came to terms with Him. If not, they would end up in prison and would not be let out until they paid their debts in full. This is where the Jew is now in prison. They must receive double for all their sins and then, through the mercy of God, they will be released.

Much gossip was going around about Pilate's cruelty to the Galileans, and the tale was passed on to the Lord. The Lord rebuked them for suggesting that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things. Eighteen men were killed when the tower of Siloam at Jerusalem collapsed. Judgment would fall on all who did not repent, whether men of despised Galilee or proud Jerusalem. The Lord's words are identical for both— "I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

The Spiritual State of God's Vineyard—Israel—13:6-17

Israel had a privileged place in the earth which is indicated in Scripture by the symbolism of a vineyard. She was the vine transplanted from Egypt Psa. 80:8 that is, redeemed by the Passover Lamb's blood and brought into the land of promise. There she was to grow grapes from which wine would come— in Scripture a figure of earthly joy. That is why the parable of the vineyard is followed by the story of the Lord delivering the woman in the synagogue. The Lord was entitled, in coming into His vineyard, to drink wine— that is, to receive earthly joy from His people in the synagogue. Instead, there was no fruit. But we are going ahead of our subject.

In the vineyard a fig tree had been planted. In Scripture, the fig tree is a symbol of Israel as a nation responsible to bear fruit. The vine is Israel from a religious viewpoint— the land of the Temple— the custodians of the Holy Scripture. The fig tree's fruit is to be eaten— the fruit of the vine is to be drunk. So, when the Lord came to this earth, He sought fruit from the nation, but there was none "these three years,"— that is, substantially the period of Christ's ministry on earth. So He raises the question of why such a useless tree should be left standing in the earth. In the parable, the gardener asks for more time to fertilize it, promising that if that failed, he would cut it down. This further period of grace for the fig tree was the testimony of Peter and the other Apostles in the Acts, up to the time the guilty nation stoned Stephen. Some teachers hold that after that, the fig tree was cut down; more likely its fate was that it withered. It will revive again under a new principle— grace, not law— under a new covenant. Then Israel shall blossom and fruit. But now we will consider the Sabbath and the synagogue, which represent the Old Covenant and which brought no joy to the heart of God.

In the world eighteen had perished when the tower in Siloam fell on them; in the synagogue a woman was bowed eighteen years by an infirmity. God must act in grace to man or all will perish. He heals the woman to the indignation of the ruler of the synagogue, who claims He has violated the Sabbath. The ruler of the synagogue professed to be acting for God, but was really His enemy. Why? Because he tried to lay down God's law to God and tell Him He could not work on His own Sabbath. No wonder the Lord calls him a hypocrite! He reminds him that the whole congregation led their animals to a watering spot on the Sabbath. It would be cruel to do otherwise. Shouldn't this woman, whom Satan had bound for eighteen years, be freed on the Sabbath? This reply silenced and shamed the Lord's critics and delighted the people.

What Should Replace Israel in the World?—13:18-21

Israel had looked for the Kingdom of God on earth, but they plainly could not have it because they had rejected their King. However, God hadn't given up the thought of the Kingdom. Instead, for the time being, it was to take an unusual outward form. This is given to us in the story of the man and the woman.

The man planted a mustard seed in his garden. The garden is Israel under another figure. A garden is an enclosure, as Israel was among the nations of the world. There, the seed of Christianity was planted. It spread out from Israel with great branches in which the birds of the air roosted— these speak of those who are really adversaries of Christianity, but who take advantage of its blessings and rest in its shelter. It is a figure of the nations which publicly profess to honor God, Christian principles, etc. Since righteousness exacts a nation, the figure of a tree is

apt.

The woman, on the other hand, speaks of what was hidden— of doctrinal evil which was to work unseen and eventually leaven the professing Church. Leaven is evil doctrine, as we saw in 12:1. So the woman hid it "till the whole was leavened"— historically, this working of evil in the Church must be just about complete. The "three measures of meal" tell us that the leaven only works in the nominally Christian part of the world, for most of the world has never professed Christianity. The moral sway of the Kingdom of God is over those who profess Christianity, but actual entrance to the Kingdom is only by the new birth John 3. A Christian not only confesses Christ as His Savior, but acknowledges Him as King, in contrast to the world which disallowed His claim at the cross.

The Kingdom of God Is a Reality Not to Be Trifled With—13:22-30

The Lord now resumes His journey to Jerusalem and the cross, teaching in cities and villages on the way. His teaching arouses the curiosity of one of His listeners, who asks Him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" This question is answered elsewhere in Scripture. We are told that in all things He should have the pre-eminence. We tend to think of salvation in terms of those who believe, forgetting that God does not judge those who are not responsible— young children, idiots, etc. Scripture makes the distinction— "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." 19:10 those who have attained the age of responsibility, whatever God may judge this to be, and "the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." Matt. 18:11. Unnumbered millions of children from all races, languages, and religions, throughout the world, who have died in infancy in plagues, famine, wars, etc., will swell the grand total in the Father's house. The Scripture "Jesus called a little child unto Him" Matt. 18:2 is full of meaning. The writer remembers reading of the concern of the late President Kennedy at the time of his young son's death. He took up the question of the child's salvation with a Roman Catholic cardinal and was correctly assured on the point. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Gen. 18:25.

Here, however, the questioner is only seeking to gratify mental curiosity, turning aside his responsibility to believe. The Lord says "strive" that is, do you strive "to enter in at the strait gate"? The "strait" gate is repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." John 3:5. The Lord continues "for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in"— that is, not at the strait gate, but will seek to enter the Kingdom on their own terms "and shall not be able." God has His own time for shutting the door of the strait gate. Then they will confess Him as Lord and plead with Him to enter, but it will be too late. They will see those who have entered the Kingdom of God by the strait gate, but they will be outside. They will see not only the godly of Israel (v. 28), but others beside Israel (v. 29) sitting down in the Kingdom of God. In that day, supreme righteousness shall reign. The former conditions in which hypocrites prevailed over the righteous will be reversed— the last shall be first and the first last.

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The distinction between the mere profession of Christianity and actual Christianity has always been difficult for the Eastern mind to grasp. The Buddhist, the Mohammedan, etc., would look at the nations which professed Christianity and call them "Christian nations." He would also be puzzled at the gap between Christian doctrine and practice in these nations. Christianity, of course, is heavenly, and is a call out of all nations to our Father's house. But, in its outward form, it is a great mustard tree which grew from a seed in God's garden— Israel— until its branches spread in the earth. Here is an incident told by an old friend of the writer, P. R. Glading, once a missionary to China, which shows the distinction between reality and profession: “In 1940 I was stranded on the island of Ceylon for sixteen months, for the ship on which I was returning to China was taken over by the Admiralty and converted into a warship. Soon after my arrival on this island, I visited a dear old Christian native woman. During this visit, a British Naval officer dropped in to visit her, too. This man was also a Christian. He was curious to know what I was doing in China, and I replied that I was working among the servicemen there. He then said, 'I guess you would like to visit the British warships as they come into this port, and give the sailors the gospel.' I told him that I would be delighted to have this privilege. He invited me to his office and gave me a pass to board all warships. Some Naval men greatly opposed my work. But on some ships I met real Christians. We would sit under the great guns and read our Bibles together and encourage each other.

“One day, H.M.A.S. Sydney, the flagship of the Australian Navy, came into port. I boarded it and distributed tracts, gospels, and testaments, and spoke to the men of their need of salvation.

Many of the sailors sat down and read the tracts right away. After spending about two hours on board, I was suddenly summoned to the Commander's cabin. He told me I must leave at once, since he had received a message that two enemy warships had been located in the Indian Ocean and he must pursue them. I left, and the ship sailed immediately. The Sydney soon sighted the enemy ships, opened fire on one of them, and sank it. But the other enemy ship fired a salvo at the Sydney and sank it in turn. Every man on the Sydney was lost— hurled into eternity, with the ship saturated with the Word of God. No doubt there were hundreds of tracts floating around these poor men while they were struggling in the sea, but I wonder how many called upon the Savior in their last moments? It is one thing to receive God's Word in the hand, but it is of the utmost importance to receive it into the heart by faith, and to receive the blessed One of whom His Word speaks, the Lord Jesus Christ, as one's Savior. Dear friends, defer not, delay not. Time is short, for the 'coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' Soon for you, the day of grace will be gone, as it suddenly ended for those poor sailors. 'Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.' Prov. 27:1.”

The King and Those at Jerusalem—13:31-35

Certain of the Pharisees now come to the Lord hoping to stop His teaching with a threat, although it came under the guise of interest in His welfare. Everything in Israel was disordered. Herod sat on David's throne, but was not David's son. Christ was David's son, but was threatened with death. The Lord replies, "Go ye and tell that fox, behold I cast out demons and I do cures today and tomorrow and the third day I shall be perfected." This latter saying referred to His rising out of death in resurrection. Herod was the fox, those at Jerusalem the chickens threatened by the fox. As Israel's rightful King, He would have gathered the children of Jerusalem under the protection of His wings, like a mother hen, but they would not. That was the key— the will was opposed to Christ. For this reason, the Lord pronounces judgment on Jerusalem— not an accidental happening as when the tower of Siloam fell, but a deliberate judgment from Jehovah. First their house that is, the Temple at Jerusalem— was left unto them desolate. God would no longer dwell there, and it would be razed by the Romans, as it had once been razed by Nebuchadnezzar. They should not see Him again until they should say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." Psa. 118:26. In that psalm, which the Lord quoted, His rejection precedes that utterance v. 22. But it ends with Israel's renewed joy when they turn to the Lord "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever.”

THE PATH OF FAITH WHILE THE KING IS ABSENT

(Suggested Reading: Chapter 12:1-53)

The crowd had heard that Jesus was present in the Pharisee's house 11:37. Whether they overflowed into his house or Jesus came outside it to address them, is unimportant. What is important, is to understand the background to His sayings and the great teaching He was bringing out. The background is that the religious leaders of the people had just rejected Him. Since the people themselves were now present, the Lord begins by warning them about their religious leaders. This warning went unheeded, for it was the religious leaders who later stirred up the crowd to crucify Christ. Knowing that this was to befall Him, the Lord next takes up the theme of how His own are to carry on His testimony after He has left this world and gone to His Father. He leaves no stone unturned to let us know the path He has marked out for the faithful. Also He warns us about unfaithful servants, who should profess His Name without really having been born again.

The Secret Evil Working Against Those Who Would Follow Christ—12:1-3

The Lord now goes to the root of things— the secret evil of the Pharisees. They washed the outside of the cup and saucer, but inside they were full of plunder and wickedness. It was all covered up by the deceit of a supposedly clean outward walk— religious externals. The reason they hated Christ was that He exposed the inside— the true condition of things— and ignored the externals on which they prided themselves.

Leaven was a substance the ancients used to make bread rise, much as we use yeast today. Scripture uses leaven in figurative language for the working of the human mind or the flesh in the things of God. Knowledge puffeth up and so the mind of man, without the new birth, merely intrudes into divine things and produces evil. Religious man uses the knowledge he acquires from the Scriptures to make himself important. He denies his true condition as lost, and when this is exposed by the light, the hidden evil working within explodes like the cone of a volcano, erupting in violence against those who bear the light of God's witness.

Open Hatred Expressed Against Those Who Would Follow Christ—4:12

Open hatred produces fear if those hated are in the minority, as Christ's disciples are. So the Lord points out that the fear of man is one thing— the fear of God is another. How much emphasis we place on the body compared to the Lord, who says, "be not afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do." The nature of fallen man is expressed in hidden evil— the unfruitful works of darkness in 12:1 and violence 12:4. The nature of God is light and love. The light exposes the darkness 12:3; His love cares for those who fear Him more than the sparrows— in fact, He numbers the very hairs of our head.

In spite of the warning to fear God, not man, some will think only of their bodies. So encouragement is given to those who confess Christ; warning to those who deny Him. There is forgiveness for those who speak against Christ, but not for those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. This is the last mention of "forgiven" in Luke's gospel. For here we have the unforgiveable sin— attributing the works of Christ— all of which were done in the power of the Holy Spirit— to Satan. Those who committed the unforgiveable sin are found in 11:15. The Apostles, in a way that is not true of other Christians, did mighty works in the Spirit's power, the record of which is given to us in the opening chapters of Acts.

Worldliness—the Trap of Satan—12:13-34

The love of the world is deep in the heart of each of us, and it is something we must judge if we are to be faithful. We might not be guilty of hypocrisy like the Pharisees or be afraid of the world, but, like Achan, we may covet something here. So we find a man asking the Lord to act as Judge between himself and his brother to divide a worldly inheritance. He was probably the aggrieved one or he would not have asked the Lord to arbitrate his case. For His judgment is true. Now a day is coming when the Lord will judge earthly matters, but now He is concerned with men's souls— not their material possessions. It is not that material possessions are wrong in themselves, for they can be used for God. It is the tendency of the human heart to turn them into idols and so shut out God from our lives. The Lord illustrates this with the parable of the rich fool who pulled down his barns to build greater. In Luke 6:24 the Lord had pronounced a woe on the rich— here He begins to spell out the reasons for the woe. Only self-enjoyment was before the rich fool. He abused God's bounty in nature, appropriating it all for himself. He thought of the future in terms of his enjoyment in the body and gave no thought to his eternal soul. In that parable, the curtain hiding our gaze from the unseen world was only partly pulled back. But, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, we see the force of the Lord's words— "fear Him who after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him.”

Now the Lord does not tell us how much money makes a man rich, any more than He tells us how short a man's hair should be or how long a woman's. Why should this be, seeing He is a God of measure? Well, the answer is that He wants these things to be a matter of exercise in Christianity. In Judaism, there were innumerable regulations on all aspects of daily life. But we are not under law, but grace. This does not justify loose walk. We form moral estimates of things. It is not how much money you own but how highly you value what you have, and whether you use it to exclude God from your life, which determines whether or not you are rich toward God.

Many years ago, I worked in a large engineering organization which had just such a rich fool. True, he probably possessed only a fraction of the wealth of the rich fool in our parable. But his principles were the same. He had a good position in life and plenty of money, which he selfishly used only for his own enjoyment. And he scoffed at all thought of God and his accountability to Him when his life was over. I had just received delivery of a new dictating machine, when in walked this official.

“Let me see how that machine works," he said.

I explained it patiently to him, including the device to play back dictation. He picked up the microphone and began cursing, swearing, and shouting blasphemies into it. Next, with great satisfaction, he turned on the playback switch and listened to his filth. Then he walked away. The last time I saw him, he had had a stroke and was dependent on his wife and daughter. Then he was gone— out of time and into eternity. God, too, has a playback switch, and all that this man said will be played back to him in the Day of Judgment. "And I saw the dead, small and

great, stand before God; and the books were opened ... and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Rev. 20:12.

After taking up the folly of ignoring life after death, the Lord would have us not to be overly concerned with this present life. He had already told His own they were more valuable than many sparrows. Next, He reminds them of the ravens. Unlike the rich fool, they have no barns, but God takes care of them. They are much better than the birds— more valuable than sparrows, more cared for than ravens. They couldn't increase the height of their bodies. Why be concerned, then, for the rest— the things that trouble other men, such as pride of race, language, color of skin, etc.? Consider the lilies. God has given them a distinctive color and beauty. We admire and enjoy them, yet they are completely dependent on God for rain and sunshine to grow, and He does not fail them. Now what is the end result of dependence on God? Is it that He fails us? No. The lilies are the apex of dependence. Unlike the birds, they cannot fly elsewhere if food is lacking. "Yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

The Lord now ties together His parable and text from nature's book. His mission was not to divide an inheritance, for He came not to direct men to this world, but to the next. Because they lived here, He held up a mirror to man to expose his worldliness and lack of confidence in God. "If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Peter, who heard these words, must have thought of them when he wrote later, "for all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Peter 1:24, 25.

The Lord's sentence on His own is that they are of little faith. How withering! Faith is believing God because He has spoken on any subject— be it the way of salvation or His teaching on how the disciple should conduct his life, as here. Instead of behaving like the nations of the world, which only sought pleasure in worldly satisfaction, they were to seek the Kingdom of God— which is moral— and God would add whatever was necessary for this life. Now the use of the word "faith" in Luke's gospel indicates that the Lord well knew just how far short we would fall from His mind to us. In the opening part 5:20, 7:9, 50; 8:25, 48 we are given an insight into faith as the saving and justifying principle, rather than the law. From "O ye of little faith" on, we are given various pictures of just how feeble our faith is. Reading all this might make us despondent— we of little faith— were it not for the great heart of our God. Those of little faith are called “a little flock," to whom the Father would give the kingdom. The Lord had taught His disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come" 11:2. But Satan's kingdom had intervened. Now they are told “fear not" for the kingdom will be theirs in spite of all Satan's interference. There are seven "fear not's" in Luke's gospel. The first three give us the introduction of Christ into the world— since He is perfect love, He casts out all fear. The last four give us the delivering power of Christ, for the godly remnant— the "little flock"— ending with them having the kingdom. Here they are:

1:13— Fear not Zacharias for thy prayer

1:30— Fear not Mary

2:10— Fear not for behold I bring you

5:10— And Jesus said unto Simon, fear not

8:50— Fear not, believe only

12:7— Fear not, therefore ye are

12:32— Fear not, little flock.

In view of the coming Kingdom, the Lord exhorted the Apostles to sell what they had, give it to the poor, and so lay up treasures in heaven. This they did. When Peter and John were at the beautiful gate of the Temple, Peter said to the lame man, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee." Oh, to have such as Peter had! He demonstrated what he had in the Temple at Jerusalem, but it will be seen even more publicly in the holy city, Jerusalem. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God." Rev. 3:12

True and False Servants—12:37-48

In the previous chapter, the Lord had pronounced woes on the Pharisees and lawyers. Here, He pronounces blessings on some of His servants, but not all. In the verses we have just been considering, He has shown the moral features He is looking for in His servants— uprightness instead of hypocrisy, the fear of God, not the fear of man, looking for our hope in heaven, not something in this world. If He finds these things in His servants, well; if not, then He will deal with those who professed that they knew God but in works denied Him.

What the Lord looks for in the faithful servant is a waiting attitude as to His return. He is not concerned with our mental assent to the doctrine of the second coming of Christ, but with our putting the doctrine into practice by a waiting attitude. Our loins are to be girded— the flowing garments of the East interfered with activity unless girded at the loins— and our lights burning— shining here as witnesses in this dark world— for lights do not burn in heaven. This activity and light-bearing was customary at an Eastern wedding before the bridegroom came. Christ, our heavenly Bridegroom, will gird Himself and in the activity of divine service will make us rest in all the blessedness and joy of His Father's house. But God has given us no exact point of time as to Christ's return— the second watch or the third watch— which? Who could take anything from that? Even so, a householder would sit up waiting for an intruder if he knew when he would come. With these illustrations as to our being ready to meet Christ without being given a definite point in time as to His return, the Lord concludes His teaching by saying, "Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.”

Peter wants to know to whom this teaching applies. Clearly it applies to those who serve in the Church. If we are faithful and wise stewards, the Lord will make us rulers over His goods. This is a different line of truth from what we have been considering. Those who awaited Christ's return— that is, those who loved Him deeply in their hearts and longed for His coming, are rewarded by Christ's serving them in His Father's house. It is, of course, a service of joy— a ministry of rest. Here, those who have served well in the Church below are rewarded above by ruling over the Master's goods. But again we find servants who only hold the doctrine of Christ's return and with whom it is not an affair of the heart. They do not repudiate the doctrine. They simply say, "My Lord delayeth His coming." This causes them to beat their fellow-servants. Now isn't this the history of the Christian Church? It wasn't the world which burned Christians at the stake once Christianity had been publicly

professed. It wasn't the world, but religious leaders who attacked Bible-believing Christians and mocked the inspiration of the Word of life. It was "that servant, which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will." Others shall be beaten with few stripes— the nations which professed religions other than Christianity. But the Christian nations and the Apostate Church in their bosom shall be beaten with many stripes. This is the end of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy.

However, all things came to an issue among the people themselves, because some had accepted the teaching of their religious leaders, others that of Christ. He is come to send fire on the earth— fire is the symbol of judgment— because, if refused, what else can man's portion be? "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" This baptism was the baptism of fire on the cross during the three hours of darkness when the Lord suffered the judgment our sins deserved. He was "straitened" till it be accomplished— that is, His divine affections toward man were pent up like water stored in a dam until the work of redemption He came to do was finished. The preaching of the cross would not unite men but divide them, breaking up families. But those who accept Christ are brought into the marvelous unity of the family of God.

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 10: 21-42

The Lord Rejoices in His Father's Will

The blessed Lord, who had told His own to rejoice, breaks forth in rejoicing Himself. And the reason? Because in suffering humiliation and rejection in the cities where His mighty works were done, He had not only submitted to His Father's will, but done it perfectly. It was in that very hour He rejoiced in spirit and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." The Lord's joy was in doing His Father's will— in this case, accepting the rejection of His mighty works as from a Father's hand which knew best. The climax of doing the Father's will, of course, was the cross where Christ took the bitter cup of judgment, not from Satan, but from His Father, and drained it to its last bitter dregs. But it was this which made the Father's joy possible— we speak reverently. In no other way could the prodigal son be received back into the Father's house. And it was this which made the Father's joy full.

Christ, the Good Samaritan—10:25-37

The Lord had told Satan, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Here man would do that, though in ignorance, for the "certain lawyer" calls the Lord a teacher and asks Him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The Lord turns the question back to him, referring him to the law of which he was an exponent. He replies, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." It is astonishing how much men may know of the truth and yet not come under the power of it. This man had grasped the twin principles of the law— that righteousness consisted in giving to God what was His due and to the creature what was his due. The Lord expresses the same thought in other words— "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Mark 12:17. The Lord gave him credit for his answer, but applied the two-edged sword to him— the application of this truth to his conscience— "this do, and thou shalt live." That was all the law promised to man if he could keep it— life on earth and no more far short of eternal life the subject of the lawyer's question. But the Lord knew that it would be useless to take up the question of eternal life with him in his state of soul. This comes out here— "but he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my neighbor?" Self-justification is the principle of law-keeping, and law-keeping is not confined to Moses' law. We find it in the codes of ethics of professional associations— indeed, it is the basis of all attempts by man to live in decency without God.

Jesus defers the answer to this man's question until he has told the story of the Good Samaritan. Only then does He answer his question (v. 37) by saying, "Go, and do thou likewise." That is to say, the man knew the answer to the question he proposed— "Who is my neighbor?"— but didn't want to do anything about it.

Had he not been willing to justify himself before God, he could have rested on the truth of Rom. 4:5 before it was written, for God was present in the flesh, "but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Jesus now gives the lawyer a true picture of man's condition before God. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho went down. Man, too, fell from the place God set him in. He "fell among thieves, who stripped him and wounded him leaving him in a half dead state." This was what Satan's attack did to man. "Dead in trespasses and sins," he still lives on in carnal pleasures, unable to do anything to change his condition. Can the law help him— the law in which this lawyer glories? Well, the two representatives of the law, the priest and the Levite, don't help him. Not only that, they appear disinterested. The priest comes "by chance," the Levite, "looks at him" and both pass by on the other side. The very representatives of the law regard our condition as hopeless. Would it have done any good to have told the dying thief on the cross to keep the law? No, he had broken it or he wouldn't have been crucified. Like the man here, he needed grace. Well, the certain Samaritan journed and came where he was. The Lord Jesus represents His mission to man under this figure— "a certain Samaritan." The Jews had said of Him "Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?" John 8:48. How they hated the Samaritans! Grace will expose man's need— it takes a Samaritan to see him and have compassion on him. Now look what the Lord does for us. First He approaches us when nobody else will then binds up our wounds— that is, healing man as He did in this gospel— leprosy, palsy, etc.— all wounds inflicted by Satan. He pours in the oil and wine— oil, light; wine, joy— all figures of His blessed teaching ministry of the Word of God. Next, He sets him on His own beast, brings him to the inn and takes care of him. The oil, wine, and the beast are figures of the Holy Spirit's activity to bless us in— this world— under the direction of Christ. We are enlightened, filled with joy, and carried through this world until Christ comes back to receive us. The Good Samaritan departed "on the morrow" as Christ left the inn— this world— in which there was no room for Him at His birth.(4) He leaves us still in the world, but with enough to spare to take care of us until He comes again (v. 35).

Martha and Mary—10:38-42

As Jesus journeys, He comes to a certain village and a woman called Martha receives Him into her house. The principles the Lord laid down for the seventy surely applied to Him who gave them v. 5-7. So peace was on Martha's house and He remained in it, eating and drinking. But the preparations for the meals so preoccupied Martha that she lacked time to hear the Lord's words. So she carried her complaint to the Lord

about her lazy sister, who she thought should be helping her in the kitchen.

Martha and Mary represent believers in the two aspects in which eternal life manifests itself in us— worship (Mary) and service (Martha). Jesus rebukes Martha for her preoccupation with service, but we are not to interpret this as meaning that service for Christ is of low value and commit the opposite error of preoccupation with worship. "But one thing is needful," Jesus says, "and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." We are to keep the truth in balance, unlike the lawyer who tempted the Lord. Service is generally manward, although rendered in the Lord's Name; worship is Godwards and God is not to be cheated out of His portion.

What was it that Mary heard at Jesus' feet which intrigued her? The Scripture says she "heard His Word." The Lord, undoubtedly, spoke about "the Father's things"— for "all things are delivered to Me of My Father. And no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father, and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." It was to Mary, not one of the wise and prudent in this world, but a babe, to whom He revealed the Father. Blessed privilege indeed. Was she not one of His disciples? And He had said to His disciples, "blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Father Give Me: Meditations on Luke, Luke 9:51-62 - Luke 10:1-20

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

(Suggested Reading: Chapter 9:51-62 and Chapter 10)

And now we come to a great watershed in the gospel of Luke. The Lord's Galilean ministry ends at chapter 9:50; the following verse opens the concluding section of the gospel, "and it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Note Luke's emphasis here, not on the cross, but on His being received up— the ascension. This was the end of the Lord's journey from the Father to the Father. In the eighth chapter, Luke gave us the entire story of the Lord's journey into this world, through this world, and out of this world, concluding with the Gadarenes— the people of this world— asking Him to leave them. 8:37. In the last section of his gospel, Luke gives us our journey— in the story of the poor man beaten by thieves whom the Good Samaritan befriended. Christ was the Good Samaritan. He journeyed through this world to rescue us. His journey through this world was triumphant— ours tragic. No matter, the Good Samaritan cannot rest until we start another journey— out of this world to His Father's house. So He invites us to a Great Supper in His Father's house. But first, the Good Samaritan lodges man in an inn until He returns— striking contrast to man's treatment of Him, for there was no room for Him in the inn at His birth. Then the poor man, beaten by thieves, and the Good Samaritan change roles, becoming respectively the prodigal son and the shepherd —Christ— seeking the lost sheep. The Shepherd brings the lost sheep to the house. This is the prodigal accepting the invitation to the Great Supper, returning to his father and eating the fatted calf in his father's house— heaven, figuratively. These stories bring out the hearts of God and man as none others do. Luke's "method" is always to bring the heart closer to God. That is why he condenses the Lord's Galilean ministry and expands these themes. They constitute the bulk of his gospel and are the very heart of it— the unfolding of the divine bosom and the very beating of the heart of God.

A New Spirit for a New Man—9:51-56

As the Lord journeys to Jerusalem and the cross, the Samaritans show their disapproval. James and John ask the Lord if He will bring fire down from heaven to burn them up. James and John had been on the holy mount with Moses and Elias. The Father's voice had not instructed them to listen to the law and the prophets, but the gracious voice of His Son. Peter failed on the mount by wanting to build three tabernacles— one for the Lord and one each for Moses and Elias. James and John failed after coming down from the mount— desiring to repeat the works of Elias in the spirit of Moses' law. So the Lord rebukes them— which He would not have done if they had not been with Him on the holy mount. He says, "ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

Following and Serving Christ—9:57-62

Next, a certain man would follow Christ without a call. He was not the first to do so— "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran." Jer. 23:21. And he has had many followers since. Self-will "—I will follow Thee"— is not God's will. It is different when the Lord calls, as He did Peter— "Follow thou Me." The Lord reminds this man that following Him is not a pathway of ease gratifying to nature— "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Next, we are given an illustration of what happens when the Lord Himself calls us. Immediately nature objects, "Lord," the man says, a contradiction, because if He is our Lord, we must obey Him— "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." This seems a legitimate enough request, except for the order in which he wanted to do it. The key to his difficulty was "first" which put Christ second. Then a third man volunteers to serve Christ, "but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." The first thing with him was saying goodbye to the dead. Dead or alive, nature's claims combine to give Christ second place. But God will not have this. And so the Lord tests every man "no— man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." To plow a straight furrow you must look ahead, fixing your eye on one object ahead of you. Failure to set Christ first before us as our object in Christian life means that our furrow the record of our life's work in the earth— becomes a crooked one.

This gives us an insight into why some Christians become good servants of Christ, while others fall by the wayside. There is a sifting out process, as we see in the stories of these three men. It is only "after these things"— that is, after His true followers gathered around Him, that He appoints— from them, no doubt— "other seventy also" —that is, in addition to the twelve Apostles. We cannot serve Christ until we first become His followers, for the servant is the ambassador of Christ and must fittingly represent Him before men.

A certain class of people today will tell you that since the simplicity of these early days has passed away, the Christian message is no longer relevant. Actually, although jet aircraft span the oceans and man has gone to the moon and returned, nothing has changed. Modern life in great cities, interlaced with traffic arteries, may differ in some details from life in the past, but the eternal issues remain the same— life, death, salvation, heaven, hell. One day I was driving slowly along a great highway, for traffic was virtually halted by an accident. A great truck was straddling the road and beside it was a completely demolished car. At the time I thought, "Nobody in that car can come out alive." The next day I went to preach in the jail and noticed the prison guards huddled together. "We have just lost the best secretary this institution ever

had," they lamented. As they went on, it became clear that the wreck I had seen the day before was the one in which their fellow employee had been killed. Across my mind flashed the memory of another woman— a Christian school teacher who used to accompany me on visits to this institution and speak to the women prisoners. I gasped, for it was two years to the very day since she also was killed in a traffic accident. The last time she was with the Lord's people, I had spoken on the text, "behold the Lamb of God." We sang together the hymn, "And shall we see Thy face, and hear Thy heavenly voice?" The next Lord's day she was with Christ, which is far better. We had dinner together on the day we parted and drove to the jail, each in our own car. Then I entered her car and discussed with her, "the things concerning Himself," little knowing it was to be a farewell message. Surely eternal issues are the same now as when the Lord sought the souls of men, both Himself and through His servants? What the world has done since then doesn't matter— God's testimony is the important thing.

The Lord Sends Out the Seventy—10:1-20

The sending out of the seventy introduces a dispensational change. That is to say, they are sent out as representatives of a Christ who was on His way to Jerusalem, not to be crowned there as King, but to be crucified outside its walls. The Lord sends them out by twos to precede every place He visited. The time is short now before the cross. He reminds them of the greatness of the harvest and the few laborers. But they are to go as lambs in the midst of wolves. This is an impossible thing to do unless there is total dependence on the God who sent them. To ensure this, they are not to take care of themselves by human means— money, etc., and are not to salute man by the way— that is, they mustn't waste God's time in human traditions, ceremonies, etc.— it is not that they were to be discourteous. They were to enter houses with a message of peace, and if received, their peace should rest on that house. This was God's provision for them instead of their own— purse, scrip, shoes. For in the houses in which they were received, they were to eat and drink "such things as they have," which would vary with the house in which they lodged. They were not to be traveling beggars going from house to house. Remaining in one house, the blessing of peace rested on that house in receiving them, for in receiving them, the householder received Christ who sent them.

The Lord gave His own instructions, not only for their conduct in houses, but in cities. Again they were to eat "such things as are set before you." But there is more— "heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them the kingdom of God is come near you." If the message of peace was rejected, it would be more tolerable for Sodom "in that day" than that city. Sodom had no such message of peace from those who represented God manifest in the flesh. Well, the Lord pronounces woe on two cities— Chorazin and Bethsaida, which had rejected His mighty works. Even Tyre and Sidon would have repented if such mighty works had been done in them. A special judgment is pronounced upon Capernaum— lifted up to heaven, it should be thrust down to hell. Then the Lord connects His own personal acceptance or rejection with the seventy who represented Him.

The seventy return with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us through Thy Name." The Lord's reply is, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." This reply showed that He was more concerned with the destruction of the seat of Satan's power— heaven— than with the workings of Satan's power on earth. Satan hasn't access to the dwelling place of God in heaven, but he still comes before the judgment seat Job 1:6-12 where he accuses us before God unceasingly see Rev. 12:10. But the day is coming when he will be barred even from that and cast out of heaven to earth as the Lord prophesies here. The actual event is given to us in Rev. 12:12 "Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Later on, he is taken away from earth by an angel with the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand, and is confined in the abyss for one thousand years. This is the duration of Christ's millennial kingdom. While the kingdom lasts, he remains confined in the abyss, unable to trouble man. At the end of the kingdom, he is freed briefly. He is allowed to tempt man after God has showered every goodness on him for one thousand years —no famines, wars, diseases, etc.— all richness and plenty from the hand of God. Satan succeeds in tempting man and is cast into the lake of fire "where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." Rev. 20:10. Even here in Luke's gospel, we see how richly his fate is deserved. He tempted Christ in the wilderness, but was overcome 4:8. His doom is foretold here 10:18. Later on we will see how he entered into Judas— a sinner 22:3 to betray Christ and desired to have Peter— a saint 22:31. But the Lord says, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Not withstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."