Mark - Commentaries by Charles Stanley

Christian Truth: Volume 24, Worthy of the Lord

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There are many who own the name of Jesus, the Savior, and preach forgiveness of sins in that blessed name. Some of such also speak of meeting in the name of Jesus. Now, the name of Jesus is unspeakably precious, and "blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are cover e d. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin"; but for those who had heard and believed the grace of God, the Apostle thus prayed: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Col. 1:9, 10.

The Lordship of Jesus is not only equally set aside by the two great streams of human wickedness—infidelity and superstition-two streams fast becoming one, in roaring rapids of violence; but, what is still more distressing, the preachers of forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus, and those who own that name most precious, they also too much set aside the authority of Him as Lord.

We may speak of Him as Lord of heaven and earth, but do we truly own Him as our Lord? Providing sinners be saved, they are left to join and own any government that men may choose to set up in Christendom, never asking or reflecting, Is this suited to the Lord? is this walking worthy of the Lord? Is He not entirely ignored as Lord, and each found doing that which is right in his own eyes?

No doubt, in the crowds that walk along the broad road of profession, there are learned and far-seeing men; but there is a narrow path, and the vulture's eye has not seen it. It can only be discerned by the Spirit. The worst thing is this—men, saved sinners, are content to go on in what their hearts condemn, so different from this earnest prayer of Paul's or even the words of Moses in another day. He says, "Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way."

Have you found grace in His sight? Thank God if you have. But now, if so, have you ever truly prayed to God, "Show me now Thy way"? You may think you know it, or you may trust in men, or churches, and think you have no need to cry to God, "Show me now Thy way." You could not make a greater mistake.

Let us read a few more words of Moses', "That I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight; and consider that this nation is Thy people." Is this the childlike desire of our hearts, having found grace in His sight, that we also may know Him, be more and more acquainted with Himself, and thus ever find His full, free favor? Do we know, and do we thus speak to Him about, His whole redeemed Church? What was the answer of the Lord? "And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Is not this enough? The path may be very narrow, and despised by men; but in that narrow path, whatever may be against us, He says, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." The vulture's eve, far-seeing men, have not known this narrow path of perfect rest in a world full of opposition and bitter hatred.

Yes, it is enough: "And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not that Thou goest with us?" Yes, it is this, the presence of the Lord with the few gathered to Himself that marks the narrow path. But then, must not this separate from whatever disowns the Lordship of Jesus? "So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

And was Israel as a nation more separate from the people that were upon the earth, than is the Church of God? But mark, if it is not separation to the Lord Himself, it is only sectarianism, or the disowning of Jesus as Lord. Can we truly say, "Is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated"? We must walk with the Lord, or we cannot walk worthy of the Lord. The world ever rejects and disowns Him. And does He not say of His own that are in the world, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"?

The first thing then the Apostle prays for, for the beloved saints in Christ, is that they "might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Is this our prayer, our desire? For how much more do we need, in these last days of deceivableness, of unrighteousness, to look to Him! Now, have we the knowledge of His (our Lord's) will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding? Or are we merely led by men for party purposes in the Church of God? Do not admit for a moment that this is not your privilege, however dark the night, however great the confusion. The path will be narrow, but the privilege how great! Is there any wisdom like being filled with the knowledge of His will? But do not forget the vulture's eye sees it not; it must be known by spiritual understanding. If, however, a servant knows his Lord's will, and does it not, does his knowledge profit him? No, is he not the more to blame? Thus the prayer continues: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."

There are lords many, or divers human church governments, owned in Christendom, but each, when compared with the Church in the beginning, displaces Jesus as Lord. In the beginning the world hated and persecuted the Church of God. And what they did to the Church, they did to the Lord. He said, "Why persecutest thou Me?" Now, with great numbers, that very world governs the church. In the beginning the Lord held the stars in His right hand—guided and governed the assembly by the Holy Ghost. Now that assembly is divided into various conflicting governments. All this we must confess and deplore. What need then for earnest prayer, at such a time, that we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing! Yes, will it not be all pleasing to Him in these days of human will, to find a few loyal hearts?

We earnestly ask all our readers to cry to God about this matter. Do all own Jesus as LORD? No doubt this can only be done by the Spirit of God. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3). We may own other lords, but if we truly own Jesus "the Lord," we may rest assured this is by the Spirit of God.

What divine comfort then there is in these words of life, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Yes, if we have found grace in His sight, we may count on His presence with us. It is enough; we need no more; soon we shall see His face in glory, Lord of all. Oh, that we may walk worthy of Him, as Lord, now. May we do that only which is suitable to Him, until He come.

Selected Writings of Charles Stanley: Volume 1, "I Have Compassion on the Multitude"

“In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away” (Mark 8:1-9).

Mark the starting point of this narrative: “Jesus called His disciples unto Him” (Mark 8:1). What a question this would be to every preacher in this land: Have you heard the call of Jesus? Have you come unto Him? Do you know Him? You cannot be a river of water if you have not come and drunk yourself. If you do not know Him you cannot break the Bread of Life to others. If you do not know your own sins are forgiven, you will not be able in faith to preach forgiveness to others. If you know Him, then just come unto Him; He has something to say unto us.

He says, as it were, I want to tell you how I feel about those millions of lost souls on earth where you at present dwell. I have compassion on the multitude. I have been offered up a propitiation on the cross: I freely offered up Myself the sacrifice; I am the Mercy-seat-God; My Father is just, is righteous, in sending a free pardon to those millions, and you have never told them. You have never made the proclamation of forgiveness of sins in My name to millions within your reach — “I have compassion on the multitude” (Mark 8:2).

And there was a large company that had been with Him three days — He says, “And have nothing to eat” (Mark 8:2). And all around are multitudes of professors, very busy in religious activities, but they have nothing to eat. They have sacraments and outward services, periodicals and religious books; and still may have nothing to eat. They are unconverted, are in their sins, guilty before God, hastening on to judgment, and literally no real gospel has been set before them, suited to lost, guilty, hell-deserving sinners.

Jesus says, “I have compassion” on them; He further says, “If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far” (Mark 8:3).

Is it so, dear reader — is your house very far from Jesus? Is Jesus known in your house? Is the holy perfume of His dear presence there? If a stranger comes to your house, does he feel that Christ reigns there? Or is it a mere Sunday profession with you, and Satan and his world all the week? Ah, when you come on Sunday you come from afar; but Jesus has compassion on you; He knows how it will end with you if you are not saved — when your heart shall cease to beat, and there is a hush in your house, and they whisper, “he is gone.” But oh, where?

Will you have refused the compassion of Christ until it is too late? Where will you be? Will it be to lift up your eyes in torment? What a mercy it is, as you read this, that it is not yet too late. Think, then, of the compassion of Jesus.

How little sympathy the disciples had, then, with Jesus. How little now. They say, “From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” (Mark 8:4). Did they not forget the Lord? He who fed the millions daily for forty years in their wilderness journey, the Jehovah of the days of Moses, was in their midst. They forgot the infinite resources they had in Him. And do we remember the compassion and power of Him who says, “I am with you alway, even unto the end” (Matthew 28:20)? Is anything too hard for the Lord? How little we feel the claims and needs of these perishing millions — how little sympathy with those devoted servants of the Lord who are true distributors of the Bread of Life in the regions far from home and comforts. But they have the joy of fellowship with Him who said, “I have compassion on the multitude.” “And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven” (Mark 8:5). They had the perfect number, and with His blessing, more than enough to meet the need.

And now, fellow-disciples of Jesus, whose heart is full of compassion and love for the multitude, how many loaves have we? We will take first the great multitude of Christendom, who have no Bread of Life ministered to them; infidelity and superstition enough, but no Bread of Life — what have you got for them? Do you say, A very few loaves for so many? Jesus says, “Give ye them to eat” (Mark 6:37).

And remember that among them there are dear redeemed children of God, very faint on the way; long have they been without food that gives real nourishment. Give ye them to eat. One means which the Lord has greatly owned — He only knows how much — is the distribution of tracts. Have you a few of these loaves? Never was there such a need to be sure that there is no poison in them — poison where little expected. Do not give any one to eat what you have not eaten of yourself, and proved to be the Bread of Life.

“And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground” (Mark 8:6). He who commanded this vast universe to be, and it was; who spake, and it was done; He commanded the people to sit down on the ground. Look at Him in the midst of that multitude — every eye turned to Him; yes, the very multitude who had requested Him to depart from their coasts in chapter 5. Yes, precious Jesus, Thou hadst compassion on the men who preferred their swine to Thee. Have you heard His voice? Have you been brought to sit down in His blessed presence? All the needed supply goes out from Himself. “And He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them” (Mark 8:67).

The disciples gave nothing except what they had received. May it always be so with us. It is most cheering to hear of souls in so many distant lands being brought to sit at His feet; to sit down and rest in His dear presence, to prove His tender compassion — and then themselves to be the distributors of the Bread of Life. It will be so everywhere if there is fellowship with Him in His compassion for lost souls. Oh my brethren, where should we have been but for His compassion on us? “He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy” (Romans 9:18).

“And they had a few small fishes: and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them” (Mark 8:7). Have you a few small tracts that contain the true gospel of God?

Will you look to Him to bless them? Can you in faith obey Him? He commands you to set them before those who have nothing to eat. You have now the privilege of distributing tracts in many languages. Will you give them to such as have nothing for the soul to feed upon? Our compassionate Jesus is using them, in spite of the disciples’ coldness, in regions far from where our feet can tread. Oh, to be a transcript of Him who has compassion on the multitude. Oh blessed Lord, to be more like Thyself!

Seven loaves and a few small fishes seemed very little for four thousand persons. They would have been utterly insufficient, but Jesus was there, and He delights to use our littleness, our weakness, our insignificance. It is thus His fullness and all-sufficiency are made to appear. Waggonloads of loaves and boatloads of fishes would have been more to the disciples’ ideas then and now. Oh, the grand secret of sinners being brought to Him is, He all, and the disciples nothing; but this does not suit man. The need is great around; let us measure it by His infinite fullness.

“So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets” (Mark 8:8). Well, dear reader, have you eaten? Are you filled? If so, you will hunger no more. Jesus said: “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). This is the sure mark of the one that has been brought to sit at His feet to receive Himself — the Bread of Life — he hungers no more. He knows the truth of the word, “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). He thirsts no more. He needs nothing more to fit him for the holiest. He is complete in Christ, and has perfect peace and rest for evermore.

If this is your singular and happy place, what will you do with your basket? Will you send nothing to those who have nothing to eat? Will you have no compassion on the multitude? It is a wonderful feast — always as much left as when we began. If Christ is enough for you, He is enough for every poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinner on earth. Oh, to be off with our baskets, and take good portions to them for whom nothing is prepared! “And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away” (Mark 8:9). Will you ask Him where you shall go with your basket?

Oh, blessed revelation of God, the heart of God, the love of God to a lost and guilty world! Yes, Jesus says, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). May this be true of every Christian who shall read these lines.

Things New and Old: Volume 33, Christ as a Preacher

Mark 2:1-12

There is much said and much done to get sinners to hear the gospel—some place posters on the walls, distribute thousands of bills, and many other expedients and efforts are tried. And these may be used and blessed to souls. We do not write to criticize these methods, but desire that our eyes may rest on Christ.

He entered Capernaum. There needed no bills to announce Him. No human agency need be set on foot. Indeed, like Paul at Philippi, it was after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And it will be found in the history of the work of the Holy Spirit, that it has been after this manner. Take the work in 1857-60, there was no need for bills, or efforts of that kind. It was noised abroad that the Lord was bringing souls to Himself, and the house was filled. A deep sense of His presence was felt. The difficulty. was in finding a place to hold the people. Sometimes two or three large buildings would be filled, and then others come in for a second service after, often until near midnight. At every meeting souls were saved for eternity.

We would not for a moment judge any evangelist using whatever means he feels led to use for winning souls to Christ, but let us not lose sight of our divine pattern. Is it not well to wait on Him, until it is noised that He is in the house? This is the character of the work in Egypt, and now in Mesopotamia, we have also just heard of a similar case in this country. As it was in Capernaum, so it is noised around that the Lord is in the house, and anxious souls are coming morning and evening. And the Lord is present to heal them.

If the reader is a Christian, may we ask why may it not be so in your house? It was a delightful sight the last summer to see two hundred come together in a christian farmer’s house, and the power of the Lord was present to meet every case. There had been no bills, but earnest invitations. And at this farm house, the next Lord’s day, “straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door.” We had to go into the open air, and the word was preached to them.

The next thing in this divine pattern is this: “And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.” Did you ever bring a sinner unto Him? It is one thing to bring a person to hear a favorite preacher; quite another thing to bring souls to Jesus. How soon man may take the place of the Lord Jesus in the house. We would esteem the servants of the Lord highly in love for their work’s sake, but the great thing is to come unto Him, bringing sin-sick souls. This man was perfectly helpless, “was borne of four,” and nothing could turn them from bringing him to Jesus. The press and crowd was great. It is so now. But do we know, unless the sinner is brought to Jesus Himself, he will be lost for all eternity? Those who came to Jesus were in earnest. Lord, awake us from our indifference. “They let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.” How many an unsaved soul has a bed on which he rests, it may even be the law, that can only curse him.

Oh, how great was their faith to let both the sick man, and that on which he lay, down to the feet of Jesus. How unlike this are the efforts of thousands in our day. See the vast machinery called Christendom; see multitudes of professed but mistaken servants of Christ j their great effort is to lift the sick and helpless sinner higher, a little higher, make him a little better, a little more sober, or a little more holy, and then we may have a shadow of a hope that Jesus will hear him. Not so our copy: no, the very opposite. Just as he was they let him down at the feet of Jesus. religious teachers! would to God your eyes were opened to see the copy. Did Jesus spurn him and them away?

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” He did not tell those who brought him, to cure the sick man first, and then bring him to Him. He did not tell the sick man to get up and walk, or climb a little higher. He did not tell him to give his sinful heart to God, or to serve God, and then he might be brought to Him. No; just as he was they brought him to Jesus. They did not look to the sick man to improve himself even the least bit. Their faith was not in the sick man, but in Jesus. “And when Jesus saw their faith.” ye preachers of England! does Jesus see your faith? Do you really believe Jesus receives sinners just as they are, utterly helpless? Do you bring the sick to Jesus, or do you do your utmost to hinder them from coming to Jesus just as they are?

Hearken to the preacher come from God, the Eternal Son, and the Son of man. He says: “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” Reader, have you ever been brought to Jesus just as you were? Have you heard Him? Has He said to you, “Thy sins be forgiven thee?” What, all your sins? All the sins of youth, of middle age, or it may be of old age? All forgiven—never to be remembered again? Have you heard Jesus speak thus to you? Oh, have you?

I think I hear a reader say, Why this is contrary to all the religion of the world! Yes, that is true; it was so then. The very scribes of the religious Jews were astounded. And how many now would be filled with hatred at the truth of the unmerited grace seen in our copy. They would say, No, it is not enough to believe, there must be a walk-—a holy walk first—or work also. Jesus says, “Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?” Now granted there must be a holy walk: but the question is just this: Are sins forgiven first in free grace? or is there to be a holy walk first, and then sins forgiven? Well, look at Jesus in this divine copy. Most surely forgiveness of sins comes first, and then rise up and walk.

Did Jesus tell this poor helpless man to walk first, though seeing he could not, and then promise him if he did He would forgive his sins? “He saith to the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.” And immediately he did so.

How clearly the true gospel shines out in this divine picture, but the darkness comprehendeth it not. Some are so dark that they would tell you no man can know whether his sins are forgiven or not, and thus a poor soul so deceived will often say, I cannot believe. Oh, think of it. Do you say you cannot believe Jesus, simply because man says you can never know whether He speaks the truth? If you have never thus come to Jesus, God grant that you may come just now, and just as you are. You will find Him the same Jesus. He freely gives both forgiveness of sins and the Spirit’s power to walk.

C.S.

Bread Cast Upon the Waters: 16 Title Set, Be Thou Clean (Mark 1:40-45)

WHAT a wretched being a leper is, afflicted with a horrid disease, which no one can cure, and shut out of society, as too loathsome for the eyes of his fellow-men. Sad, but true, picture of man's moral condition. Fallen—utterly fallen. The very heart filled with the loathsome disease of sin. His whole nature corrupt—incurable. This little paper may be put into the hands of one who feels the wretchedness of sin. Thou hast sinned. The leprosy has broken out; art thou trying to hide it? God knows it, and thou art wretched. Oh, how wretched! What a burden on thy heart! What is that thou wast saying? I wish I had never been born? Why? Oh! I see; thou hast tried many physicians, but no cure. The leprosy is still there and spreads. Thou hast tried temperance, morality, religion. Thou hast tried to amend, and tried hard, but all in vain; thy case is too bad for these remedies. God knows thy deep sorrow, thy despairing groans.

Who are those two persons there? A loathsome leper and the Son of God. Well now, look; the leper speaks to Jesus, just as he is. He does not ask what he must do to cleanse himself. He came to Him, "beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Does Jesus say, Go and get better first? No! See! Jesus is moved with compassion; and though no other person would touch that wretched leper, Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, and said, "I will, be thou clean." What a wondrous change! That man, whom no one could cure, was in a moment healed: as soon as Jesus had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, AND HE WAS CLEANSED.

Ah! I see your mistake. You have not yet fully seen the love of God to the ungodly in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, trembling sinner! look in the face of Jesus I See Him moved with compassion at the sight of thy leprous wretchedness. Art thou thus brought to Him just as thou art? It was God who sent Him from heaven, that thy leprosy might be cleansed with His very life's blood: and now, raised from the dead, He speaks to thee just as thou art, "I will, be thou clean.”

My fellow-leper, there never was a poor, wretched sinner thus brought and given to Jesus just as he was, but that moment he heard the voice of God in the words of Jesus, and those blessed words were true of him, "and he was cleansed.”

Wouldst thou rob Christ of His glory? Wouldst thou say that thou must get better before Christ can heal thee? Thou wouldst not give an earthly physician such a character. Wilt thou then say of the Great Physician, He receiveth none, and cleanseth none, but those who are getting better? The blessed Jesus rejected none. Thou mayest be too great a Pharisee for Him, but thou canst not be too great a sinner.

Oh, reader! if now thine eyes are opened to see Jesus receiving thee just as thou art, and renouncing all pretensions to righteousness in thyself, believing on Jesus, thou, even thou art cleansed, and cleansed forever. "For, by one offering, he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

C. S.”

How bright there above is the mercy of God!"—

“And void of all guilt, and clear of all sin,

Is my conscience and heart, thro' my Savior's blood."—

"Not a cloud above,"—"not a spot within."

Christ died! then I am clean: "not a spot within."

God's mercy and love: "not a cloud above."

'Tis the Spirit, through faith, thus triumphs o'er sin

"Not a cloud above,"—"not a spot within."

Things New and Old: Volume 30, Supposed Difficulties

PROOFS OF INSPIRATION; THE FORTY DAYS AFTER THE RESURRECTION.

T. G., Florence. In your letter you say: "In Matt. 28 and Mark 16:7, the angel says, 'He goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him.' In Matt. 28:10 the Lord says, 'They go into Galilee, and there they shall see me.' But in Luke 24:49 the Lord says, 'But tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued.' &c. Also in Matt. 28:9 we read 'and held him by the feet;' but in John 20:17 the Lord says, 'Touch me not.' And apparently these two are the same occasion."

That which at first sight may appear a contradiction, contains the clearest proof of divine inspiration. You will find each of the writers gives the history of the events after the resurrection, not according to memory, but in keeping with the aspect of our Lord's history on this earth which each gives. Let us notice them. Matthew keeps to that which concerns Christ's Messiah ship—the rejected king of Israel, owned only by the remnant. Consequently he omits here every word that refers to the church. The order is therefore: verse 1, the end of the Sabbath, our Saturday night. Verses 2-10, what took place in the morning of the Lord's day. The company of women receive the message of the angel; but not a word about the Holy Ghost, and the intended work at Jerusalem. He is rejected of the Jews, and will meet the remnant in Galilee. They are to announce His resurrection. Jesus meets them, and as their message is concerning Galilee, there is not that haste, but they may hold Him by the feet and worship Him. In "touch me not" we shall find it altogether different.

Then verses 11-15 relate to the Jews, and are entirely omitted by the other Gospels. Then verses 16 to end, the remnant meet Him in the former scenes of His labors with them. And these verses throw great light on the millennial kingdom, and the gospel which will then be preached to all nations. As to the church, or special character of the present grace of God, the ascension of Christ, or the work at Jerusalem, or the return of Jesus, not a word. How much Matthew must have remembered. But we are deeply convinced he only wrote the words the Holy Ghost gave him to write.

Mark also says very little. Verse 1 is also separated from verse 2. Verses 2-8 describe what took place early in the morning of the first day of the week. But such tenderness, in keeping with His servant character: "the stone was rolled away;" and "tell his disciples and Peter." In verse 9 to end, new facts are recorded; but up to that verse it is Galilee that is named, as in Matthew. The fact is just mentioned that He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, then to two, then to the eleven; their unbelief; and the commission to preach the good tidings of His resurrection; and His ascension also is named. Just a short outline; but no contradiction to Matthew.

In Luke we seldom get the historic order of events, but their moral order or connection. Jesus is here the Son of man, as in Matthew He is the righteous Jew, or Messiah. Perhaps we might say Matthew is the Jewish Gospel, and Luke the Gentile, or to man. Verse 1 begins with the events of the early morn. There are again fresh interesting particulars which you may trace out, and enjoy, as verses 6 and 7. Also we are told who these women were. (Ver. 10.) One verse only as to the two disciples who ran to the sepulcher. (Ver. 12.) The wonderful interview with Mary is entirely omitted. Verses 13-36, the most instructive narrative of the two disciples at Emmaus. It is the fullest account of any event, describing as it does the three states of soul during this dispensation: the sad hearts, the burning hearts, and hearts in communion—marvelous church lessons. Then verses 36-43, the pattern of the assembly—Jesus in the midst. Oh hear Him! All this has to do with the setting up of the church, first at Jerusalem. To that place they returned from Emmaus. Then verses 44-48, the great present commission, totally distinct from the remnant commission in Matthew. Here the Holy Ghost is wholly occupied with the setting up of the church at Jerusalem. Not a word about Galilee. And as the Holy Ghost would set it up at Jerusalem, they must wait in the city of Jerusalem until they "be endued with power from on high." All this in strict keeping with the fact, that Luke was the vessel the Spirit had chosen to go on and describe the formation and early history of the church, as formed by the Holy Ghost. Thus, instead of going to Galilee, Luke closes here with Jesus being parted from them and carried up into heaven.

In Acts 1 he takes up the history as given to him to narrate. In verse 3 we learn that Jesus was seen forty days, but, as usual, he does not give the order, he does not say when in Jerusalem and when in Galilee. The Holy Ghost does not give him a word to say about Galilee, though he must well have remembered the events of Galilee. Verse 4, he does not say whether this was after they had seen Him in Galilee; but verse 6 may describe the coming together from Galilee, and what took place from that moment until He was taken up. They must have returned to Jerusalem. Indeed, in speaking to them He plainly impresses them with the fact, that grace must begin and triumph in the city of His murderers. Only bear in mind that the Holy Ghost uses Luke to bring the great moral facts before us. He then goes on to describe the formation of the assembly of God on the day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem, and subsequently from the Gentiles at Antioch.

Hitherto we have certainly no contradiction, but each writer states only that which he is inspired to write, and certainly not all which he could remember.

In 1 Cor. 15 we learn He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, then of about five hundred brethren at once, and lastly of Paul.

We now turn to the Gospel of John. The inspired account of John demands our utmost attention. Given by the Holy Ghost so many years after the rest, and when the Jews had utterly rejected Christ, and also after the church had so signally failed, bow much that is new, both at the supper and after the resurrection! In John, Mary Magdalene has a very special place. She is singled out in verse 1, and in verse 2 "she runneth." Afterward she remained at the sepulcher when the two disciples went home. In verse 16 Jesus speaks to her: "Mary." He appeared first to her. (Mark 16:9.) When He met the women (Matt. 28:9), when they held Him by the feet and worshipped Him, it was then only a question of going to tell His brethren that He was risen and would meet them in Galilee, but there need be no haste as to that.

But it was altogether (here in John) another matter. It was not through His mother He chose to announce the wondrous news, but by Mary Magdalene. “Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; BUT GO to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” This was not, I go to Galilee, but a present fact, the result of His death and resurrection. It was the new creation, new relationship. He was the first-born from the dead. They were one now forever with Himself. How His heart longed for them to know it. Touch me not; go and tell them they stand in the same relationship to my Father and God as I stand in to Him. Haste to tell them—there was no need for the women with the other message to haste, they might for the moment take Him by the feet and worship Him.

And think of His joy that evening when He appeared in their midst, and said, Peace be unto you. This was not Galilee, but peace made by the death of the cross—present and eternal. For proof, He showed them His hands and His side. And in still further contrast to Galilee, He said, “Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you;” and He breathes on them the Holy Ghost, that they might make known the peace and forgiveness of sins to others that He had made known unto them. All this is beyond what we get in Matthew, and unspeakably precious. The end of chapter 20 closes the Gospel of John. Then follows a supplementary chapter after these things—and here the scene is Galilee! It is a figure of the millennial morn, quite in keeping with all we have had in Matthew and Mark, and is Jewish: Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, is the chief person. He it was that fed the sheep and lambs of the Jewish fold. This is added, as the ministry of John has its place when Peter’s had ceased to the Jews. Thus all is in inspired harmony. To our God be all praise.

C S.

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Things New and Old: Volume 32, Preparation Day, The: No. 4

We, have traced the holy sufferer through the hours of the preparation day until the third hour, or nine o’clock a.m. In the seventh journey He halted at the place of crucifixion. We read the words, but how little can we realize the depth of degradation to the holy, holy Son of God. Let us meditate on what took place during the first three hours on the cross, until twelve at noon. What is crucifixion? At first it was an instrument of death, shameful and cruel. The poor criminal was stripped naked, a sharp stake was placed in the ground with the point upwards. This was driven through the body of the living prisoner, upwards to the heart, and there he was impaled to die! But this was a merciful death compared to the mode used in the days of our Lord.

A hole was dug in the ground to receive the beam of wood. The feet were nailed to that wood and the body laid in awful agony on the same, and the hands nailed to the cross part at the top. Then think of the torture of the body as the cross was lifted up, and let fall in the hole prepared, It was at this supreme moment of untold pain that Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” For three hours He hung there on that shameful cross, brutal soldiers mocking Him, rulers deriding Him. Oh, behold Him there crucified between two thieves. “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.” And there the unfeeling crowd pass by, wagging their heads, and saying, “Ah thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross.” The priests, yes, the chief of them, joined in the mockery. The very thieves reviled Him. (Mark 15:25-32.) Oh, for three hours they sat down and watched Him endure the torture of the cross.

But what was the inward experience of our adorable Lord, as He hung there in cruel suffering? He tells how the fathers had trusted in God, and were delivered, “But I am a worm, and no man... and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord, that he-would deliver him: let him deliver him seeing he delighted in him.” Oh, read the unheard sighs of Jesus in Psalm 22. Was ever sorrow like His sorrow? In the midst of all the cruel mockery, only one voice was heard that owned Him Savior, Lord, One of the reviling thieves was given to Him as He hung there on the cross. He had heard those gracious words, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Faith was given to the dying thief: precious grace. May we not also still pray, Father, forgive the living thieves all around in this day, who are robbing Jesus of His glory as the Savior of sinners, and the giver of eternal life, yea, denying His divinity and atonement for sins—for they know not what they do. But oh, wretched men, beware lest your doom be not that of the dying thief, but that of Judas. For surely the man that pretends to be a minister of Christ, and is a betrayer of the scriptures into the hands of the infidels, is more like Judas than like the dying thief.

Oh, how full the answer of Thy heart, blessed Jesus, to the faith of the tortured dying thief: “Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Yes, he was justly put out of this sinful world, but in grace he was to be with Thee in the paradise of God.

It would appear to have been about noon when Jesus thus spoke to the converted thief, the sixth hour of Jewish time. (Luke 23:43, 44.) (And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.” (Mark 15:33.)

And why is there so little said in the Gospels as to what the holy, holy Lord suffered during those three last hours? Surely it is because it cannot be told. It can only be known to God what Jesus then suffered for us, for our redemption. We only hear the final bitter cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Darkness covered Him from every eye but the eye of God. Oh, think of Him being made sin for us; of all God’s billows rolling over His soul; of all our sins, dear fellow believer, laid on Him—delivered for our offenses, bearing our iniquities—-the infinite wrath of God, which could only be borne by the infinite One.

And now He cries, with a loud voice, “It is Finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.” (John 19:30.) Nothing now remained, but to take down the precious body and lay it in the sepulcher. The great work of the preparation day is finished. Every scripture is fulfilled; all the shadows of the law pass away. The one atoning sacrifice has been offered. Will God accept it? What was the preparation for? The sabbath of the passover week, the sabbath or rest of redemption. As we have seen, God gave the sabbath to Israel because they were redeemed, as a shadow of this rest, or sabbath, to come. Well, let us see what took place. The body of Jesus is laid in the sepulcher at the close of the preparation day. The great stone was laid on the mouth of the sepulcher.

Did God raise Him from the dead on the Jewish sabbath, and thus restore man to rest under the sabbath of the law? No; Jesus lay in the sepulcher all through the sabbath given to Israel, The eternal sabbath of rest for man must be entirely new—the rest of the new Creation. We cannot express in words how entirely all was changed, and all the effect of the work accomplished on the preparation day. When that work was finished the veil was rent. The way of approach to God was opened—opened also was the way for God to come out to man in richest, fullest grace. But this must be by first raising Jesus from the dead. He must be the first-fruits of them that slept. If He be not risen, all He suffered was in vain, as is fully shown in 1 Cor. 15 “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.” Oh, what a first day of the week was that, when God raised Christ from the dead! Could He have given a greater proof that He accepted the work done on the preparation day? The grave clothes were laid peacefully aside, “and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.” How little the disciples understood what had been accomplished on that preparation day! “For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.”

What were the first words Jesus spoke to His disciples when He was risen from the dead? “Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” Yes, He had made peace by His own blood on the preparation day. He showed them His hands and His side. The work was done. It is finished. They heard Him speak unto them. We also are assured by the inspired word that righteousness is reckoned unto us, “if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the; dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 4:24, 25; 5:1, 2.)

What a sabbath of rest, entirely through the work accomplished on the preparation day! Now, if you saw Jesus, if He appeared to you, and you looked at His wounded side and wounded hands, and He were to speak to you with His voice, “Peace unto you” just as He did to His disciples, would not that make you perfectly happy? Well, He says, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Do you believe He died for your sins according to the scriptures? Do you believe that God raised Him from the dead for the purpose of your justification? And believing this, do you know that you are reckoned righteous, or justified from all things before God? Then He says, being justified by faith you have peace, with God—and all through, our Lord Jesus Christ: yes, through the work He finished on the preparation day.

The redemption from Egypt was temporal, and the sabbath given to them also was temporal, for a time: has been lost, and passed away. But the redemption effected by Jesus on the preparation day is eternal, not for a time, and can never be lost. It does not depend on what we shall do, but on what He has done. The efficacy of His work, like His person, is ever the same, “having obtained eternal redemption for us;” our sabbath of peace and rest is eternal also. Soon we shall enjoy it in all its fullness in His presence, where all is peace and rest forever.

Such is the everlasting portion of him that believeth. And do not forget, “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36.) Which is before you? An eternity of the blessed sabbath of the rest of God, or an eternity with His wrath, ever, ever, abiding on you: where “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night.” (Rev. 14:10, 11.) If we think of what this sabbath of rest cost Jesus on the preparation day, and of what God says as to the result of rejecting it, how is it that man can go on with this question unsettled? Eternal rest: or no rest day nor night—torment forever and ever? Do ask yourself, reader, how it will be with your soul? How is it with you now? Have you ceased from all works for salvation, and entered into the rest of God? In this matter be most careful, neither to carry a burden, nor do a work. See Jer. 17:21, 22.

All this is individual. On another occasion we may look at the first great and eternal purpose of God in the work accomplished on the preparation day.

Things New and Old: Volume 32, Preparation Day, The: No. 3

It is now approaching morning on the preparation day. Remember how Jesus had been beaten, spit upon, and mocked at His trial before the high priest. “And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.” (Mark 15:1.) The Jews could convict Him of no sin, and Pilate can find no fault in Him. He fully declares this. He is greatly puzzled. He knows well that for envy the Jews had delivered Him to him.

Oh, what a sight! The weary, bruised, beaten Jesus! There He stands: see how His blessed face has been smitten. And there stand the multitude of the Jews, fiercely accusing the Prisoner, who created the universe. Yes, the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And in their cruel hatred they could only belch out lies against the Holy One. “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar,” &c. And when the Roman governor declared he could find no fault in Him, they were the more fierce.

Pilate, hearing He was from Galilee, seeks to escape from his difficulty by sending Him to Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem at this time. Yes, every possible insult must be heaped upon the Lamb of God. He must be led again through the dark streets of Jerusalem to stand before the wicked Idumean Herod—the voluptuous, cruel murderer. And this wicked man was glad, and hoped to have his curiosity gratified. Not a single word of complaint, even now, escapes the holy lips of Jesus. “He answered him nothing.” Blessed Jesus, may we learn of Thee!

And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. They followed Him like bloodhounds on this preparation day. Yes, they accused Him, their Messiah, to the murderer Herod. They had blindfolded Him, and beaten Him with rods, and in the face. And is there any pity in the heart of Herod? Just as much as the true followers of Jesus have found, and may again find, in the dungeons of the Inquisition. “Herod with his men of war set him at naught, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.”

Thus, Jerusalem, was thy Jehovah, King, and Lord, dragged and mocked by the cruel crowd through thy dark streets. Not a word of pity, or a look of sympathy for Him, who came to do the Father’s will.

Pilate felt the deep wickedness of the chief priests and rulers of the people. Again he tries to set Him free. He says, “I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him.” (Luke 23) Herod, too, had pronounced no sentence of death on Him. The struggle to release Him was made still greater by a message from his wife. This poor Gentile alone pleads for Jesus with Pilate her husband. She says: “Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of

him.” (Matt. 27:19.)

Pilate tried hard to escape the evident guilt of giving up “that just man” by using his privilege of releasing one prisoner at the feast of passover. But no, the Lamb must die on this passover day. The chief priests demand His death, and deliberately prefer a murderer and a robber to the holy and the just One of God—the Lamb without spot. They demand that Jesus shall be crucified. And now Pilate joins them in their wickedness. No evil could they lay to His charge, “But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.” Then the bold words from the Jews were uttered: “His blood be on us, and on our children.”

And what did this representative of the Gentile power then do, convinced, judge as he was, that there was no fault in Jesus? He deliberately released the robber and murderer. And then what? Was there a little respite now? Was the bruised and beaten prisoner, the declared just one, allowed to rest His weary body awhile? The first thing done was to inflict the cruel torment of the Roman lash—a torment under which prisoners often died. Pilate has Him stripped and scourged. How that back was torn with the cruel lash!

Isaiah, more than 600 years before, had described this scene. He who clothes the heavens said, “I was not rebellious, neither turned away back: I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” (Isa. 1:6.) “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” (Isa. 53:7.) Yes, He loved the church and gave Himself for it. Oh, look at that bleeding, bruised Lamb of God, silently suffering all the cruel agony that man could inflict!

How long they tare His back we are not told. Surely this was enough! No. He was now given up to the brutal Roman soldiers. The whole Gentile band was called together. And after all that He had suffered at the hands of His own people the Jews, was there no pity, no relaxation in the cruel torture? No, none! The first twelve hours of the preparation day had about closed (John 19:14) and the first of the measured three hours began with the scourging, about the sixth hour of Roman time: and lasted until the third hour of Jewish time (9 a.m.) when He was crucified.

What took place during these three hours? The awful scourging. This may have been nearly unto death. But all was borne in holy silence, the silence of undying love. No tender hand to wash and dress those bleeding wounds. They took Jesus after the awful torture into the common hall. Patiently He bore the pain as they stripped Him there. “And put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews!” Oh, hold! is not this enough? No, no. “And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.” And when they, the Gentiles, had had their fill of cruel torture and mockery, then Pilate must add one more act of deep degradation. At this very time when the soldiers were wearied out with their mockery, and beating Him with their hands; whilst Jesus was wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, “Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.” And Pilate saith unto them, “Behold the man! Behold the man! Ah, behold the Lamb of God! See the blood drop from His holy crowned brow! Yet this is He who shall come in glory and show that nation his wounded hands. And is there no melting of the Jewish hearts to Him? Was ever sorrow like His sorrow? No, the very priests cried out again, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate at last delivers Him up to them.

There was no rest for Jesus on the preparation day. The soldiers spit on Him, and smite Him on the head, and then take the robe from off Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. Oh, what He went through during these three hours from His condemnation to the cross! His perfectly tender human heart needed sympathy; but lover and friend were far from Him.

It was customary to compel the malefactor to bear his own cross to the place of execution. From John we learn this was carried out on Jesus. After all the beating, scourging, smiting on the head, and torture, we read, “And he bearing his cross went forth.” (John 19:17.) In Luke 23 we read, “And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.” Was this pity to Him in His extreme weakness? No, from all we have seen they may have feared He would die on the way, and so they might lose the Satanic gratification of witnessing His torture on the cross.

Oh, look at that last procession on the preparation day. All that was past was as nothing to what was before Him, yet to come. He was about to drink the dreadful cup of wrath due to millions of souls. Let us look at the procession in Luke 23:27. It is now approaching nine o’clock a.m. A great company of people follow Him. “And of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.” His tender heart was occupied with the terrible judgments so soon to fall on them and their city. What love! God is love.

One other indignity must be added, that the words of Isaiah might be fulfilled, “And he was numbered with the transgressors.” (Isa. 53:12.) “And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.” What a sight! He who was God, walking with two thieves, to that place where the great work of the preparation day must be accomplished, that shall bring lost sinners into the sabbath, the rest of God. The procession halts at the place of a skull, Calvary. “There they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left.” This is at the third hour of Jewish time, or 9 o’clock a.m. The cross was not merely an instrument of death, but of torture and death, the most prolonged and painful torture. The six hours’ torture is divided into two distinct parts. Let us inquire what took place in each.

Things New and Old: Volume 28, Nothing but Leaves: the Fig-Tree Accursed: No. 1

Mark 11:12-21.

“And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a [or, one] fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered, and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And his disciples heard it”.... “And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus, answering, saith unto them, Have faith in God.”

There is one striking peculiarity attached to this miracle of the Lord Jesus. It is the only one of judgment, or the curse. Every other miracle was of the character of blessing. What, then, can be the spiritual significance of this single exception? Let us look at it, both in itself, and in its connection with its context.

Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem, and He sees one fig-tree afar off. He desires fruit. See Him walking to this one tree, so fair, so full of leaf. But when He came to it, “he found nothing but leaves.” For the time of figs, of fruit, was not yet. Surely He who saw Nathanael under another fig-tree knew that there was nothing but leaves on this. Yet He came to it, desiring fruit. He showed that desire, being hungry. And now He pronounced those remarkable words—“No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever.” And He spake those words to be heard by His disciples. “ And his disciples heard it.” That was the last day of that fig-tree; judgment was passed upon it. The very next morning, “ as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots.” How swift and complete the judgment! There can be no more fruit forever from that tree—it is withered from the very roots. Well might Peter exclaim, “Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away.” What can this remarkable action of the Lord mean? What is its teaching to us?

Let us now notice the context Of this miracle, What a yesterday it had! Certainly, to all outward appearance, one of the brightest days of Israel. The entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem—garments spread, and branches of trees cut down, and strewed in the way. “And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Loud: blessed be the kingdom of our father, David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.” Never had the leaves of profession shone with a fresher green. And then we find Jesus entered Jerusalem, and into the temple; and when He had looked round about on all things, He went out, and retired from it all to Bethany, the place of the family remnant.

Now, do you not begin to see the meaning of those remarkable words, “Nothing but leaves?”

Then what took place on the day that judgment was passed on the one fig-tree? See Him enter the temple again; see Him casting out the buyers and sellers, and overthrowing the tables of the money-changers, and suffering no man to carry a burden through the temple. Hear His words: “Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.” Is not this again, “Nothing but leaves?”

There is also another striking connection of o scripture with this miracle, here in Mark 11; 12, and also in Matt. 21. In both cases the parable of the vineyard follows, as it were as an explanation of the miracle of the one fig-tree. The two, taken together, become most deeply interesting. There can be no mistake as to the meaning of the parable. The Pharisees and scribes understood it to mean themselves. God had planted His one vineyard—He had separated one nation from all nations of the earth. It was the trial of what is called in scripture the flesh—the trial of man in his fallen nature. Men, they had placed themselves on this ground of probation, and engaged to keep the law. God had come, seeking fruit, but had found none. As the owner of the vineyard, He had a just right to look for fruit. The parable explains how Israel had treated the prophets and servants of Jehovah, and, as the last test of man, God had sent His own Son. Did He find fruit? Never were there more leaves, as we have seen, but “nothing but leaves.” They said, “This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.” The more we study this parable, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, the more we see how it explains the meaning of the miracle—“Nothing but leaves.”

The connection of scripture is still more striking in Matthew, as showing the connection between this miracle and the Jews, or Judaism.

First, there is the judgment on the one fig-tree that yields no fruit.

Secondly, the parable of the vineyard, which goes beyond all endurance, in the rejection and murder of the Son.

And, in the third place, the wedding feast. (Matt. 22) When they had done their utmost, in rejecting and murdering the Son of God, then it was proved there was no fruit to God in man, even in that one nation so highly privileged. God had come down, manifested in flesh, born of a woman, full of grace and truth; but there was no love of God in the nature of man. Never had there been such a tender, loving Neighbor to man as Jesus; but there was neither love to God, nor love to the neighbor, in man. The flesh was proved to be only fit for the curse, for it was sin, and only sin. Then, after all this, in the riches of His own infinite grace, God spread the feast for man as a lost sinner, and the servants were sent to call the guests—sent first to that very nation, yea, that very city of Jerusalem. And what took place then? “They would not come.” (Matt. 22:3.) And. when other servants were sent, assuring them that all things were ready—all that man as a sinner could need in the presence of God—entreating them to come, “they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.” How terrible the sin of: rejecting the riches of the grace of God! How bitterly all this came to pass, and their city was destroyed.

Thus, as to Israel as a test of man in the flesh, the green-leaved one fig-tree of profession, there was no fruit for Christ. He came, seeking fruit, but found “nothing but leaves.” No more fruit in this the brightest day of profession, than in the dark days of Elijah; yet, in both cases, and at all times, God has an election of grace. This is seen in all scripture, from Abel downwards. God has His remnant of Hannahs and Simeons. But religious man in the flesh is tested, weighed in the balances, and found utterly wanting: “nothing but leaves.”

Let us now look at this remarkable miracle a little more closely: first, as to Jerusalem, or Judaism; and afterward as to Christendom.

Jerusalem was the center of religion—the one green fig-tree of profession—it looked upon all other nations as dogs. Its privileges were exceeding great. The flesh, or man in his natural state, had been tried now in every possible way; and the result, as seen in the last test, the sending of Jesus, the Son of God, had proved that there was only sin in man. This is a lesson that must be learned, and it is impossible to separate sin and the curse—sin and its curse. Thus, if the one fig-tree is the one nation tested in the flesh, and the flesh is found to yield no fruit—nothing but leaves, nothing but sin—its judgment, its curse, must come. But here we come to the most solemn part. The judgment on the fig-tree was terrible, and final. There was not only no fruit found then, when fully and finally tested, but it received its judgment, and there was to be no fruit from it hereafter forever. There is to be no fruit from Israel as in the flesh, as children of Adam, hereafter forever.

How little have they—yea, how little have we—understood this. It may be said, How can this be so, since we know from scripture that they will be the most highly-favored nation on earth, when the kingdom of God shall come on this earth? The instruction of the Lord to Nicodemus settles this apparent difficulty. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” When the Lord restores the house of Israel, He says: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes,” &e. (Eze. 36:26, 27.) No, the trial of man in

the flesh, of sinful flesh, is over forever, withered from the root. “Now is the judgment of this world.” (John 12:31.) This will take us beyond Jerusalem, or the Jews, to the whole world under judgment. Man in the flesh is like the one fig-tree, forever under the just judgment of God: nothing but leaves; hollow, heartless profession, but no fruit. The whole world is like a condemned prisoner; all are concluded guilty, under judgment, waiting for execution. It is there the glad tidings of mercy and pardon begin, and are so suited to us. Let us, then, next see how the teaching in this most singular miracle applies to us, or rather to Christendom.

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