

# JESUS THE CHRIST

*A Study of the Messiah and His Mission according to  
Holy Scriptures both Ancient and Modern*

**By JAMES E. TALMAGE**

One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Commentary (Indented Italics), Underlining and Bolding by  
**Brenda L. High**

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## PREFACE

The scope of the subject presented in this work is expressed on the title page. It will be readily seen that the author has departed from the course usually followed by writers on the Life of Jesus Christ, which course, as a rule, begins with the birth of Mary's Babe and ends with the ascension of the slain and risen Lord from Olivet. The treatment embodied in these pages, in addition to the narrative of the Lord's life in the flesh comprises the Antemortal existence and activities of the world's Redeemer, the revelations and personal manifestations of the glorified and exalted Son of God during the apostolic period of old and in modern times, the assured nearness of the Lord's second advent, and predicted events beyond—all so far as the Holy Scriptures make plain.

It is particularly congruous and appropriate that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the only Church that affirms authority based on specific revelation and commission to use the Lord's Holy Name as a distinctive designation—should set forth her doctrines concerning the Messiah and His mission.

The author of this volume entered upon his welcome service under request and appointment from the presiding authorities of the Church; and the completed work has been read to and is approved by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. It presents, however, the writer's personal belief and profoundest conviction as to the truth of what he has written. The book is published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

A characteristic feature of the work is the guidance afforded by modern scriptures and the explication of the Holy Writ of olden times in the light of present day revelation, which, as a powerful and well directed beam, illumines many dark passages of ancient construction.

The spirit of the sacredness inherent in the subject has been a constant companion of the writer throughout his pleasing labor, and he reverently invokes the same as a minister to the readers of the volume.

JAMES E. TALMAGE.  
Salt Lake City, Utah,  
September, 1915.

## PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

The second edition of this work appeared in December, 1915, and the third in March, 1916. The third edition presented several minor alterations in wording and contained additional notes and references. Succeeding issues, including the fifth which was printed on India paper, and the present edition are practically uniform with the third.

JAMES E. TALMAGE.  
Salt Lake City, Utah,  
October, 1922.

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# 14

## CONTINUATION OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY IN GALILEE

### A LEPER MADE CLEAN

Early in the morning following that eventful Sabbath in Capernaum, our Lord arose "a great while before day" and went in quest of seclusion beyond the town. In a solitary place He gave Himself to prayer, thus demonstrating the fact that, Messiah though He was, He was profoundly conscious of His dependence upon the Father, whose work He had come to do. Simon Peter and other disciples found the place of His retirement, and told Him of the eager crowds who sought Him. Soon the people gathered about Him, and urged that He remain with them; but "he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent." [405] And to the disciples He said: "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth." [406] Thence He departed, accompanied by the few whom He had already closely associated with Himself, and ministered in many towns of Galilee, preaching in the synagogs, healing the sick, and casting out devils.

Among the afflicted seeking the aid that He alone could give came a leper, [407] who knelt before Him, or bowed with his face to the ground, and humbly professed his faith, saying: "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The petition implied in the words of this poor creature was pathetic; the confidence he expressed is inspiring. The question in his mind was not— Can Jesus heal me? But— Will He heal me? In compassionate mercy Jesus laid His hand upon the sufferer, unclean though he was, both ceremonially and physically, for leprosy is a loathsome affliction, and we know that this man was far advanced in the disease since we are told that he was "**full of leprosy.**" Then the Lord said: "I will: be thou clean." The leper was immediately healed. Jesus instructed him to show himself to the priest, and make the offerings prescribed in the law of Moses for such cases as his. [408]

In this instruction we see that Christ had not come to destroy the law, but, as He affirmed at another time, to fulfill it; [409] and at this stage of His work the fulfillment was incomplete. Moreover, had the legal requirements been disregarded in as serious a matter as that of restoring an outcast leper to the society of the community from which he had been debarred, priestly opposition, already waxing strong and threatening against Jesus, would have been augmented, and further hindrance to the Lord's work might have resulted. There was to be no delay in the man's compliance with the Master's instruction; Jesus "straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away."

Furthermore He explicitly directed the man to tell nobody of the manner of his healing. There was perhaps good reason for this injunction of silence, aside from the very general course of our Lord in discountenancing undesirable notoriety; for, had word of the miracle preceded the man's appearing before the priest, obstacles might have been thrown in the way of his Levitical recognition as one who was clean. The man, however, could not keep the good word to himself, but went about "and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter."[410]

## A PALSIED MAN HEALED AND FORGIVEN

It must be borne in mind that no one of the evangelists attempts to give a detailed history of all the doings of Jesus, nor do all follow the same order in relating the incidents with which they associate the great lessons of the Master's teachings. There is much uncertainty as to the actual sequence of events.

"Some days" after the healing of the leper, Jesus was again in Capernaum. The details of His employment during the interval are not specified; but, we may be sure that His work continued, for His characteristic occupation was that of going about doing good.[411] His place of abode in Capernaum was well known, and word was soon noised about that He was in the house.[412] A great throng gathered, so that there was no room to receive them; even the doorway was crowded, and later comers could not get near the Master. To all who were within hearing Jesus preached the gospel. A little party of four approached the house bearing a litter or pallet on which lay a man afflicted with palsy, a species of paralysis which deprived the subject of the power of voluntary motion and usually of speech; the man was helpless. His friends, disappointed at finding themselves unable to reach Jesus because of the press, resorted to an unusual expedient, which exhibited in an unmistakable way their faith in the Lord as One who could rebuke and stay disease, and their determination to seek the desired blessing at His hands.

By some means they carried the afflicted man to the flat roof of the house, probably by an outside stairway or by the use of a ladder, possibly by entering an adjoining house, ascending the stairs to its roof and crossing therefrom to the house within which Jesus was teaching. They broke away part of the roof, making an opening, or enlarging that of the trapdoor such as the houses of that place and time were usually provided with; and, to the surprise of the assembled crowd, they then let down through the tiling the portable couch upon which the palsied sufferer lay. Jesus was deeply impressed by the faith and works[413] of those who had thus labored to place a helpless paralytic before Him; doubtless, too, He knew of the trusting faith in the heart of the sufferer; and, looking compassionately upon the man, He said: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Among the people there assembled were scribes, Pharisees, and doctors of the law, not only representatives of the local synagog but some who had come from distant towns in Galilee, and some from Judea, and even from Jerusalem. The official class had opposed our Lord and His works on earlier occasions, and their presence in the house at this time boded further unfriendly criticism and possible obstruction. They heard the words spoken to the paralytic, and were angered thereat. In their hearts they accused Jesus of the awful offense of blasphemy, which consists essentially in claiming for human or demon power the prerogatives of God, or in dishonoring God by ascribing to Him attributes short of perfection.[414] These unbelieving scholars, who incessantly wrote and talked of the coming of the Messiah, yet rejected Him when He was there present, murmured in silence, saying to themselves: "Who can forgive sins but God only?" Jesus knew their inmost thoughts,[415] and made reply thereto, saying: "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?" And then to emphasize, and to put beyond question His possession of divine authority, He added: "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive 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." The man arose, fully restored; and, taking up the mattress upon which he had been brought, walked out before them. The amazement of the people was mingled with reverence, and many glorified God, of whose power they were witnesses.

The incident demands our further study. According to one of the accounts, the Lord's first words to the afflicted one were: "Son, be of good cheer;" followed directly by the comforting and authoritative assurance: "Thy sins be given thee." [416] The man was probably in a state of fear; he may have known that his ailment was the result of wicked indulgences; nevertheless, though he may have considered the possibility of hearing only condemnation for his transgression, he had faith to be brought. In this man's condition there was plainly a close connection between his past sins and his present affliction; and in this particular his case is not unique, for we read that Christ admonished another, whom He healed, to sin no more lest a worse thing befall him. [417] We are not warranted, however, in assuming that all bodily ills are the result of culpable sin; and against such a conception stands the Lord's combined instruction and rebuke to those who, in the case of a man born blind, asked who had sinned, the man or his parents to bring so grievous an affliction upon him, to which inquiry our Lord replied that the man's blindness was due neither to his own sin nor to that of his parents. [418]

In many instances, however, disease is the direct result of individual sin. Whatever may have been the measure of past offense on the part of the man suffering from palsy, Christ recognized his repentance together with the faith that accompanied it, and it was the Lord's rightful prerogative to decide upon the man's fitness to receive remission of his sins and relief from his bodily affliction. The interrogative response of Jesus to the muttered criticism of the scribes, Pharisees, and doctors, has been interpreted in many

ways. He inquired which was easier, to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or to say, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk." Is it not a rational explanation that, when spoken authoritatively by Him, the two expressions were of allied meaning? The circumstance should have been a sufficient demonstration to all who heard, that He, the Son of Man, claimed and possessed the right and the power to remit both physical and spiritual penalties, to heal the body of visible disease, and to purge the spirit of the no less real malady of sin. In the presence of people of all classes Jesus thus openly asserted His divinity, and affirmed the same by a miraculous manifestation of power.

The charge of blasphemy, which the rabbinical critics formulated in their minds against the Christ, was not to end as a mental conception of theirs, nor to be nullified by our Lord's later remarks. It was through perjured testimony that He finally received unrighteous condemnation and was sent to His death.[419] Already, in that house at Capernaum, the shadow of the cross had fallen athwart the course of His life.

## **PUBLICANS AND SINNERS**

From the house Jesus repaired to the seaside, whither the people followed Him; there He taught them again. At the close of His discourse He walked farther and saw a man named Levi, one of the publicans[420] or official collectors of taxes, sitting at the custom-house where the tariff levied under Roman law had to be paid. This man was known also as Matthew, a nameless distinctively Jewish than is Levi.[421] He afterward became one of the Twelve and the author of the first of the evangelical Gospels. To him Jesus said, "Follow me." Matthew left his place and followed the Lord. Sometime later the new disciple provided a great feast at his house, in honor of the Master; and other disciples were present. So obnoxious to the Jews was the power of Rome to which they were subject, that they regarded with aversion all officials in Roman employ. Particularly humiliating to them was the system of compulsory taxation, by which they, the people of Israel, had to pay tribute to an alien nation, which in their estimation was wholly pagan and heathen.

Naturally, the collectors of these taxes were abhorred; and they, known as publicans, probably resented the discourteous treatment by inconsiderate enforcement of the tax requirements, and, as affirmed by historians, often inflicted unlawful extortion upon the people. If publicans in general were detested, we can readily understand how bitter would be the contempt in which the Jews would hold one of their own nation who had accepted appointment as such an official. In this unenviable status was Matthew when Jesus called him. The publicans formed a distinct social class, for from the community in general they were practically ostracized. All who associated with them were made to share in the popular odium, and "publicans and sinners" became a common designation for the degraded caste. To Matthew's feast many of his friends and some of his fellow officials were invited, so that the gathering was largely made up of these despised "publicans and sinners." And to such an assemblage went Jesus with His disciples.

The scribes and Pharisees could not let pass such an opportunity for faultfinding and caustic criticism. They hesitated to address themselves directly to Jesus, but of the disciples they asked in disdain: "**Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?**" The Master heard, and replied with edifying incisiveness mingled with splendid irony. Citing one of the common aphorisms of the day, He said: "**They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.**" To this He added: "**I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.**" The hypercritical Pharisees were left to make their own application of the rejoinder, which some may have understood to mean that their self-righteousness was arraigned and their claims to superiority derided. Aside from the veiled sarcasm in the Master's words, they ought to have perceived the wisdom enshrined in His answer and to have profited thereby. Is not the physician's place among the afflicted ones? Would he be justified in keeping aloof from the sick and the suffering? His profession is that of combating disease, preventing when possible, curing when necessary, to the full extent of his ability. If the festive assembly at Matthew's house really did comprise a number of sinners, was not the occasion one of rare opportunity for the ministrations of the Physician of Souls? The righteous need no call to repentance; but are the sinners to be left in sin, because those who profess to be spiritual teachers will not condescend to extend a helping hand?

## THE OLD AND THE NEW

Shortly after the entertainment provided by Matthew, the Pharisees were ready with another criticism, and in this they were associated with some of the Baptist's adherents. John was in prison; but many of those who had been drawn to his baptism, and had professed discipleship to him, still clung to his teachings, and failed to see that the Greater One of whom he had testified was then ministering amongst them. The Baptist had been a scrupulous observer of the law; his strict asceticism vied with the rigor of Pharisaic profession. His non-progressive disciples, now left without a leader, naturally fell in with the Pharisees. Some of John's disciples came to Jesus, and questioned Him concerning His seeming indifference in the matter of fasting. They propounded a plain question: "**Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?**"[422] To the friends of the now imprisoned Baptist our Lord's reply must have brought memories of their beloved leader's words, when he had compared himself to the Bridegroom's friend, and had plainly told them who was the real Bridegroom.[423] "**Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.**"[424]

If the questioners were able to comprehend the true import of this reply, they could not fail to find therein an implied abrogation of purely ceremonial observances comprised in the code of rabbinical rules and the numerous traditions associated with the law. But

to make the subject clearer to their biased minds, Jesus gave them illustrations, which may be classed as parabolic. "No man also," said He, "seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles."<sup>[425]</sup>

In such wise did our Lord proclaim the newness and completeness of His gospel. It was in no sense a patching up of Judaism. He had not come to mend old and torn garments; the cloth He provided was new, and to sew it on the old would be but to tear afresh the threadbare fabric and leave a more unsightly rent than at first. Or to change the figure, new wine could not safely be entrusted to old bottles. The bottles here referred to were really bags, made of the skins of animals, and of course they deteriorated with age. Just as old leather splits or tears under even slight strain, so the old bottle-skins would burst from the pressure of fermenting juice, and the good wine would be lost. The gospel taught by Christ was a new revelation, superseding the past, and marking the fulfillment of the law; it was no mere addendum, nor was it a reenactment of past requirements; it embodied a new and an everlasting covenant. Attempts to patch the Judaistic robe of traditionalism with the new fabric of the covenant could result in nothing more sightly than a rending of the fabric. The new wine of the gospel could not be held in the old time-worn containers of Mosaic libations. Judaism would be belittled and Christianity perverted by any such incongruous association.<sup>[426]</sup>

## FISHERS OF MEN

It is improbable that the disciples who followed Jesus in the early months of His ministry had remained with Him continuously down to the time now under consideration. We find that some of those who were later called to the apostleship were following their vocation as fishermen even while Jesus was actively engaged as a Teacher in their own neighborhood. One day, as the Lord stood by the lake or sea of Galilee, the people pressed about Him in great numbers, eager to hear more of the wondrous words He was wont to speak.<sup>[427]</sup> Near the place were two fishing boats drawn in upon the beach; the owners were close by, washing and mending their nets. One of the boats belonged to Simon Peter, who had already become identified with the Master's work; this boat Jesus entered, and then asked Simon to thrust out a little from the land. Seating Himself, as teachers of that time usually did in delivering discourses, the Lord preached from this floating pulpit to the multitude on shore. The subject of the address is not given us.

When the sermon was ended, Jesus directed Simon to launch out into deep water and then let down the nets for a draught. Presumably Andrew was with his brother and possibly other assistants were in the boat. Simon replied to Jesus: "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down

the net. It was soon filled with fishes; so great was the haul that the net began to break, and the busy fishermen signalled to those in the other boat to come to their assistance. The catch filled both boats so that they appeared to be in danger of sinking. Simon Peter was overcome with this new evidence of the Master's power, and, falling at the feet of Jesus, he exclaimed: "**Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**" Jesus answered graciously and with promise: "**Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.**"[428] The occupants of the second boat were Zebedee and his two sons James and John, the last named being he who with Andrew had left the Baptist to follow Jesus at the Jordan.[429] Zebedee and his sons were partners with Simon in the fishing business. When the two boats were brought to land, the brothers Simon and Andrew, and Zebedee's two sons James and John, left their boats and accompanied Jesus.

The foregoing treatment is based on Luke's record; the briefer and less circumstantial accounts given by Matthew and Mark omit the incident of the miraculous draught of fishes, and emphasize the calling of the fishermen. To Simon and Andrew Jesus said: "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." The contrast thus presented between their former vocation and their new calling is strikingly forceful. Theretofore they had caught fish, and the fate of the fish was death; thereafter they were to draw men—to a life eternal. To James and John the call was no less definite; and they too left their all to follow the Master.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 14

**1. Leprosy** – In Biblical usage this name is applied to several diseases, all, however having some symptoms in common, at least in the earlier stages of the malady. The real leprosy is a scourge and a plague in many oriental lands today. Zenos, in *Standard Bible Dict.*, says: "True leprosy, as known in modern times, is an affection characterized by the appearance of nodules in the eye-brows, the cheeks, the nose, and the lobes of the ears, also in the hands and feet, where the disease eats into the joints, causing the falling off of fingers and toes. If nodules do not appear, their place is taken by spots of blanched or discolored skin (Mascular leprosy). Both forms are based upon a functional degeneration of the nerves of the skin. Its cause was discovered by Hansen in 1871 to be a specific bacillus. Defective diet, however, seems to serve as a favorable condition for the culture of the bacillus. Leprosy was one of the few abnormal conditions of the body which the Levitical law declared unclean. Elaborate provision was therefore made for testing its existence and for the purification of those who were cured of it."

Deems, *Light of the Nations*, p. 185, summing up the conditions incident to the advanced stages of the dread disease, writes: "The symptoms and the effects of this disease are very loathsome. There comes a white swelling or scab, with a change of the color of the hair on the part from its natural hue to yellow; then the appearance of a taint going deeper than the skin, or raw flesh appearing in the swelling. Then it spreads and attacks

the cartilaginous portions of the body. The nails loosen and drop off, the gums are absorbed, and the teeth decay and fall out; the breath is a stench, the nose decays; fingers, hands, feet, may be lost, or the eyes eaten out. The human beauty has gone into corruption, and the patient feels that he is being eaten as by a fiend, who consumes him slowly in a long remorseless meal that will not end until he be destroyed. He is shut out from his fellows. As they approach he must cry, 'Unclean! unclean!' that all humanity may be warned from his precincts. He must abandon wife and child. He must go to live with other lepers, in disheartening view of miseries similar to his own. He must dwell in dismantled houses or in the tombs. He is, as Trench says, a dreadful parable of death. By the laws of Moses (Lev. 13:45; Numb. 6:9; Ezek. 24:17) he was compelled, as if he were mourning for his own decease, to bear about him the emblems of death, the rent garments; he was to keep his head bare and his lip covered, as was the custom with those who were in communion with the dead. When the Crusaders brought the leprosy from the East, it was usual to clothe the leper in a shroud, and to say for him the masses for the dead.... In all ages this indescribably horrible malady has been considered incurable. The Jews believed that it was inflicted by Jehovah directly, as a punishment for some extraordinary perversity or some transcendent act of sinfulness, and that only God could heal it. When Naaman was cured, and his flesh came back like that of a little child, he said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel,' (2 Kings 5:14, 15.)"

The fact that leprosy is not ordinarily communicable by mere outward contact is accentuated by Trench, *Notes on the Miracles*, pp. 165-168, and the isolation of lepers required by the Mosaic law is regarded by him as an intended object lesson and figure to illustrate spiritual uncleanness. He says: "I refer to the mistaken assumption that leprosy was catching from one person to another; and that the lepers were so carefully secluded from their fellowmen lest they might communicate the disease to others, as in like manner that the torn garment, the covered lip, the cry, 'Unclean, unclean' (Lev. 13:45) were warnings to all that they should keep aloof, lest unawares touching a leper, or drawing unto too great a nearness, they should become partakers of this disease. So far from any danger of the kind existing, nearly all who have looked closest into the matter agree that the sickness was incommunicable by ordinary contact from one person to another. A leper might transmit it to his children, or the mother of a leper's children might take it from him; but it was by no ordinary contact communicable from one person to another. All the notices in the Old Testament, as well as in other Jewish books, confirm the statement that we have here something very much higher than a mere sanitary regulation. Thus, when the law of Moses was not observed, no such exclusion necessarily found place; Naaman the leper commanded the armies of Syria (2 Kings 5:1); Gehazi, with his leprosy that never should be cleansed, (2 Kings 5:27) talked familiarly with the king of apostate Israel (2 Kings 8:5).... How, moreover, should the Levitical priests, had the disease been this creeping infection, have ever themselves escaped it, obliged as they were by their very office to submit the leper to actual handling and closest examination?... Leprosy was nothing short of a living death, a

corrupting of all the humors, a poisoning of the very springs, of life; a dissolution, little by little, of the whole body, so that one limb after another actually decayed and fell away. Aaron exactly describes the appearance which the leper presented to the eyes of the beholders, when, pleading for Miriam, he says, 'Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb.' (Numb. 12:12.) The disease, moreover, was incurable by the art and skill of man; not that the leper might not return to health; for, however rare, such cases are contemplated in the Levitical law.... The leper, thus fearfully bearing about the body the outward and visible tokens of sin in the soul, was treated throughout as a sinner, as one in whom sin had reached its climax, as one dead in trespasses and sins. He was himself a dreadful parable of death. He bore about him the emblems of death (Lev. 13:45); the rent garments, mourning for himself as one dead; the head bare as they were wont to have it who were defiled by communion with the dead (Numb. 6:9; Ezek. 24:27); and the lip covered (Ezek. 24:17).... But the leper was as one dead, and as such was shut out of the camp (Lev. 13:46; Numb. 5:2-4). and the city (2 Kings 7:3), this law being so strictly enforced that even the sister of Moses might not be exempted from it (Numb. 12:14, 15); and kings themselves, as Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:21; 2 Kings 15:5) must submit to it; men being by this exclusion taught that what here took place in a figure, should take place in the reality with everyone who was found in the death of sin."

For the elaborate ceremonies incident to the cleansing of a recovered leper see Lev. chap. 14.

**2. Blasphemy** – The essence of the deep sin of blasphemy lies not, as many suppose, in profanity alone, but as Dr. Kelso, *Stand. Bible Dict.*, summarizes: "Every improper use of the divine name (Lev. 24:11), speech derogatory to the Majesty of God (Matt. 26:65), and sins with a high hand – i.e. premeditated transgressions of the basal principles of the theocracy (Numb. 9:13; 15:30; Exo. 31:14) – were regarded as blasphemy; the penalty was death by stoning (Lev. 24:16)." *Smith's Bible Dict.* states: "Blasphemy, in its technical English sense, signifies the speaking evil of God, and in this sense it is found in Psalm 74:18; Isa. 52:5; Rom. 2:24, etc.... On this charge both our Lord and Stephen were condemned to death by the Jews. When a person heard blasphemy he laid his hand on the head of the offender, to symbolize his sole responsibility for the guilt, and rising on his feet, tore his robe, which might never again be mended." (See Matt. 26:65.)

**3. Publican** – "A word originally meaning a contractor for public works or supplies, or a farmer of public lands, but later applied to Romans who bought from the government the right to collect taxes in a given territory. These buyers, always knights (senators were excluded by their rank), became capitalists and formed powerful stock companies, whose members received a percentage on the capital invested. Provincial capitalists could not buy taxes, which were sold in Rome to the highest bidders, who to recoup themselves sublet their territory (at a great advance on the price paid the government) to the native (local) publicans, who in their turn had to make a profit on their purchase

money, and being assessors of property as well as collectors of taxes, had abundant opportunities for oppressing the people, who hated them both for that reason and also because the tax itself was the mark of their subjection to foreigners." — J. R. Sterrett in *Stand. Bible Dict.*

**4. Fishers of Men** — "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," said Jesus to fishermen who afterward became His apostles (Matt. 4:19). Mark's version is nearly the same (1:17), while that of Luke (5:10) reads: "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." The correct translation is, as commentators practically agree, "From henceforth thou shalt take men alive." This reading emphasizes the contrast given in the text — that between capturing fish to kill them and winning men to save them. Consider in this connection the Lord's prediction through Jeremiah (16:16), that in reaching scattered Israel, "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them;" etc.

**5. "Thy Sins Be Forgiven Thee"** — The following commentary by Edersheim (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. i, pp. 505, 506) on the incident under consideration is instructive: "In this forgiveness of sins He presented His person and authority as divine, and He proved it such by the miracle of healing which immediately followed. Had the two been inverted, [i.e. had Christ first healed the man and afterward told him that his sins were forgiven] there would have been evidence, indeed, of His power, but not of His divine personality, nor of His having authority to forgive sins; and this, not the doing of miracles, was the object of His teaching and mission, of which the miracles were only secondary evidence. Thus the inward reasoning of the scribes, which was open and known to Him who readeth all thoughts, issued in quite the opposite of what they could have expected. Most unwarranted, indeed, was the feeling of contempt which we trace in their unspoken words, whether we read them: 'Why does this one thus speak blasphemies?' or, according to a more correct transcript of them: 'Why does this one speak thus? He blasphemeth!' Yet from their point of view they were right, for God alone can forgive sins; nor has that power ever been given or delegated to man. But was He a mere man, like even the most honored of God's servants? Man, indeed; but 'the Son of Man.' ... It seemed easy to say: 'Thy sins have been forgiven.' But to Him, who had authority to do so on earth, it was neither more easy nor more difficult than to say: 'Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.' Yet this latter, assuredly, proved the former, and gave it in the sight of all men unquestioned reality. And so it was the thoughts of these scribes, which, as applied to Christ, were 'evil' — since they imputed to Him blasphemy — that gave occasion for offering real evidence of what they would have impugned and denied. In no other manner could the object alike of miracles and of this special miracle have been so attained as by the 'evil thoughts' of these scribes, when, miraculously brought to light, they spoke out the inmost possible doubt, and pointed to the highest of all questions concerning the Christ. And so it was once more the wrath of man which praised Him."

## FOOTNOTES

[405] Luke 4:42-44.

[406] Mark 1:38.

[407] Mark 1:40-45; Matt. 8:2-4; Luke 5:12-15.

[408] Lev. 14:2-10. Note 1, end of chapter.

[409] Matt. 5:17.

[410] Mark 1:45.

[411] Acts 10:38.

[412] Mark 2:1-12; compare Matt. 9:2-8; Luke 5:17-24.

[413] Compare James 2:14-18.

[414] Note 2, end of chapter.

[415] See another instance of our Lord reading unuttered thoughts. Luke 7:39-50.

[416] Matt. 9:2. Note 5, end of chapter.

[417] John 5:14. See Chapter 15.

[418] John 9:1-3.

[419] Compare John 10:33, and 5:18; Matt. 26:65, 66.

[420] Note 3, end of chapter.

[421] Matt. 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32.

[422] Mark 2:18-22; Matt. 9:14-17; Luke 5:33-39.

[423] See Chapter 12.

[424] Mark 2:19, 20.

[425] Mark 2:21, 22.

[426] See "The Great Apostasy" 7:5.

[427] Luke 5:1-11; compare Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20.

[428] Note 4, end of chapter.

[429] See Chapter 11.

# 15

## LORD OF THE SABBATH

### THE SABBATH DISTINCTIVELY SACRED TO ISRAEL

The observance of the Sabbath as a holy day was prominent among the Lord's requirements of His people, Israel, from a very early period in their history as a nation. Indeed, the keeping of the Sabbath as a day of surcease from ordinary toil was a national characteristic, by which the Israelites were distinguished from pagan peoples, and rightly so, for the holiness of the Sabbath was made a mark of the covenant between the chosen people and their God. The sanctity of the Sabbath had been prefigured in the account of the creation, antedating the placing of man upon the earth, as shown by the fact that God rested after the six periods or days of creative work, and blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.[430] In the course of Israel's exodus, the seventh day was set apart as one of rest, upon which it was not allowed to bake, seethe, or otherwise cook food. A double supply of manna had to be gathered on the sixth day, while on other days the laying-by of a surplus of this daily bread sent from heaven was expressly forbidden. The Lord observed the sacredness of the holy day by giving no manna thereon.[431]

The commandment to celebrate the Sabbath in strictness was made definite and explicit in the Decalogue, written by the hand of God amidst the awful glory of Sinai; and the injunction was kept before the people through frequent proclamation.[432] It was unlawful to kindle a fire on that day; and record is made of a man who was put to death for gathering sticks on the seventh day.[433] Under the administration of later prophets, the holiness of the Sabbath, the blessings promised to those who sanctified the day unto themselves, and the sin of Sabbath desecration were reiterated in words of inspired forcefulness.[434] Nehemiah admonished and reprovved in the matter, and attributed the affliction of the nation to the forfeiture of Jehovah's favor through Sabbath violation.[435] By the mouth of Ezekiel the Lord affirmed that the institution of the Sabbath was a sign of the covenant between Himself and the people of Israel; and with stern severity He upbraided those who heeded not the day.[436] To the separate branch of the Israelitish nation that had been colonized on the western hemisphere, regard for the sanctity of the Sabbath was no less an imperative requirement.[437]

The observance demanded, however, was the very opposite of affliction and burden; the Sabbath was consecrated to rest and righteous enjoyment, and was to be a day of

spiritual feasting before the Lord. It was not established as a day of abstinence; all might eat, but both mistress and maid were to be relieved from the work of preparing food; neither master nor man was to plow, dig or otherwise toil; and the Weekly day of rest was as much the boon of the cattle as of their owners.

In addition to the weekly Sabbath, the Lord in mercy prescribed also a sabbatic year; in every seventh year the land was to rest, and thereby its fertility was enhanced.[438] After seven times seven years had passed, the fiftieth was to be celebrated throughout as a year of jubilee, during which the people should live on the accumulated increase of the preceding seasons of plenty, and rejoice in liberality by granting to one another redemption from mortgage and bond, forgiveness of debt, and general relief from burdens – all of which had to be done in mercy and justice.[439] The Sabbaths established by the Lord, whether of days, of years, or of weeks of years, were to be times of refreshing, relief, blessing, bounty, and worship.

*What would it be like to have a year of jubilee, every 50<sup>th</sup> year, where mortgages and debts could be forgiven – a time of “refreshing, relief, blessing, bounty, and worship”.*

To the many who profess to regard the necessity of toil as a part of the curse evoked through Adam's fall, the Sabbath should appeal as a day of temporary reprieve, a time of exemption from labor, and as affording blessed opportunity of closer approach to the Presence from which mankind has been shut out through sin. And to those who take the higher view of life, and find in work both happiness and material blessing, the periodical relief brings refreshment and gives renewed zest for the days that follow.

But long before the advent of Christ, the original purpose of the Sabbath had come to be largely ignored in Israel; and the spirit of its observance had been smothered under the weight of rabbinical injunction and the formalism of restraint. In the time of the Lord's ministry, the technicalities prescribed as rules appended to the law were almost innumerable; and the burden thus forced upon the people had become well nigh unbearable. Among the many wholesome requirements of the Mosaic law, which the teachers and spiritual rulers of the Jews had made thus burdensome, that of Sabbath observance was especially prominent. The "hedge," which by unwarranted assumption they professedly set about the law,[440] was particularly thorny in the sections devoted to the Jewish Sabbath. Even trifling infractions of traditional rules were severely punished, and the capital penalty was held before the eyes of the people as a supreme threat for extreme desecration.[441]

## **THE HEALING OF A CRIPPLE ON THE SABBATH**

In view of these conditions, we are not surprised to find our Lord confronted with charges of Sabbath violation relatively early in the course of His public work. An instance attended with many great developments is recorded by John,[442] whose

narrative covers the incident of a very impressive miracle. Jesus was again in Jerusalem at the time of one of the Jewish festivals.[443] There was a pool of water, called Bethesda, near the sheep market in the city. From the recorded description, we may understand this to have been a natural spring; possibly the water was rich in dissolved solids or gases, or both, making it such as we would call today a mineral spring; for we find that the water was reputed to possess curative virtues, and many afflicted folk came to bathe therein. The spring was of the pulsating variety; at intervals its waters rose with bubbling disturbance, and then receded to the normal level. Mineral springs of this kind are known today in many parts of the world. Some believed that the periodical upwelling of the Bethesda waters was the result of supernatural agency; and it was said that "whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." The Bethesda pool was wholly or partly enclosed; and five porches had been built for the shelter of those who waited at the spring for the intermittent bubbling up of the water.

On a certain Sabbath day, Jesus visited the pool and saw many afflicted folk thus waiting. Among them lay a man who for thirty-eight years had been grievously afflicted. From the man's statement of his helplessness we may infer that his malady was paralysis, or possibly an extreme form of rheumatism; whatever his affliction, it was so disabling as to give him little chance of getting into the pool at the critical time, for others less crippled crowded him away; and, according to the legends regarding the curative properties of the spring, only the first to enter the pool after the agitation of the water might expect to be healed.

Jesus recognized in the man a fit subject for blessing, and said to him: "Wilt thou be made whole?" The question was so simple as almost to appear superfluous. Of course the man wanted to be made well, and on the small chance of being able to reach the water at the right moment was patiently yet eagerly waiting. There was purpose, however, in these as in all other words of the Master. The man's attention was drawn to Him, fixed upon Him; the question aroused in the sufferer's heart renewed yearning for the health and strength of which he had been bereft since the days of his youth. His answer was pitiful, and revealed his almost hopeless state of mind; he thought only of the rumored virtues of Bethesda pool as he said: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." Then spake Jesus: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Immediately strength returned to the man, who for nearly four decades had been a helpless invalid; he obeyed the Master, and, taking up the little mattress or pallet on which he had rested, walked away.

He had not gone far, before the Jews, that is to say, some of the official class, for so the evangelist John employs the term, saw him carrying his bed; and it was the Sabbath day. To their peremptory reprimand he replied out of the gratitude and honest simplicity of his heart, that He who had healed him had told him to take up his bed and

walk. The interest of the inquisitors was instantly turned from the man toward Him who had wrought the miracle; but the erstwhile cripple could not name his Benefactor, as he had lost sight of Jesus in the crowd before he had found opportunity for question or thanks. The man who had been healed went to the temple, possibly impelled by a desire to express in prayer his gratitude and joy. There Jesus found him, and said unto him: "**Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.**"[444] The man had probably brought about his affliction through his own sinful habits. The Lord decided that he had suffered enough in body, and terminated his physical suffering with the subsequent admonition to sin no more.

The man went and told the rulers who it was that had healed him. This he may have done with a desire to honor and glorify the Giver of his boon; we are not justified in ascribing to him any unworthy purpose, though by his act he was instrumental in augmenting the persecution of his Lord. So intense was the hatred of the priestly faction that the rulers sought a means of putting Jesus to death, under the specious pretense of His being a Sabbath-breaker. We may well ask of what act they could possibly have hoped to convict Him, even under the strictest application of their rules. There was no proscription against speaking on the Sabbath; and Jesus had but spoken to heal. He had not carried the man's bed, nor had He attempted even the lightest physical labor. By their own interpretation of the law they had no case against Him.

## OUR LORD'S REPLY TO THE ACCUSING JEWS

Nevertheless, the Jewish officials confronted Jesus with accusations. Whether the interview took place within the temple walls, on the open street, at the market place, or in the judgment hall, matters not. His reply to their charges is not confined to the question of Sabbath observance; it stands as the most comprehensive sermon in scripture on the vital subject of the relationship between the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

His first sentence added to the already intense anger of the Jews. Referring to the work He had done on the holy day, He said: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." This remark they construed to be a blasphemy.[445] "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." To their spoken or unuttered protest, Jesus replied, that He, the Son, was not acting independently, and in fact could do nothing except what was in accordance with the Father's will, and what He had seen the Father do; that the Father so loved the Son as to show unto Him the Father's works.

Be it observed that Jesus in no way attempted to explain away their construction of His words; on the contrary He confirmed their deductions as correct. He did associate Himself with the Father, even in a closer and more exalted relationship than they had conceived. The authority given to Him by the Father was not limited to the healing of

bodily infirmities; He had power even to raise the dead – **"For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."**

Moreover, the judgment of men had been committed unto Him; and no one could honor the Father except by honoring the Son. Then followed this incisive declaration: **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."**

Christ's realm was not bounded by the grave; even the dead were wholly dependent upon Him for their salvation; and to the terrified ears of His dumbfounded accusers He proclaimed the solemn truth, that even then the hour was near in which the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God. Ponder His profound affirmation: **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."** The murderous rage of the Jews was rebuffed by the declaration that without His submission they could not take His life: **"For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."** Another utterance was equally portentous: **"And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."** He, the Son of the exalted and glorified Man of Holiness and now Himself a mortal Man,[446] was to be the judge of men.

No wonder they marveled; such doctrine they had never before heard nor read; it was not of the scribes nor of the rabbis, of neither the Pharisaic nor Sadducean schools. But He reproved their amazement, saying: **"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."**[447]

This enunciation of the resurrection, so plainly made that the most unlettered could understand, must have offended any Sadducees present, for they emphatically denied the actuality of the resurrection. The universality of a resurrection is here unquestionably affirmed; not only the righteous but even those who merit condemnation are to come forth from their graves in their bodies of flesh and bones.[448]

Then, renewing His solemn asseveration of the unity of His Father's will and His own, Christ discussed the matter of witnesses to His work. He admitted what was a recognized tenet of the time that no man's unsupported witness of himself was sufficient; but, He added: **"There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true."** He cites John the Baptist, and reminds them that they had sent a delegation to him, and that John had answered them by bearing testimony of the Messiah; and John had been a burning and a shining light, in whose illuminating ministry many had temporarily rejoiced. The hostile Jews were

left to see that the witness of John was valid under their strictest construction of the rules of evidence; "But," He continued, "**I receive not testimony from man ... But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.**"

Then in terms of unqualified condemnation, He told them they were devoid of the Father's word, for they refused to accept Himself whom the Father had sent. With humiliating directness He admonished these learned men of the law, these interpreters of the prophets, these professional expounders of sacred writ, to betake themselves to reading and study. "**Search the scriptures,**" said He, "**for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.**" Convictingly He continued – that they who admitted and taught that in the scriptures lay the way to eternal life, refused to come to Him, of whom those same scriptures testified, though by coming they might obtain eternal life. "**I receive not honour from men,**" He added, "**But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.**" They knew that they sought for honor among men, received honors from one another, were made rabbis and doctors, scribes and teachers, by the bestowal of titles and degrees – all of men; but they rejected Him who came in the name of One infinitely greater than all their schools or societies – He had come in the supreme name of the Father. The cause of their spiritual ignorance was pointed out – they relied upon the honors of men, and sought not the honor of real service in the cause of God.

He had spoken of the authority of judgment that had been committed to Himself; now He explained that they should not think He would accuse them before the Father; a lesser one than He would accuse, even Moses, another of His witnesses in whom they professed such trust – Moses whom they all were said to believe – and, driving home the full effect of His powerful arraignment, the Lord continued: "**For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?**" Such was the illuminating instruction combined with burning denunciation that these men had called forth by their futile attempt to convict Jesus on the charge of Sabbath desecration. This was but one of many evil machinations by which they so determinedly plotted, and strove to attach the stigma and invoke the penalty of Sabbath-breaking upon the very One who had ordained the Sabbath and was in truth and verity the one and only Lord thereof.

## **THE DISCIPLES CHARGED WITH SABBATH-BREAKING**

We may profitably consider in this connection other instances of good work done by our Lord on Sabbath days; and this we may do without undue regard to the order of the events in time. We again find Jesus in Galilee, whether prior to or after His visit to Jerusalem at the time of the unidentified feast, on which occasion He wrought the miracle of healing at the Bethesda pool, matters not. On a certain Sabbath, He and the

disciples walked through a field of grain,[449] and, being hungry, the disciples began to pluck some of the ripening ears; rubbing out the kernels between their hands, they ate. There was no element of theft in what they did, for the Mosaic law provided that in passing through another's vineyard or corn field one might pluck grapes or corn to relieve hunger; but it was forbidden to use a sickle in the field, or to carry away any of the grapes in a vessel.[450] The permission extended only to the relief of present need. When the disciples of Jesus availed themselves of this lawful privilege, there were Pharisees on the watch, and these came at once to the Master, saying: "Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day." The accusers doubtless had in mind the rabbinical dictum that rubbing out an ear of grain in the hands was a species of threshing; that blowing away the chaff was winnowing; and that it was unlawful to thresh or winnow on the Sabbath. Indeed, some learned rabbis had held it to be a sin to walk on grass during the Sabbath, inasmuch as the grass might be in seed, and the treading out of the seed would be as the threshing of grain.

Jesus defended the disciples by citing a precedent applicable to the case, and of much greater import. The instance was that of David, who with a small company of men had asked bread of the priest Ahimelech; for they were hungry and in haste. The priest had none but consecrated bread, the loaves of shewbread which were placed in the sanctuary at intervals, and which none but the priests were allowed to eat. In view of the condition of urgent need the priest had given the shewbread to the hungry men.[451] Jesus also reminded the critical Pharisees that the priests in the temple regularly did much work on the Sabbath in the slaughtering of sacrificial victims and in altar service generally, yet were held blameless because of the higher requirements of worship which rendered such labor necessary; and added with solemn emphasis: "**But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.**" He cited the word of God spoken through Hosea, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,"[452] and reproved at once their ignorance and their unrighteous zeal by telling them that had they known what that scripture meant they would not have condemned the guiltless. Be it remembered, "**The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.**"[453]

His reproof was followed by the affirmation of His personal supremacy: "For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day!" What can we gather from that declaration but that He, Jesus, there present in the flesh, was the Being through whom the Sabbath had been ordained, that it was He who had given and written in stone the decalog, including "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy," and, "the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God"?

## A PHARISAICAL PLOT

Again on a Sabbath, Jesus went into a synagog, and saw in the congregation a man whose right hand was withered.[454] There were Pharisees present, and they watched to see whether Jesus would heal the man, their purpose being to accuse Him if He did

so. The Pharisees asked: "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?" Our Lord countered their poorly veiled purpose by asking: "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days?" and extended the question, "or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" They held their peace, for the question was double-edged. To reply in the affirmative would have been to justify the work of healing; a negative answer would have stultified them. He put another question: **"What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep?"**

As the Pharisees could not or would not reply, He summed up the whole matter thus: **"Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days."** He called upon the man with the withered hand to stand forth before the congregation. Grief and anger were mingled in His penetrating and sweeping glance; but, turning with compassion toward the afflicted one, He commanded him to stretch forth his hand; the man obeyed, and lo! the hand "was restored whole, like as the other."

The discomfited Pharisees were furious, "filled with madness" Luke says; and they went out to plot anew against the Lord. So bitter was their hatred that they allied themselves with the Herodians, a political party generally unpopular among the Jews.[455] The rulers of the people were ready to enter into any intrigue or alliance to accomplish their avowed purpose of bringing about the death of the Lord Jesus. Aware of the wicked determination against Him, Jesus withdrew Himself from the locality. Other accusations of Sabbath-breaking, brought against Christ by Jewish casuists, will be considered later.[456]

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 15

**1. Rabbinical Requirements Concerning Sabbath Observance.**— "No feature of the Jewish system was so marked as their extraordinary strictness in the outward observance of the Sabbath, as a day of entire rest. The Scribes had elaborated from the command of Moses, a vast array of prohibitions and injunctions, covering the whole of social, individual, and public life, and carried it to the extreme of ridiculous caricature. Lengthened rules were prescribed as to the kinds of knots which might legally be tied on the Sabbath. The camel-driver's knot and the sailor's were unlawful, and it was equally illegal to tie or to loose them. A knot which could be untied with one hand might be undone. A shoe or sandal, a woman's cup, a wine or oil-skin, or a flesh-pot might be tied. A pitcher at a spring might be tied to the body-sash, but not with a cord.... To kindle or extinguish a fire on the Sabbath was a great desecration of the day, nor was even sickness allowed to violate Rabbinical rules. It was forbidden to give an emetic on the Sabbath— to set a broken bone, or put back a dislocated joint, though some Rabbis, more liberal, held that whatever endangered life made the Sabbath law void, 'for the commands were given to Israel only that they might live by them.' One

who was buried under ruins on the Sabbath, might be dug for and taken out, if alive, but, if dead, he was to be left where he was, till the Sabbath was over." – Geikie, *Life and Words of Christ*, chap. 38.

**2. The Unnamed Feast.** – There has been no little discussion as to the particular festival referred to in John 5:1, at the time of which Jesus healed the cripple at the pool of Bethesda. Many writers hold that it was the Passover, others that it was the feast of Purim, or some other Jewish celebration. The only semblance of importance attaching to the question is the possibility of learning from the fact, if it could be proved, something of the chronological order of events at this period of our Lord's life. We are not told which feast this was, neither the year nor the time of the year when it occurred. The miracle wrought on the occasion, and the doctrinal discourse delivered as a result thereof, depend for their value in no degree on the determination of date.

**3. Shewbread.** – The name means "bread of the presence," signifying that it was placed in the presence of Jehovah. The bread so sanctified consisted of twelve loaves, made without leaven. They were to be deposited in the Holy Place in two columns of six loaves each. Zenos, in *Stand. Bible Dict.* writes: "They were allowed to remain there for a whole week, at the end of which period they were removed, and eaten by the priest upon holy ground, i.e. within the precincts of the sanctuary. For other persons than priests to eat of the loaves of the shewbread was regarded as sacrilegious, for they were 'holy.'" See Exo. 25:30; Lev. 24:5-9; 1 Sam. 21:1-6.

**4. The Sabbath Was Made for Man and Not Man for the Sabbath.** – Edersheim (vol. i, pp. 57, 58) says: "When on his flight from Saul, David had, 'when an hungered,' eaten of the shewbread and given it to his followers, although, by the letter of the Levitical law, it was only to be eaten by the priests. Jewish tradition vindicated his conduct on the plea that 'danger to life superseded the Sabbath law,' and hence, all laws connected with it... In truth, the reason why David was blameless in eating the shewbread was the same as that which made the Sabbath labor of the priests lawful. The Sabbath law was not one merely of rest, but of rest for worship. The service of the Lord was the object in view. The priests worked on the Sabbath, because this service was the object of the Sabbath; and David was allowed to eat of the shewbread, not [solely] because there was danger to life from starvation, but because he pleaded that he was on the service of the Lord, and needed this provision. The disciples, when following the Lord, were similarly on the service of the Lord; ministering to Him was more than ministering in the temple, for He was greater than the temple. If the Pharisees had believed this, they would not have questioned their conduct, nor in so doing have themselves infringed that higher law which enjoined mercy, not sacrifice."

## FOOTNOTES

- [430] Gen. 2:3.
- [431] Exo. 16:16-31.
- [432] Exo. 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:13-15; 34:21; Lev. 19:3; 23:3; Deut. 5:12-14.
- [433] Exo. 35:3; Numb. 15:32-36.
- [434] Isa. 56:2; 58:13; Jer. 17:21-24.
- [435] Neh. 8:9-12; 13:15-22.
- [436] Ezek. 20:12-24.
- [437] B. of M., Jarom 1:5; Mosiah 13:16-19; 18:23.
- [438] Lev. 25:1-8; compare 26:34, 35.
- [439] Lev. 25:10-55.
- [440] See Chapter 5 herein.
- [441] Note 1, end of chapter.
- [442] John, chapter 5.
- [443] Note 2, end of chapter.
- [444] See another instance, See Chapter 14 herein.
- [445] See Chapter 14 herein. For further justification of this act of healing on the Sabbath, see John 7:21-24.
- [446] See Chapter 11 herein.
- [447] Compare Doc. and Cov. 76:16, 17. See Chapter 3 herein.
- [448] See Chapter 3 herein.
- [449] Matt. 12:1-8; compare Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5.
- [450] Deut. 23:24, 25.
- [451] Note 3, end of chapter.
- [452] Hos. 6:6; compare Micah 6:6-9.
- [453] Mark 2:27. Note 4, end of chapter.
- [454] Matt. 12:10-13; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-8.
- [455] See Chapter 6 herein.
- [456] For instances, see Luke 13:14-16; 14:3-6; John 9:14-16.

# 16

## THE CHOSEN TWELVE

### THEIR CALL AND ORDINATION [457]

The night preceding the morn on which the Twelve Apostles were called and ordained was spent by the Lord in solitary seclusion; He had "continued all night in prayer to God." [458] Then, when day had come, and while many people were gathering to hear more of the new and wonderful gospel of the kingdom, He called to come closer some who had theretofore been devotedly associated together as His disciples or followers, and from among them He chose twelve, whom he ordained and named apostles. [459] Prior to that time none of these had been distinguished by any special delegation of authority or appointment; they had been numbered with the disciples in general, though, as we have seen, seven had received a preliminary call, and had promptly responded thereto by abandoning wholly or in part their business affairs, and had followed the Master. These were Andrew, John, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, James, and Levi Matthew. Prior to this eventful day, however, none of the Twelve had been ordained or set apart to their sacred office.

The three Gospel-writers who make record of the organization of the Twelve place Simon Peter first and Judas Iscariot last in the category; they agree also in the relative position of some but not of all the others. Following the order given by Mark, and this may be the most convenient since he names as the first three those who later became most prominent, we have the following list: Simon Peter, James (son of Zebedee), John (brother of the last-named), Andrew (brother of Simon Peter), Philip, Bartholomew (or Nathanael), Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alpheus), Judas (also known as Lebbeus or Thaddeus), Simon (distinguished by his surname Zelotes, also known as the Canaanite), and Judas Iscariot.

### TWELVE CONSIDERED INDIVIDUALLY

Simon, named as the first apostle, is more commonly known as *Peter* – the appellation given him by the Lord on the occasion of their first meeting, and afterward confirmed. [460] He was the son of Jona, or Jonas, and by vocation was a fisherman. He and his brother Andrew were partners with James and John, the sons of Zebedee; and apparently the fishing business was a prosperous one with them, for they owned their boats and gave employment to other men. [461] Peter's early home had been at the little fishery town of Bethsaida, [462] on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee; but about the time of his first association with Jesus, or soon thereafter, he, with others of his family,

removed to Capernaum, where he appears to have become an independent householder.[463] Simon Peter was a married man before his call to the ministry. He was well to do in a material way; and when he once spoke of having left all to follow Jesus, the Lord did not deny that Peter's sacrifice of temporal possessions was as great as had been implied. We are not justified in regarding him as unlettered or ignorant. True, both he and John were designated by the council of rulers as "unlearned and ignorant men,"[464] but this was spoken of them as indicating their lack of training in the schools of the rabbis; and it is worthy of note, that the members of that same council were amazed at the wisdom and power manifested by the two apostles, whom they professed to despise.

In temperament Peter was impulsive and stern, and, until trained by severe experience, was lacking in firmness. He had many human weaknesses, yet in spite of them all he eventually overcame the temptations of Satan and the frailties of the flesh, and served his Lord as the appointed and acknowledged leader of the Twelve. Of the time and place of his death the scriptures do not speak; but the manner thereof was prefigured by the resurrected Lord,[465] and in part was foreseen by Peter himself.[466] Tradition, originating in the writings of the early Christian historians other than the apostles, states that Peter met death by crucifixion as a martyr during the persecution incident to the reign of Nero, probably between A.D. 64 and 68. Origen states that the apostle was crucified with his head downward. Peter, with James and John, his associates in the presidency of the Twelve, has ministered as a resurrected being in the present dispensation, in restoring to earth the Melchizedek Priesthood, including the Holy Apostleship, which had been taken away because of the apostasy and unbelief of men.[467]

James and John, brothers by birth, partners in business as fishermen, brethren in the ministry, were associated together and with Peter in the apostolic calling. The Lord bestowed upon the pair a title in common – Boanerges, or Sons of Thunder[468] – possibly with reference to the zeal they developed in His service, which, indeed, at times had to be restrained, as when they would have had fire called from heaven to destroy the Samaritan villagers who had refused hospitality to the Master.[469] They and their mother aspired to the highest honors of the kingdom, and asked that the two be given places, one on the right the other on the left of Christ in His glory. This ambition was gently reprov'd by the Lord, and the request gave offense to the other apostles.[470] With Peter these two brothers were witnesses of many of the most important incidents in the life of Jesus; thus, the three were the only apostles admitted to witness the raising of the daughter of Jairus from death to life;[471] they were the only members of the Twelve present at the transfiguration of Christ;[472] they were nearest the Lord during the period of His mortal agony in Gethsemane;[473] and, as heretofore told, they have ministered in these modern days in the restoration of the Holy Apostleship with all its ancient authority and power of blessing.[474] James is commonly designated in theological literature as James I, to distinguish him from the

other apostle bearing the same name. James, the son of Zebedee, was the first of the apostles to meet a martyr's violent death; he was beheaded by order of the king, Herod Agrippa.[475] John had been a disciple of the Baptist, and had demonstrated his confidence in the latter's testimony of Jesus by promptly turning from the forerunner and following the Lord.[476] He became a devoted servant, and repeatedly refers to himself as the disciple "**whom Jesus loved.**"[477] At the last supper John sat next to Jesus leaning his head upon the Master's breast;[478] and next day as he stood beneath the cross he received from the dying Christ the special charge to care for the Lord's mother;[479] and to this he promptly responded by conducting the weeping Mary to his own house. He was the first to recognize the risen Lord on the shores of Galilee, and received from His immortal lips encouragement of his hope that his life would be continued in the body, in order that he might minister among men until the Christ shall come in His glory.[480] The realization of that hope has been attested by revelation in modern days.[481]

*John, "The beloved" is still on earth ministering the Gospel of Jesus Christ, until He comes in His glory.*

*Andrew*, son of Jona and brother of Simon Peter, is mentioned less frequently than the three already considered. He had been one of the Baptist's followers, and with John, the son of Zebedee, left the Baptist to learn from Jesus; and having learned he went in search of Peter, solemnly averred to him that the Messiah had been found, and brought his brother to the Savior's feet.[482] He shared with Peter in the honor of the call of the Lord on the sea shore, and in the promise "**I will make you fishers of men.**"[483] In one instance we read of Andrew as present with Peter, James and John, in a private interview with the Lord;[484] and he is mentioned in connection with the miraculous feeding of the five thousand,[485] and as associated with Philip in arranging an interview between certain inquiring Greeks and Jesus.[486] He is named with others in connection with our Lord's ascension.[487] Tradition is rife with stories about this man, but of the extent of his ministry, the duration of his life, and the circumstances of his death, we have no authentic record.

*Philip* may have been the first to receive the authoritative call "**Follow me**" from the lips of Jesus, and we find him immediately testifying that Jesus was the long expected Messiah. His home was in Bethsaida, the town of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. It is said that Jesus found him,[488] whereas the others concerned in that early affiliation seem to have come of themselves severally to Christ. We find brief mention of him at the time the five thousand were fed, on which occasion Jesus asked him "**Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?**" This was done to test and prove him, for Jesus knew what would be done. Philip's reply was based on a statement of the small amount of money at hand, and showed no expectation of miraculous intervention.[489] It was to him the Greeks applied when they sought a meeting with Jesus as noted in connection with Andrew. He was mildly reproved for his misunderstanding when he asked Jesus

to show to him and the others the Father – "**Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?**"[490] Aside from incidental mention of his presence as one of the Eleven after the ascension, the scriptures tell us nothing more concerning him.

*Bartholomew* is mentioned in scripture by this name only in connection with his ordination to the apostleship, and as one of the Eleven after the ascension. The name means son of Tolmai. It is practically certain, however, that he is the man called Nathanael in John's Gospel – the one whom Christ designated as "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."[491] He is named again as among those who went fishing with Peter after the resurrection of Christ.[492] His home was in Cana of Galilee. The reasons for assuming that Bartholomew and Nathanael are the same persons are these: Bartholomew is named in each of the three synoptic Gospels as an apostle, but Nathanael is not mentioned. Nathanael is named twice in John's Gospel, and Bartholomew not at all; Bartholomew and Philip, or Nathanael and Philip, are mentioned together.

*Matthew, or Levi*, son of Alpheus, was one of the seven who received a call to follow Christ before the ordination of the Twelve. He it was who gave a feast, for attending which Jesus and the disciples were severely criticized by the Pharisees,[493] on the charge that it was unseemly for Him to eat with publicans and sinners. Matthew was a publican; he so designates himself in the Gospel he wrote;[494] but the other evangelists omit the mention when including him with the Twelve. His Hebrew name, Levi, is understood by many as an indication of priestly lineage. Of his ministry we have no detailed account; though he is the author of the first Gospel, he refrains from special mention of himself except in connection with his call and ordination. He is spoken of by other than scriptural writers as one of the most active of the apostles after Christ's death and as operating in lands far from Palestine.

*Thomas*, also known as Didymus, the Greek equivalent of his Hebrew name, meaning "a twin," is mentioned as a witness of the raising of Lazarus. His devotion to Jesus is shown by his desire to accompany the Lord to Bethany, though persecution in that region was almost certain. To his fellow apostles Thomas said: "Let us also go, that we may die with him."[495] Even as late in his experience as the night before the crucifixion, Thomas had failed to comprehend the impending necessity of the Savior's sacrifice; and when Jesus referred to going away and leaving the others to follow, Thomas asked how they could know the way. For his lack of understanding he stood reproved.[496] He was absent when the resurrected Christ appeared to the assembled disciples in the evening of the day of His rising; and on being informed by the others that they had seen the Lord, he forcefully expressed his doubt, and declared he would not believe unless he could see and feel for himself the wounds in the crucified body. Eight days later the Lord visited the apostles again, when, as on the earlier occasion, they were within closed doors; and to Thomas the Lord said: "Reach hither thy finger,

**and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." Then Thomas, no longer doubting but with love and reverence filling his soul, exclaimed "My Lord and my God." The Lord said unto him: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."[497] Of Thomas no further record appears in the New Testament aside from that of his presence with his fellows after the ascension.**

*James*, son of Alpheus, is mentioned in the Gospels only in the matter of his ordination to the apostleship; and but once elsewhere in the New Testament by the appellation "son of Alpheus."[498] In writings other than scriptural he is sometimes designated as James II to avoid confusing him with James the son of Zebedee. There is acknowledged uncertainty concerning the identity of James the son of Alpheus as the James or one of the James's referred to in the Acts and the Epistles;[499] and a plenitude of controversial literature on the subject is extant.[500]

*Judas* is called *Lebbeus Thaddeus* by Matthew, *Thaddeus* by Mark, and *Judas the brother of James* by Luke.[501] The only other specific reference to this apostle is made by John, and is incident to the last long interview between Jesus and the apostles, when this Judas, "not Iscariot," asked how or why Jesus would manifest Himself to His chosen servants and not to the world at large. The man's question shows that the really distinguishing character of the apostleship was not fully comprehended by him at that time.

*Simon Zelotes*, so designated in Acts,[502] and as *Simon called Zelotes* in Luke's Gospel, is distinguished by both Matthew and Mark as the Canaanite. The last designation has no reference to the town of Cana, nor to the land of Canaan, neither is it in any sense of geographical signification; it is the Syro-Chaldaic equivalent of the Greek word which is rendered in the English translation "Zelotes." The two names, therefore, have the same fundamental meaning, and each refers to the Zealots, a Jewish sect or faction, known for its zeal in maintaining the Mosaic ritual. Doubtless Simon had learned moderation and toleration from the teachings of Christ; otherwise he would scarcely have been suited to the apostolic ministry. His zealous earnestness, properly directed, may have developed into a most serviceable trait of character. This apostle is nowhere in the scriptures named apart from his colleagues.

*Judas Iscariot* is the only Judean named among the Twelve; all the others were Galileans. He is generally understood to have been a resident of Kerioth, a small town in the southerly part of Judea, but a few miles west from the Dead Sea, though for this tradition, as also for the signification of his surname, we lack direct authority. So too we are uninformed as to his lineage, except that his father's name was Simon.[503] He served as treasurer or agent of the apostolic company, receiving and disbursing such offerings as were made by disciples and friends, and purchasing supplies as required.[504] That he was unprincipled and dishonest in the discharge of this trust is

attested by John. His avaricious and complaining nature revealed itself in his murmuring against what he called a waste of costly spikenard, in the anointing of the Lord by Mary but a few days before the crucifixion; he hypocritically suggested that the precious ointment could have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor.[505] The crowning deed of perfidy in the career of Iscariot was his deliberate betrayal of his Master to death; and this the infamous creature did for a price, and accomplished the foul deed with a kiss. He brought his guilty life to a close by a revolting suicide and his spirit went to the awful fate reserved for the sons of perdition.[506]

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWELVE

A survey of the general characteristics and qualifications of this body of twelve men reveals some interesting facts. Before their selection as apostles they had all become close disciples of the Lord; they believed in Him; several of them, possibly all, had openly confessed that He was the Son of God; and yet it is doubtful that any one of them fully understood the real significance of the Savior's work. It is evident by the later remarks of many of them, and by the instructions and rebuke they called forth from the Master, that the common Jewish expectation of a Messiah who would reign in splendor as an earthly sovereign after He had subdued all other nations, had a place even in the hearts of these chosen ones. After long experience, Peter's concern was: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"[507] They were as children to be trained and taught; but they were mostly willing pupils, receptive of soul, and imbued with a sincere eagerness to serve. To Jesus they were His little ones, His children, His servants, and His friends, as they merited.[508] They were all of the common people, not rabbis, scholars, nor priestly officials. Their inner natures, not their outward accomplishments, were taken into prime account in the Lord's choosing. The Master chose them; they did not choose themselves; by Him they were ordained,[509] and they could in consequence rely the more implicitly upon His guidance and support. To them much was given; much of them was required. With the one black exception they all became shining lights in the kingdom of God, and vindicated the Master's selection. He recognized in each the characteristics of fitness developed in the primeval world of spirits.[510]

*Note: The Lord knew about Judas Iscariot's character, and the future actions he would take, including the betrayal, which was prophesied.*

## DISCIPLES AND APOSTLES

Discipleship is general; any follower of a man or devotee to a principle may be called a disciple. The Holy Apostleship is an office and calling belonging to the Higher or Melchizedek Priesthood, at once exalted and specific, comprising as a distinguishing function that of personal and special witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of mankind.[511] The apostleship is an individual

bestowal, and as such is conferred only through ordination. That the Twelve did constitute a council or "quorum" having authority in the Church established by Jesus Christ is shown by their ministrations after the Lord's resurrection and ascension. Their first official act was that of filling the vacancy in their organization occasioned by the apostasy and death of Judas Iscariot; and in connection with this procedure, the presiding apostle, Peter, set forth the essential qualifications of the one who would be chosen and ordained, which comprised such knowledge of Jesus, His life, death, and resurrection, as would make the new apostle one with the Eleven as special witnesses of the Lord's work.[512]

The ordination of the Twelve Apostles marked the inauguration of an advanced epoch in the earthly ministry of Jesus, an epoch characterized by the organization of a body of men invested with the authority of the Holy Priesthood, upon whom would rest, more particularly after the Lord's departure, the duty and responsibility of continuing the work He had begun, and of building up the Church established by Him.

The word "apostle" is an Anglicized form derived from the Greek *apostolos*, meaning literally "one who is sent," and connoting an envoy or official messenger, who speaks and acts by the authority of one superior to himself. In this sense Paul afterward applied the title to Christ as one specially sent and commissioned of the Father.[513]

The Lord's purpose in choosing and ordaining the Twelve is thus enunciated by Mark: **"And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils."**[514] For a season following their ordination the apostles remained with Jesus, being specially trained and instructed by Him for the work then before them; afterward they were specifically charged and sent forth to preach and to administer in the authority of their priesthood, as shall be hereafter considered.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 16

**1. Judas Lebbeus Thaddeus.**— This Judas (not Iscariot) is designated in the authorized version of Luke 6:16, and Acts 1:13, as "*the brother of James*." That the words "the brother" are an addition to the original text is indicated by italics. The revised version of these passages reads in each instance "*the son of James*," with italics of corresponding significance. The original reads "Judas of James." We are uninformed as to which James is referred to, and as to whether the Judas here mentioned was the son, the brother, or some other relative of the unidentified James.

**2. The Meaning of "Apostle."**— "The title 'Apostle' is likewise one of special significance and sanctity; it has been given of God, and belongs only to those who have been called and ordained as 'special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world', thus differing

from other officers in the Church in the duties of their calling' (Doc. and Cov. 107:23). By derivation the word 'apostle' is the English equivalent of the Greek *apostolos*, indicating a messenger, an ambassador, or literally 'one who is sent'. It signifies that he who is rightly so called, speaks and acts not of himself, but as the representative of a higher power whence his commission issued; and in this sense the title is that of a servant, rather than that of a superior. Even the Christ, however, is called an Apostle with reference to His ministry in the flesh (Hebrews 3:1), and this appellation is justified by His repeated declaration that He came to earth to do not His own will but that of the Father by whom *He was sent*.

"Though an apostle is thus seen to be essentially an envoy, or ambassador, his authority is great, as is also the responsibility associated therewith, for he speaks in the name of a power greater than his own – the name of Him whose special witness he is. When one of the Twelve is sent to minister in any stake, mission or other division of the Church, or to labor in regions where no Church organization has been effected, he acts as the representative of the First Presidency, and has the right to use his authority in doing whatever is requisite for the furtherance of the work of God. His duty is to preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances thereof, and set in order the affairs of the Church, wherever he is sent. So great is the sanctity of this special calling, that the title 'Apostle' should not be used lightly as the common or ordinary form of address applied to living men called to this office. The quorum or council of the Twelve Apostles as existent in the Church to-day may better be spoken of as the 'Quorum of the Twelve,' the 'Council of the Twelve,' or simply as the 'Twelve,' than as the 'Twelve Apostles,' except as particular occasion may warrant the use of the more sacred term. It is advised that the title 'Apostle' be not applied as a prefix to the name of any member of the Council of the Twelve; but that such a one be addressed or spoken of as 'Brother — —,' or 'Elder — —,' and when necessary or desirable, as in announcing his presence in a public assembly, an explanatory clause may be added, thus, 'Elder — —, one of the Council of the Twelve,'" — From "The Honor and Dignity of Priesthood," by the author, *Improvement Era*, Vol. 17, No. 5, pp. 409-410.

**3. "Of Alpheus;" or "Son of Alpheus."** — In all Bible passages specifying "James son of Alpheus" (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13) the word *son* has been supplied by the translators, and therefore properly appears in *Italics*. The phrase in the Greek reads "James of Alpheus." This fact must not be given undue weight in support of the thought that the James spoken of was not the son of Alpheus; for the word *son* has been similarly added in the translation of other passages, in all of which *Italics* are used to indicate the words supplied, e.g. "James *the son* of Zebedee" (Matt. 10:2; see also Mark 3:17). Read in this connection Note 1 on the opposite page.

## FOOTNOTES

- [457] Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16.
- [458] Luke 6:12.
- [459] Luke 3:13; compare John 15:16; see also Acts 1:22.
- [460] John 1:42; compare Matt. 16:18.
- [461] Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:10.
- [462] John 1:44; 12:21.
- [463] Matt. 8:14; Mark 1:29; Luke 4:38.
- [464] Acts 4:13.
- [465] John 21:18, 19.
- [466] 2 Peter 1:14.
- [467] Doc. and Cov. 27:12. See Chapter 41 herein.
- [468] Mark 3:17.
- [469] Luke 9:54. See also Mark 9:38, for instance of John's impulsive zeal.
- [470] Mark 10:35-41; compare Matt. 20:20-24.
- [471] Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51.
- [472] Matt. 17:1-2; Luke 9:28-29.
- [473] Matt. 26:36, 37.
- [474] Doc. and Cov. 27:12. See Chapter 41 herein.
- [475] Acts 12:1, 2.
- [476] John 1:35-40; See Chapter 11 herein.
- [477] John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2.
- [478] John 13:23, 25.
- [479] John 19:25-27.
- [480] John 21:7, 21-23.
- [481] Doc. and Cov. Sec. 7; compare B. of M., 3 Nephi 28:1-12.
- [482] John 1:35-40.
- [483] Matt. 4:18, 19.
- [484] Mark 13:3.
- [485] John 6:8.
- [486] John 12:20-22.
- [487] Acts 1:13.
- [488] John 1:43-45.
- [489] John 6:5-7.
- [490] John 14:8, 9.
- [491] John 1:45-51; See Chapter 11 herein.
- [492] John 21:2, 3.
- [493] See Chapter 14 herein.
- [494] Matt. 10:3.
- [495] John 11:16.
- [496] John 14:1-7.
- [497] John 20:24-29. See Chapter 37 herein.
- [498] Acts 1:13. Note 3, end of chapter.
- [499] Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; and the Epistle of James.
- [500] Concerning the James's mentioned in the New Testament, the opinion of Bible scholars is divided, the question being as to whether two or three individuals are indicated. Those who hold that there were three men of this name distinguish them as follows: (1) James the son of Zebedee and brother of John the apostle; all scriptural references to him are explicit; (2) James the son of Alphaeus; and (3) James the brother of the Lord (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Gal. 1:19). If we accept this classification, the references given in the previous footnote on this page apply to James the Lord's brother. Both the Oxford and Bagster Bible "Helps" treat James the son of Alphaeus and James the Lord's brother as one person, the expression

"son of" being understood in its general sense only (See Chapter 18 herein). The Bagster designation is: "James II, apostle, son of Alpheus, brother or cousin to Jesus." (See Note 3, end of chapter.) The Nave "Student's Bible" states (page 1327) that the question as to whether James the Lord's brother "is identical with James the son of Alpheus is one of the most difficult questions in the biographical history of the Gospels." Faussett (in his "Cyclopedia Critical and Expository") supports the contention that but one James is meant; and other acknowledged authorities treat the two as one. For detailed consideration of the subject the reader is referred to special works.

[501] Note 1, end of chapter.

[502] Acts 1:13; compare Luke 6:15.

[503] John 6:71; 12:4; 13:26.

[504] John 12:6; 13:29.

[505] John 12:1-7; compare Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9.

[506] Matt. 27:5; compare Acts 1:18; see also John 17:12; Doc. and Cov. 76; 31-48; 132:27.

[507] Matt. 19:27.

[508] Matt. 10:42; John 21:5; 13:16. compare verse 13; 15:14, 15.

[509] John 15:16.

[510] See Chapter 2 herein.

[511] Doc. and Cov. 18:27-33; 20:38-44; 107:1-9, 23, 24, 39.

[512] Acts 1:15-26.

[513] Heb. 3:1; see Note 2, end of chapter.

[514] Mark 3:14, 15.

# 17

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

At some time very near that of the ordination of the Twelve, Jesus delivered a remarkable discourse, which, in reference to the place where it was given, has come to be known as the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew presents an extended account occupying three chapters of the first Gospel; Luke gives a briefer synopsis.[515] Circumstantial variations appearing in the two records are of minor importance;[516] it is the sermon itself to which we may profitably devote attention. Luke introduces in different parts of his writings many of the precious precepts given as parts of the sermon recorded as a continuous discourse in the Gospel written by Matthew. In our present study we shall be guided principally by Matthew's account. Some portions of this comprehensive address were expressly directed to the disciples, who had been or would be called to the apostleship and in consequence be required to renounce all their worldly interests for the labors of the ministry; other parts were and are of general application. Jesus had ascended the mountain side, probably to escape the crowds that thronged Him in or near the towns.[517] The disciples gathered about Him, and there He sat and taught them.[518]

### THE BEATITUDES [519]

The opening sentences are rich in blessing, and the first section of the discourse is devoted to an explanation of what constitutes genuine blessedness; the lesson, moreover, was made simple and unambiguous by specific application, each of the blessed being assured of recompense and reward in the enjoyment of conditions directly opposite to those under which he had suffered. The blessings particularized by the Lord on this occasion have been designated in literature of later time as the Beatitudes. The poor in spirit are to be made rich as rightful heirs to the kingdom of heaven; the mourner shall be comforted for he shall see the divine purpose in his grief, and shall again associate with the beloved ones of whom he has been bereft; the meek, who suffer spoliation rather than jeopardize their souls in contention, shall inherit the earth; those that hunger and thirst for the truth shall be fed in rich abundance; they that show mercy shall be judged mercifully; the pure in heart shall be admitted to the very presence of God; the peacemakers, who try to save themselves and their fellows from strife, shall be numbered among the children of God; they that suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness shall inherit the riches of the eternal kingdom. To the disciples the Lord spake directly, saying: "**Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be**

**exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."**[520]

It is evident that the specified blessings and the happiness comprised therein are to be realized in their fullness only beyond the grave; though the joy that comes from the consciousness of right living brings, even in this world, a rich return. An important element in this splendid elucidation of the truly blessed state is the implied distinction between pleasure and happiness.[521] Mere pleasure is at best but fleeting; happiness is abiding, for in the recollection thereof is joy renewed. Supreme happiness is not an earthly attainment; the promised "fullness of joy" lies beyond death and the resurrection.[522] While man exists in this mortal state he needs some of the things of the world; he must have food and clothing and provision for shelter; and beside these bare necessities he may righteously desire the facilities of education, the incidentals of advancing civilization, and the things that are conducive to refinement and culture; yet all of these are but aids to achievement, not the end to attain which man was made mortal.

The Beatitudes are directed to the duties of mortal life as a preparation for a greater existence yet future. In the kingdom of heaven, twice named in this part of the Lord's discourse, are true riches and unfailing happiness to be found. The kingdom of heaven was the all-comprising text of this wonderful sermon; the means of reaching the kingdom and the glories of eternal citizenship therein are the main divisions of the treatise.

## **DIGNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MINISTRY** [523]

The Master next proceeded to instruct with particular directness those upon whom would devolve the responsibility of the ministry as His commissioned representatives. **"Ye are the salt of the earth,"** said He. Salt is the great preservative; as such it has had practical use since very ancient times. Salt was prescribed as an essential addition to every meat offering under the Mosaic law.[524] Long before the time of Christ, the use of salt had been accorded a symbolism of fidelity, hospitality, and covenant.[525] To be of use salt must be pure; to be of any saving virtue as salt, it must be salt indeed, and not the product of chemical alteration or of earthy admixture, whereby its saltiness or "savor" would be lost;[526] and, as worthless stuff, it would be fit only to be thrown away. Against such change of faith, against such admixture with the sophistries, so-called philosophies, and heresies of the times, the disciples were especially warned. Then, changing the figure, Jesus likened them to the light of the world, and enjoined upon them the duty of keeping their light before the people, as prominently as stands a city built upon a hill, to be seen from all directions, a city that cannot be hid. Of what service would a lighted candle be if hidden under a tub or a box? **"Let your light so shine before men,"** said He, **"that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."**

That they should make no error as to the relationship of the ancient law and the gospel of the kingdom which He was elucidating, Jesus assured them that He had not come to destroy the law nor to nullify the teachings and predictions of the prophets, but to fulfill such and to establish that for which the developments of the centuries gone had been but preparatory. The gospel may be said to have destroyed the Mosaic law only as the seed is destroyed in the growth of the new plant, only as the bud is destroyed by the bursting forth of the rich, full, and fragrant flowers, only as infancy and youth pass forever as the maturity of years develops. Not a jot or a tittle of the law was to be void. A more effective analogy than the last could scarcely have been conceived; the jot or yod, and the tittle, were small literary marks in the Hebrew script; for present purposes we may regard them as equivalent to the dot of an "i" or the cross of a "t"; with the first, the jot, our English word "iota," signifying a trifle, is related. Not even the least commandment could be violated without penalty; but the disciples were admonished to take heed that their keeping of the commandments was not after the manner of the scribes and Pharisees, whose observance was that of ceremonial externalism, lacking the essentials of genuine devotion; for they were assured that by such an insincere course they could "in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

#### **THE LAW SUPERSEDED BY THE GOSPEL [527]**

The next section of the sermon deals with the superiority of the gospel of Christ over the law of Moses, and contrasts the requirements of the two in particular instances. Whereas the law forbade murder, and provided a just penalty for the crime, Christ taught that one's giving way to anger, which might possibly lead to violence or even murder, was of itself a sin. To maliciously use an offensive epithet such as "Raca" laid one liable to punishment under the decree of the council, and to call another a fool placed one "in danger of hell fire." These objectionable designations were regarded at that time as especially opprobrious and were therefore expressive of hateful intent. The murderer's hand is impelled by the hatred in his heart. The law provided penalty for the deed; the gospel rebuked the evil passion in its incipiency. To emphasize this principle, the Master showed that hatred was not to be atoned by a material sacrifice; and that if one came to make an offering at the altar, and remembered that he was at enmity with his brother, he should first go to that brother and be reconciled, even though such a course involved the interruption of the ceremonial, which was a particularly grievous incident according to the judgment of the priests. Differences and contentions were to be adjusted without delay.

The law forbade the awful sin of adultery; Christ said that the sin began in the lustful glance, the sensual thought; and He added that it was better to become blind than to look with evil eye; better to lose a hand than to work iniquity therewith. Touching the matter of divorcement, in which great laxity prevailed in that day, Jesus declared that except for the most serious offense of infidelity to marriage vows, no man could divorce

his wife without becoming himself an offender, in that she, marrying again while still a wife not righteously divorced, would be guilty of sin, and so would be the man to whom she was so married.

Of old it had been forbidden to swear or take oaths except in solemn covenant before the Lord; but in the gospel dispensation the Lord forbade that men swear at all; and the heinousness of wanton oaths was expounded. Grievously sinful indeed it was and is to swear by heaven, which is the abode of God; or by earth, which is His creation and by Him called His footstool; or by Jerusalem, which was regarded by those who swore as the city of the great King; or by one's own head, which is part of the body God has created. Moderation in speech, decision and simplicity were enjoined, to the exclusion of expletives, profanity and oaths.

Of old the principle of retaliation had been tolerated, by which one who had suffered injury could exact or inflict a penalty of the same nature as the offense. Thus an eye was demanded for the loss of an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life.[528] In contrast, Christ taught that men should rather suffer than do evil, even to the extent of submission without resistance under certain implied conditions. His forceful illustrations – that if one were smitten on one cheek he should turn the other to the smiter; that if a man took another's coat by process of law, the loser should allow his cloak to be taken also; that if one was pressed into service to carry another's burden a mile, he should willingly go two miles; that one should readily give or lend as asked – are not to be construed as commanding abject subserviency to unjust demands, nor as an abrogation of the principle of self-protection. These instructions were directed primarily to the apostles, who would be professedly devoted to the work of the kingdom to the exclusion of all other interests. In their ministry it would be better to suffer material loss or personal indignity and imposition at the hands of wicked oppressors, than to bring about an impairment of efficiency and a hindrance in work through resistance and contention. To such as these the Beatitudes were particularly applicable – Blessed are the meek, the peace-makers, and they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Of old it had been said: "**Love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy**";[529] but the Lord now taught: "**Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.**" This was a new doctrine. Never before had Israel been required to love their foes. Friendship for enemies had found no place in the Mosaic code: indeed the people had grown to look upon Israel's enemies as God's enemies; and now Jesus required that tolerance, mercy, and even love be meted out to such! He supplemented the requirement by an explanation – through the course indicated by Him men may become children of God, like unto their Heavenly Father to the extent of their obedience; for the Father is kind, long-suffering and tolerant, causing His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sending rain for the sustenance of both just and unjust.[530] And further, what

excellence has the man who gives only as he receives, acknowledges only those who salute him with respect, loves only as he is loved? Even the publicans[531] did that much. Of the disciples of Christ much more was expected. The admonition closing this division of the discourse is an effective and comprehensive summary of all that had preceded: **"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."**[532]

### SINCERITY OF PURPOSE [533]

In the matter of alms-giving the Master warned against, and inferentially denounced, ostentation and hypocritical display. To give to the needy is praiseworthy; but to give for the purpose of winning the praise of men is rank hypocrisy. The tossing of alms to a beggar, the pouring of offerings into the temple treasure chests, to be seen of men,[534] and similar displays of affected liberality, were fashionable among certain classes in the time of Christ; and the same spirit is manifest today. Some there be now who cause a trumpet to be sounded, through the columns of the press perchance, or by other means of publicity, to call attention to their giving, that they may have glory of men – to win political favor, to increase their trade or influence, to get what in their estimation is worth more than that from which they part. With logical incisiveness the Master demonstrated that such givers have their reward. They have received what they bid for; what more can such men demand or consistently expect? **"But" said the Lord, "when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly!"**

In the same spirit did the Preacher denounce hypocritical prayers – the saying of prayers in place of praying. There were many who sought places of public resort, in the synagogs, and even on the street-corners, that they might be seen and heard of men when saying their prayers. They secured the publicity they sought; what more could they ask? **"Verily I say unto you, They have their reward,"** He who would really pray – pray as nearly as possible as Christ prayed, pray in actual communion with God to whom the prayer is addressed – will seek privacy, seclusion, isolation; if opportunity permits he will retire to his chamber, and will shut the door, that none may intrude; there he may pray indeed, if the spirit of prayer be in his heart; and this course was commended by the Lord. Wordy supplications, made up largely of iterations and repetitions such as the heathen use, thinking that their idol deities will be pleased with their much speaking, were forbidden.

It is well to know that prayer is not compounded of words, words that may fail to express what one desires to say, words that so often cloak inconsistencies, words that may have no deeper source than the physical organs of speech, words that may be spoken to impress mortal ears. The dumb may pray, and that too with the eloquence that prevails in heaven. Prayer is made up of heart throbs and the righteous yearnings

of the soul, of supplication based on the realization of need, of contrition and pure desire. If there lives a man who has never really prayed, that man is a being apart from the order of the divine in human nature, a stranger in the family of God's children. Prayer is for the uplifting of the suppliant. God without our prayers would be God; but we without prayer cannot be admitted to the kingdom of God. So did Christ instruct: **"your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."**

Then gave He unto those who sought wisdom at His feet, a model prayer, saying: **"After this manner therefore pray ye:**

***"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name."*** In this we acknowledge the relation we bear to our Heavenly Father, and while reverencing His great and holy Name, we avail ourselves of the inestimable privilege of approaching Him, less with the thought of His infinite glory as the Creator of all that is, the Supreme Being above all creation, than with the loving realization that He is Father, and that we are His children. This is the earliest Biblical scripture giving instruction, permission, or warrant, for addressing God directly as "Our Father". Therein is expressed the reconciliation which the human family, estranged through sin, may attain by the means provided through the well beloved Son. This instruction is equally definite in demonstrating the brotherhood between Christ and humanity. As He prayed so pray we to the same Father, we as brethren and Christ as our Elder Brother.

***"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."*** The kingdom of God is to be a kingdom of order, in which toleration and the recognition of individual rights shall prevail. One who really prays that this kingdom come will strive to hasten its coming by living according to the law of God. His effort will be to keep himself in harmony with the order of the kingdom, to subject the flesh to the spirit, selfishness to altruism, and to learn to love the things that God loves. To make the will of God supreme on earth as it is in heaven is to be allied with God in the affairs of life. There are many who profess belief that as God is omnipotent, all that is according to His will. Such a supposition is unscriptural, unreasonable, and untrue.[535] Wickedness is not in harmony with His will; falsehood, hypocrisy, vice and crime are not God's gifts to man. By His will these monstrosities that have developed as hideous deformities in human nature and life shall be abolished, and this blessed consummation shall be reached when by choice, without surrender or abrogation of their free agency, men shall do the will of God.

***"Give us this day our daily bread."*** Food is indispensable to life. As we need it we should ask for it. True, the Father knows our need before we ask, but by asking we acknowledge Him as the Giver, and are made humble, grateful, contrite, and reliant by the request. Though the sun shines and the rain falls alike upon the just and the unjust, the righteous man is grateful for these blessings; the ungodly man receives the benefits as a matter of course with a soul incapable of gratitude. The capacity to be grateful is a

blessing, for the possession of which we should be further grateful. We are taught to pray day by day for the food we need, not for a great store to be laid by for the distant future. Israel in the desert received manna as a daily supply[536] and were kept in mind of their reliance upon Him who gave. The man with much finds it easier to forget his dependence than he who must ask with each succeeding day of need.

*"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."* He who can thus pray with full intent and unmixed purpose merits forgiveness. In this specification of personal supplication we are taught to expect only as we deserve. The selfish and sinful would rejoice in exemption from their lawful debts, but being selfish and sinful would exact the last farthing from those who owe them.[537] Forgiveness is too precious a pearl to be cast at the feet of the unforgiving;[538] and, without the sincerity that springs from a contrite heart, no man may justly claim mercy. If others owe us, either in actual money or goods as suggested by debts and debtors, or through some infringement upon our rights included under the broader designation as a trespass, our mode of dealing with them will be taken into righteous account in the judgment of our own offenses.

*"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:"* The first part of this petition has occasioned comment and question. We are not to understand that God would ever lead a man into temptation except, perhaps, by way of wise permission, to test and prove him, thereby affording him opportunity of overcoming and so of gaining spiritual strength, which is the only true advancement in man's eternal course of progress. The one purpose of providing bodies for the preexistent spirits of the race, and of advancing them to the mortal state, was to "prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."[539] The plan of mortality involved the certainty of temptation. The intent of the supplication appears to be that we be preserved from temptation beyond our weak powers to withstand; that we be not abandoned to temptation without the divine support that shall be as full a measure of protection as our exercise of choice will allow.

*My prayer might be similar, such as: "Please don't let me take the wrong path or make a decision that will make it hard for me to be proven worthy in my earthly test. Please, if I do take the wrong path, help me to get to the right path so I can triumph over my mistakes and be worthy to be delivered by the Savior's atonement."*

How inconsistent then to go, as many do, into the places where the temptations to which we are most susceptible are strongest; for the man beset with a passion for strong drink to so pray and then resort to the *dramshop*; for the man whose desires are lustful to voice such a prayer and then go where lust is kindled; for the dishonest man, though he say the prayer, to then place himself where he knows the opportunity to steal will be found! Can such souls as these be other than hypocrites in asking God to deliver them from the evils they have sought? Temptation will fall in our way without our seeking,

and evil will present itself even when we desire most to do right; for deliverance from such we may pray with righteous expectation and assurance.

"*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*" Herein we acknowledge the supremacy of the Being whom we addressed at the beginning as Father. He is the Almighty in whom and through whose provision we live and move and have our existence.[540] To assert independence of God is both sacrilege and blasphemy; to acknowledge Him is a filial duty and a just confession of His majesty and dominion.

The Lord's Prayer is closed with a solemn "*Amen*," set as a seal to the document of the supplication, attesting its genuineness as the true expression of the suppliant's soul; gathering within the compass of a word the meaning of all that has been uttered or thought. *So let it be* is the literal signification of *Amen*.

From the subject of prayer the Master turned to that of fasting, and emphasized the important truth that to be of avail fasting must be a matter between the man and his God, not between man and his kind. It was a common thing in the Master's day to see men parading the fact of their abstinence as an advertisement of their assumed piety.[541] That they might appear haggard and faint, this class of hypocrites disfigured their faces, went with unkempt hair, and gazed about with sad countenances. Of these also the Lord said, "**Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.**" Believers were admonished to fast secretly, with no outward display, and to fast unto God, who could see in secret and would heed their sacrifice and prayer.

## TREASURES OF EARTH AND OF HEAVEN [542]

The transitory character of worldly wealth was next contrasted with the enduring riches of eternity. Many there were and many there are whose principal effort in life has been that of amassing treasures of earth, the mere possession of which entails responsibility, care, and disturbing anxiety. Some kinds of wealth are endangered by the ravages of moths, such as silks and velvets, satins and furs; some are destroyed by corrosion and rust – silver and copper and steel; while these and others are not infrequently made the booty of thieves. Infinitely more precious are the treasures of a life well spent, the wealth of good deeds, the account of which is kept in heaven, where the riches of righteous achievement are safe from moth, rust, and robbers. Then followed the trenchant lesson: "**For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**"

Spiritual light is shown to be greater than any product of physical illuminants. What does the brightest light avail the man who is blind? It is the bodily eye that discerns the light of the candle, the lamp, or the sun; and the spiritual eye sees by spiritual light; if then man's spiritual eye be single, that is, pure and undimmed by sin, he is filled with the light that shall show him the way to God; whereas if his soul's eye be evil, he will be

as one full of darkness. Solemn caution is expressed in the summary, "**If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!**" Those whom the Master was addressing had received of the light of God; the degree of belief they had already professed was proof of that. Should they turn from the great enterprise on which they had embarked, the light would be lost, and the succeeding darkness would be denser than that from which they had been relieved.[543] There was to be no indecision among the disciples. No one of them could serve two masters; if he professed so to do he would be an untrue servant to the one or the other. Then followed another profound generalization: "**Ye cannot serve God and mammon.**" [544]

They were told to trust the Father for what they needed, taking no thought of food, drink, clothing, or even of life itself, for all these were to be supplied by means above their power to control. With the wisdom of a Teacher of teachers, the Master appealed to their hearts and their understanding by citing the lessons of nature, in language of such simple yet forceful eloquence that to amplify or condense it is but to mar:

**"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."**

The weakness of faith was reproved in the reminder that the Father who cared even for the grass of the field, which one day flourishes and on the next is gathered up to be burned, would not fail to remember His own. Therefore the Master added: "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**"

## **HYPOCRISY FURTHER CONDEMNED [545]**

Men are prone to judge their fellows and to praise or censure without due consideration of fact or circumstance. On prejudiced or unsupported judgment the Master set His disapproval. "**Judge not, that ye be not judged,**" He admonished, for, according to one's own standard of judging others, shall he himself be judged. The man who is always ready to correct his brother's faults, to remove the mote from his neighbor's eye so that that neighbor may see things as the interested and interfering friend would have him see, was denounced as a hypocrite. What was the speck in his neighbor's vision to the obscuring beam in his own eye? Have the centuries between the days of Christ and our own time made us less eager to cure the defective vision of those who cannot or will not assume our point of view, and see things as we see them?

These disciples, some of whom were soon to minister in the authority of the Holy Apostleship, were cautioned against the indiscreet and indiscriminate scattering of the sacred truths and precepts committed to them. Their duty would be to discern the spirits of those whom they essayed to teach, and to impart unto them in wisdom. The words of the Master were strong: "**Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before, swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.**"[546]

## PROMISE AND REASSURANCE [547]

That their supplications would be heard and answered followed as a rich promise. They were to ask and they would receive; they were to knock and the door would be opened. Surely the Heavenly Father would not be less considerate than a human parent; and what father would answer his son's plea for bread by giving him a stone, or who would give a serpent when a fish was desired? With greater certainty would God bestow good gifts upon those who asked according to their need, in faith. "**Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.**"

The straight and narrow way by which man may walk in Godliness was compared with the broad highway leading to destruction. False prophets were to be shunned, such as were then among the people, comparable in their pretense to sheep, and in their reality to ravening wolves. These were to be recognized by their works and the results thereof, even as a tree to be judged as good or bad according to its fruit. A thorn bush does not produce grapes, nor can thistles bear figs. Conversely, it is as truly impossible for a good tree to produce evil fruit as for a useless and corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit.

Religion is more than the confession and profession of the lips. Jesus averred that in the day of judgment many would pretend allegiance to Him, saying: "**Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**" Only by doing the will of the Father is the saving grace of the Son obtainable. To assume to speak and act in the name of the Lord without the bestowal of authority, such as the Lord alone can give, is to add sacrilege to hypocrisy. Even miracles wrought will be no vindication of the claims of those who pretend to minister in the ordinances of the gospel while devoid of the authority of the Holy Priesthood.[548]

## HEARING AND DOING [549]

The Sermon on the Mount has stood through all the years since its delivery without another to be compared with it. No mortal man has ever since preached a discourse of its kind. The spirit of the address is throughout that of sincerity and action, as opposed

to empty profession and neglect. In the closing sentences the Lord showed the uselessness of hearing alone, as contrasted with the efficacy of doing. The man who hears and acts is likened unto the wise builder who set the foundation of his house upon a rock; and in spite of rain and hurricane and flood, the house stood. He that hears and obeys not is likened unto the foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and when rain fell, or winds blew, or floods came, behold it fell, and great was the fall thereof.

Such doctrines as these astonished the people. For His distinctive teachings the Preacher had cited no authority but His own. His address was free from any array of rabbinical precedents; the law was superseded by the gospel: **"For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes!"**

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 17

**1. Time and Place of the Sermon on the Mount**—Matthew gives the address early mention, placing it even before the record of his own call from the seat of custom—which call certainly preceded the ordination of the Twelve as a body—and before his account of many sayings and doings of the Lord already considered in these pages. Luke's partial summary of the sermon follows his record of the ordination of the apostles. Matthew tells us that Jesus had gone up the mountain and that He sat while speaking; Luke's account suggests the inference that Jesus and the Twelve first descended from the mountain heights to a plain, where they were met by the multitude, and that Jesus preached unto them, standing. Critics who rejoice in trifles, often to the neglect of weightier matters, have tried to make much of these seeming variations. Is it not probable that Jesus spoke at length on the mountain-side to the disciples then present, and from whom He had chosen the Twelve, and that after finishing His discourse to them He descended with them to the plain where a multitude had assembled, and that to these He repeated parts of what He had before spoken? The relative fullness of Matthew's report may be due to the fact that he, as one of the Twelve, was present at the first and more extended delivery.

**2. Pleasure Versus Happiness**—"The present is an age of **pleasure-seeking**, and men are losing their sanity in the mad rush for sensations that do but excite and disappoint. In this day of counterfeits, adulterations, and base imitations, the devil is busier than he has ever been in the course of human history, in the manufacture of pleasures, both old and new; and these he offers for sale in most attractive fashion, falsely labeled, *Happiness*. In this soul-destroying craft he is without a peer; he has had centuries of experience and practice, and by his skill he controls the market. He has learned the tricks of the trade, and knows well how to catch the eye and arouse the desire of his customers. He puts up the stuff in bright-colored packages, tied with tinsel string and

tassel; and crowds flock to his bargain counters, hustling and crushing one another in their frenzy to buy.

"Follow one of the purchasers as he goes off gloatingly with his gaudy packet, and watch him as he opens it. What finds he inside the gilded wrapping? He has expected fragrant happiness, but uncovers only an inferior brand of pleasure, the stench of which is nauseating.

"Happiness includes all that is really desirable and of true worth in pleasure, and much beside. Happiness is genuine gold, pleasure but gilded brass, which corrodes in the hand, and is soon converted into poisonous verdigris. Happiness is as the genuine diamond, which, rough or polished, shines with its own inimitable luster; pleasure is as the paste imitation that glows only when artificially embellished. Happiness is as the ruby, red as the heart's blood, hard and enduring; pleasure, as stained glass, soft, brittle, and of but transitory beauty.

"Happiness is true food, wholesome, nutritious and sweet; it builds up the body and generates energy for action, physical, mental and spiritual; pleasure is but a deceiving stimulant which, like spirituous drink, makes one think he is strong when in reality enfeebled; makes him fancy he is well when in fact stricken with deadly malady.

"Happiness leaves no bad after-taste, it is followed by no depressing reaction; it calls for no repentance, brings no regret, entails no remorse; pleasure too often makes necessary repentance, contrition, and suffering; and, if indulged to the extreme, it brings degradation and destruction.

"True happiness is lived over and over again in memory, always with a renewal of the original good; a moment of unholy pleasure may leave a barbed sting, which, like a thorn in the flesh, is an ever-present source of anguish.

"Happiness is not akin with levity, nor is it one with light-minded mirth. It springs from the deeper fountains of the soul, and is not infrequently accompanied by tears. Have you never been so happy that you have had to weep? I have." From an article by the author, *Improvement Era*, vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 172, 173.

**3. Salt of the Earth** – Dummelow's *Commentary*, on Matt. 5:13, states: "Salt in Palestine, being gathered in an impure state, often undergoes chemical changes by which its flavor is destroyed while its appearance remains." Perhaps a reasonable interpretation of the expression, "if the salt have lost his savor," may be suggested by the fact that salt mixed with insoluble impurities may be dissolved out by moisture, leaving the insoluble residue but slightly salty. The lesson of the Lord's illustration is that spoiled salt is of no use as a preservative. The corresponding passage in the sermon delivered by Jesus to the Nephites after His resurrection reads: "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, I**

**give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor, wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."** (3 Nephi 12:13.)

**4. Reference to Publicans** – Observe that Matthew, who had been a publican, frankly records this reference (5:46, 47) to his despised class. Luke writes "sinners" instead of "publicans" (6:32-34). Of course, if the accounts of the two writers refer to separate addresses (see Note 1, above), both may be accurate. But we find Matthew's designation of himself as a publican in his list of the apostles (10:3) and the considerate omission of the unenviable title by the other evangelists (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15).

**5. Relative Perfection** – Our Lord's admonition to men to become perfect, even as the Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48) cannot rationally be construed otherwise than as implying the possibility of such achievement. Plainly, however, man cannot become perfect in mortality in the sense in which God is perfect as a supremely glorified Being. It is possible, though, for man to be perfect in his sphere in a sense analogous to that in which superior intelligences are perfect in their several spheres; yet the relative perfection of the lower is infinitely inferior to that of the higher. A college student in his freshman or sophomore year may be perfect as freshman or sophomore; his record may possibly be a hundred per cent on the scale of efficiency and achievement; yet the honors of the upper classman are beyond him, and the attainment of graduation is to him remote, but of assured possibility, if he do but continue faithful and devoted to the end.

## FOOTNOTES

[515] Matt. chaps. 5, 6, 7; Luke 6:20-49. See also the version of the Sermon as delivered by Jesus Christ after His resurrection, to the Nephites on the western continent; B. of M., 3 Nephi, chaps. 12, 13, 14. See also chapter 39 herein.

[516] Note 1, end of chapter.

[517] Matt. 4:23-25; read these verses in connection with 5:1; see also Luke 6:17-19.

[518] Note 1, end of chapter.

[519] Matt. 5:3-12; compare Luke 6:20-26; and B. of M., 3 Nephi 12:1-12.

[520] Matt. 5:11,12; compare Luke 6:26; B. of M., 3 Nephi 12:11,12.

[521] Note 2, end of chapter.

[522] Doc. and Cov. 93:33.

[523] Matt. 5:13-20; compare Luke 14:34-35; B. of M., 3 Nephi 12:13-20.

[524] Lev. 2:13; compare Ezra 6:9; Ezek. 43:24.

[525] Note the expression "covenant of salt," indicating the covenant between Jehovah and Israel, Lev. 2:13; Numb. 18:19; compare 2 Chron. 13:5.

[526] Note 3, end of chapter.

[527] Matt. 5:21-48; Luke 6:27-36; compare B. of M., 3 Nephi 12:21-48.

[528] Exo. 21:23-25; Lev. 24:17-22; Deut. 19:21.

[529] Compare Lev. 19:18; Deut. 23:6; and Psa. 41:10.

[530] Compare the lesson taught in the Parable of the Tares, Matt. 13:24-30.

[531] Note 4, end of chapter; See Chapter 14 herein.

[532] Note 5, end of chapter.

- [533] Matt. 6:1-18; compare Luke 11:2-4; B. of M., 3 Nephi 13:1-18.
- [534] Consider the incident of the gifts of the rich and the widow's mite, Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4.
- [535] See Chapter 3 herein.
- [536] Exo. 16:16-21.
- [537] Note the lesson of the parable of the Unmerciful Servant, Matt. 18:33-25.
- [538] Compare Matt. 7:6.
- [539] P. of G.P., Abraham 3:25; See Chapter 2 herein.
- [540] Acts 17:28.
- [541] Compare the instance connected with the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, Luke 18:10-14.
- [542] Matt. 6:19-34; compare Luke 12:24-34; 16:13; 18:22; B. of M., 3 Nephi 13:19-34.
- [543] Luke 11:34-36.
- [544] Compare Gal. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:17; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15.
- [545] Matt. 7:1-5; Luke 6:37, 38, 41, 42; compare B. of M., 3 Nephi 14:1-5.
- [546] Matt. 7:6; compare B. of M., 3 Nephi 14:6.
- [547] Matt. 7:7-23; Luke 6:43-44, 46; 11:9-13; 13:24-30; compare B. of M., 3 Nephi 14:7-23.
- [548] "Articles of Faith," x:1-20; and xii:1-30.
- [549] Matt. 7:24-29; Luke 6:46-49; compare B. of M., 3 Nephi 14:24-27.