

JESUS THE CHRIST

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

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Commentary (Indented Italics), Underlining and Bolding by
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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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AS ONE HAVING AUTHORITY

Matthew's account of the invaluable address, known to us as the Sermon on the Mount, is closed with a forceful sentence of his own, referring to the effect of the Master's words upon the people: "**For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**"[550] A striking characteristic of Christ's ministry was the entire absence of any claim of human authority for His words or deeds; the commission He professed to have was that of the Father who sent Him. His addresses, whether delivered to multitudes or spoken in relative privacy to few, were free from the labored citations in which the teachers of the day delighted. His authoritative "I say unto you" took the place of invocation of authority and exceeded any possible array of precedent commandment or deduction. In this His words differed essentially from the erudite utterances of scribes, Pharisees and rabbis. Throughout His ministry, inherent power and authority were manifest over matter and the forces of nature, over men and demons, over life and death. It now becomes our purpose to consider a number of instances in which the Lord's power was demonstrated in divers mighty works.

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT HEALED [551]

From the Mount of Beatitudes Jesus returned to Capernaum, whether directly or by a longer way marked by other works of power and mercy is of little importance. There was at that time a Roman garrison in the city. A military officer, a centurion or captain of a hundred men, was stationed there. Attached to the household of this officer was an esteemed servant, who was ill, "and ready to die." The centurion had faith that Christ could heal his servant, and invoked the intercession of the Jewish elders to beg of the Master the boon desired. These elders implored Jesus most earnestly, and urged the worthiness of the man, who, though a Gentile, loved the people of Israel and out of his munificence had built for them a synagog in the town. Jesus went with the elders, but the centurion, probably learning of the approach of the little company, hastily sent other envoys to say that he did not consider himself worthy to have Jesus enter his home, from which sense of unworthiness he had not ventured to make his request in person.[552] "But," ran the message of supplication, "**say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.**" We may well contrast this man's conception of Christ's power with that of the nobleman of the same town, who had requested Jesus to hasten in person to the side of his dying son.[553]

The centurion seems to have reasoned in this way: He himself was a man of authority, though under the direction of superior officers. To his subordinates he gave orders

which were obeyed. He did not find it necessary to personally attend to the carrying out of his instructions. Surely One who had such power as Jesus possessed could command and be obeyed. Moreover, the man may have heard of the marvelous restoration of the nobleman's dying son, in accomplishing which the Lord spoke the effective word when miles away from the sufferer's bed. That the centurion's trust and confidence, his belief and faith, were genuine, is not to be doubted, since Jesus expressly commended the same. The afflicted one was healed. Jesus is said to have marveled[554] at the centurion's manifestation of faith, and, turning to the people who followed, He thus spake: **"I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."** This remark may have caused some of the listeners to wonder; the Jews were unaccustomed to hear the faith of a Gentile so extolled, for, according to the traditionalism of the day, a Gentile, even though an earnest proselyte to Judaism, was accounted essentially inferior to even the least worthy of the chosen people. Our Lord's comment plainly indicated that Gentiles would be preferred in the kingdom of God if they excelled in worthiness. Turning to Matthew's record we find this additional teaching, introduced as usual with **"I say unto you" – "That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**[555] This lesson, that the supremacy of Israel can be attained only through excellence in righteousness, is reiterated and enlarged upon in the Lord's teachings, as we shall see.

A YOUNG MAN OF NAIN RAISED FROM THE DEAD [556]

On the day after that of the miracle last considered, Jesus went to the little town of Nain, and, as usual, many people accompanied Him. This day witnessed what in human estimation was a wonder greater than any before wrought by Him. He had already healed many, sometimes by a word spoken to afflicted ones present, and again when He was far from the subject of His beneficent power; bodily diseases had been overcome, and demons had been rebuked at His command; but, though the sick who were nigh unto death had been saved from the grave, we have no earlier record of our Lord having commanded dread death itself to give back one it had claimed.[557] As Jesus and His followers approached the town, they met a funeral cortege of many people; the only son of a widow was being borne to the tomb; the body was carried according to the custom of the day on an open bier. Our Lord looked with compassion upon the sorrowing mother, now bereft of both husband and son; and, feeling in Himself[558] the pain of her grief, He said in gentle tone, "Weep not." He touched the stretcher upon which the dead man lay, and the bearers stood still. Then addressing the corpse He said: **"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise."** And the dead heard the voice of Him who is Lord of all,[559] and immediately sat up and spoke. Graciously Jesus delivered the young man to his mother. We read without wonder that there came a fear on all who were present, and that they glorified God, testifying that a great prophet was amongst them and that God has visited His people. Reports of this miracle were carried

throughout the land, and even reached the ears of John the Baptist, who was confined in the prison of Herod. The effect of the information conveyed to John concerning this and other mighty works of Christ, now claims our attention.

JOHN BAPTIST'S MESSAGE TO JESUS

Even before Jesus had returned to Galilee after His baptism and the forty days of solitude in the wilderness, John the Baptist had been imprisoned by order of Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.[560] During the subsequent months of our Lord's activities, in preaching the gospel, teaching the true significance of the kingdom, reproving sin, healing the afflicted, rebuking evil spirits and even raising the dead to life, His forerunner, the God-fearing, valiant John, had lain a prisoner in the dungeons of Machærus, one of the strongest of Herod's citadels.[561]

The tetrarch had some regard for John, having found him to be a holy man; and many things had Herod done on the direct advice of the Baptist or because of the influence of the latter's general teaching. Indeed, Herod had listened to John gladly, and had imprisoned him through a reluctant yielding to the importunities of Herodias, whom Herod claimed as a wife under cover of an illegal marriage. Herodias had been and legally was still the wife of Herod's brother Philip, from whom she had never been lawfully divorced; and her pretended marriage to Herod Antipas was both adulterous and incestuous under Jewish law. The Baptist had fearlessly denounced this sinful association; to Herod he had said: "**It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.**" Though Herod might possibly have ignored this stern rebuke, or at least might have allowed it to pass without punishment, Herodias would not condone. It was she, not the tetrarch, who most hated John; she "**had a quarrel against him,**" and succeeded in inducing Herod to have the Baptist seized and incarcerated as a step toward the consummation of her vengeful plan of having him put to death.[562] Moreover, Herod feared an uprising of the people in the event of John being slain by his order.[563]

In the course of his long imprisonment John had heard much of the marvelous preaching and works of Christ; these things must have been reported to him by some of his disciples and friends who were allowed to visit him.[564] Particularly was he informed of the miraculous raising of the young man at Nain;[565] and forthwith he commissioned two of his disciples to bear a message of inquiry to Jesus.[566] These came to Christ and reported the purpose of their visit thus: "**John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?**" The messengers found Jesus engaged in beneficent ministrations; and, instead of giving an immediate reply in words, He continued His labor, relieving in that same hour many who were afflicted by blindness or infirmities, or who were troubled by evil spirits. Then, turning to the two who had communicated the Baptist's question, Jesus said: "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see,

the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

The words of John's inquiring disciples were answered by wondrous deeds of beneficence and mercy. When the reply was reported to John, the imprisoned prophet could scarcely have failed to remember the predictions of Isaiah, that by those very tokens of miracle and blessing should the Messiah be known;[567] and the reproof must have been convincing and convicting as he called to mind his own citations of Isaiah's prophecies, when he had proclaimed in fiery, withering eloquence the fulfillment of those earlier predictions in his own mission and in that of the Mightier One to whom he had borne personal testimony.[568]

The concluding sentence of our Lord's answer to John was the climax of what had preceded, and a further though yet gentle rebuke of the Baptist's defective comprehension of the Messiah's mission. "**Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me,**" said the Lord. Misunderstanding is the prelude to offense. Gaged by the standard of the then current conception of what the Messiah would be, the work of Christ must have appeared to many as failure; and those who were looking for some sudden manifestation of His power in the conquest of Israel's oppressors and the rehabilitation of the house of David in worldly splendor, grew impatient, then doubtful; afterward they took offense and were in danger of turning in open rebellion against their Lord. Christ has been an offender to many because they, being out of harmony with His words and works, have of themselves taken offense.[569]

Many in Israel, those who were corrupted, not only in their Biblical education but in their personal lives, expected Christ to come in power and glory the first time – these would be the people who were "offended" and unbelieving.

John's situation must be righteously considered by all who assume to render judgment as to his purpose in sending to inquire of Christ, "Art thou he that should come?" John thoroughly understood that his own work was that of preparation; he had so testified and had openly borne witness that Jesus was the One for whom he had been sent to prepare. With the inauguration of Christ's ministry, John's influence had waned, and for many months he had been shut up in a cell, chafing under his enforced inactivity, doubtless yearning for the freedom of the open, and for the locusts and wild honey of the desert. Jesus was increasing while he decreased in popularity, influence, and opportunity; and he had affirmed that such condition was inevitable.[570]

But, left in prison, he may have become despondent, and may have permitted himself to wonder whether that Mightier One had forgotten him. He knew that were Jesus to speak the word of command the prison of Machærus could no longer hold him; nevertheless Jesus seemed to have abandoned him to his fate, which comprised not only confinement but other indignities, and physical torture.[571] It may have been a part of

John's purpose to call Christ's attention to his pitiable plight; and in this respect his message was rather a reminder than a plain inquiry based on actual doubt. Indeed, we have good grounds for inference that John's purpose in sending disciples to inquire of Christ was partly, and perhaps largely, designed to confirm in these disciples an abiding faith in the Christ. The commission with which they were charged brought them into direct communication with the Lord, whose supremacy they could not well fail to comprehend. They were personal witnesses of His power and authority.

...John wanted his disciples to gain a testimony of Christ

Our Lord's commentary on John's message indicated that the Baptist had no full understanding of what the spiritual kingdom of God comprised. After the envoys had departed, Jesus addressed Himself to the people who had witnessed the interview. He would not have them underrate the importance of the Baptist's service.[572] He reminded them of the time of John's popularity, when some of those then present, and multitudes of others, had gone into the wilderness to hear the prophet's stern admonition; and they had found him to be no reed, shaken by the wind, but a firm and unbending oak. They had not gone to see a man in fashionable attire; those who wore soft raiment were to be looked for in the court of the king, not in the wilderness, nor in the dungeon where John now lay. They had found in John a prophet indeed, yea, more than a prophet; "For," affirmed the Lord, "**I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.**"[573] What stronger testimony of the Baptist's integrity is needed? Other prophets had told of the Messiah's coming, but John had seen Him, had baptized Him, and had been to Jesus as a body servant to his master. Nevertheless from the day of John's preaching to the time at which Christ then spoke, the kingdom of heaven had been rejected with violence, and this even though all the prophets and even the fundamental law had told of its coming, and though both John and Christ had been abundantly predicted.

Concerning John, the Lord continued: "**And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.**"[574] It is important to know that the designation, Elias, here applied by Jesus to the Baptist, is a title rather than a personal name, and that it has no reference to Elijah, the ancient prophet called the Tishbite.[575] Many of those who heard the Lord's eulogy on the Baptist rejoiced, for they had accepted John, and had turned from him to Jesus as from the lesser to the Greater; as from the priest to the great High Priest, as from the herald to the King. But Pharisees and lawyers were present, those of the class that John had so vehemently denounced as of a generation of vipers, and those who had rejected the counsel of God in refusing to heed the Baptist's call to repentance.[576]

At this point the Master resorted to analogy to make His meaning clearer. He compared the unbelieving and dissatisfied generation to fickle children at play, disagreeing

among themselves. Some wanted to enact the pageantry of a mock wedding, and though they piped the rest would not dance; then they changed to a funeral procession and essayed the part of mourners, but the others would not weep as the rules of the game required. Ever critical, ever skeptical, by nature fault-finders and defamers, hard of hearing and of heart, they grumbled. John the Baptist had come amongst them like the eremitic prophets of old, as strict as any Nazarite, refusing to eat with the merry-makers or drink with the convivial, and they had said "He hath a devil." Now came the Son of Man,[577] without austerity or hermit ways, eating and drinking as a normal man would do, a guest at the houses of the people, a participant in the festivities of a marriage party, mingling alike with the publicans and the Pharisees – and they complained again, saying: "Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" The Master explained that such inconsistency, such wicked trifling with matters most sacred, such determined opposition to truth, would surely be revealed in their true light, and the worthlessness of boasted learning would appear. "But," said He, "**wisdom is justified of all her children.**"

From reproof for unbelieving individuals He turned to unappreciative communities, and upbraided the cities in which He had wrought so many mighty works, and wherein the people repented not: "**Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.**"[578]

Seemingly faint at heart over the unbelief of the people, Jesus sought strength in prayer.[579] With the eloquence of soul for which one looks in vain save in the anguish-laden communion of Christ with His Father, He voiced His reverent gratitude that God had imparted a testimony of the truth to the humble and simple rather than to the learned and great; though misunderstood by men He was known for what He really was by the Father. Turning again to the people, He urged anew their acceptance of Him and His gospel, and His invitation is one of the grandest outpourings of spiritual emotion known to man: "**Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**"[580] He invited them from drudgery to pleasant service; from the well-nigh unbearable burdens of ecclesiastical exactions and traditional formalism, to the liberty of truly spiritual worship; from slavery to freedom; but they would not. The gospel He offered them was the embodiment of liberty, but not of license; it entailed obedience and submission; but even if such could be likened unto a yoke, what was its burden in comparison with the incubus under which they groaned?

DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Reverting to John Baptist in his dungeon solitude, we are left without information as to how he received and understood the reply to his inquiry, as brought by his messengers. His captivity was destined soon to end, though not by restoration to liberty on earth. The hatred of Herodias increased against him. An opportunity for carrying into effect her fiendish plots against his life soon appeared.[581] The king celebrated his birthday by a great feast, to which his lords, high captains, and the principal officials of Galilee were bidden. To grace the occasion, Salome, daughter of Herodias though not of Herod, came in and danced before the company. So enchanted were Herod and his guests that the king bade the damsel ask whatever she would, and he swore he would give it unto her, even though the gift were half of his kingdom.

She retired to consult her mother as to what she should ask, and, being instructed, returned with the appalling demand: "I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist." The king was astounded; his amazement was followed by sorrow and regret; nevertheless, he dreaded the humiliation that would follow a violation of the oath he had sworn in the presence of his court; so, summoning an executioner, he immediately gave the fatal order; and John was forthwith beheaded in the dungeon. The headsman returned, carrying a dish in which lay the ghastly trophy of the corrupt queen's vengeance. The bloody gift was delivered to Salome, who carried it with inhuman triumph to her mother. Some of John's disciples came, secured the corpse, laid it in a tomb; and bore the tidings of his death to Jesus. Herod was sorely troubled over the murder he had ordered; and when, later, the marvels wrought by Jesus were reported to him, he was afraid, and said: "**That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.**" To those who dissented, the terrified king replied: "It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead."[582]

So ended the life of the prophet-priest, the direct precursor of the Christ; thus was stilled the mortal voice of him who had cried so mightily in the wilderness: "**Prepare ye the way of the Lord.**" After many centuries his voice has been heard again, as the voice of one redeemed and resurrected; and the touch of his hand has again been felt, in this the dispensation of restoration and fullness. In May, 1829, a resurrected personage appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, announced himself as John, known of old as the Baptist, laid his hands upon the two young men, and conferred upon them the priesthood of Aaron, which comprises authority to preach and minister the gospel of repentance and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.[583]

IN THE HOUSE OF SIMON THE PHARISEE

"And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat." [584]

From the place of this incident in Luke's narration of events, it appears that it may have occurred on the day of the visit of John's messengers. Jesus accepted the Pharisee's invitation, as He had accepted the invitations of others, including even publicans, and those called by the rabbis, sinners. His reception at Simon's house appears to have been somewhat lacking in warmth, hospitality and honorable attendance. The narrative suggests an attitude of condescension on the part of the host. It was the custom of the times to treat a distinguished guest with marked attention; to receive him with a kiss of welcome, to provide water for washing the dust from his feet, and oil for anointing the hair of the head and the beard. All these courteous attentions were omitted by Simon. Jesus took His place, probably on one of the divans or couches on which it was usual to partly sit, partly recline, while eating. [585] Such an attitude would place the feet of the person outward from the table. In addition to these facts relating to the usages of the time it should be further remembered that dwellings were not protected against intrusion by such amenities of privacy as now prevail. It was not unusual at that time in Palestine for visitors and even strangers, usually men however, to enter a house at meal time, observe the procedure and even speak to the guests, all without bidding or invitation.

Among those who entered Simon's house while the meal was in progress, was a woman; and the presence of a woman, though somewhat unusual, was not strictly a social impropriety and could not well be forbidden on such an occasion. But this woman was one of the fallen class, a woman who had been unvirtuous, and who had to bear, as part of the penalty for her sins, outward scorn and practical ostracism from those who professed to be morally superior. She approached Jesus from behind, and bent low to kiss His feet as a mark of humility on her part and of respectful homage to Him. She may have been one of those who had heard His gracious words, spoken possibly that day: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Whatever her motive in coming, she had certainly come in a repentant and deeply contrite state. As she leaned over the feet of Jesus her tears rained upon them. Seemingly oblivious of her surroundings and of disapproving eyes watching her movements, she shook out her tresses and wiped the Lord's feet with her hair. Then, opening an alabaster box of ointment, she anointed them, as a slave might do to his master. Jesus graciously permitted the woman to proceed unrebuked and uninterrupted in her humble service inspired by contrition and reverent love.

Simon had observed the whole proceeding; by some means he had knowledge as to the class to which this woman belonged; and though not aloud, within himself he said: "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of

woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. Jesus read the man's thoughts, and thus spake: "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," to which the Pharisee replied, "Master, say on." Jesus continued, **"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?"** But one answer could be given with reason, and that Simon gave, though apparently with some hesitation or reserve. He possibly feared that he might involve himself. "I suppose" he ventured, **"that he, to whom he forgave most."** Jesus said, **"Thou hast rightly judged,"** and proceeded: **"Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment."**

The Pharisee could not fail to note so direct a reminder of his having omitted the ordinary rites of respect to a specially invited guest. The lesson of the story had found its application in him, even as Nathan's parable had drawn from David the king a self-convicting answer.[586] **"Wherefore,"** Jesus continued, **"I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."** Then to the woman He spake the words of blessed relief: "Thy sins are forgiven." Simon and the others at table murmured within themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Understanding their unspoken protest, Christ addressed the woman again, saying, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

The latter part of the narrative brings to mind another occasion on which Christ granted remission of sins, and because of opposition in the minds of some hearers, opposition none the less real because unvoiced, had supplemented His authoritative utterance by another pronouncement.[587]

The name of the woman who thus came to Christ, and whose repentance was so sincere as to bring to her grateful and contrite soul the assurance of remission, is not recorded. There is no evidence that she figures in any other incident recorded in scripture. By certain writers she has been represented as the Mary of Bethany who, shortly before Christ's betrayal, anointed the head of Jesus with spikenard;[588] but the assumption of identity is wholly unfounded,[589] and constitutes an unjustifiable reflection upon the earlier life of Mary, the devoted and loving sister of Martha and Lazarus. Equally wrong is the attempt made by others to identify this repentant and forgiven sinner with Mary Magdalene, no period of whose life was marked by the sin of unchastity so far as the scriptures aver. The importance of guarding against mistakes in the identity of these women renders advisable the following addition to the foregoing treatment.

There are many Mary's in the New Testament and the Bible. Developing beliefs about their moral sins, (as well as everyone else), should be made cautiously.

In the chapter following that in which are recorded the incidents last considered, Luke[590] states that Jesus went throughout the region, visiting every city and village, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and showing the glad tidings thereof. With Him on this tour were the Twelve, and also "certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." Further reference is made to some or all of these honorable women in connection with the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, and of Mary Magdalene particular mention appears.[591] Mary Magdalene, whose second name is probably derived from her home town, Magdala, had been healed through the ministrations of Jesus from both physical and mental maladies, the latter having been associated with possession by evil spirits. Out of her we are told Christ had cast seven devils,[592] but even such grievous affliction affords no warrant for the assertion that the woman was unvirtuous or unchaste.

Mary Magdalene became one of the closest friends Christ had among women; her devotion to Him as her Healer and as the One whom she adored as the Christ, was unswerving; she stood close by the cross while other women tarried afar off in the time of His mortal agony; she was among the first at the sepulchre on the resurrection morning, and was the first mortal to look upon and recognize a resurrected Being – the Lord whom she had loved with all the fervor of spiritual adoration. To say that this woman, chosen from among women as deserving of such distinctive honors, was once a fallen creature, her soul seared by the heat of unhallowed lust, is to contribute to the perpetuating of an error for which there is no excuse. Nevertheless the false tradition, arising from early and unjustifiable assumption, that this noble woman, distinctively a friend of the Lord, is the same who, admittedly a sinner, washed and anointed the Savior's feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee and gained the boon of forgiveness through contrition, has so tenaciously held its place in the popular mind through the centuries, that the name, Magdalene, has come to be a generic designation for women who fall from virtue and afterward repent. We are not considering whether the mercy of Christ could have been extended to such a sinner as Mary of Magdala is wrongly reputed to have been; man cannot measure the bounds nor fathom the depths of divine forgiveness; and if it were so that this Mary and the repentant sinner who ministered to Jesus as He sat at the Pharisee's table were one and the same, the question would stand affirmatively answered, for that woman who had been a sinner was forgiven. We are dealing with the scriptural record as a history, and nothing said therein warrants the really repellent though common imputation of unchastity to the devoted soul of Mary Magdalene.

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY ASCRIBED TO BEELZEBUB [593]

At the time of our Lord's earthly ministry, the curing of the blind, deaf, or dumb was regarded as among the greatest possible achievements of medical science or spiritual treatment; and the subjection or casting out of demons was ranked among the attainments impossible to rabbinical exorcism. Demonstrations of the Lord's power to heal and restore, even in cases universally considered as incurable, had the effect of intensifying the hostility of the sacerdotal classes; and they, represented by the Pharisaic party, evolved the wholly inconsistent and ridiculous suggestion that miracles were wrought by Jesus through the power of the prince of devils, with whom He was in league.[594]

While the Lord was making His second missionary tour through Galilee, going about through "all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people,"[595] the absurd theory that Christ was Himself a victim of demoniacal possession, and that He operated by the power of the devil, was urged and enlarged upon until it became the generally accepted explanation among the Pharisees and their kind. Jesus had withdrawn Himself for a time from the more populous centers, where He was constantly watched by emissaries, whom the ruling classes had sent from Jerusalem into Galilee; for the Pharisees were in conspiracy against Him, seeking excuse and opportunity to take His life; but even in the smaller towns and rural districts He was followed and beset by great multitudes, to whom He ministered for both physical and spiritual ailments.[596]

He urged the people to refrain from spreading His fame; and this He may have done for the reason that at that stage of His work an open rupture with the Jewish hierarchy would have been a serious hindrance; or possibly He desired to leave the rulers, who were plotting against Him, time and opportunity to brew their bitter enmity and fill to the brim the flagons of their determined iniquity. Matthew sees in the Lord's injunctions against publicity a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that the chosen Messiah would not strive nor cry out on the street to attract attention, nor would He use His mighty power to crush even a bruised reed, or to quench even the smoking flax; He would not fail nor be discouraged, but would victoriously establish just judgment upon the earth for the Gentiles, as well as, by implication, for Israel.[597] The figure of the bruised reed and the smoking flax is strikingly expressive of the tender care with which Christ treated even the weakest manifestation of faith and genuine desire to learn the truth, whether exhibited by Jew or Gentile.

Soon after His return from the missionary tour referred to, an excuse for the Pharisees to assail Him was found in His healing of a man who was under the influence of a demon, and was both blind and dumb. This combination of sore afflictions, affecting body, mind, and spirit, was rebuked, and the sightless, speechless demoniac was

relieved of his three-fold burden.[598] At this triumph over the powers of evil the people were the more amazed and said: "Is not this the son of David?" in other words, Can this be any other than the Christ we have been so long expecting? The popular judgment so voiced maddened the Pharisees, and they told the almost adoring people: **"This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of devils."** Jesus took up the malicious charge and replied thereto, not in anger but in terms of calm reason and sound logic. He laid the foundation of His defense by stating the evident truth that a kingdom divided against itself cannot endure but must surely suffer disruption. If their assumption were in the least degree founded on truth, Satan through Jesus would be opposing Satan. Then, referring to the superstitious practices and exorcisms of the time, by which some such effects as we class today under mind cures were obtained, He asked: "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges." And to make the demonstration plainer by contrast, He continued: **"But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come upon you."** By the acceptance of either proposition, and surely one was true, for the fact that Jesus did cast out devils was known throughout the land and was conceded in the very terms of the charge now brought against Him, the accusing Pharisees stood defeated and condemned.

But the illustration went further. Jesus continued: **"Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house."** Christ had attacked the stronghold of Satan, had driven his evil spirits from the human tabernacles of which they had unwarrantably taken possession; how could Christ have done this had He not first subdued the "strong man," the master of devils, Satan himself? And yet those ignorant scholars dared to say in the face of such self-evident refutation of their own premises, that the powers of Satan were subdued by Satanic agency. There could be no agreement, no truce nor armistice between the contending powers of Christ and Satan. Offering a suggestion of self-judgment to His accusers, that they might severally decide on which side they were aligned, Jesus added: **"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."**

Then, the demonstration being complete, and the absurdity of His opponents' assumption proved, Christ directed their thoughts to the heinous sin of condemning the power and authority by which Satan was overcome. He had proved to them on the basis of their own proposition that He, having subdued Satan, was the embodiment of the Spirit of God, and that through Him the kingdom of God was brought to them. They rejected the Spirit of God, and sought to destroy the Christ through whom that Spirit was made manifest. What blasphemy could be greater? Speaking as one having authority, with the solemn affirmation **"I say unto you,"** He continued: **"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the**

Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

Who among men can word a more solemn and awful warning against the danger of committing the dread unpardonable sin?[599] Jesus was merciful in His assurance that words spoken against Himself as a Man, might be forgiven; but to speak against the authority He possessed, and particularly to ascribe that power and authority to Satan, was very near to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, for which sin there could be no forgiveness. Then, in stronger terms, which developed into cutting invective, He told them to be consistent – if they admitted that the result of His labors was good, as the casting out of devils surely was, to be likened unto good fruit – why did they not acknowledge that the power by which such results were attained, in other words that the tree itself, was good? **"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit."** With burning words of certain conviction He continued: **"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."** By the truths He had made so plain it was evident that their accusing words were drawn from hearts stored with evil treasure. Moreover their words were shown to be not only malicious but foolish, idle and vain, and therefore doubly saturated with sin. Another authoritative declaration followed: **"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."**

SEEKERS AFTER SIGNS? [600]

The Master's lesson, enforced though it was by illustration and analogy, by direct application, and by authoritative avowal, fell on ears that were practically deaf to spiritual truth, and found no place in hearts already stuffed with great stores of evil. To the profound wisdom and saving instruction of the word of God to which they had listened, they responded with a flippant request: **"Master, we would see a sign from thee."** Had they not already seen signs in profusion? Had not the blind and the deaf, the dumb and the infirm, the palsied and the dropsical, and people afflicted with all manner of diseases, been healed in their houses, on their streets, and in their synagogues; had not devils been cast out and their foul utterances been silenced by His word; and had not the dead been raised, and all by Him whom they now importuned for a sign? They would have some surpassing wonder wrought, to satisfy curiosity, or perhaps to afford them further excuse for action against Him – they wanted signs to waste on their lust.[601] Small wonder, that **"he sighed deeply in his spirit"** when such demands were made.[602] To the scribes and Pharisees who had shown such inattention to His words, He replied: **"An evil and adulterous generation[603] seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas."**

The sign of Jonas (or Jonah) was that for three days he had been in the belly of the fish and then had been restored to liberty; so would the Son of Man be immured in the

tomb, after which He would rise again. That was the only sign He would give them, and by that would they stand condemned. Against them and their generation would the men of Nineveh rise in judgment, for they, wicked as they were, had repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas was among them.[604] The queen of Sheba would rise in judgment against them, for she had journeyed far to avail herself of Solomon's wisdom; and behold a greater than Solomon stood before them.[605]

Then, reverting to the matter of unclean and evil spirits, in connection with which they had spread the accusation that He was one of the devil's own, He told them, that when a demon is cast out, he tries after a season of loneliness to return to the house or body from which he had been expelled; and, finding that house in order, sweet and clean since his filthy self had been forced to vacate it, he calls other spirits more wicked than himself, and they take possession of the man, and make his state worse than it was at first.[606] In this weird example is typified the condition of those who have received the truth, and thereby have been freed from the unclean influences of error and sin, so that in mind and spirit and body they are as a house swept and garnished and set in cleanly order, but who afterward renounce the good, open their souls to the demons of falsehood and deceit, and become more corrupt than before. **"Even so," declared the Lord, "shall it be also unto this wicked generation."**

Though the scribes and Pharisees were mostly unconvinced, if at all really impressed by His teachings, our Lord was not entirely without appreciative listeners. A woman in the company raised her voice in an invocation of blessing on the mother who had given birth to such a Son, and on the breasts that had suckled Him. While not rejecting this tribute of reverence, which applied to both mother and Son, Jesus answered: **"Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."**[607]

CHRIST'S MOTHER AND BRETHREN COME TO SEE HIM [608]

While Jesus was engaged with the scribes and Pharisees, and a great number of others, possibly at or near the conclusion of the teachings last considered, word was passed to Him that His mother and His brethren were present and desired to speak with Him. On account of the press of people they had been unable to reach His side. Making use of the circumstance to impress upon all the fact that His work took precedence over the claims of family and kinship, and thereby explaining that He could not meet His relatives at that moment, He asked, **"Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?"** Answering His own question and expressing in the answer the deeper thought in His mind, He said, pointing toward His disciples: **"Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."**

The incident reminds one of the answer He made to His mother, when she and Joseph had found Him in the temple after their long and anxious search: **"How is it that ye**

sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"[609] In that business He was engaged when His mother and brethren desired to speak with Him as He sat amidst the crowd. The superior claims of His Father's work caused Him to let all minor matters wait. We are not justified in construing these remarks as evidence of disrespect, far less of filial and family disloyalty. Devotion, similar in kind at least, was expected by Him of the apostles, who were called to devote without reserve their time and talents to the ministry.[610] The purpose on which the relatives of Jesus had come to see Him is not made known; we may infer, therefore, that it was of no great importance beyond the family circle.[611]

NOTES TO CHAPTER 18

1. The Two Accounts of the Miracle—In the commentary on the miraculous healing of the centurion's servant, as given in the text, we have followed in the main Luke's more circumstantial account. Matthew's briefer statement of the officer's petition, and the Lord's gracious compliance therewith, represents the man as coming in person to Jesus; while Luke refers to the elders of the local synagog as presenting the request. There is here no real discrepancy. It was then allowable, as in our time it is, to speak of one who causes something to be done as doing that thing himself. One may properly be said to notify another, when he sends the notification by a third party. A man may say he has built a house, when in reality others did the work of building though at his instance. An architect may with propriety be said to have constructed a building, when as a matter of fact he made the design, and directed others who actually reared the structure.

2. Jesus Marveled—Both Matthew and Luke tell us that Jesus marveled at the faith shown by the centurion, who begged that his beloved servant be healed (Matt. 8:10; Luke 7:9). Some have queried how Christ, whom they consider to have been omniscient during His life in the flesh, could have marveled at anything. The meaning of the passage is evident in the sense that when the fact of the centurion's faith was brought to His attention, He pondered over it, and contemplated it, probably as a refreshing contrast to the absence of faith He so generally encountered. In similar way, though with sorrow in place of joy, He is said to have marveled at the peoples' unbelief (Mark 6:6).

3. Sequence of the Miracles of Raising the Dead—As stated and reiterated in the text the chronology of the events in our Lord's ministry, as recorded by the Gospel-writers, is uncertain. Literature on the subject embodies much disputation and demonstrates absence of any near approach to agreement among Biblical scholars. We have record of three instances of miraculous restoration of the dead to life at the word of Jesus—the raising of the son of the widow of Nain, the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and the raising of Lazarus; and on the sequence of two of these there is difference of opinion. Of course the placing of the raising of Lazarus as the latest of the three is based on

certainty. Dr. Richard C. Trench, in his scholarly and very valuable *Notes on the Miracles of our Lord* definitely asserts that the raising of the daughter of Jairus is the first of the three works of restoration to life. Dr. John Laidlaw, in *The Miracles of our Lord*, treats this first among the miracles of its class though without affirming its chronological precedence; many other writers make it the second of the three. The incentive to arrange the three miracles of this group in the sequence indicated may, perhaps, be found in the desire to present them in the increasing order of apparent greatness – the raising of the damsel being an instance of recalling to life one who had but just died, ("hardly dead" as some wrongly describe her condition), the raising of the young man of Nain being the restoration of one on the way to the tomb, and the raising of Lazarus an instance of recalling to life one who had lain four days in the sepulchre. We cannot consistently conceive of these cases as offering grades of greater or lesser difficulty to the power of Christ; in each case His word of authority was sufficient to reunite the spirit and body of the dead person. Luke, the sole recorder of the miracle at Nain, places the event before that of the raising of the daughter of Jairus, with many incidents between. The great preponderance of evidence is in favor of considering the three miracles in the order followed herein, (1) the raising of the young man of Nain, (2) that of the daughter of Jairus, and (3) that of Lazarus.

4. Tetrarch – This title by derivation of the term and as originally used was applied to the ruler of a fourth part, or one of four divisions of a region that had formerly been one country. Later it came to be the designation of any ruler or governor over a part of a divided country, irrespective of the number or extent of the fractions. Herod Antipas is distinctively called the tetrarch in Matt. 14:1; Luke 3:1, 19; 9:7; and Acts 13:1; and is referred to as king in Matt. 14:9; Mark 6:14, 22, 25, 26.

5. Machærus – According to the historian Josephus (*Antiquities* xviii; 5:2), the prison to which John the Baptist was consigned by Herod Antipas was the strong fortress Machærus.

6. Christ an Offender to Many – The concluding part of our Lord's message to the imprisoned Baptist, in answer to the latter's inquiry, was, "Blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me." In passing it may be well to observe that whatever of reproof or rebuke these words may connote, the lesson was given in the gentlest way and in the form most easy to understand. As Deems has written, "Instead of saying 'Woe to him who is offended in me,' He puts it in the softer way 'Blessed is he who is not offended.'" In our English version of the Holy Bible the word "offend" and its cognates, are used in place of several different expressions which occur in the original Greek. Thus, actual infractions of the law, sin, and wickedness in general are all called offenses, and the perpetrators of such are guilty offenders who deserve punishment. In other instances even the works of righteousness are construed as causes of offense to the wicked; but this is so, not because the good works were in any way offenses against law or right, but because the law-breaker takes offense thereat. The convicted felon, if unrepentant and

still of evil mind, is offended and angry at the law by which he has been brought to justice; to him the law is a cause of offense. In a very significant sense Jesus Christ stands as the greatest offender in history; for all who reject His gospel, take offense thereat. On the night of His betrayal Jesus told the apostles that they would be offended because of Him (Matt. 26:31; see also verse 33). The Lord's personal ministry gave offense not alone to Pharisees and priestly opponents, but to many who had professed belief in Him (John 6:61; compare 16:1). The gospel of Jesus Christ is designated by Peter as "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient" (1 Peter 2:8; compare Paul's words, Romans 9:33). Indeed blessed is he to whom the gospel is welcome, and who finds therein no cause for offense.

Like someone who seems really sorry when they are facing the consequences of their actions, but really, they are only sorry for getting caught and they still haven't decided to repent.

7. The Greatness of the Baptist's Mission – The exalted nature of the mission of John the Baptist was thus testified to by Jesus: "**Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he**" (Matt. 11:11; compare Luke 7:28). In elucidation of the first part of this testimony, the prophet Joseph Smith said, in the course of a sermon delivered May 24, 1843, (Hist. of the Church, under date named): "It could not have been on account of the miracles John performed, for he did no miracles; but it was – First, because he was trusted with a divine mission of preparing the way before the face of the Lord. Who was trusted with such a mission before or since? No man. Second, he was trusted and it was required at his hands, to baptise the Son of Man. Who ever did that? Who ever had so great a privilege or glory? Who ever led the Son of God into the waters of baptism, beholding the Holy Ghost descend upon Him in the sign of a dove? No man. Third, John at that time was the only legal administrator holding the keys of power there was on earth. The keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory had departed from the Jews; and John, the son of Zacharias, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven, held the keys of power at that time."

The latter part of our Lord's statement – "notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (John), has given rise to diverse interpretations and comment. The true meaning may be, that surpassingly great as was John's distinction among the prophets, he had not learned, at the time of the incident under consideration, the full purpose of the Messiah's mission, and such he would surely have to learn before he became eligible for admission into the kingdom of heaven; therefore, the least of those who through knowledge gained and obedience rendered, would be prepared for a place in the kingdom of which Jesus taught, was greater than was John the Baptist at that time. Through latter-day inspiration we learn that "it is impossible for

a man to be saved in ignorance" (Doc. and Cov. 131:6), and that "The glory of God in intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth" (Doc. and Cov. 93:36). The Baptist's inquiry showed that he was then lacking in knowledge, imperfectly enlightened and unable to comprehend the whole truth of the Savior's appointed death and subsequent resurrection as the Redeemer of the world. But we must not lose sight of the fact, that Jesus in no wise intimated that John would remain less than the least in the kingdom of heaven. As he increased in knowledge of the vital truths of the kingdom, and rendered obedience thereto, he would surely advance, and become great in the kingdom of heaven as he was great among the prophets of earth.

8. John the Baptist the Elias that was to Come – In the days of Christ the people clung to the traditional belief that the ancient prophet Elijah was to return in person. Concerning this tradition the Dummelow *Commentary* says, on Matt. 11:14: "It was supposed that his [Elijah's] peculiar activity would consist in settling ceremonial and ritual questions, doubts and difficulties and that he would restore to Israel (1) the golden pot of manna, (2) the vessel containing the anointing oil, (3) the vessel containing the waters of purification, (4) Aaron's rod that budded and bore fruit." For this belief there was no scriptural affirmation. That John was to go before the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elias was declared by the angel Gabriel in his announcement to Zacharias (Luke 1:17); and our Lord made plain the fact that John was that predicted Elias. "Elias" is both a name and a title of office. Through revelation in the present dispensation we learn of the separate individuality of Elias and Elijah, each of whom appeared in person and committed to modern prophets the particular powers pertaining to his respective office (Doc. and Cov. 110:12, 13). We learn that the office of Elias is that of restoration (Doc. and Cov. 27:6, 7; 76:100; 77:9, 14). Under date of March 10, 1844, the following is recorded (*Hist. of Church*) as the testimony of the prophet Joseph Smith: –

"The spirit of Elias is to prepare the way for a greater revelation of God, which is the Priesthood of Elias, or the Priesthood that Aaron was ordained unto. And when God sends a man into the world to prepare for a greater work, holding the keys of the power of Elias, it was called the doctrine of Elias, even from the early ages of the world.

"John's mission was limited to preaching and baptizing; but what he did was legal; and when Jesus Christ came to any of John's disciples, He baptized them with fire and the Holy Ghost.

"We find the apostles endowed with greater power than John: their office was more under the spirit and power of Elijah than Elias.

"In the case of Philip, when he went down to Samaria, when he was under the spirit of Elias, he baptized both men and women. When Peter and John heard of it, they went down and laid hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost. This shows the distinction between the two powers.

Not extremely clear, but it sounds like the Priesthood of Aaron (baptism and preparing the way for something greater) is the Spirit of Elias and the Spirit and Power of Elijah is one of "fire and the Holy Ghost".

"When Paul came to certain disciples, he asked if they had received the Holy Ghost? They said, No. Who baptized you, then? We were baptized unto John's baptism. No, you were not baptized unto John's baptism, or you would have been baptized by John. And so Paul went and baptized them, for he knew what the true doctrine was, and he knew that John had not baptized them. And these principles are strange to me, that men who have read the Scriptures of the New Testament are so far from it.

"What I want to impress upon your minds is the difference of power in the different parts of the Priesthood, so that when any man comes among you, saying, 'I have the spirit of Elias,' you can know whether he be true or false; for any man that comes having the spirit and power of Elias, he will not transcend his bounds.

"John did not transcend his bounds, but faithfully performed that part belonging to his office; and every portion of the great building should be prepared right and assigned to its proper place; and it is necessary to know who holds the keys of power, and who does not, or we may be likely to be deceived.

"That person who holds the keys of Elias hath a preparatory work.

"This is the Elias spoken of in the last days, and here is the rock upon which many split, thinking the time was past in the days of John and Christ, and no more to be. But the spirit of Elias was revealed to me, and I know it is true; therefore I speak with boldness, for I know verily my doctrine is true."

9. At the Pharisee's Table—The expression "sat at meat," as in Luke 7:37 and in other instances, is stated by good authority to be a mistranslation; it should be rendered "lay" or "reclined" (see Smith's *Comp. Dict. of the Bible*, article "Meals"). That sitting was the early Hebrew posture at meals is not questioned (Gen. 27:19; Judges 19:6; 1 Sam. 16:11; 20:5, 18, 24; 1 Kings 13:20); but the custom of reclining on couches set around the table seems to date back long before the days of Jesus (Amos 3:12; 6:4). The Roman usage of arranging the tables and adjoining couches along three sides of a square, leaving the fourth side open for the passage of the attendants who served the diners was common in Palestine. Tables and couches so placed constituted the *triclinium*. In reference to the ceremonial of the Pharisees in the matter of prescribed washing of articles used in eating, Mark (7:4) specifies "tables"; this mention is conceded to be a mistranslation, as couches or literally beds, are meant by the Greek expression. (See marginal reading, "beds" in Oxford Bible, and others.) A person reclining at table would have the feet directed outward. Thus it was a simple matter for the contrite woman to approach Jesus from behind and anoint His feet without causing disturbance to others at the table.

10. The Woman's Identity not Specified – The attempt to identify the contrite sinner who anointed the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee with Mary of Bethany is thus strongly condemned by Farrar (p. 228, note): "Those who identify this feast at the house of Simon the Pharisee, in Galilee, with the long-subsequent feast at the house of Simon the leper, at Bethany, and the anointing of the feet by 'a woman that was a sinner' in the city, with the anointing of the head by Mary the sister of Martha, adopt principles of criticism so reckless and arbitrary that their general acceptance would rob the Gospels of all credibility, and make them hardly worth study as truthful narratives. As for the names Simon and Judas, which have led to so many identifications of different persons and different incidents, they were at least as common among the Jews of that day as Smith and Jones among ourselves. There are five or six Judes and nine Simons mentioned in the New Testament, and two Judes and two Simons among the Apostles alone; Josephus speaks of some ten Judes and twenty Simons in his writings, and there must, therefore, have been thousands of others who at this period had one of these two names. The incident (of anointing with ointment) is one quite in accordance with the customs of the time and country, and there is not the least improbability in its repetition under different circumstances. (Eccles. 9:8; Cant. 4:10; Amos 6:6.) The custom still continues."

The learned canon is fully justified in his vigorous criticism; nevertheless he endorses the commonly-accepted identification of the woman mentioned in connection with the meal in the house of Simon the Pharisee with Mary Magdalene, although he admits that the foundation of the assumed identification is "an ancient tradition, – especially prevalent in the Western Church, and followed by the translation of our English version" (p. 233). As stated in our text, there is an entire absence of trustworthy evidence that Mary Magdalene was ever tainted with the sin for which the repentant woman in the Pharisee's house was so graciously pardoned by our Lord.

11. The Unpardonable Sin – The nature of the awful sin against the Holy Ghost, against which the Lord warned the Pharisaic accusers who sought to ascribe His divine power to Satan, is more fully explained, and its dread results are more explicitly set forth in modern revelation. Concerning them and their dreadful fate, the Almighty has said: – "I say that it had been better for them never to have been born, for they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity; concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come.... They shall go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment; and the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows, neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will be revealed unto man, except to them who are made partakers thereof: nevertheless I, the Lord, show it by vision unto many, but straightway shut it up again; wherefore the end, the width, the

height, the depth, and the misery thereof, they understand not, neither any man except them who are ordained unto this condemnation." (Doc. and Cov. 76:31-48; see also Heb. 6:4-6; B. of M., Alma 39:6.)

12. An Adulterous Generation Seeking after Signs—Our Lord's reply to those who clamored for a sign, that "**An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign**" (Matt. 12:39; see also 16:4; Mark 8:38) could only be interpreted by the Jews as a supreme reproof. That the descriptive designation "adulterous" was literally applicable to the widespread immorality of the time, they all knew. Adam Clarke in his commentary on Matt. 12:39, says of this phase of our topic: "There is the utmost proof from their [the Jews'] own writings, that in the time of our Lord, they were most literally an adulterous race of people; for at this very time Rabbi Jachanan ben Zacchi abrogated the trial by the bitter waters of jealousy, because so many were found to be thus criminal." For the information concerning the trial of the accused by the bitter waters, see Numb. 5:11-31. Although Jesus designated the generation in which He lived as adulterous, we find no record that the Jewish rulers, who by their demand for a sign had given occasion for the accusation, ventured to deny or attempt to repel the charge. The sin of adultery was included among capital offenses (Deut. 22:22-25). The severity of the accusation as applied by Jesus, however, was intensified by the fact that the older scriptures represented the covenant between Jehovah and Israel as a marriage bond (Isa. 54:5-7; Jer. 3:14; 31:32; Hos. 2:19, 20); even as the later scriptures typify the Church as a bride, and Christ as the husband (2 Cor. 11:2; compare Rev. 21:2). To be spiritually adulterous, as the rabbis construed the utterances of the prophets, was to be false to the covenant by which the Jewish nations claimed distinction, as the worshipers of Jehovah, and to be wholly recreant and reprobate. Convicted on such a charge those sign-seeking Pharisees and scribes understood that Jesus classed them as worse than the idolatrous heathen. The words "adultery" and "idolatry" are of related origin, each connoting the act of unfaithfulness and the turning away after false objects of affection or worship.

13. The Mother and the Brethren of Jesus—The attempt of Mary and some members of her family to speak with Jesus on the occasion referred to in the text has been construed by many writers to mean that the mother and sons had come to protest against the energy and zeal with which Jesus was pursuing His work. Some indeed have gone so far as to say that the visiting members of the family had come to put Him under restraint, and to stem, if they could, the tide of popular interest, criticism, and offense, which surged about Him. The scriptural record furnishes no foundation for even a tentative conception of the kind. The purpose of the desired visit is not intimated. It is a fact as will be shown in pages to follow, that some members of Mary's household had failed to understand the great import of the work in which Jesus was so assiduously engaged; and we are told that some of His friends (marginal rendering, "kinsmen,") on one occasion set out with the purpose of laying hold on Him and stopping His public activities by physical force, for they said "He is beside himself." (Mark 3:21); furthermore we learn that His brethren did not believe on Him (John 7:5). These facts,

however, scarcely warrant the assumption that the desire of Mary and her sons to speak with Him on the occasion referred to was other than peaceful. And to assume that Mary, His mother, had so far forgotten the wondrous scenes of the angelic annunciation, the miraculous conception, the heavenly accompaniments of the birth, the more than human wisdom and power exhibited in youth and manhood, as to believe her divine Son an unbalanced enthusiast, whom she ought to restrain, is to assume responsibility for injustice to the character of one whom the angel Gabriel declared was blessed among women, and highly favored of the Lord.

The statement that the brethren of Jesus did not believe on Him at the time referred to by the recorder (John 7:5) is no proof that some or even all of those same brethren did not later believe on their divine Brother. Immediately after the Lord's ascension, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brethren were engaged in worship and supplication with the Eleven and other disciples (Acts 1:14). The attested fact of Christ's resurrection converted many who had before declined to accept Him as the Son of God. Paul records a special manifestation of the resurrected Christ to James (1 Cor. 15:7) and the James here referred to may be the same person elsewhere designated as "the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19); compare Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3. It appears that "brethren of the Lord" were engaged in the work of the ministry in the days of Paul's active service (1 Cor. 9:5). The specific family relationship of our Lord to James, Joses, Simon, Judas and the sisters referred to by Matthew (13:55, 56), and Mark (6:3), has been questioned; and several theories have been invented in support of divergent views. Thus, the Eastern or Epiphonian hypothesis holds, on no firmer basis than assumption, that the brethren of Jesus were children of Joseph of Nazareth by a former wife, and not the children of Mary the Lord's mother. The Levirate theory assumes that Joseph of Nazareth and Clopas (the latter name, it is interesting to note, is regarded as the equivalent of Alpheus, see Chapter 16) were brothers; and that, after the death of Clopas or Alpheus, Joseph married his brother's widow according to the levirate law (Chapter 31). The Hieronymian hypothesis is based on the belief that the persons referred to as brethren and sisters of Jesus were children of Clopas (Alpheus) and Mary the sister of the Lord's mother, and therefore cousins to Jesus. (See Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25.) It is beyond reasonable doubt that Jesus was regarded by those, who were acquainted with the family of Joseph and Mary as a close blood relative of other sons and daughters belonging to the household. If these others were children of Joseph and Mary, they were all juniors to Jesus, for He was undoubtedly His mother's firstborn child. The acceptance of this relationship between Jesus and His "brethren" and "sisters" mentioned by the synoptists constitutes what is known in theological literature as the Helvidian view.

FOOTNOTES

[550] Matt. 7:29; compare Luke 4:32; John 7:46.

[551] Luke 7:1-10; compare Matt. 8:5-13.

[552] Note 1, end of chapter.
[553] John 4:46-53; see Chapter 13.
[554] Note 2, end of chapter.
[555] Matt. 8:11, 12; see also Luke 13:28, 29; compare Acts 10:45.
[556] Luke 7:11-17.
[557] Note 3, end of chapter.
[558] Matt. 8:17; compare Isa. 53:4.
[559] Luke 20:36, 38; compare Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5; Rom. 14:9.
[560] Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14; Luke 3:19, 20; see Note 2, chap. 9, see Chapter 9, and Note 4, end of this chapter.
[561] Note 5, end of chapter.
[562] Mark 6:17-20.
[563] Matt. 14:5.
[564] Matt. 11:2. Note a similar liberty allowed to Paul when in durance, Acts 24:23.
[565] Luke 7:18; Matt. 11:2.
[566] Matt. 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23.
[567] Isa. 35:5, 6.
[568] Matt. 3:3; compare Isa. 40:3; Matt. 3:7; compare Isa. 59:5; Luke 3:6; compare Isa. 52:10.
[569] Matt. 13:57; 24:10; 26:31; Mark 6:3; 14:27; John 6:61. Note 6, end of chapter.
[570] John 3:30.
[571] Note that Jesus compared the sufferings of John while in prison as in part comparable to those He would Himself have to endure, in that they did unto John "whatsoever they listed" (Matt. 17:12; Mark 9:13).
[572] Luke 7:24-30; see also Matt. 11:7-14; compare Christ's testimony of John Baptist delivered at Jerusalem, John 5:33-35.
[573] Luke 7:28; see Note 7, end of chapter.
[574] Matt. 11:12-15; compare 17:12; Luke 1:17.
[575] Note 8, end of chapter.
[576] Matt. 3:7; Luke 7:30.
[577] See Chapter 11.
[578] Matt. 11:20-24; compare Luke 10:13-15.
[579] Matt. 11:25-27; compare Luke 10:21, 22.
[580] Matt. 11:28-30.
[581] Mark 6:21-29.
[582] Mark 6:14-16.
[583] "Articles of Faith," x:18; see also chapter 41 herein.
[584] Luke 7:36; see further, verses 37-50.
[585] Note 9, end of chapter.
[586] 2 Sam. 12:1-7.
[587] Matt. 9:2-6; Mark 2:5-7; See Chapter 14.
[588] Matt. 26:6, 7; Mark 14:3; John 11:2.
[589] Note 10, end of chapter.
[590] Luke 8:1-3.
[591] Matt. 27:55, 56, 61; 28:1, 5; Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1, 9; Luke 23:49, 55; 24:10, 22; John 19:25; 20:1, 13, 18.
[592] Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2.
[593] Matt. 12:24-45; compare 9:33, 34; see also Mark 3:22-30; Luke 11:14-26.
[594] Matt. 9:34.
[595] Matt. 9:35.
[596] Matt. 12:14-15.
[597] Matt. 12:17-20; compare Isa. 42:1.
[598] Matt. 12:22, 23.
[599] Note 11, end of chapter.

[600] Matt. 12:38-45; compare 16:1; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16, 29; John 2:18; 1 Cor. 1:22.

[601] Doc. and Cov. 46:9; compare 63:7-12.

[602] Mark 8:12.

[603] Note 12, end of chapter.

[604] Jonah chaps. 1-4.

[605] Kings 10:1; 2 Chron. 9:1; compare Luke 11:31.

[606] Matt. 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26.

[607] Luke 11:27, 28.

[608] Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21.

[609] Luke 2:49. See Chapter 9 herein.

[610] Matt. 10:37; compare Luke 14:26.

[611] Note 13, end of chapter.

19

"HE SPAKE MANY THINGS UNTO THEM IN PARABLES"

Throughout the period of Christ's ministry with which we have thus far dealt, His fame had continuously increased, because of the authority with which He spoke and of the many mighty works He did; His popularity had become such that whenever He moved abroad great multitudes followed Him. At times the people so thronged as to impede His movements, some with a desire to hear more of the new doctrine, others to plead at His feet for relief from physical or other ills; and many there were who had faith that could they but reach Him, or even touch the border of His robe, they would be healed.[612] One effect of the people's eagerness, which led them to press and crowd around Him, was to render difficult if not impossible at times the effective delivery of any discourse. His usual place for open-air teaching while He tarried in the vicinity of the sea, or lake, of Galilee was the shore; and thither flocked the crowds to hear Him. At His request, the disciples had provided a "small ship," which was kept in readiness on the beach;[613] and it was usual with Him to sit in the boat a short distance off shore, and preach to the people, as He had done when in the earlier days He called the chosen fishermen to leave their nets and follow Him.[614]

On one such occasion He employed a means of instruction, which, prior to that time, had not been characteristic of His teaching; this consisted in the use of parables,[615] simple stories to illustrate His doctrines. Some of these we shall here consider briefly, in the order most advantageous for treatment, and as best we know, in what may have been the sequence in which they were given.

"A SOWER WENT FORTH TO SOW"

First in the order of delivery is the Parable of the Sower. It is a splendid type of our Lord's parables in general, and is particularly valuable for its great intrinsic worth and because we possess a comprehensive interpretation of it by the divine Author. This is the story:

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some

an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."[616]

This new way of teaching, this departure from the Master's earlier method of doctrinal exposition, caused even the most devoted of the disciples to marvel. The Twelve and a few others came to Jesus when He was apart from the multitude, and asked why He had spoken to the people in this manner, and what was the meaning of this particular parable. Our Lord's reply to the first part of the inquiry we shall consider presently; concerning the second, He asked "**Know ye not the parable? and how then will ye know all parables?**"[617] Thus did He indicate the simplicity of this the first of His parables, together with its typical and fundamental character, and at the same time intimate that other parables would follow in the course of His teaching. Then He gave the interpretation:

"Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."[618]

Further exposition may appear superfluous; some suggestion as to the individual application of the contained lessons may be in place, however. Observe that the prominent feature of the story is that of the prepared or unprepared condition of the soil. The seed was the same whether it fell on good ground or bad, on mellow mold or among stones and thistles. The primitive method of sowing still followed in many countries, consists in the sower throwing the grain by handfuls against the wind, thus securing a widespread scattering. Running through the Galilean fields, were pathways, hard trodden by feet of men and beasts. Though seed should fall on such tracts, it could not grow; birds would pick up the living kernels lying unrooted and uncovered and some of the grains would be crushed and trodden down. So with the seed of truth falling upon the hardened heart; ordinarily it cannot take root, and Satan, as a marauding crow, steals it away, lest a grain of it perchance find a crack in the trampled ground, send down its rootlet, and possibly develop.

Seed falling in shallow soil, underlain by a floor of unbroken stone or hard-pan, may strike root and flourish for a brief season; but as the descending rootlets reach the impenetrable stratum they shrivel, and the plant withers and dies, for the nutritive

juices are insufficient where there is no depth of earth.[619] So with the man whose earnestness is but superficial, whose energy ceases when obstacles are encountered or opposition met; though he manifest enthusiasm for a time persecution deters him; he is offended,[620] and endures not. Grain sown where thorns and thistles abound is soon killed out by their smothering growth; even so with a human heart set on riches and the allurements of pleasure – though it receive the living seed of the gospel it will produce no harvest of good grain, but instead, a rank tangle of noxious weeds. The abundant yield of thorny thistles demonstrates the fitness of the soil for a better crop, were it only free from the cumbering weeds. The seed that falls in good deep soil, free from weeds and prepared for the sowing, strikes root and grows; the sun's heat scorches it not, but gives it thrift; it matures and yields to the harvester according to the richness of the soil, some fields producing thirty, others sixty, and a few even a hundred times as much grain as was sown.

Even according to literary canons, and as judged by the recognized standards of rhetorical construction and logical arrangement of its parts, this parable holds first place among productions of its class. Though commonly known to us as the Parable of the Sower, the story could be expressively designated as the Parable of the Four Kinds of Soil. It is the ground upon which the seed is cast, to which the story most strongly directs our attention, and which so aptly is made to symbolize the softened or the hardened heart, the clean or the thorn-infested soil. Observe the grades of soil, given in the increasing order of their fertility: (A) the compacted highway, the wayside path, on which, save by a combination of fortuitous circumstances practically amounting to a miracle, no seed can possibly strike root or grow; (B) the thin layer of soil covering an impenetrable bed-rock, wherein seed may sprout yet can never mature; (C) the weed-encumbered field, capable of producing a rich crop but for the jungle of thistles and thorns; and (D) the clean rich mold receptive and fertile. Yet even soils classed as good are of varying degrees of productiveness, yielding an increase of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred fold, with many inter-gradations.

Some Bible expositors have professed to find in this splendid parable evidence of decisive fatalism in the lives of individuals, so that those whose spiritual state is comparable to the hardened pathway or wayside ground, to the shallow soil on stony floor, or to the neglected, thorn-ridden tract, are hopelessly and irredeemably bad; while the souls who may be likened unto good soil are safe against deterioration and will be inevitably productive of good fruit. Let it not be forgotten that a parable is but a sketch, not a picture finished in detail; and that the expressed or implied similitude in parabolic teaching cannot logically and consistently be carried beyond the limits of the illustrative story. In the parable we are considering, the Teacher depicted the varied grades of spiritual receptivity existing among men, and characterized with incisive brevity each of the specified grades. He neither said nor intimated that the hard-baked soil of the wayside might be plowed, harrowed, fertilized, and so be rendered productive; nor that the stony impediment to growth might not be broken up and

removed, or an increase of good soil be made by actual addition; nor that the thorns could never be uprooted and their former habitat be rendered fit to support good plants. The parable is to be studied in the spirit of its purpose; and strained inferences or extensions are unwarranted. A strong metaphor, a striking simile, or any other expressive figure of speech, is of service only when rationally applied; if carried beyond the bounds of reasonable intent, the best of such may become meaningless or even absurd.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

Another parable, somewhat closely related to the foregoing as to the actual story, dealing again with seed and sowing, and, like the first, accompanied by an interpretation, was delivered by the Master as follows:

"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."[621]

When Jesus had retired to the house in which He lodged, the disciples came, saying:
"Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field."

"He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."[622]

By the Author's explication, the sower was Himself, the Son of Man; and, as the condition of wheat and tares growing together was one that shall continue until "the end of the world," those who were ordained to carry on the ministry after Him are by direct implication also sowers. The seed as here represented is not, as in the last parable, the gospel itself, but the children of men, the good seed typifying the honest in heart,

righteous-minded children of the kingdom; while the tares are those souls who have given themselves up to evil and are counted as children of the wicked one. Inspired by zeal for their Master's profit, the servants would have forcibly rooted up the tares, but were restrained, for their unwise though well-intended course would have endangered the wheat while yet tender, since in the early stages of growth it would have been difficult to distinguish the one from the other, and the intertwining of the roots would have caused much destruction of the precious grain.

One cardinal lesson of the parable, apart from the representation of actual conditions present and future, is that of patience, long-suffering, and toleration—each an attribute of Deity and a trait of character that all men should cultivate. The tares mentioned in the story may be considered as any kind of noxious weed, particularly such as in early growth resembles the wholesome grain.[623] Over-sowing with the seed of weeds in a field already sown with grain is a species of malignant outrage not unknown even in the present day.[624] The certainty of a time of separation, when the wheat shall be garnered in the store-house of the Lord, and the tares be burned, that their poisonous seed may reproduce no more, is placed beyond question by the Lord's own exposition.

So important is the lesson embodied in this parable, and so assured is the literal fulfillment of its contained predictions, that the Lord has given a further explication through revelation in the current dispensation, a period in which the application is direct and immediate. Speaking through Joseph Smith the Prophet in 1832, Jesus Christ said:

"But behold, in the last days, even now while the Lord is beginning to bring forth the word, and the blade is springing up and is yet tender. Behold, verily I say unto you, the angels are crying unto the Lord day and night, who are ready and waiting to be sent forth to reap down the fields; but the Lord saith unto them, pluck not up the tares while the blade is yet tender, (for verily your faith is weak,) lest you destroy the wheat also. Therefore, let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest is fully ripe, then ye shall first gather out the wheat from among the tares, and after the gathering of the wheat, behold and lo! the tares are bound in bundles, and the field remaineth to be burned."[625]

THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY

Matthew records the Parable of the Tares as immediately following that of the Sower; Mark places in the same position of sequence a parable found in his writings alone. It is presented in outline form, and by critical expositors would be classed rather as a simple analogy than a typical parable. Read it:

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he

knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."[626]

We have no record of the disciples asking nor of the Master giving any interpretation of this, or of any later parable.[627] In this story we find effectively illustrated the fact of the vitality of the seed of truth, though the secret processes of its growth be a mystery to all save God alone. A man having planted seed must needs leave it alone. He may tend the field, removing weeds, protecting the plants as best he may, but the growth itself is dependent upon conditions and forces beyond his power to ultimately control. Though it were Paul who planted and Apollos who watered, none but God could insure the increase.[628] The one who sowed may go about his other affairs, for the field does not demand continuous or exclusive attention; nevertheless, under the influences of sunshine and shower, of breeze and dew, the blade develops, then the ear, and in due time the full corn in the ear. When the grain is ripe the man gladly harvests his crop.

The sower in this story is the authorized preacher of the word of God; he implants the seed of the gospel in the hearts of men, knowing not what the issue shall be. Passing on to similar or other ministry elsewhere, attending to his appointed duties in other fields, he, with faith and hope, leaves with God the result of his planting. In the harvest of souls converted through his labor, he is enriched and made to rejoice.[629] This parable was probably directed more particularly to the apostles and the most devoted of the other disciples, rather than to the multitude at large; the lesson is one for teachers, for workers in the Lord's fields, for the chosen sowers and reapers. It is of perennial value, as truly applicable today as when first spoken. Let the seed be sown, even though the sower be straightway called to other fields or other duties; in the gladsome harvest he shall find his recompense.

THE MUSTARD SEED

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."[630]

This little story, addressed to the assembled multitude, must have set many thinking, because of the simplicity of the incident related and the thoroughly un-Jewish application made of it. To the mind taught by teachers of the time the kingdom was to be great and glorious from its beginning; it was to be ushered in by blare of trumpets and tramp of armies, with King Messiah at the head; yet this new Teacher spoke of it as having so small a beginning as to be comparable to a mustard seed. To make the illustration more effective He specified that the seed spoken of was "the least of all seeds." This superlative expression was made in a relative sense; for there were and are

smaller seeds than the mustard, even among garden plants, among which rue and poppy have been named; but each of these plants is very small in maturity, while the well-cultivated mustard plant is one of the greatest among common herbs, and presents a strong contrast of growth from tiny seed to spreading shrub.

Moreover, the comparison "as small as a mustard seed" was in every-day use among Jews of the time. The comparison employed by Jesus on another occasion evidences the common usage, as when He said: "**If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ... nothing shall be impossible unto you.**"[631] It should be known that the mustard plant attains in Palestine a larger growth than in more northerly climes.[632] The lesson of the parable is easy to read. The seed is a living entity. When rightly planted it absorbs and assimilates the nutritive matters of soil and atmosphere, grows, and in time is capable of affording lodgment and food to the birds. So the seed of truth is vital, living, and capable of such development as to furnish spiritual food and shelter to all who come seeking. In both conceptions, the plant at maturity produces seed in abundance, and so from a single grain a whole field may be covered.

THE LEAVEN

"Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."[633]

Points of both similarity and contrast between this parable and the last are easily discerned. In each the inherent vitality and capacity for development, so essentially characteristic of the kingdom of God, are illustrated. The mustard seed however, typifies the effect of vital growth in gathering the substance of value from without; while the leaven or yeast disseminates and diffuses outward its influence throughout the mass of otherwise dense and sodden dough. Each of these processes represents a means whereby the Spirit of Truth is made effective. Yeast is no less truly a living organism than a mustard seed. As the microscopic yeast plant develops and multiplies within the dough, its myriad living cells permeate the lump, and every bit of the leavened mass is capable of affecting likewise another batch of properly prepared meal. The process of leavening, or causing dough "to rise," by the fermentation of the yeast placed in the mass, is a slow one, and moreover as quiet and seemingly secret as that of the planted seed growing without the sower's further attention or concern.[634]

THE HIDDEN TREASURE

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."[635]

This and the two parables following are recorded by Matthew only; and the place assigned them in his narrative indicates that they were spoken to the disciples alone, in the house, after the multitude had departed. The quest for treasure-trove is always fascinating. Instances of finding buried valuables were not uncommon in the time of which we speak, since the practice of so concealing treasure was usual with people exposed to bandit incursions and hostile invasion. Observe that the fortunate and happy man is represented as finding the treasure seemingly by accident rather than as a result of diligent search. He gladly sold all that he possessed to make possible his purchase of the field. The hidden treasure is the kingdom of heaven; when a man finds that, he ought to be ready to sacrifice all that he has, if by so doing he may gain possession. His joy in the new acquisition will be unbounded; and, if he but remain a worthy holder, the riches thereof shall be his beyond the grave.[636]

Casuists have raised the question of propriety as to the man's course of action in the story, inasmuch as he concealed the fact of his discovery from the owner of the field, to whom the treasure, they say, rightly belonged. Whatever opinion one may hold as to the ethics of the man's procedure, his act was not illegal, since there was an express provision in Jewish law that the purchaser of land became the legal owner of everything the ground contained.[637] Assuredly Jesus commended no dishonest course; and had not the story been in every detail probable, its effect as a parable would have been lost. The Master taught by this illustration that when once the treasure of the kingdom is found, the finder should lose no time nor shrink from any sacrifice needful to insure his title thereto.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."[638]

Pearls have always held high place among gems, and long before, as indeed ever since, the time of Christ, pearl-merchants have been active and diligent in seeking the largest and richest to be had. Unlike the man in the last parable, who found a hidden treasure with little or no search, the merchant in this story devoted his whole energy to the quest for goodly pearls, to find and secure which was his business. When at last he beheld the pearl that excelled all others, though it was, as of right it ought to have been, held at high cost, he gladly sold all his other gems; indeed he sacrificed "**all that he had**" – gems and other possessions – and purchased the pearl of great price. Seekers after truth may acquire much that is good and desirable, and not find the greatest truth of all, the truth that shall save them. Yet, if they seek persistently and with right intent, if they are really in quest of pearls and not of imitations, they shall find. Men who by search and research discover the truths of the kingdom of heaven may have to abandon many of their cherished traditions, and even their theories of imperfect philosophy and "science

falsely so called,"[639] if they would possess themselves of the pearl of great price. Observe that in this parable as in that of the hidden treasure, the price of possession is one's all. No man can become a citizen of the kingdom by partial surrender of his earlier allegiances; he must renounce everything foreign to the kingdom or he can never be numbered therein. If he willingly sacrifices all that he has, he shall find that he has enough. The cost of the hidden treasure, and of the pearl, is not a fixed amount, alike for all; it is all one has. Even the poorest may come into enduring possession; his all is a sufficient purchase price.

We are required to give all that ONE has – we cannot depend on what other 'one's' may have. We are responsible to ourselves to seek and obtain the Kingdom of God. We may find the 'hidden treasure' but will we also pay the price to purchase that treasure.

THE GOSPEL NET

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."[640]

Men of many minds, men good and bad, all nationalities and races, are affected by the gospel of the kingdom. The "fishers of men"[641] are skilful, active, and comprehensive in their haul. The sorting takes place after the net is brought to shore; and, as the fisherman discards every bad fish while he saves the good, so shall the angels who do the bidding of the Son of Man separate the just and the wicked, preserving the one kind to life eternal; consigning the other to destruction. Unwise efforts to carry the application of the parable beyond the Author's intent have suggested the criticism that whether the fish be good or bad they die. The good, however, die to usefulness, the bad to utter waste. Though all men die, they die not alike; some pass to rest, and shall come forth in the resurrection of the just; others go to a state of sorrow and disquiet there to anxiously and with dread await the resurrection of the wicked.[642] Similarity of application in the present parable as in that of the tares, is apparent in the emphasis given to the decreed separation of the just from the unjust, and in the awful fate of those who are fit subjects for condemnation. A further parallelism is noticed in the postponement of the judgment until the "end of the world," by which expression we may understand the consummation of the Redeemer's work, subsequent to the Millennium and the final resurrection of all who have had existence on earth.[643]

Following His delivery of this, the last of the group of parables recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus asked the disciples, "**Have ye understood all these things?**" They answered, "**Yea, Lord.**" He impressed upon them that they should be

ready, like well-taught teachers, to bring, from the store-house of their souls, treasures of truth both old and new, for the edification of the world.[644]

CHRIST'S PURPOSE IN USING PARABLES

As before stated, the Twelve and other disciples were surprised at the Lord's innovation of parabolic instruction. Prior to that time His doctrines had been set forth in unveiled plainness, as witness the explicit teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. It is noticeable that the introduction of parables occurred when opposition to Jesus was strong, and when scribes, Pharisees, and rabbis were alert in maintaining a close watch upon His movements and His works, ever ready to make Him an offender for a word. The use of parables was common among Jewish teachers; and in adopting this mode of instruction Jesus was really following a custom of the time; though between the parables He spake and those of the scholars there is possible no comparison except that of most pronounced contrast.[645]

To the chosen and devoted followers who came asking the Master why He had changed from direct exposition to parables, He explained[646] that while it was their privilege to receive and understand the deeper truths of the gospel, "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" as He expressed it, with people in general, who were unreceptive and unprepared, such fullness of understanding was impossible. To the disciples who had already gladly accepted the first principles of the gospel of Christ, more should be given; while from those who had rejected the proffered boon, even what they had theretofore possessed should be taken away.[647] **"Therefore,"** said He, **"speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."** That the state of spiritual darkness then existing among the Jews had been foreseen was instanced by a citation of Isaiah's words, in which the ancient prophet had told of the people becoming blind, deaf, and hard of heart respecting the things of God, whereby though they would both hear and see in a physical sense yet should they not understand.[648]

There is plainly shown an element of mercy in the parabolic mode of instruction adopted by our Lord under the conditions prevailing at the time. Had He always taught in explicit declaration, such as required no interpretation, many among His hearers would have come under condemnation, inasmuch as they were too weak in faith and unprepared in heart to break the bonds of traditionalism and the prejudice engendered by sin, so as to accept and obey the saving word. Their inability to comprehend the requirements of the gospel would in righteous measure give Mercy some claim upon them, while had they rejected the truth with full understanding, stern Justice would surely demand their condemnation.[649]

That the lesson of the parables was comprehensible through study, prayer and search was intimated in the Teacher's admonishment: **"Who hath ears to hear, let him**

hear."[650] To the more studious inquirers, the Master added: "**Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.**"[651] Two men may hear the same words; one of them listens in indolence and indifference, the other with active mind intent on learning all that the words can possibly convey; and, having heard, the diligent man goes straightway to do the things commended to him, while the careless one neglects and forgets. The one is wise, the other foolish; the one has heard to his eternal profit, the other to his everlasting condemnation.[652]

Another example of the merciful adaptation of the word of truth to the varied capacities of the people who heard the parables is found in the psychological fact, that the incidents of an impressive though simple story will live, even in minds which for the time being are incapable of comprehending any meaning beyond that of the common-place story itself. Many a peasant who had heard the little incident of the sower and the four kinds of soil, of the tares sown by an enemy at night, of the seed that grew though the planter had temporarily forgotten it, would be reminded by the recurring circumstances of his daily work; the gardener would recollect the story of the mustard seed whenever he planted afresh, or when he looked upon the umbrageous plant with birds nesting in its branches; the housewife would be impressed anew by the story of the leaven as she mixed and kneaded and baked; the fisherman at his nets would think again of the good fish and the bad and compare the sorting of his catch with the judgment to come. And then, when time and experience, including suffering perhaps, had prepared them for deeper thought, they would find the living kernel of gospel truth within the husk of the simple tale.

PARABLES IN GENERAL

The essential feature of a parable is that of comparison or similitude, by which some ordinary, well-understood incident is used to illustrate a fact or principle not directly expressed in the story. The popular thought that a parable necessarily rests on a fictitious incident is incorrect; for, inasmuch as the story or circumstance of the parable must be simple and indeed common-place, it may be real. There is no fiction in the parables we have thus far studied; the fundamental stories are true to life and the given circumstances are facts of experience. The narrative or incident upon which a parable is constructed may be an actual occurrence or fiction; but, if fictitious, the story must be consistent and probable, with no admixture of the unusual or miraculous. In this respect the parable differs from the fable, the latter being imaginative, exaggerated and improbable as to fact; moreover, the intent is unlike in the two, since the parable is designed to convey some great spiritual truth, while the so-called moral of the fable is at best suggestive only of worldly achievement and personal advantage. Stories of trees, animals and inanimate things talking together or with men are wholly fanciful; they are fables or apologues whether the outcome be depicted as good or bad; to the parable

these show contrast, not similarity. The avowed purpose of the fable is rather to amuse than to teach. The parable may embody a narrative as in the instances of the sower and the tares, or merely an isolated incident, as in those of the mustard seed and the leaven.

Allegories are distinguished from parables by greater length and detail of the story, and by the intimate admixture of the narrative with the lesson it is designed to teach; these are kept distinctly separate in the parable. Myths are fictitious stories, sometimes with historic basis of fact, but without symbolism of spiritual worth. A proverb is a short, sententious saying, in the nature of a maxim, connoting a definite truth or suggestion by comparison. Proverbs and parables are closely related, and in the Bible the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.[653]

The Old Testament contains two parables, a few fables and allegories, and numerous proverbs; of the last-named we possess an entire book.[654] Nathan the prophet reproved King David by the parable of the poor man's ewe lamb, and so effective was the story that the king decreed punishment for the wealthy offender, and was overcome by sorrow and contrition when the prophet made application of his parable by the fateful words, "**Thou art the man.**"[655] The story of the vineyard, which though fenced and well-tended yet brought forth only wild, useless fruit, was used by Isaiah to portray the sinful state of Israel in his attempt to awaken the people to lives of righteousness.[656]

The parables of the New Testament, spoken by the Teacher of teachers, are of such beauty, simplicity, and effectiveness, as to stand unparalleled in literature.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 19

1. The First Group of Parables – Many Bible scholars hold that the seven parables recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew were spoken at different times and to different people, and that the writer of the first Gospel grouped them for convenience in recording and with prime consideration of their subjective interest. Some color is found for this claim in Luke's mention of some of these parables in different relations of both time and place; thus, the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven are given (Luke 13:18, 21) as directly following the healing of the infirm woman in the synagog, and the rebuke to the hypocritical ruler. While we must admit that Matthew may have grouped with the parables spoken on that particular day some of other dates, it is probable that Jesus repeated some of His parables, as He certainly did other teachings, and thus presented the same lesson on more occasions than one. As a matter of fact each parable is a lesson in itself, and holds its high intrinsic value whether considered as an isolated story or in connection with related teachings. Let us give heed to the lesson of each whatever opinions men may promulgate as to the circumstances of its first delivery.

2. Local Setting for the Parable of the Sower – Dr. R. C. Trench, in his excellent work *Notes on the Parables of our Lord* (p. 57, note), quotes Dean Stanley's description of existing conditions in the place where the Parable of the Sower was given by Jesus; and as there is reason to believe that the environment has changed but little since the days of Christ, the account is here reproduced: "A slight recess in the hillside close upon the plain disclosed at once in detail, and with a conjunction which I remember nowhere else in Palestine, every feature of the great parable. There was the undulating corn-field descending to the water's edge. There was the trodden pathway running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seed falling here or there on either side of it, or upon it – itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule and human feet. There was the 'good' rich soil, which distinguishes the whole of that plain and its neighborhood from the bare hills elsewhere, descending into the lake, and which, where there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn. There was the rocky ground of the hillside protruding here and there through the corn-fields, as elsewhere, through the grassy slopes. There were the large bushes of thorn, the 'nabk' ... springing up, like the fruit-trees of the more inland parts, in the very midst of the waving wheat."

3. Tares – This term occurs nowhere within the Bible except in this instance of the parable. Plainly any kind of weed, particularly a poisonous sort, such as would seriously depreciate the garnered crop, would serve the Master's purpose in the illustration. The traditional belief commonly held is that the plant referred to in the parable is the darnel weed, known to botanists as *Lolium temulenium*, a species of bearded rye-grass. This plant closely resembles wheat in the early period of growth, and exists as a pest to the farmers in Palestine to-day; it is called by the Arabians "Zowan" or "Zawan" which name, says Arnot, citing Thompson, "bears some resemblance to the original word in the Greek text." The writer of the article "Tares" in Smith's Dictionary says: "Critics and expositors are agreed that the Greek plural *zizania*, A.V. 'tares,' of the parable (Matt 13:25) denotes the weed called 'bearded darnel' (*Lolium temulentum*), a widely-distributed grass, and the only species of the order that has deleterious properties. The bearded darnel before it comes into ear is very similar in appearance to wheat, and the roots of the two are often intertwined; hence the command that the 'tares' should be left till the harvest, lest while men plucked up the tares 'they should root up also the wheat with them.' This darnel is easily distinguishable from the wheat and barley when headed out, but when both are less developed, 'the closest scrutiny will often fail to detect it. Even the farmers, who in this country generally weed their fields, do not attempt to separate the one from the other ... The taste is bitter, and, when eaten separately, or even when diffused in ordinary bread, it causes dizziness, and often acts as a violent emetic." The secondary quotation is from Thompson's *The Land and the Book*, ii, 111, 112. It has been asserted that the darnel is a degenerated kind of wheat; and attempts have been made to give additional significance to our Lord's instructive parable by injecting this thought; there is no scientific warrant for the strained conception, however, and earnest students will not be misled thereby.

4. The Wickedness of the Sower of Tares – Attempts have been made to disparage the Parable of the Tares on the ground that it rests on an unusual if not unknown practice. Trench thus meets the criticism (*Notes on the Parables*, pp. 72, 73): "Our Lord did not imagine here a form of malice without example, but adduced one which may have been familiar enough to His hearers, one so easy of execution, involving so little risk, and yet effecting so great and lasting a mischief, that it is not strange, where cowardice and malice meet, that this should have been often the shape in which they displayed themselves. We meet traces of it in many quarters. In Roman law the possibility of this form of injury is contemplated; and a modern writer, illustrating Scripture from the manners and habits of the East, with which he had become familiar through a sojourn there, affirms the same to be now practiced in India." In a subjoined note the author adds: "We are not without this form of malice nearer home. Thus in Ireland I have known an outgoing tenant, in spite at his eviction, to sow wild oats in the fields which he was leaving. These, like the tares in the parable, ripening and seeding themselves before the crops in which they were mingled, it became next to impossible to extirpate.";

5. The Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly – This parable has given rise to much discussion among expositors, the question being as to who is meant by the man who cast seed into the ground. If, as in the parables of the Sower and the Tares, the Lord Jesus be the planter, then, some ask, how can it be said "that the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how," when all things are known unto Him? If on the other hand the planter represents the authorized teacher or preacher of the gospel, how can it be said that at the harvest time "he putteth in the sickle," since the final harvesting of souls is the prerogative of God? The perplexities of the critics arise from their attempt to find in the parable a literalism never intended by the Author. Whether the seed be planted by the Lord Himself, as when He taught in Person, or by any one of His authorized servants, the seed is alive and will grow. Time is required; the blade appears first and is followed by the ear, and the ear ripens in season, without the constant attention which a shaping of the several parts by hand would require. The man who figures in the parable is presented as an ordinary farmer, who plants, and waits, and in due time reaps. The lesson imparted is the vitality of the seed as a living thing, endowed by its Creator with the capacity to both grow and develop.

6. The Mustard Plant – The wild mustard, which in the temperate zone seldom attains a height of more than three or four feet, reaches in semitropical lands the height of a horse and its rider (Thompson, *The Land and the Book* ii, 100). Those who heard the parable evidently understood the contrast between size of seed and that of the fully developed plant. Arnot, (*The Parables*, p. 102), aptly says: "This plant obviously was chosen by the Lord, not on account of its absolute magnitude, but because it was, and was recognized to be, a striking instance of increase from very small to very great. It seems to have been in Palestine, at that time, the smallest seed from which so large a plant was known to grow. There were, perhaps, smaller seeds, but the plants which sprung from them were

not so great; and there were greater plants, but the seeds from which they sprung were not so small." Edersheim (i, p. 593) states that the diminutive size of the mustard seed was commonly used in comparison by the rabbis, "to indicate the smallest amount such as the least drop of blood, the least defilement, etc." The same author continues, in speaking of the grown plant: "Indeed, it looks no longer like a large garden-herb or shrub, but 'becomes' or rather appears like 'a tree' – as St. Luke puts it, 'a great tree,' of course, not in comparison with other trees, but with garden-shrubs. Such growth of mustard seed was also a fact well known at the time, and, indeed, still observed in the East... And the general meaning would the more easily be apprehended, that a tree, whose wide-spreading branches afforded lodgment to the birds of heaven, was a familiar Old Testament figure for a mighty kingdom that gave shelter to the nations (Ezek. 31:6, 12; Dan. 4:12, 14, 21, 22). Indeed, it is specifically used as an illustration of the Messianic Kingdom (Ezek. 17:23)."

7. The Symbolism of Leaven – In the parable, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto leaven. In other scriptures, leaven is figuratively mentioned as representing evil, thus, "the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6, see also Luke 12:1), "the leaven of Herod" (Mark 8:15). These instances, and others (1 Cor. 5:7, 8) are illustrative of the contagion of evil. In the incident of the woman using leaven in the ordinary process of bread-making, the spreading, penetrating vital effect of truth is symbolized by the leaven. The same thing in different aspects may very properly be used to represent good in one instance and evil in another.

8. Treasure Belonging to the Finder – As to the justification of the man who found a treasure hidden in another's field and then, concealing the fact of his discovery, bought the field that he might possess the treasure, Edersheim (i, p. 595-6) says: "Some difficulty has been expressed in regard to the morality of such a transaction. In reply it may be observed, that it was, at least, in entire accordance with Jewish law. If a man had found a treasure in loose coins among the corn it would certainly be his if he bought the corn. If he had found it on the ground, or in the soil, it would equally certainly belong to him if he could claim ownership of the soil, and even if the field were not his own, unless others could prove their right to it. The law went so far as to adjudge to the purchaser of fruits anything found among these fruits. This will suffice to vindicate a question of detail, which, in any case, should not be too closely pressed in a parabolic history."

9. Superiority of our Lord's Parables – "Perhaps no other mode of teaching was so common among the Jews as that by parables. Only in their case, they were almost entirely illustrations of what had been said or taught; while in the case of Christ, they served as the foundation for His teaching... In the one case it was intended to make spiritual teaching appear Jewish and national, in the other to convey spiritual teaching in a form adapted to the stand-point of the hearers. This distinction will be found to hold true, even in instances where there seems the closest parallelism between a

Rabbinic and an Evangelic parable.... It need scarcely be said that comparison between such parables, as regards their spirit, is scarcely possible, except by way of contrast" (Edersheim, i, pp. 580-1). Geikie tersely says: "Others have uttered parables, but Jesus so far transcends them, that He may justly be called the creator of this mode of instruction" (ii, p. 145).

10. Parables and Other Forms of Analogy – "The parable is also clearly distinguishable from the proverb, though it is true that, in a certain degree, the words are used interchangeably in the New Testament, and as equivalent the one to the other. Thus '**Physician, heal thyself**' (Luke 4:23) is termed a parable, being more strictly a proverb; so again, when the Lord had used that proverb, probably already familiar to His hearers '**If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch**'; Peter said 'Declare unto us this parable' (Matt. 15:14, 15); and Luke 5:36 is a proverb or proverbial expression, rather than a parable, which name it bears.... So, upon the other hand, those are called 'proverbs' in St. John, which if not strictly parables, yet claim much closer affinity to the parable than to the proverb, being in fact allegories; thus Christ's setting forth of His relations to His people under those of a shepherd to his sheep is termed a 'proverb,' though our translators, holding fast to the sense rather than to the letter, have rendered it a 'parable' (John 10:6; compare 16:25, 29). It is easy to account for this interchange of words. Partly it arose from one word in Hebrew signifying both parable and proverb." – Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, pp. 9, 10.

For the convenience of readers who may not have a dictionary at hand as they read, the following definitions are given:

Allegory – The setting forth of a subject under the guise of some other subject or aptly suggestive likeness.

Apologue – A fable or moral tale, especially one in which animals or inanimate things speak or act, and by which a useful lesson is suggested or taught.

Fable – A brief story or tale feigned or invented to embody a moral, and introducing animals and sometimes even inanimate things as rational speakers and actors; a legend or myth.

Myth – A fictitious or conjectural narrative presented as historical, but without any basis of fact.

Parable – A brief narrative or descriptive allegory founded on real scenes or events such as occur in nature and human life, and usually with a moral or religious application.

Proverb – A brief, pithy saying, condensing in witty or striking form the wisdom of experience; a familiar and widely known popular saying in epigrammatic form.

11. Old Testament Parables, Etc – "Of parables in the strictest sense the Old Testament contains only two" (2 Sam. 12:1-; and Isa. 5:1-). "Other stories, such as that of the trees assembled to elect a king (Judges 9:8), and of the thistle and cedar (2 Kings 14:9), are more strictly fables. Still others, such as Ezekiel's account of the two eagles and the vine (17:2-), and of the caldron (24:3-) are allegories. The small number of parabolic narratives to be found in the Old Testament must not, however, be taken as an indication of indifference toward this literary form as suitable for moral instruction. The number is only apparently small. In reality, similitudes, which, though not explicitly couched in the terms of fictitious narrative, suggest and furnish the materials for such narrative, are abundant." – Zenos, *Stand. Bible Dict.*, article "Parables."

By applying the term "parable" in its broadest sense, to include all ordinary forms of analogy, we may list the following as the most impressive parables of the Old Testament. Trees electing a king (**Judges 9:7-**); the poor man's ewe lamb (**2 Sam. 12:1-**); the contending brothers and the avengers (**2 Sam. 14:1-**); story of the escaped captive (1 Kings 20:35-); the thistle and the cedar (**2 Kings 14:9**); the vineyard and its wild grapes (**Isa. 5:1-**); the eagles and the vine (**Ezek. 17:3-**); the lion's whelps (**Ezek. 19:2-**); the seething pot (**Ezek. 24:3-**).

Judges 9:7-15 – Trees electing a king

⁷And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

⁸The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.

⁹But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

¹⁰And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us.

¹¹But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?

¹²Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us.

¹³And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

¹⁴Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us.

¹⁵And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

2 Samual 12:1-7 – Poor man's ewe lamb

¹And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

²The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

³But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

⁴And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

⁵And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

⁶And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

⁷And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

1 Kings 20:35-42 - Story of the escaped captive

³⁵And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him.

³⁶Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him.

³⁷Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him.

³⁸So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face.

³⁹And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver.

⁴⁰And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it.

⁴¹And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets.

⁴²And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.

2 Kings 14:9 - The thistle and the cedar

⁹And Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

Isa. 5:1- – The vineyard and its wild grapes

¹Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

²And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

³And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

⁴What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

⁵And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

⁶And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

⁷For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

⁸Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!

⁹In mine ears said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.

¹⁰Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.

Ezek. 17:3-8 – The eagles and the vine

³And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:

⁴He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffick; he set it in a city of merchants.

⁵He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow tree.

⁶And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.

⁷There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.

⁸It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.

Ezek. 19:2-14 – The lion's whelps

²And say, What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions.

³And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men.

⁴The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt.

⁵Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion.

⁶And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men.

⁷And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring.

⁸Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit.

⁹And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.

¹⁰Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters.

¹¹And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches.

¹²But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them.

¹³And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground.

¹⁴And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

Ezek. 24:3-14 – The seething pot

³And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it:

⁴Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones.

⁵Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein.

⁶Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it.

⁷For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust;

⁸That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance; I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered.

⁹Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great.

¹⁰Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned.

¹¹Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed.

¹²She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her: her scum shall be in the fire.

¹³In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.

¹⁴I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord GOD.

FOOTNOTES

- [612] Mark 3:10; compare Matt. 9:20, 21; 14:36; Mark 6:56; Luke 6:19
- [613] Mark 3:9.
- [614] Luke 5:10; See Chapter 14 herein.
- [615] Note 1, end of chapter.
- [616] Matt. 13:3-9; compare Mark 4:3-9; Luke 8:5-8.
- [617] Mark 4:13.
- [618] Matt. 13:18-23; compare Mark 4:13-20; Luke 8:11-15.
- [619] Note 2, end of chapter.
- [620] See Chapter 18 herein.
- [621] Matt. 13:24-30.
- [622] Verses 36-43.
- [623] Note 3, end of chapter.
- [624] Note 4, end of chapter.
- [625] Doc. and Cov. 86:4-7; read the entire section.
- [626] Mark 4:26-29.
- [627] Note 5, end of chapter.
- [628] 1 Cor. 3:6.
- [629] Read the Lord's early promise of souls as the hire of the appointed harvesters: John 4:35-38; see also Matt. 9:37, 38; Luke 10:2.
- [630] Matt. 13:31, 32; compare Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18, 19.
- [631] Matt. 17:20; compare Luke 17:6.
- [632] Note 6, end of chapter.
- [633] Matt. 13:33; compare Luke 13:20, 21.
- [634] Note 7, end of chapter.
- [635] Matt. 13:44.
- [636] Compare Matt. 6:19, 20.
- [637] Note 8, end of chapter.
- [638] Matt. 13:45, 48.
- [639] 1 Tim. 6:20.
- [640] Matt. 13:47-50.
- [641] Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17; Luke 5:10.
- [642] John 5:29; see also B. of M., Alma 40:11-14; and the author, "Articles of Faith," xxi:24-39.
- [643] See chapter 42.
- [644] Matt. 13:51, 52.
- [645] Note 9, end of chapter.
- [646] Matt. 13:10-17; compare Mark 4:10-13; Luke 8:9, 10.
- [647] Matt. 13:12; compare 25:29; Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18; 19:26.
- [648] Isa. 6:9; see also 42:20; 43:8; Ezek. 12:2; John 12:40; Acts 28:26, 27.
- [649] See the author's "Articles of Faith," iii:12, 13; B. of M., 2 Nephi 9:25-27; Rom. 2:12; Doc. and Cov. 45:54; 76:72.
- [650] Matt. 13:9, 43; see also 11:15; Mark 4:9.
- [651] Mark 4:24, 25.
- [652] Read again Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49.
- [653] Note 10, end of chapter.
- [654] Note 11, end of chapter.
- [655] 2 Sam. 12:1-7, 13.
- [656] Isa. 5:1-7.