

# 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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*PUBLISHED BY THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS - SIXTH EDITION -  
TWENTY-EIGHTH TO THIRTIETH THOUSAND INCLUSIVE - Salt Lake City, Utah - Deseret Book Company,  
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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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## "PEACE, BE STILL"

### INCIDENTS PRELIMINARY TO THE VOYAGE

Near the close of the day on which Jesus had taught the multitudes for the first time by parables, He said to the disciples, "**Let us pass over unto the other side.**"[657] The destination so indicated is the east side of the sea of Galilee. While the boat was being made ready, a certain scribe came to Jesus and said: "**Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.**" Prior to that time, few men belonging to the titled or ruling class had offered to openly ally themselves with Jesus. Had the Master been mindful of policy and desirous of securing official recognition, this opportunity to attach to Himself as influential a person as a scribe would have received careful consideration if not immediate acceptance; but He, who could read the minds and know the hearts of men, chose rather than accepted. He had called men who were to be thenceforth His own, from their fishing boats and nets, and had numbered one of the ostracized publicans among the Twelve; but He knew them, every one, and chose accordingly. The gospel was offered freely to all; but authority to officiate as a minister thereof was not to be had for the asking; for that sacred labor, one must be called of God.[658]

In this instance, Christ knew the character of the man, and, without wounding his feelings by curt rejection, pointed out the sacrifice required of one who would follow whithersoever the Lord went, saying: "**The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.**" As Jesus had no fixed place of abode, but went wherever His duty called Him, so was it necessary that they who represented Him, men ordained or set apart to His service, be ready to deny themselves the enjoyment of their homes and the comfort of family associations, if the duties of their calling so demanded. We do not read that the aspiring scribe pressed his offer.

Another man indicated his willingness to follow the Lord, but asked first for time to go and bury his father; to him Jesus said: "**Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.**" Some readers have felt that this injunction was harsh, though such an inference is scarcely justified. While it would be manifestly unfilial for a son to absent himself from his father's funeral under ordinary conditions, nevertheless, if that son had been set apart to service of importance transcending all personal or family obligations, his ministerial duty would of right take precedence. Moreover, the requirement expressed by Jesus was no greater than that made of every priest during his term of active service, nor was it more afflicting than the obligation of the Nazarite vow,[659] under which

many voluntarily placed themselves. The duties of ministry in the kingdom pertained to spiritual life; one dedicated thereto might well allow those who were negligent of spiritual things, and figuratively speaking, spiritually dead, to bury their dead.

A third instance is presented; a man who wanted to be a disciple of the Lord asked that, before entering upon his duties, he be permitted to go home and bid farewell to his family and friends. The reply of Jesus has become an aphorism in life and literature: **"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."**[660]

From Matthew's record we draw the inference that the first two of these candidates for discipleship offered themselves to our Lord as He stood on the shore or in the boat ready to begin the evening voyage across the lake. Luke places the instances in a different connection, and adds to the offers of the scribe and the man who would first bury his father, that of the one who wished to go home and then return to Christ. The three incidents may be profitably considered together, whether all occurred in the evening of that same eventful day or at different times.

## **STILLING THE STORM [661]**

The instruction to launch forth and cross to the opposite side of the lake was given by Jesus, who probably desired a respite after the arduous labors of the day. No time had been lost in unnecessary preparation; **"they took him, even as he was, into the ship,"** and set out without delay. Even on the water some of the eager people tried to follow; for a number of small boats, "little ships" as Mark styles them, accompanied the vessel on which Jesus was embarked; but these lesser craft may have turned back, possibly on account of the approaching storm; anyway, we do not hear of them further.

Jesus found a resting place near the stern of the ship and soon fell asleep. A great storm arose,[662] and still He slept. The circumstance is instructive as it evidences at once the reality of the physical attributes of Christ, and the healthy, normal condition of His body. He was subject to fatigue and bodily exhaustion from other causes, as are all men; without food He grew hungry; without drink He thirsted; by labor He became weary. The fact that after a day of strenuous effort He could calmly sleep, even amidst the turmoil of a tempest, indicates an unimpaired nervous system and a good state of health. Nowhere do we find record of Jesus having been ill. He lived according to the laws of health, yet never allowed the body to rule the spirit; and His daily activities, which were of a kind to make heavy demands on both physical and mental energy, were met with no symptoms of nervous collapse nor of functional disturbance. Sleep after toil is natural and necessary. The day's work done, Jesus slept.

Meanwhile the storm increased in fury; the wind rendered the boat unmanageable; waves beat over the side; so much water was shipped that the vessel seemed about to

founder. The disciples were terror-stricken; yet through it all Jesus rested peacefully. In their extremity of fear, the disciples awakened Him, crying out, according to the several independent accounts, "Master, Master, we perish"; "Lord, save us: we perish"; and, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" They were abjectly frightened, and at least partly forgetful that there was with them One whose voice even death had to obey. Their terrified appeal was not wholly devoid of hope nor barren of faith: "**Lord, save us**" they cried. Calmly He replied to their piteous call, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

Then He arose; and out through the darkness of that fearsome night, into the roaring wind, over the storm-lashed sea, went the voice of the Lord as He "rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Turning to the disciples, He asked in tones of gentle yet unmistakable reproof: "**Where is your faith?**" and "**How is it that ye have no faith?**" Gratitude for rescue from what but a moment before had seemed impending death was superseded by amazement and fear. "**What manner of man is this,**" they asked one of another, "**that even the wind and the sea obey him?**"

Among the recorded miracles of Christ, none has elicited greater diversity in comment and in attempt at elucidation than has this marvelous instance of control over the forces of nature. Science ventures no explanation. The Lord of earth, air, and sea spoke and was obeyed. He it was who, amidst the black chaos of creation's earliest stages, had commanded with immediate effect – Let there be light; Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters; Let the dry land appear – and, as He had decreed, so it was. The dominion of the Creator over the created is real and absolute. A small part of that dominion has been committed to man[663] as the offspring of God, tabernacled in the very image of his divine Father. But man exercises that delegated control through secondary agencies, and by means of complicated mechanism. Man's power over the objects of his own devising is limited. It is according to the curse evoked by Adam's fall, which came through transgression, that by the strain of his muscles, by the sweat of his brow, and by stress of his mind, shall he achieve. His word of command is but a sound-wave in air, except as it is followed by labor. Through the Spirit that emanates from the very Person of Deity, and which pervades all space, the command of God is immediately operative.

Not man alone, but also the earth and all the elemental forces pertaining thereto came under the Adamic curse[664] and as the soil no longer brought forth only good and useful fruits, but gave of its substance to nurture thorns and thistles, so the several forces of nature ceased to be obedient to man as agents subject to his direct control. What we call natural forces – heat, light, electricity, chemical affinity – are but a few of the manifestations of eternal energy through which the Creator's purposes are subserved; and these few, man is able to direct and utilize only through mechanical contrivance and physical adjustment. But the earth shall yet be "renewed and receive its

paradisaical glory"; then soil, water, air, and the forces acting upon them, shall directly respond to the command of glorified man, as now they obey the word of the Creator.[665]

## QUIETING THE DEMONS [666]

Jesus and the disciples with Him landed on the eastern or Perea side of the lake, in a region known as the country of the Gadarenes or Gergesenes. The precise spot has not been identified, but it was evidently a country district apart from the towns.[667] As the party left the boat, two maniacs, who were sorely tormented by evil spirits, approached. Matthew states there were two; the other writers speak of but one; it is possible that one of the afflicted pair was in a condition so much worse than that of his companion that to him is accorded greater prominence in the narrative; or, one may have run away while the other remained. The demoniac was in a pitiful plight. His frenzy had become so violent and the physical strength incident to his mania so great that all attempts to hold him in captivity had failed. He had been bound in chains and fetters, but these he had broken asunder by the aid of demon power; and he had fled to the mountains, to the caverns that served as tombs, and there he had lived more like a wild beast than a man. Night and day his weird, terrifying shrieks had been heard, and through dread of meeting him people traveled by other ways rather than pass near his haunts. He wandered about naked, and in his madness often gashed his flesh with sharp stones.

*Today, this man would be in an institution and would be given powerful sedative drugs – how would evil spirits accomplish their demon control today? What happened at the time of Christ's ministry, must be happening today, but we can't diagnose it.*

Seeing Jesus, the poor creature ran toward Him, and, impelled by the power of his demon control, prostrated himself before Christ, the while crying out with a loud voice: **"What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?"** As Jesus commanded the evil spirits to leave, one or more of them, through the voice of the man, pleaded to be left alone, and with blasphemous presumption exclaimed: "I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." Matthew records the further question addressed to Jesus: **"Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"** The demons, by whom the man was possessed and controlled, recognized the Master, whom they knew they had to obey; but they pleaded to be left alone until the decreed time of their final punishment would come.[668]

Jesus asked, "What is thy name?" and the demons within the man answered, **"My name is Legion, for we are many."** The fact of the man's dual consciousness or multi-personality is here apparent. So complete was his possession by wicked spirits that he could no longer distinguish between his individual personality and theirs. The devils implored that Jesus would not banish them from that country; or as Luke records in words of awful import, "that he would not command them to go out into the

**deep.**"[669] In their wretched plight, and out of diabolical eagerness to find abode in bodies of flesh even though of beasts, they begged that, being compelled to leave the man they be allowed to enter a herd of hogs feeding nearby. Jesus gave permission; the unclean demons entered the swine; and the whole herd, numbering about two thousand, went wild, stampeded in terror, ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and were drowned. The swineherds were frightened, and, hastening to the town, told what had happened to the hogs. People came out in crowds to see for themselves; and all were astounded to behold the once wild man of whom they had all been afraid, now clothed, and restored to a normal state of mind, sitting quietly and reverently at the feet of Jesus. They were afraid of One who could work such wonders, and, conscious of their sinful unworthiness, begged Him to leave their country.[670]

The man who had been rid of the demons feared not; in his heart love and gratitude superseded all other feelings; and as Jesus returned to the boat he prayed that he might go also. But Jesus forbade, saying: "**Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.**" The man became a missionary, not alone in his home town but throughout Decapolis, the region of the ten cities; wherever he went he told of the marvelous change Jesus had wrought on him.

The testimony of wicked and unclean spirits to the divinity of Christ as the Son of God is not confined to this instance. We have already considered the case of the demoniac in the synagog at Capernaum;[671] and another instance appeared, when Jesus, withdrawing from the towns in Galilee, betook Himself to the sea shore, and was followed by a great multitude comprising Galileans and Judeans, and people from Jerusalem and Idumea, and from beyond Jordan (i.e. from Perea), and inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, amongst whom He had healed many of divers diseases; and those who were in bondage to unclean spirits had fallen down and worshiped Him; while the demons cried out: "**Thou art the Son of God.**"[672]

In the course of the short journey considered in this chapter, the power of Jesus as Master of earth, men and devils, was manifest in miraculous works of the most impressive kind. We cannot classify the Lord's miracles as small and great, nor as easy and difficult of accomplishment; what one may consider the least is to another of profound import. The Lord's word was sufficient in every instance. To the wind and the waves, and to the demon-ridden mind of the man possessed, He had but to speak and be obeyed. "**Peace, be still.**"

## **THE RAISING OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS [673]**

Jesus and His attendants recrossed the lake from the land of Gadara to the vicinity of Capernaum, where He was received with acclamation by a multitude of people, "for they were all waiting for him." Immediately after landing, Jesus was approached by

Jairus, one of the rulers of the local synagog, who "**besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.**"

The fact of this man's coming to Jesus, with the spirit of faith and supplication, is an evidence of the deep impression the ministry of Christ had made even in priestly and ecclesiastical circles. Many of the Jews, rulers and officials as well as the people in common, believed in Jesus;[674] though few belonging to the upper classes were willing to sacrifice prestige and popularity by acknowledging their discipleship. That Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagog, came only when impelled by grief over the impending death of his only daughter, a girl of twelve years, is no evidence that he had not before become a believer; certainly at this time his faith was genuine and his trust sincere, as the circumstances of the narrative prove. He approached Jesus with the reverence due One whom he considered able to grant what he asked, and fell at the Lord's feet, or as Matthew says, worshiped Him. When the man had started from his home to seek aid of Jesus, the maiden was at the point of death; he feared lest she had died in the interval. In the very brief account given in the first Gospel, he is reported as saying to Jesus: "My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live." [675] Jesus went with the imploring father, and many followed.

On the way to the house an incident occurred to hinder progress. A sorely afflicted woman was healed, under circumstances of peculiar interest; this occurrence we shall consider presently. No intimation is given that Jairus showed impatience or displeasure over the delay; he had placed trust in the Master and awaited His time and pleasure; and while Christ was engaged in the matter of the suffering woman, messengers came from the ruler's house with the saddening word that the girl was dead. We may infer that even these dread tidings of certainty failed to destroy the man's faith; he seems to have still looked to the Lord for help, and those who had brought the message asked, "Why troublest thou the Master any further?" Jesus heard what was said, and sustained the man's sorely-taxed faith by the encouraging behest: "**Be not afraid, only believe.**" Jesus permitted none of His followers save three of the apostles to enter the house with Himself and the bereaved but trusting father. Peter and the two brothers James and John were admitted.

The house was no place of such respectful silence or subdued quiet as we now consider appropriate to the time and place of death; on the contrary it was a scene of tumult, but that condition was customary in the orthodox observances of mourning at the time. [676] Professional mourners, including singers of weird dirges, and minstrels who made great noise with flutes and other instruments, had already been summoned to the house. To all such Jesus said, on entering: "**Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead but sleepeth.**" It was in effect a repetition of His command uttered on a then recent occasion — Peace, be still. His words drew scorn and ridicule from those who were paid for the noise they made, and who, if what He said proved true, would

lose this opportunity of professional service. Moreover, they knew the maid was dead; preparations for the funeral, which custom required should follow death as speedily as possible, were already in progress. Jesus ordered these people out, and restored peace to the house.[677] He then entered the death chamber, accompanied only by the three apostles and the parents of the girl. Taking the dead maiden by the hand He "said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." To the astonishment of all but the Lord, the girl arose, left her bed, and walked. Jesus directed that food be given her, as bodily needs, suspended by death, had returned with the girl's renewal of life.

The Lord imposed an obligation of secrecy, charging all present to refrain from telling what they had seen. The reasons for this injunction are not stated. In some other instances a similar instruction was given to those who had been blessed by Christ's ministrations; while on many occasions of healing no such instructions are recorded, and in one case at least the man who had been relieved of demons was told to go and tell how great a thing had been done for him.[678] In His own wisdom Christ knew when to prudently forbid and when to permit publication of His doings. Though the grateful parents, the girl herself, and the three apostles who had been witnesses of the restoration, may all have been loyal to the Lord's injunction of silence, the fact that the maiden had been raised to life could not be kept secret, and the means by which so great a wonder had been wrought would certainly be inquired into. The minstrels and the wailers who had been expelled from the place while it was yet a house of mourning, and who had scornfully laughed at the Master's assertion that the maiden was asleep and not dead as they thought, would undoubtedly, spread reports. It is not surprising, therefore, to read in Matthew's short version of the history, that the fame of the miracle "went abroad into all that land."

## RESTORATION TO LIFE AND RESURRECTION

The vital distinction between a restoration of the dead to a resumption of mortal life, and the resurrection of the body from death to a state of immortality, must be thoughtfully heeded. In each of the instances thus far considered – that of the raising of the dead man of Nain,[679] and that of the daughter of Jairus, as also the raising of Lazarus to be studied later – the miracle consisted in reuniting the spirit and the body in a continuation of the interrupted course of mortal existence. That the subject of each of these miracles had to subsequently die is certain. Jesus Christ was the first of all men who have lived on earth to come forth from the tomb an immortalized Being; He is therefore properly designated as "**the first fruits of them that slept.**"[680]

Though both Elijah and Elisha, many centuries prior to the time of Christ, were instrumental in restoring life to the dead, the former to the widow's son in Zarephtha, the latter to the child of the Shunammite woman,[681] in these earlier miracles the restoration was to mortal existence, not to immortality. It is instructive to observe the

difference in the procedure of each of the Old Testament prophets mentioned as compared with that of Christ in analogous miracles. By both Elijah and Elisha the wonderful change was brought about only after long and labored ministrations, and earnest invocation of the power and intervention of Jehovah; but Jehovah, embodied in flesh as Jesus Christ, did nothing outwardly but command, and the bonds of death were immediately broken. He spoke in His own name and by inherent authority, for by the power with which He was invested He held control of both life and death.

## **A REMARKABLE HEALING BY THE WAY [682]**

While Jesus was walking to the house of Jairus with a great crowd of people thronging about Him, the progress of the company was arrested by another case of suffering. In the throng was a woman who for twelve years had been afflicted with a serious ailment involving frequent hemorrhage. She had spent in medical treatment all she had owned, and "**had suffered many things of many physicians,**" but had steadily grown worse. She worked her way through the crowd, and, approaching Jesus from behind, touched His robe; "**For she said, If I may touch but his clothes I shall be whole.**" The effect was more than magical; immediately she felt the thrill of health throughout her body, and knew that she had been healed of her affliction. Her object attained, the blessing she sought being now secured, she tried to escape notice, by hastily dropping back into the crowd. But her touch was not unheeded by the Lord. He turned to look over the throng and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" or as Luke puts it, "Who touched me?" As the people denied, the impetuous Peter speaking for himself and the others said: "**Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?"** But Jesus answered: "Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me."

The woman, finding that she could not escape identification, came tremblingly forward, and, kneeling before the Lord, confessed what she had done, her reason for so doing, and the beneficent result. If she had expected censure her fears were promptly set at rest, for Jesus, addressing her by a term of respect and kindness, said: "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace," and as Mark adds, "be whole of thy plague."

This woman's faith was sincere and free from guile, nevertheless it was in a sense defective. She believed that the influence of Christ's person, and even that attaching to His raiment, was a remedial agency, ample to cure her malady; but she did not realize that the power to heal was an inherent attribute to be exercised at His will, and as the influence of faith might call it forth. True, her faith had already been in part rewarded, but of greater worth to her than the physical cure of her illness would be the assurance that the divine Healer had granted the desire of her heart, and that the faith she had manifested was accepted by Him. To correct her misapprehension and to confirm her faith, Jesus gently subjected her to the necessary ordeal of confession, which must have

been made easier through her consciousness of the great relief already experienced. He confirmed the healing and let her depart with the comforting assurance that her recovery was permanent.

In contrast with the many cases of healing in connection with which the Lord charged the beneficiaries that they should tell none how or by whom they had been relieved, we see here that publicity was made sure by His own action, and that too, when secrecy was desired by the recipient of the blessing. The purposes and motives of Jesus may be but poorly understood by man; but in this woman's case we see the possibility of stories strange and untrue getting afloat, and it appears to have been the wiser course to make plain the truth then and there. Moreover the spiritual worth of the miracle was greatly enhanced by the woman's confession and by the Lord's gracious assurance.

Observe the significant assertion, "**Thy faith hath made thee whole.**" Faith is of itself a principle of power;[683] and by its presence or absence, by its fullness or paucity, even the Lord was and is influenced, and in great measure controlled, in the bestowal or withholding of blessings; for He ministers according to law, and not with caprice or uncertainty. We read that at a certain time and place Jesus "could there do no mighty work" because of the people's unbelief.[684] Modern revelation specifies that faith to be healed is one of the gifts of the Spirit, analogous to the manifestations of faith in the work of healing others through the exercise of the power of the Holy Priesthood.[685]

Our Lord's inquiry as to who had touched Him in the throng affords us another example of His asking questions in pursuance of a purpose, when He could readily have determined the facts directly and without aid from others. There was a special purpose in the question, as every teacher finds a means of instruction in questioning his pupils.[686] But there is in Christ's question, "Who touched me?" a deeper significance than could inhere in a simple inquiry as to the identity of an individual; and this is implied in the Lord's further words: "**Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.**" The usual external act by which His miracles were wrought was a word or a command, sometimes accompanied by the laying on of hands, or by some other physical ministrations as in anointing the eyes of a blind man.[687] That there was an actual giving of His own strength to the afflicted whom He healed is evident from the present instance. Passive belief on the part of a would-be recipient of blessing is insufficient; only when it is vitalized into active faith is it a power; so also of one who ministers in the authority given of God, mental and spiritual energy must be operative if the service is to be effective.

## **THE BLIND SEE AND THE DUMB SPEAK [688]**

Two other instances of miraculous healing are chronicled by Matthew as closely following the raising of the daughter of Jairus. As Jesus passed down the streets of Capernaum, presumably on His departure from the house of the ruler of the synagogue,

two blind men followed Him, crying out: "Thou son of David, have mercy on us." This title of address was voiced by others at sundry times, and in no case do we find record of our Lord disclaiming it or objecting to its use.[689] Jesus paused not to heed this call of the blind, and the two sightless men followed Him, even entering the house after Him. Then He spoke to them, asking: "**Believe ye that I am able to do this?**" And they replied, "Yea, Lord." Their persistency in following the Lord was evidence of their belief that in some way, though to them unknown and mysterious, He could help them; and they promptly and openly confessed that belief. Our Lord touched their eyes, saying: "**According to your faith be it unto you.**" The effect was immediate; their eyes were opened. They were explicitly instructed to say nothing of the matter to others; but, rejoicing in the inestimable blessing of sight, they "spread abroad his fame in all that country." So far as we can unravel the uncertain threads of sequence in the works of Christ, this is the earliest instance, recorded with attendant details, of His giving sight to the blind. Many remarkable cases follow.[690]

It is worthy of note that in blessing the sightless by the exercise of His healing power, Jesus usually ministered by some physical contact in addition to uttering the authoritative words of command or assurance. In this instance, as also in that of two blind men who sat by the wayside, He touched the sightless eyes; in the giving of sight to the blind indigent in Jerusalem He anointed the man's eyes with clay; to the eyes of another He applied saliva.[691] An analogous circumstance is found in the healing of one who was deaf and defective of speech, in which instance the Lord put His fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue.[692] In no case can such treatment be regarded as medicinal or therapeutic. Christ was not a physician who relied upon curative substances, nor a surgeon to perform physical operations; His healings were the natural results of the application of a power of His own. It is conceivable that confidence, which is a stepping-stone to belief, as that in turn is to faith, may have been encouraged by these physical ministrations, strengthened, and advanced to a higher and more abiding trust in Christ, on the part of the afflicted who had not sight to look upon the Master's face and derive inspiration therefrom, nor hearing to hear His uplifting words. There is apparent not alone an entire absence of formula and formalism in His ministration, but a lack of uniformity of procedure quite as impressive.

As the two men, once sightless but now seeing, departed, others came, bringing a dumb friend whose affliction seems to have been primarily due to the malignant influence of an evil spirit rather than to any organic defect. Jesus rebuked the wicked spirit – cast out the demon that had obsessed the afflicted one and held him in the tyranny of speechlessness. The man's tongue was loosened, he was freed from the evil incubus, and was no longer dumb.[693]

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 20

**1. Storms on the Lake of Galilee** – It is a matter of record that sudden and violent storms are common on the lake or sea of Galilee; and the tempest that was quieted by the Lord's word of command was of itself no unusual phenomenon, except perhaps in its intensity. Another incident connected with a storm on this small body of water is of scriptural record, and will be considered later in the text (Matt. 14:22-26; Mark 6:45-56; John 6:15-21). Dr. Thompson (*The Land and the Book* ii:32) gives a description founded on his personal experience on the shores of the lake: "I spent a night in that Wady Shukaiyif, some three miles up it, to the left of us. The sun had scarcely set when the wind began to rush down toward the lake, and it continued all night long with constantly increasing violence, so that when we reached the shore next morning the face of the lake was a huge boiling caldron. The wind howled down every wady from the north-east and east with such fury that no efforts of rowers could have brought a boat to shore at any point along that coast.... To understand the causes of these sudden and violent tempests, we must remember that the lake lies low – six hundred feet lower than the ocean; that the vast and naked plateaus of the Jaulan rise to a great height, spreading backward to the wilds of the Hauran, and upward to snowy Hermon; and the water-courses have cut out profound ravines and wild gorges, converging to the head of this lake, and that these act like gigantic funnels to draw down the cold winds from the mountains."

**2. The Earth Before and After Its Regeneration** – That the earth itself fell under the curse incident to the fall of the first parents of the race, and that even as man shall be redeemed so shall the earth be regenerated, is implied in Paul's words: "**Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole Creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body**" (Rom. 8:21-23). The present author has written elsewhere: "According to the scriptures, the earth has to undergo a change analogous to death, and to be regenerated in a manner comparable to a resurrection. References to the elements melting with heat, and to the earth being consumed and passing away, such as occur in many scriptures already cited, are suggestive of death; and the new earth, really the renewed or regenerated planet, which is to result, may be compared with a resurrected organism. The change has been likened unto a transfiguration (Doc. and Cov. 63:20, 21). Every created thing has been made for a purpose; and everything that fills the measure of its creation is to be advanced in the scale of progression, be it an atom or a world, an animalcule, or man – the direct and literal offspring of Deity. In speaking of the degrees of glory provided for His creations, and of the laws of regeneration and sanctification, the Lord, in a revelation dated 1832, speaks plainly of the approaching death and subsequent quickening of the earth. These are his words: – '**And again, verily I say unto you, the**

**earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law. Wherefore it shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it.'** (Doc. and Cov. 88:25-26.)"

The vital Spirit that emanates from God and is coextensive with space, may operate directly and with as positive effect upon inanimate things, and upon energy in its diverse manifestations known to us as the forces of nature, as upon organized intelligences, whether yet unembodied, in the flesh, or disembodied. Thus, the Lord may speak directly to the earth, the air, the sea, and be heard and obeyed, for the divine affluence, which is the sum of all energy and power may and does operate throughout the universe. In the course of a revelation from God to Enoch, the earth is personified, and her groans and lamentations over the wickedness of men were heard by the prophet: **"And it came to pass that Enoch looked upon the earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face?"** Enoch pleaded: "O Lord, wilt thou not have compassion upon the earth?" Following further revelation as to the then future course of mankind in sin and in the rejection of the Messiah who was to be sent, the prophet wept with anguish, and asked of God **"When shall the earth rest?"** It was then shown unto him that the crucified Christ shall return to earth and establish a millennial reign of peace: **"And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah; and the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men."** And the glorious assurance followed **"that for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest."** (P. of G.P., Moses 7:48, 49, 58, 60, 61, 64.)

A partial description of the earth in its regenerated state has been given through the prophet Joseph Smith in the present dispensation: **"This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon, whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it; and this earth will be Christ's."** (Doc. and Cov. 130:9).

That Jesus Christ, in the exercise of His powers of Godship, should speak directly to the wind or the sea and be obeyed, is no less truly in accord with the natural law of heaven, than that He should effectively command a man or an unembodied spirit. That through faith even mortal man may set in operation the forces that act upon matter and with assurance of stupendous results has been explicitly declared by Jesus Christ: **"For verily**

**I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you"** (Matt. 17:20; compare Mark 11:23; Luke 17:6).

**3. The Land of the Gergesenes** – Attempts have been made to discredit the account of Christ's healing the demoniac in "the country of the Gadarenes" (Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26) on the claim that the ancient town of Gadara the capital of the district (see Josephus, Wars, iii, 7:1), was too far inland to make possible the precipitous dash of the swine into the sea from that place. Others lay stress on the fact that Matthew differs from the two other Gospel-historians, in specifying "the country of the Gergesenes" (8:28). As stated in the text, a whole region or section is referred to, not a town. The keepers of the swine ran off to the towns to report the disaster that had befallen their herd. In that district of Perea there were at the time towns named respectively Gadara, Gerasa, and Gergesa; the region in general, therefore, could properly be called the land of the Gadarenes or of the Gergesenes. Farrar (*Life of Christ*, p. 254 note) says: "After the researches of Dr. Thompson (*The Land and the Book*, ii:25), there can be no doubt that Gergesa ... was the name of a little town nearly opposite Capernaum, the ruined site of which is still called Kerza or Gersa by the Bedawin. The existence of this little town was apparently known both to Origen, who first introduced the reading, and to Eusebius and Jerome; and in their day a steep declivity near it, where the hills approach to within a little distance from the lake, was pointed out as the scene of the miracle."

**4. Jesus Entreated to Leave the Country** – The people were frightened over the power possessed by Jesus, as demonstrated in the cure of the demoniac, and in the destruction of the swine, which latter occurrence, however, was not in pursuance of His command. It was the fear that sinful men feel in the presence of the Righteous. They were not prepared for other manifestations of divine power, and they dreaded to think who among them might be directly affected thereby should it be exerted. We must judge the people mercifully, however, if at all. They were in part heathen, and had but superstitious conceptions of Deity. Their prayer that Jesus leave them brings to mind the ejaculation of Simon Peter in his witnessing one of Christ's miracles: "**Depart from me: for I am a sinful man, O Lord**" (Luke 5:8).

**5. "Dead," or "At the Point of Death"** – According to Luke (8:42) the daughter of Jairus "lay a dying" when the grief-stricken father sought help of the Lord; Mark (5:23) reports the man as stating that the girl lay "at the point of death." These two accounts agree; but Matthew (9:18) represents the father as saying: "My daughter is even now dead." Unbelieving critics have dwelt at length on what they designate an inconsistency if not a contradiction in these versions; and yet both accounts embodied in the three records are plainly true. The maid was seemingly breathing her last, she was in the very throes of death, when the father hurried away. Before he met Jesus he felt that the end had probably come; nevertheless his faith endured. His words attest his trust, that even had

his daughter actually died since he left her side, the Master could recall her to life. He was in a state of frenzied grief, and still his faith held true.

**6. Mourning Customs Among Orientals** – Observances that to us seem strange, weird, and out of place, prevailed from very early times among oriental peoples, some of which customs were common to the Jews in the days of Christ. Noise and tumult, including screeching lamentations by members of the bereaved family and by professional mourners, as also the din of instruments, were usual accompaniments of mourning. Geikie, citing Buxtorf's quotation from the Talmud, gives place to the following: "Even a poor Israelite was required to have not fewer than two flute players and one mourning woman at the death of his wife; but if he be rich all things are to be done according to his quality." In Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, we read: "The number of words (about eleven Hebrew and as many Greek) employed in scripture to express the various actions characteristic of mourning, shows in a great degree the nature of Jewish customs in this respect. They appear to have consisted chiefly in the following particulars: (1) Beating upon the breast or other parts of the body. (2) Weeping and screaming in an excessive degree. (3) Wearing sad-colored garments. (4) Songs of lamentation. (5) Funeral feasts. (6) Employment of persons, especially women, to lament. One marked feature of oriental mourning is what may be called its studied publicity, and the careful observance of prescribed ceremonies (Gen. 23:2; Job 1:20; 2:8; Isa. 15:3; etc.)."

**7. "Not Dead, but Sleepeth"** – That the daughter of Jairus was dead is placed beyond reasonable doubt by the scriptural record. Our Lord's statement to the noisy mourners that "**the damsel is not dead but sleepeth**" told that her sleep was to be of short duration. It was a rabbinical and common custom of the time to speak of death as a sleep, and those who laughed Jesus to scorn for His statement chose to construe His words in a sense of such literalism as the context scarcely warrants. It is noticeable that the Lord used a strictly equivalent expression with respect to the death of Lazarus. "**Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,**" said He, "**but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.**" The literal construction placed upon these words by the apostles evoked the plain declaration "**Lazarus is dead**" (John 11:11, 14). In the Talmud death is repeatedly designated as sleep – hundreds of times says Lightfoot, a recognized authority on Hebrew literature.

**8. Why Did Jesus Make Inquiries?** – We have already considered many instances of Christ's possession of what man would call superhuman knowledge, extending even to the reading of unuttered thoughts. Some people find difficulty in reconciling this superior quality with the fact that Jesus often asked questions even on matters of minor circumstance. We should realize that even complete knowledge may not preclude the propriety of making inquiries, and, moreover, that even omniscience does not imply ever-present consciousness of all that is. Undoubtedly through his paternal heritage of divine attributes, Jesus had the power of ascertaining for Himself, by means not

possessed by others, any facts He might have desired to know; nevertheless we find Him repeatedly asking questions on circumstantial detail (Mark 9:21; 8:27; Matt. 16:13; Luke 8:45); and this He did even after His resurrection (Luke 24:41; John 21:5; B. of M., 3 Nephi 17:7).

*Jesus taught by asking questions – lots of teachers ask questions, even though they know the answer to the question. It makes people think...and learn.*

That catechization is one of the most effective means of mind development is exemplified in the methods followed by the best of human teachers. Trench (*Notes on the Miracles*, pp. 148-9), thus instructively points the lesson as illustrated by our Lord's question concerning the woman who was healed of her issue of blood: With little force "can it be urged that it would have been inconsistent with absolute truth for the Lord to profess ignorance, and to ask the question which He did ask, if all the while He perfectly knew what He thus seemed implicitly to say that He did not know. A father among his children, and demanding Who committed this fault? himself conscious, even while he asks, but at the same time willing to bring the culprit to a full confession, and so to put him in a pardonable state, can he be said, in any way to violate the law of the highest truth? The same offense might be found in Elisha's 'Whence comest thou, Gehazi?' (2 Kings 5:25) when his heart went with his servant all the way that he had gone; and even in the question of God Himself to Adam, '**Where art thou?**' (Gen. 3:9), and to Cain, '**Where is Abel thy brother?**' (Gen. 4:9). In every case there is a moral purpose in the question, an opportunity given even at the latest moment for making good at least a part of the error by its unreserved confession."

**9. The Blind See**— In his treatment of the miraculous healing of the two blind men who had followed Jesus into the house, Trench (*Notes on the Miracles of our Lord*, p. 152) says: "We have here the first of those many healings of the blind recorded (Matt. 12:22; 20:30; 21:14; John 9) or alluded to (Matt. 11:5) in the Gospels; each of them a literal fulfillment of that prophetic word of Isaiah concerning the days of Messiah: 'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened' (35:5). Frequent as these miracles are, they yet will none of them be found without distinguishing features of their own. That they should be so numerous is nothing wonderful, whether we regard the fact from a natural or spiritual point of view. Regarded naturally they need not surprise us if we keep in mind how far commoner a calamity is blindness in the East than with us. Regarded from a spiritual point of view we have only to remember how commonly sin is contemplated in Scripture as a moral blindness (Deut. 28:29; Isa. 59:10; Job 12:25; Zeph. 1:17), and deliverance from sin as a removal of this blindness (Isa. 6:9, 10; 43:8; Eph. 1:18; Matt. 15:14); and we shall at once perceive how fit it was that He who was the 'light of the world' should often accomplish works which symbolized so well that higher work which He came into the world to accomplish."

**10. Imputation of Satanic Agency** – Observe that in the matter of healing the dumb demoniac referred to in the text, Christ was charged with being in league with the devil. Although the people, impressed by the manifestation of divine power in the healing, exclaimed in reverence, "It was never so seen in Israel," the Pharisees, intent on counteracting the good effect of the Lord's miraculous ministrations, said "He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils," (Matt. 9:32-34.) an inconsistent and, strictly speaking, blasphemous charge.

## FOOTNOTES

[657] Mark 4:35.

[658] "Articles of Faith," x:1-20 – "Men called of God."

[659] See Chapter 7 herein.

[660] Luke 9:57-62; see also Matt. 8:19-22.

[661] Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25.

[162] Note 1, end of chapter.

[663] Gen. 1:28; P. of G.P., Moses 2:26; 5:1.

[664] Gen. 3:17-19.

[665] Note 2, end of chapter.

[666] Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-19; Luke 8:26-39.

[667] Note 3, end of chapter.

[668] Compare Rev. 20:3.

[669] Revised version, "abyss" instead of "deep."

[670] Note 4, end of chapter.

[671] Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34, also verse 41; See chapter 13 herein.

[672] Mark 3:7-11; compare Luke 6:17-19. See chapter 13 herein.

[673] Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Luke 8:41, 42, 49-56; Matt. 9:18, 19, 23-26.

[674] John 11:45; compare 8:30; 10:42.

[675] Note 5, end of chapter.

[676] Note 6, end of chapter.

[677] Note 7, end of chapter.

[678] Mark 5:19-20; Luke 8:39.

[679] See Chapter 18 herein.

[680] 1 Cor. 15:20, 23; see also Acts 26:23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; and "Articles of Faith," xxi:24-27.

[681] 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:31-37.

[682] Mark 5:25-34; Matt. 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48.

[683] "Articles of Faith," v:11-13.

[684] Mark 6:5, 6; compare Matt. 13:58.

[685] Doc. and Cov. 46:19; compare Matt. 8:10; 9:28, 29. Acts 14:9.

[686] Note 8, end of chapter.

[687] Matt. 8:3; Luke 4:40; 13:13; John 9:6; compare Mark 6:5; 7:33; 8:23.

[688] Matt. 9:27-35.

[689] Matt. 15:22; 20:30, 31; Mark 10:47, 48; Luke 18:38, 39.

[690] Note 9, end of chapter.

[691] Matt. 20:30-34; John 9:6; Mark 8:23.

[692] Mark 7:32-37.

[693] Matt. 9:32, 33. Note 10, end of chapter.

# 21

## THE APOSTOLIC MISSION, AND EVENTS RELATED THERETO JESUS AGAIN IN NAZARETH [694]

It will be remembered that, in the early days of His public ministry, Jesus had been rejected by the people of Nazareth, who thrust Him out from their synagog and tried to kill Him.[695] It appears that subsequent to the events noted in our last chapter, He returned to the town of His youth, and again raised His voice in the synagog, thus mercifully affording the people another opportunity to learn and accept the truth. The Nazarenes, as they had done before, now again openly expressed their astonishment at the words He spoke, and at the many miraculous works He had wrought; nevertheless they rejected Him anew, for He came not as they expected the Messiah to come; and they refused to know Him save as "the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon;" all of whom were common folk as were also His sisters. "And they were offended at him."[696] Jesus reminded them of the proverb then current among the people, "**A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.**" Their unbelief was so dense as to cause Him to marvel;[697] and because of their lack of faith He was unable to accomplish any great work except to heal a few exceptional believers upon whom He laid His hands. Leaving Nazareth, He entered upon His third tour of the Galilean towns and villages, preaching and teaching as He went.[698]

### THE TWELVE CHARGED AND SENT [699]

About this time, also, Jesus inaugurated a notable expansion of the ministry of the kingdom, by sending forth the Twelve on assigned missions. Since their ordination the apostles had been with their Lord, learning from Him by public discourse and private exposition, and acquiring invaluable experience and training through that privileged and blessed companionship. The purpose of their ordination was specified – "**that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.**"[700] They had been pupils under the Master's watchful guidance for many months; and now they were called to enter upon the duties of their calling as preachers of the gospel and individual witnesses of the Christ. By way of final preparation they were specifically and solemnly charged.[701] Some of the instructions given them on this occasion had particular reference to their first mission, from which they would in due time return

and report; other directions and admonitions were to be of effect throughout their ministry, even after the Lord's ascension.

*The Twelve Apostles had been mentored and trained to preach. The Saviour knew that they would soon be on their own, so it was time to "practice a mission" of their own.*

They were directed to confine their ministrations for the time being "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and not to open a propaganda among the Gentiles,[702] nor even in Samaritan cities. This was a temporary restriction, imposed in wisdom and prudence; later, as we shall see, they were directed to preach among all nations, with the world for their field.[703] The subject of their discourses was to be that upon which they had heard the Master preach – "**the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" They were to exercise the authority of the Holy Priesthood as conferred upon them by ordination; it was a specified part of their mission to "**heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils,**" as occasion presented itself; and they were commanded to give freely, even as they had freely received. Personal comfort and bodily needs they were not to provide for; the people were to be proved as to their willingness to receive and assist those who came in the name of the Lord; and the apostles themselves were to learn to rely upon a Provider more to be trusted than man; therefore money, extra clothing, and things of mere convenience were to be left behind. In the several towns they entered they were to seek entertainment and leave their blessing upon every worthy family into which they were received. If they found themselves rejected by a household or by a town as a whole, they were to shake the dust from their feet on leaving, as a testimony against the people;[704] and it was decreed that, in the day of judgment, the place so denounced would fare worse than wicked Sodom and Gomorrha upon which fire from heaven had descended.

The apostles were told to be prudent, to give no needless offense, but to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves; for they were sent forth as sheep into the midst of wolves. They were not to recklessly entrust themselves to the power of men; for wicked men would persecute them, seek to arraign them before councils and courts, and to afflict them in the synagogs. Moreover they might expect to be brought before governors and kings, under which extreme conditions, they were to rely upon divine inspiration as to what they should say, and not depend upon their own wisdom in preparation and premeditation; "For," said the Master, "**it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.**"[705]

They were not to trust even the claims of kinship for protection, for families would be divided over the truth, brother against brother, children against parents, and the resulting strife would be deadly. These servants of Christ were told that they would be hated of all men, but were assured that their sufferings were to be for His name's sake. They were to withdraw from the cities that persecuted them, and go to others; and the Lord would follow them, even before they would be able to complete the circuit of the

cities of Israel. They were admonished to humility, and were always to remember that they were servants, who ought not to expect to escape when even their Master was assailed. Nevertheless they were to be fearless, hesitating not to preach the gospel in plainness; for the most their persecutors could do was to kill the body, which fate was as nothing compared to that of suffering destruction of the soul in hell.

Assurance of the Father's watchful care was impressed upon them by the simple reminder that though sparrows were sold two for a farthing, and yet not a sparrow could be sacrificed without the Father's concern, they, who were of more value than many sparrows, would not be forgotten. They were solemnly warned that whosoever would freely confess the Christ before men would be acknowledged by Him in the Father's presence, while they who denied Him before men would be denied in heaven. And again they were told that the gospel would bring strife, whereby households would be disrupted; for the doctrine the Lord had taught would be as a sword to cut and divide. The duties of their special ministry were to supersede the love for kindred; they must be willing to leave father, mother, son, or daughter, whatever the sacrifice; for, said Jesus "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

The significance of this figure must have been solemnly impressive, and actually terrifying; for the cross was a symbol of ignominy, extreme suffering, and death. However, should they lose their lives for His sake, they would find life eternal; while he who was not willing to die in the Lord's service should lose his life in a sense at once literal and awful. They were never to forget in whose name they were sent; and were comforted with the assurance that whoever received them would be rewarded as one who had received the Christ and His Father; and that though the gift were only that of a cup of cold water, the giver should in no wise lose his reward.

Thus charged and instructed, the twelve special witnesses of the Christ set out upon their mission, traveling in pairs,<sup>[706]</sup> while Jesus continued His personal ministry.

## THE TWELVE RETURN

We are without definite information as to the duration of the apostles' first mission, and as to the extent of the field they traversed. The period of their absence was marked by many important developments in the individual labors of Jesus. It is probable that during this time our Lord visited Jerusalem, on the occasion mentioned by John as coincident with the unnamed feast of the Jews.<sup>[707]</sup> While the apostles were absent, Jesus was visited by the Baptist's disciples, as we have already seen<sup>[708]</sup> and the return of the Twelve occurred near the time of the infamous execution of John the Baptist in prison.<sup>[709]</sup>

The missionary labors of the apostles greatly augmented the spread of the new doctrine of the kingdom, and the name and works of Jesus were proclaimed throughout the land. The people of Galilee were at that time in a state of discontent threatening open insurrection against the government; their unrest had been aggravated by the murder of the Baptist. Herod Antipas, who had given the fatal order, trembled in his palace. He heard, with fear due to inward conviction of guilt, of the marvelous works wrought by Jesus, and in terror averred that Christ could be none other than John Baptist returned from the tomb. His fawning courtiers essayed to allay his fears by saying that Jesus was Elijah, or some other of the prophets whose advent had been predicted; but the conscience-stricken Herod said: "**It is John whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.**" Herod desired to see Jesus; perhaps through the fascination of fear, or with the faint hope that sight of the renowned Prophet of Nazareth might dispel his superstitious dread that the murdered John had returned to life.

Upon the completion of their missionary tour, the apostles rejoined the Master and reported to Him both what they had taught and what they had done by way of authoritative ministrations. They had preached the gospel of repentance in all the cities, towns, and villages to which they had gone; they had anointed with oil many afflicted ones, and the power of their priesthood had been attested by consequent healings; even unclean spirits and devils had been subject unto them.[710] They found Jesus attended by great multitudes; and they had little opportunity of private conference with Him; "**for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.**" The apostles must have heard in gladness the Lord's invitation: "**Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.**" In quest of seclusion, Jesus and the Twelve withdrew from the throng, and privately entered a boat in which they crossed to a rural spot adjacent to the city of Bethsaida.[711] Their departure had not been unobserved, however, and eager crowds hastened along the shore, and partly around the northerly end of the lake, to join the party at the landing place. From John's account we are led to infer that, before the arrival of great numbers, Jesus and His companions had ascended the hillside near the shore, where, for a short time they had rested. As the multitude gathered on the lower slopes, our Lord looked upon them as upon sheep without a shepherd; and, yielding to their desire and to His own emotions of divine pity, He taught them many things, healed their afflicted ones, and comforted their hearts with compassionate tenderness.

## **FIVE THOUSAND FED IN THE DESERT [712]**

So intent were the people on hearing the Lord's words, and so concerned in the miraculous relief resulting from His healing ministrations, that they remained in the wilderness, oblivious to the passing of the hours, until the evening approached. It was the springtime, near the recurrence of the annual Passover festival, the season of grass and flowers.[713] Jesus, realizing that the people were hungry, asked Philip, one of the Twelve, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" The purpose of the question

was to test the apostle's faith; for the Lord had already determined as to what was to be done. Philip's reply showed surprise at the question, and conveyed his thought that the suggested undertaking was impossible. **"Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little,"** said he. Andrew added that there was a lad present who had five barley loaves, and two small fishes, **"But,"** said he, **"what are they among so many?"**

Such is John's account; the other writers state that the apostles reminded Jesus of the lateness of the hour, and urged that He send the people away to seek for themselves food and lodging in the nearest towns. It appears most probable that the conversation between Jesus and Philip occurred earlier in the afternoon;[714] and that as the hours sped, the Twelve became concerned and advised that the multitude be dismissed. The Master's reply to the apostles was: "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." In amazed wonder they replied: **"We have here but five loaves and two fishes;"** and Andrew's despairing comment is implied again—What are they among so many?

Jesus gave command, and the people seated themselves on the grass in orderly array; they were grouped in fifties and hundreds; and it was found that the multitude numbered about five thousand men, beside women and children. Taking the loaves and the fishes, Jesus looked toward heaven and pronounced a blessing upon the food; then, dividing the provisions, He gave to the apostles severally, and they in turn distributed to the multitude. The substance of both fish and bread increased under the Master's touch; and the multitude feasted there in the desert, until all were satisfied. To the disciples Jesus said: "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost;" and twelve baskets were filled with the surplus.

As to the miracle itself, human knowledge is powerless to explain. Though wrought on so great a scale, it is no more nor less inexplicable than any other of the Lord's miraculous works. It was a manifestation of creative power, by which material elements were organized and compounded to serve a present and pressing need. The broken but unused portion exceeded in bulk and weight the whole of the original little store. Our Lord's direction to gather up the fragments was an impressive object-lesson against waste; and it may have been to afford such lesson that an excess was supplied. The fare was simple, yet nourishing, wholesome and satisfying. Barley bread and fish constituted the usual food of the poorer classes of the region. The conversion of water into wine at Cana was a qualitative transmutation; the feeding of the multitude involved a quantitative increase; who can say that one, or which, of these miracles of provision was the more wonderful?

*Turning water into wine was turning one thing into another, still a miracle, but, in my opinion only, turning nothing into something is the bigger miracle. In modern words, it would be like "beaming" the desired food into the baskets.*

The multitude, now fed and filled, gave some consideration to the miracle. In Jesus, by whom so great a work had been wrought, they recognized One having superhuman powers. **"This is of a truth the prophet that should come into the world,"** said they – the Prophet whose coming had been foretold by Moses and who should be like unto himself. Even as Israel had been miraculously fed during the time of Moses, so now was bread provided in the desert by this new Prophet. In their enthusiasm the people proposed to proclaim Him king, and forcibly compel Him to become their leader. Such was their gross conception of Messianic supremacy. Jesus directed His disciples to depart by boat, while He remained to dismiss the now excited multitude. The disciples hesitated to leave their Master; but He constrained them and they obeyed. His insistence, that the Twelve depart from both Himself and the multitude, may have been due to a desire to protect the chosen disciples against possible infection by the materialistic and unrighteous designs of the throng to make Him king. By means that are not detailed, He caused the people to disperse; and, as night came on, He found that for which He had come in quest, solitude and quiet. Ascending the hill, He chose a secluded place, and there remained in prayer during the greater part of the night.

*...the people did not understand, Jesus already is a King – He need only make a command and ALL would obey.*

### **"IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID" [715]**

The return by boat proved to be a memorable journey for the disciples. They encountered a boisterous head-wind, which of course rendered impossible the use of sails; and though they toiled heavily at the oars the vessel became practically unmanageable and wallowed in the midst of the sea.[716] Though they had labored through the night they had progressed less than four miles on their course; to turn and run before the wind would have been to invite disastrous wreck; their sole hope lay in their holding the vessel to the wind by sheer power of muscle. Jesus, in His place of solitary retirement, was aware of their sad plight, and along in the fourth watch,[717] that is, between three and six o'clock in the morning, He came to their assistance, walking upon the storm-tossed water as though treading solid ground. When the voyagers caught sight of Him as He approached the ship in the faint light of the near-spent night, they were overcome by superstitious fears, and cried out in terror, thinking that they saw a ghostly apparition. **"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."**

Relieved by these assuring words, Peter, impetuous and impulsive as usual, cried out: "Lord, if[718] it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Jesus assenting, Peter descended from the ship and walked toward his Master; but as the wind smote him and the waves rose about him, his confidence wavered and he began to sink. Strong swimmer though he was,[719] he gave way to fright, and cried, "Lord, save me." Jesus caught him by the hand, saying: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

From Peter's remarkable experience, we learn that the power by which Christ was able to walk the waves could be made operative in others, provided only their faith was enduring. It was on Peter's own request that he was permitted to attempt the feat. Had Jesus forbidden him, the man's faith might have suffered a check; his attempt, though attended by partial failure, was a demonstration of the efficacy of faith in the Lord, such as no verbal teaching could ever have conveyed. Jesus and Peter entered the vessel; immediately the wind ceased, and the boat soon reached the shore. The amazement of the apostles, at this latest manifestation of the Lord's control over the forces of nature, would have been more akin to worship and less like terrified consternation had they remembered the earlier wonders they had witnessed; but they had forgotten even the miracle of the loaves, and their hearts had hardened.[720] Marveling at the power of One to whom the wind-lashed sea was a sustaining floor, the apostles bowed before the Lord in reverent worship, saying: "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."[721]

Aside from the marvelous circumstances of its literal occurrence, the miracle is rich in symbolism and suggestion. By what law or principle the effect of gravitation was superseded, so that a human body could be supported upon the watery surface, man is unable to affirm. The phenomenon is a concrete demonstration of the great truth that faith is a principle of power, whereby natural forces may be conditioned and controlled.[722] Into every adult human life come experiences like unto the battling of the storm-tossed voyagers with contrary winds and threatening seas; ofttimes the night of struggle and danger is far advanced before succor appears; and then, too frequently the saving aid is mistaken for a greater terror. As came unto Peter and his terrified companions in the midst of the turbulent waters, so comes to all who toil in faith, the voice of the Deliverer – **"It is I; be not afraid."**

## IN THE LAND OF GENNESARET

The night voyage, in the course of which Jesus had reached the boat with its frightened occupants while "in the midst of the sea," ended at some point within the district known as the land of Gennesaret, which, as generally believed, embraced the rich and fertile region in the vicinity of Tiberias and Magdala. Of the natural beauties, for which the region was famed much has been written.[723] Word of our Lord's presence there spread rapidly, and, from "all that country round about" the people flocked to Him, bringing their afflicted to receive of His beneficence by word or touch. In the towns through which He walked, the sick were laid in the streets that the blessing of His passing might fall upon them; and many "besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment; and as many as touched him were made whole." [724] Bounteously did He impart of His healing virtue to all who came asking with faith and confidence. Thus, accompanied by the Twelve, He wended His way northward to Capernaum, making the pathway bright by the plentitude of His mercies.

## IN SEARCH OF LOAVES AND FISHES [725]

The multitude who, on the yesterday, had partaken of His bounty on the other side of the lake, and who dispersed for the night after their ineffectual attempt to force upon Him the dignity of earthly kingship, were greatly surprised in the morning to discover that He had departed. They had seen the disciples leave in the only boat there present, while Jesus had remained on shore; and they knew that the night tempest had precluded the possibility of other boats reaching the place. Nevertheless their morning search for Him was futile; and they concluded that He must have returned by land round the end of the lake. As the day advanced some boats were sighted, bound for the western coast; these they hailed, and, securing passage, crossed to Capernaum.

Their difficulty in locating Jesus was at an end, for His presence was known throughout the town. Coming to Him, probably as He sat in the synagog, for on this day He taught there, some of the most intrusive of the crowd asked, brusquely and almost rudely, "Rabbi, when comest thou hither?" To this impertinent inquiry Jesus deigned no direct reply; in the miracle of the preceding night the people had no part, and no account of our Lord's movements was given them. In tone of impressive rebuke Jesus said unto them: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." Their concern was for the bread and fishes. One who could supply them with victuals as He had done must not be lost sight of.

*This could be compared to people who vote for a Congressman because he/she can vote them a job, or welfare, or some entitlement.*

The Master's rebuke was followed by admonition and instruction: "**Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.**"

*In other words, get real – think of the long term. Think of everlasting life and not something that spoils or is temporary.*

This contrast between material and spiritual food they could not entirely fail to understand, and some of them asked what they should do to serve God as Jesus required. The answer was: "**This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.**" That Jesus was referring to Himself, none could doubt; and straightway they demanded of Him further evidence of His divine commission; they would see greater signs. The miracle of the loaves and fishes was nearly a day old; and its impressiveness as evidence of Messianic attributes was waning. Moses had fed their fathers with manna in the desert, they said; and plainly they regarded a continued daily supply as a greater gift than a single meal of bread and fish, however much the latter may have been appreciated in the exigency of hunger. Moreover, the manna was heavenly

food:[726] whereas the bread He had given them was of earth, and only common barley bread at that. He must show them greater signs, and give them richer provender, before they would accept Him as the One whom they at first had taken Him to be and whom He now declared Himself to be.

## **CHRIST, THE BREAD OF LIFE [727]**

**"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."** They were mistaken in assuming that Moses had given them manna; and after all, the manna had been but ordinary food in that those who ate of it hungered again; but now the Father offered them bread from heaven such as would insure them life.

*...Eternal Life*

As the Samaritan woman at the well, on hearing the Lord speak of water that would satisfy once for all, had begged impulsively and with thought only of physical convenience, "**Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw**,"[728] so these people, eager to secure so satisfying a food as that of which Jesus spake, implored: "**Lord, evermore give us this bread.**" Perhaps this request was not wholly gross; there may have been in the hearts of some of them at least a genuine desire for spiritual nourishment. Jesus met their appeal with an explanation: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He reminded them that though they had seen Him they believed not His words; and assured them that those who really accepted Him would do as the Father directed. Then, without metaphor or symbolism, He affirmed: "**I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.**" And the Father's will was that all who would accept the Son should have everlasting life.

There were present in the synagog some of the rulers – Pharisees, scribes, rabbis – and these, designated collectively as the Jews, criticized Jesus, and murmured against Him because He had said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." They averred that He could do nothing more than any man could do; He was known to them as the son of Joseph, and as far as they knew was of ordinary earthly parentage, and yet He had the temerity to declare that He had come down from heaven. Chiefly to this class rather than to the promiscuous crowd who had hastened after Him, Jesus appears to have addressed the remainder of His discourse. He advised them to cease their murmurings; for it was a certainty that they could not apprehend His meaning, and therefore would not believe Him, unless they had been "taught of God" as the prophets had written:[729] and none could come to Him in the sense of accepting His saving gospel unless the Father drew them to the Son; and none save those who were receptive, willing, and prepared, could be so drawn.[730] Yet belief in the Son of God is

an indispensable condition to salvation, as Jesus indicated in His affirmation: "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.**"

Then, reverting to the symbolism of the bread, He reiterated: "**I am the bread of life.**" In further elucidation He explained that while their fathers did truly eat manna in the wilderness, yet they were dead; whereas the bread of life of which He spake would insure eternal life unto all who partook thereof. That bread, He averred, was His flesh. Against this solemn avowal the Jews complained anew, and disputed among themselves, some asking derisively: "**How can this man give us his flesh to eat.**" Emphasizing the doctrine, Jesus continued: "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.**"

There was little excuse for the Jews pretending to understand that our Lord meant an actual eating and drinking of His material flesh and blood. The utterances to which they objected were far more readily understood by them than they are by us on first reading; for the representation of the law and of truth in general as bread, and the acceptance thereof as a process of eating and drinking, were figures in every-day use by the rabbis of that time.[731] Their failure to comprehend the symbolism of Christ's doctrine was an act of will, not the natural consequence of innocent ignorance. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ was and is to believe in and accept Him as the literal Son of God and Savior of the world, and to obey His commandments. By these means only may the Spirit of God become an abiding part of man's individual being, even as the substance of the food he eats is assimilated with the tissues of his body.

It is not sufficing to accept the precepts of Christ as we may adopt the doctrines of scientists, philosophers, and savants, however great the wisdom of these sages may be; for such acceptance is by mental assent or deliberate exercise of will, and has relation to the doctrine only as independent of the author. The teachings of Jesus Christ endure because of their intrinsic worth; and many men respect His aphorisms, proverbs, parables, and His profoundly philosophical precepts, who yet reject Him as the Son of God, the Only Begotten in the flesh, the God-Man in whom were united the attributes of Deity with those of humanity, the chosen and foreordained Redeemer of mankind, through whom alone may salvation be attained. But the figure used by Jesus – that of eating His flesh and drinking His blood as typical of unqualified and absolute acceptance of Himself as the Savior of men, is of superlative import; for thereby are affirmed the divinity of His Person, and the fact of His pre-existent and eternal Godship. The sacrament of the Lord's supper, established by the Savior on the night of

His betrayal, perpetuates the symbolism of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, by the partaking of bread and wine in remembrance of Him.[732] Acceptance of Jesus as the Christ implies obedience to the laws and ordinances of His gospel; for to profess the One and refuse the other is but to convict ourselves of inconsistency, insincerity, and hypocrisy.

### **A CRUCIAL TEST – MANY TURN AWAY [733]**

The truth respecting Himself, as taught by the Lord in this, His last, discourse in the synagog at Capernaum, proved to be a test of faith through which many fell away. Not alone critical Jews of the official class, whose hostility was openly avowed, but those who had professed some measure of belief in Him were affected. **"Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?"** Jesus, cognizant of their disaffection, asked: "Doth this offend you?" and added: **"What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"** His ascension, which was to follow His death and resurrection, is here definitely implied. The spiritual significance of His teachings was put beyond question by the explanation that only through the Spirit could they comprehend; **"Therefore,"** He added, **"said I unto you, that no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father."**

Many deserted Him, and from that time sought Him no more. The occasion was crucial; the effect was that of sifting and separation. The portentous prediction of the Baptist-prophet had entered upon the stage of fulfillment: **"One mightier than I cometh ... Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."**[734] The fan was in operation, and much chaff was blown aside.

It appears that even the Twelve were unable to comprehend the deeper meaning of these latest teachings; they were puzzled, though none actually deserted. Nevertheless, the state of mind of some was such as to evoke from Jesus the question: **"Will ye also go away?"** Peter, speaking for himself and his brethren, answered with pathos and conviction: **"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."**[735] The spirit of the Holy Apostleship was manifest in this confession. Though they were unable to comprehend in fullness the doctrine, they knew Jesus to be the Christ, and were faithful to Him while others turned away into the dark depths of apostasy.

While Peter spoke for the apostolic body as a whole, there was among them one who silently revolted; the treacherous Iscariot, who was in worse plight than an openly avowed apostate, was there. The Lord knew this man's heart, and said: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" The historian adds: **"He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve."**

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 21

**1. Jesus at Nazareth** – As no one of the Gospel-writers records two occasions of our Lord's ministry in Nazareth, and as the separate accounts appearing in the synoptic Gospels closely resemble one another in a few particulars, some commentators hold that our Lord preached to His townsmen in Nazareth and was rejected by them but once. Luke's account (4:14-30) refers to an occasion immediately following the first return of Jesus to Galilee after His baptism and temptations, and directly preceding the preliminary call of the fishermen-disciples, who afterward were numbered among the apostles. Matthew (13:53-58) and Mark (6:1-6) chronicle a visit of Jesus to Nazareth later than the occasion of the first teaching in parables, and the events immediately following the same. We have good reason for accepting Luke's record as that of an early incident, and the accounts given by Matthew and Mark as those of a later visit.

**2. Gentiles** – In a general way the Jews designated all other peoples as Gentiles; though the same Hebrew word is rendered in the Old Testament variously, as "Gentiles" (Gen. 10:5; Judg. 4:2, 13, 16; Isa. 11:10; etc.), "nations" (Gen. 10:5, 20, 31, 32; 14:1, 9; etc.), and "heathen" (Neh. 5:8; Psa. 2:1, 8, etc.), the essential element of designation being that of foreigners. In Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, we read "It [the name 'Gentiles'] acquired an ethnographic and also an invidious meaning, as other nations were idolatrous, rude, hostile, etc., yet the Jews were able to use it in a purely technical, geographical sense, when it was usually translated 'nations.'" Dr. Edward E. Nourse, writing for the *Standard Bible Dictionary*, says: "In New Testament times, the Jew divided mankind into three classes, (1) Jews, (2) Greeks (Hellenes, made to include Romans, thus meaning the civilized peoples of the Roman Empire, often rendered 'Gentiles' in Authorized Version), and (3) barbarians (the uncivilized, Acts 28:4; Rom. 1:14; 1 Cor. 14:11)." The injunction laid by Jesus upon the Twelve – "Go not into the way of the Gentiles" – was to restrain them for the time being from attempting to make converts among the Romans and Greeks, and to confine their ministry to the people of Israel.

**3. Shaking the Dust from the Feet** – To ceremonially shake the dust from one's feet as a testimony against another was understood by the Jews to symbolize a cessation of fellowship and a renunciation of all responsibility for consequences that might follow. It became an ordinance of accusation and testimony by the Lord's instructions to His apostles as cited in the text. In the current dispensation, the Lord has similarly directed His authorized servants to so testify against those who willfully and maliciously oppose the truth when authoritatively presented (see Doc. and Cov. 24:15; 60:15; 75:20; 84:92; 99:4). The responsibility of testifying before the Lord by this accusing symbol is so great that the means may be employed only under unusual and extreme conditions, as the Spirit of the Lord may direct.

*Shaking the dust from the feet is a very serious act and is a judgment that may be employed only under unusual and extreme conditions...better not to shake the dust from the feet than to judge wrongly. Leave the judgment up to God; He knows.*

**4. The Two Bethsaidas** – It is held by many Bible students that Bethsaida, in the desert region adjoining which Jesus and the Twelve sought rest and seclusion, was the town of that name in Perea, on the eastern side of the Jordan, and known more specifically as Bethsaida Julias to distinguish it from Bethsaida in Galilee, which latter was close to Capernaum. The Perean village of Bethsaida had been enlarged and raised to the rank of a town by the tetrarch, Philip, and by him had been named Julias in honor of Julia, daughter of the reigning emperor. The Gospel narratives of the voyage by which Jesus and His companions reached the place, and of the return therefrom, are conformable to the assumption that Bethsaida Julias in Perea and not Bethsaida in Galilee, was the town to which the "desert place" referred to was an outlying district.

**5. The Earlier and the Later Evening** – Matthew specifies two evenings of the day on which the five thousand were fed; thus "**when it was evening**" the disciples asked Jesus to send away the multitude; and later, after the miraculous feeding and after the disciples had left by boat, and after the crowds had departed, "when the evening was come" Jesus was alone on the mountain (Matt. 14:15, 23; compare Mark 6:35, 47). Trench *Notes on the Miracles*, (p. 217) says: "St. Matthew and St. Mark with him, makes two evenings to this day – one which had already commenced before the preparations for the feeding of the multitude had begun (verse 15), the other now, when the disciples had entered into the ship and set forth on their voyage (verse 23). And this was an ordinary way of speaking among the Jews, the first evening being very much our afternoon ... the second evening being the twilight, or from six o'clock to twilight, on which absolute darkness followed." See Smith's *Dict.*, article "Chronology," from which the following excerpt is taken: "Between the two evenings' (margin of Exo. 12:6; Numb. 9:3; 28:4) is a natural division between the late afternoon when the sun is low, and the evening when his light has not wholly disappeared, the two evenings into which the natural evening would be cut by the commencement of the civil day if it began at sunset."

*...before sundown and after sundown*

**6. Watches of the Night** – During the greater part of Old Testament time, the people of Israel divided the night into three watches, each of four hours, such a period being that of individual sentinel duty. Before the beginning of the Christian era, however, the Jews had adopted the Roman order of four night-watches, each lasting three hours. These were designated numerically, e.g. the fourth watch mentioned in the text (see Matt. 14:25), or as even, midnight, cock-crowing, and morning (see Mark 13:35). The fourth watch was the last of the three-hour periods between sunset and sunrise, or between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. and therefore extended from 3 to 6 o'clock in the morning.

6 pm to 9 pm - 9 to Midnight - 12 am to 3 am - 3 am to 6 am

**7. The Hem of the Garment**— The faith of those who believed that if they could but touch the border of the Lord's garment they would be healed, is in line with that of the woman who was healed of her long-standing malady by so touching His robe (see Matt. 9:21; Mark 5:27, 28; Luke 8:44). The Jews regarded the border or hem of their outer robes as of particular importance, because of the requirement made of Israel in earlier days (Numb. 15:38, 39) that the border be fringed and supplied with a band of blue, as a reminder to them of their obligations as the covenant people. The desire to touch the hem of Christ's robe may have been associated with this thought of sanctity attaching to the hem or border.

**8. Traditions Concerning Manna**— The supplying of manna to the Israelites incident to the exodus and the long travel in the wilderness, was rightly regarded as a work of surpassing wonder (Exo. 16:14-36; Numb. 11:7-9; Deut. 8:3, 16; Josh. 5:12; Psa. 78:24, 25). Many traditions, some of them perniciously erroneous, gathered about the incident, and were transmitted with invented additions from generation to generation. In the time of Christ the rabbinical teaching was that the manna on which the fathers had fed was literally the food of the angels, sent down from heaven; and that it was of diverse taste and flavor to suit all ages, conditions, or desires; to one it tasted like honey, to another as bread, etc.; but in all Gentile mouths it was bitter. Moreover it was said that the Messiah would give an unfailing supply of manna to Israel when He came amongst them. These erroneous conceptions in part explain the demand of those who had been fed on barley loaves and fishes, for a sign that would surpass the giving of manna in the olden days, as evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus.

**9. Faith a Gift of God**— "Though within the reach of all who diligently strive to gain it, faith is nevertheless a divine gift, and can be obtained only from God (Matt. 16:17; John 6:44, 65; Eph. 2:8; 1 Cor. 12:9; Rom. 12:3; Moroni 10:11). As is fitting for so priceless a pearl, it is given to those only who show by their sincerity that they are worthy of it, and who give promise of abiding by its dictates. Although faith is called the first principle of the Gospel of Christ, though it be in fact the foundation of all religion, yet even faith is preceded by sincerity of disposition and humility of soul, whereby the word of God may make an impression upon the heart (Rom. 10:17). No compulsion is used in bringing men to a knowledge of God; yet, as fast as we open our hearts to the influences of righteousness, the faith that leads to life eternal will be given us of our Father." — *Articles of Faith*, v:16.

**10. Spiritual Symbolism of Eating**— "The idea of eating, as a metaphor for receiving spiritual benefit, was familiar to Christ's hearers, and was as readily understood as our expressions — 'devouring a book,' or 'drinking in' instruction. In Isaiah 3:1, the words 'the whole stay of bread,' were explained by the rabbis as referring to their own

teaching, and they laid it down as a rule, that wherever, in Ecclesiastes, allusion was made to food or drink, it meant study of the law, and the practice of good works. It was a saying among them — 'In the time of the Messiah the Israelites will be fed by Him.' Nothing was more common in the schools and synagogues than the phrases of eating and drinking, in a metaphorical sense. 'Messiah is not likely to come to Israel,' said Hillel, 'for they have already eaten Him' — that is, greedily received His words — 'in the days of Hezekiah.' A current conventionalism in the synagogues was that the just would 'eat the Shekinah.' It was peculiar to the Jews to be taught in such metaphorical language. Their rabbis never spoke in plain words, and it is expressly said that Jesus submitted to the popular taste, for 'without a parable spake he not unto them' (Mark 4:34)." — Geikie, *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. i, p. 184.

**11. The Crucial Nature of the Discourse** — Commenting on the effect of our Lord's discourse (John 6:26-71), Edersheim (vol. ii, p. 36) says: "Here then we are at the parting of the two ways; and just because it was the hour of decision, did Christ so clearly set forth the highest truths concerning Himself, in opposition to the views which the multitude entertained about the Messiah. The result was yet another and a sorer defection. Upon this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Nay, the searching trial reached even unto the hearts of the Twelve. Would they also go away? It was an anticipation of Gethsemane — its first experience. But one thing kept them true. It was the experience of the past. This was the basis of their present faith and allegiance. They could not go back to their old past; they must cleave to Him. So Peter spake it in name of them all: Lord, to whom shall we go? Words of eternal life hast thou! Nay, and more than this, as the result of what they had learned: And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God. It is thus, also, that many of us, whose thoughts may have been sorely tossed, and whose foundations terribly assailed, may have found our first resting-place in the assured, unassailable spiritual experience of the past. Whither can we go for words of eternal life, if not to Christ? If He fails us, then all hope of the eternal is gone. But He has the words of eternal life — and we believed when they first came to us; nay, we know that He is the Holy One of God. And this conveys all that faith needs for further learning. The rest will He show when He is transfigured in our sight. But of these Twelve Christ knew one to be a devil — like that angel, fallen from highest height to lowest depth. The apostasy of Judas had already commenced in his heart. And the greater the popular expectancy and disappointment had been, the greater the reaction and the enmity that followed. The hour of decision was past, and the hand on the dial pointed to the hour of His death."

## FOOTNOTES

[694] Matt. 13:53-58; Mark 6:1-6.

[695] Luke 4:28-30. See chapter 13 herein.

[696] See chapter 18 herein.

[697] Note 2, See chapter 18 herein.

[698] Note 1, end of chapter.

[699] Matt. 10:5-42; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-5.  
[700] Mark 3:14.  
[701] Matt. 10:5-42; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6.  
[702] Note 2, end of chapter.  
[703] Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15. See chapter 37 herein.  
[704] Note 3, end of chapter.  
[705] Matt. 10:18-20; compare Mark 13:9; Luke 12:10-12.  
[706] Mark 6:7.  
[707] John 5; See chapter 15 herein.  
[708] Matt. 11:2-19; Luke 7:18-34; See chapter 18 herein.  
[709] See chapter 18 herein.  
[710] Mark 6:12, 13; Luke 9:10. Note similar testimony of the Seventy, who were sent out at a later time, and who returned rejoicing in the power that had been manifest in their ministry; Luke 10:17.  
[711] Note, end of chapter.  
[712] John 6:5-14; compare Matt. 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:12-17.  
[713] John 6:4; Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:39.  
[714] Note 5, end of chapter.  
[715] Matt. 14:22-33; compare Mark 6:45-52; John 6:15-21.  
[716] See chapter 20 herein.  
[717] Note 6, end of chapter.  
[718] That is to say, "since" or "inasmuch".  
[719] Compare Peter's impetuous leap into the sea to reach the resurrected Lord on the shore, John 21:7.  
[720] Mark 6:52.  
[721] Note that this is the first occurrence of this title in the Synoptic Gospels, as applied to Jesus by mortals; compare an earlier instance of its application by Nathanael, John 1:49.  
[722] "Articles of Faith," v:11-13 – "Faith a Principle of Power."  
[723] Josephus, Wars. iii, 10:7, 8.  
[724] Mark 6:53-56; compare Matt. 14:34-36. Note 7, end of chapter.  
[725] John 6:22-27.  
[726] Note 8, end of chapter.  
[727] John 6:32-59.  
[728] John 4:13-15; See chapter 13 herein.  
[729] Isa. 54:13; Jer. 31:34; Micah 4:2; compare Heb. 8:10; 10:16.  
[730] Note 9, end of chapter.  
[731] Note 10, end of chapter.  
[732] Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19, 20. See chapter 33 herein.  
[733] John 6:59-71.  
[734] Luke 3:16, 17; Matt. 3:11, 12.  
[735] Compare this confession (John 6:68, 69) with Peter's later testimony (Matt. 16:16). Note 11, end of chapter.

# 22

## A PERIOD OF DARKENING OPPOSITION

Our Lord's last recorded discourse in the synagog at Capernaum, which followed close upon the miracle of feeding the five thousand and that of walking upon the water, marked the beginning of another epoch in the development of His life's work. It was the season of an approaching Passover festival;[736] and at the next succeeding Passover, one year later, as shall be shown, Jesus would be betrayed to His death. At the time of which we now speak, therefore, He was entering upon the last year of His ministry in the flesh. But the significance of the event is other and greater than that of a chronological datum-plane. The circumstance marked the first stage of a turn in the tide of popular regard toward Jesus, which theretofore had been increasing, and which now began to ebb. True, He had been repeatedly criticized and openly assailed by complaining Jews on many earlier occasions; but these crafty and even venomous critics were mostly of the ruling classes; the common people had heard Him gladly, and indeed many of them continued so to do;[737] nevertheless His popularity, in Galilee at least, had begun to wane. The last year of His earthly ministration was inaugurated by a sifting of the people who professed to believe His word, and this process of test, trial, and separation, was to continue to the end.

We are without information as to Jesus having attended this Passover feast; and it is reasonable to infer that in view of the increasing hostility on the part of the rulers, He refrained from going to Jerusalem on the occasion. Conjecture as to whether any of the Twelve went up to the festival is profitless; we are not told. Certain it is that immediately after this time, the detectives and spies, who had been sent from Jerusalem into Galilee to watch Jesus, became more active than ever in their critical espionage. They dogged His footsteps, noted every act, and every instance of omission of traditional or customary observance, and were constantly on the alert to make Him out an offender.

*...like paparazzi*

### CEREMONIAL WASHINGS, "AND MANY SUCH LIKE THINGS" [738]

Shortly after the Passover to which allusion has been made, and probably in accordance with a plan decided upon by the Jewish rulers, Jesus was visited by a delegation of Pharisees and scribes who had come from Jerusalem, and who made protest against the disregard of traditional requirements by His followers. It appears that the disciples, and almost certainly the Master Himself, had so far transgressed "the tradition of the elders" as to omit the ceremonial washing of hands before eating; the Pharisaic critics found

fault, and came demanding explanation, and justification if such were possible. Mark tells us that the disciples were charged with having eaten with "defiled", or, as the marginal reading gives it, with "common" hands; and he interpolates the following concise and lucid note concerning the custom which the disciples were said to have ignored: **"For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables."**[739] It should be borne in mind that the offense charged against the disciples was that of ceremonial uncleanness, not physical uncleanliness or disregard of sanitary propriety; they were said to have eaten with common or defiled hands, not specifically with dirty fingers. In all the externals of their man-made religionism, the Jews were insistent on scrupulous exactitude; every possibility of ceremonial defilement was to be carefully guarded against, and the effects thereof had to be counteracted by prescribed washings.[740]

To the question: "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread", Jesus gave no direct reply; but asked as a rejoinder: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" To the Pharisaic mind this must have been a very sharp rebuke; for rabbinism held that rigorous compliance with the traditions of the elders was more important than observance of the law itself; and Jesus in His counter question put their cherished traditions as in direct conflict with the commandment of God. Adding to their discomfiture, He cited the prophecy of Isaiah, and applied to them whom He designated hypocrites, the prophet's words: "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."[741] With deserved severity Jesus carried the lesson home to their consciences, declaring that they had laid aside the commandments of God in order that they might follow the traditions of men.

*When Jesus said, "Why do ye ALSO transgress the commandments of God by your traditions?" he put the the Pharisees on the spot, and even more interesting, he used the word, "also", which inferred even more transgression on their part.*

This accusing affirmation was followed by the citing of an undeniable instance: Moses had voiced the direct commandment of God in saying: **"Honour thy father and thy mother,"** and had proclaimed the ordained penalty in extreme cases of unfilial conduct thus: **"Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die";**[742] but this law, though given of God direct to Israel, had been so completely superseded that any ungrateful and wicked son could find ready means, which their traditions had made lawful, of escaping all filial obligations, even though his parents were destitute. If a needy father or mother craved help of a son, he had but to say – What you ask of me is Corban – or in other words, an intended gift to God; and he was held to be legally exempt from all

requirements to contribute of that substance to the support of his parents.[743] Other obligations could be similarly evaded. To declare that any article of property real or personal, or any part or proportion of one's possessions was "corban," was generally understood as an averment that the property so characterized was dedicated to the temple, or at least was intended to be devoted to ecclesiastical purposes, and would eventually be turned over to the officials, though the donor might continue to hold possession during a specified period, extending even to the end of his life. Property was often declared to be "corban" for other purposes than dedication to ecclesiastical use. The result of such established though utterly unlawful and pernicious traditions was, as Jesus emphatically stated to the Pharisees and scribes, to make the word of God of none effect, and, He added, "Many such like things do ye."

Turning from His titled visitors, He called the people together and proclaimed unto them the truth, as follows: "**Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.**" This was directly in conflict with rabbinical precept and practice; the Pharisees were offended, for they had said that to eat with hands that had not been ritualistically cleansed was to defile the food touched, and in turn to become yet more defiled from the food thus rendered unclean.

The apostles were not sure that they understood the Master's lesson; though couched in plain, non-figurative language, it was to some of them very like a parable, and Peter asked an exposition. The Lord explained that the food one eats is but temporarily part of his body; having served its purpose of nourishing the tissues and supplying energy to the organism, it is eliminated; therefore the food that enters the body through the mouth is of small and transient importance compared with the utterances that issue from the mouth, for these, if evil, are truly defiling. As Jesus set forth: "**Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.**"[744]

Some of the disciples asked Jesus whether He knew that the Pharisees had taken offense at His saying; His answer was a further denunciation of Pharisaism: "**Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.**" There could be no compromise between His doctrine of the kingdom and the corrupt Judaism of the time. The rulers were plotting against His life; if their emissaries chose to take offense at His words, let them be offended and stand the consequences; but blessed would they be if they were not offended because of Him.[745] He had no conciliatory measures to offer those whose inability to understand His meaning was the result of willful obstinacy, or darkness of mind produced by persistence in sin.

## WITHIN THE BORDERS OF TYRE AND SIDON [746]

Unable to find in Galilee rest, seclusion, or adequate opportunity of instructing the Twelve as He desired to do, Jesus departed with them northward, and journeyed into the coasts or borders of Phenicia, a district commonly known by the names of its prominent cities, Tyre and Sidon. In one of the little towns near the border, the party took lodgings; but the attempt to secure privacy was futile, for the Master's presence "could not be hid." His fame had preceded Him beyond the boundaries of the land of Israel. On earlier occasions, people from the region of Tyre and Sidon had been among His listeners, and some of them had been blessed by His healing mercies.[747]

A woman, hearing of His presence within her own land, came asking a boon. Mark tells us she was a Greek, or more literally a Gentile[748] who spoke Greek, and by nationality a Syro-Phenician; Matthew says she was "a **woman of Canaan**"; these statements are in harmony, since the Phenicians were of Canaanite descent. The Gospel-historians make clear the fact that this woman was of pagan or heathen birth; and we know that among the peoples so classed the Canaanites were held in particular disrepute by the Jews. The woman cried aloud to Jesus, saying: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Her words expressed at once faith in the Lord's power, and a fullness of mother-love, for she implored as though she were the afflicted sufferer. The fact that she addressed Jesus as Son of David demonstrates her belief that He was the Messiah of Israel. At first Jesus refrained from answering her. Undeterred, she pleaded the more, until the disciples besought the Lord saying: "Send her away; for she crieth after us." Their intervention was probably an intercession in her behalf; she could be quieted by the granting of her request; as it was, she was making an undesirable scene, probably on the street, and the Twelve knew well that their Master sought quietude. To them Jesus said: "**I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,**" and the remark must have reminded them of the restriction under which they had been sent out.[749]

The woman, with importunate desire came near, possibly entering the house; she fell at the Lord's feet and worshiped Him, pleading pitifully, "Lord, help me." To her Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." The words, harsh as they may sound to us, were understood by her in the spirit of the Lord's intent. The original term here translated "dogs" connoted, as the narrative shows, not the vagrant and despised curs elsewhere spoken of in the Bible as typical of a degraded state, or of positive badness,[750] but literally the "little dogs" or domestic pets, such as were allowed in the house and under the table. Certainly the woman took no offense at the comparison, and found therein no objectionable epithet. Instantly she adopted the analogy, and applied it in combined argument and supplication,[751] "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table;" or, in the words of Mark's version: "Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

Her prayer was immediately granted; for Jesus said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." Mark emphasizes the special recognition of her final plea, and adds: "**And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.**" The woman's commendable persistency was based on the faith that overcomes apparent obstacles and endures even under discouragement. Her case reminds one of the lesson taught by the Lord on another occasion through the story of the importunate widow.[752]

Many have queried as to why Jesus delayed the blessing. We may not be able to fathom His purposes; but we see that, by the course He adopted, the woman's faith was demonstrated and the disciples were instructed. Jesus impressed upon her that she was not of the chosen people, to whom He had been sent; but His words prefigured the giving of the gospel to all, both Jew and Gentile: "**Let the children first be filled**" He had said. The resurrected Christ was to be made known to every nation;[753] but His personal ministry as a mortal, as also that of the apostles while He was with them in the flesh, was directed to the house of Israel.[754]

## IN THE COASTS OF DECAPOLIS [755]

We are not told how long Jesus and the Twelve tarried in the land of Tyre and Sidon, nor which portions of the district they traversed. They went thence into the region adjoining the sea of Galilee on the east, "**through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.**"[756] Though still among semi-pagan peoples, our Lord was greeted by great crowds, amongst whom were many lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and otherwise afflicted; and them He healed. Great was the astonishment of these aliens, "when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel."

Among the many who were healed was one of whom special mention is made. He was deaf and defective in speech. The people asked the Lord to lay His hands upon the man; but Jesus led him away from the multitude, put His fingers in the man's ears, spat, and touched the man's tongue; then looking upward in prayer, and sighing the while, He uttered a word of command in Aramaic, "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain." The manner of effecting this cure was different again from the usual mode of our Lord's healing ministrations. It may be that by the finger-touch to the closed ears and to the bound tongue, the man's faith was strengthened and his confidence in the Master's power increased. The people were forbidden to tell abroad what they had witnessed; but the more they were charged the more they published the news. Their conclusion as to Jesus and His works was: "**He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.**"

## ANOTHER MEAL IN THE DESERT; OVER FOUR THOUSAND FED [757]

For three days the glad crowds remained with Jesus and the apostles. Camping out at that season and in that region entailed no great hardship incident to exposure. Their supply of food, however, had become exhausted; and many of them were far from home. Jesus had compassion upon the people, and was loath to send them away fasting, lest they would faint by the way. When He spoke to the disciples on the matter they intimated the impossibility of feeding so great a number, for the entire stock of food at hand comprised but seven loaves and a few little fishes. Had they forgotten the former occasion on which a greater multitude had been fed and filled with but five loaves and two small fishes? Rather let us believe that the disciples remembered well, yet deemed it beyond their duty or privilege to suggest a repetition of the miracle. But the Master commanded; and the people seated themselves on the ground. Blessing and dividing the small provision as before, He gave to the disciples and they distributed to the multitude. Four thousand men, beside women and children, were abundantly fed; and of the broken but uneaten food there remained enough to fill seven baskets. With no semblance of the turbulent enthusiasm that had followed the feeding of the five thousand, this multitude dispersed quietly and returned to their homes, grateful and doubly blessed.

## AGAIN BESET BY SIGN-SEEKERS [758]

Jesus and the apostles returned by boat to the western shore of the lake, and landed near Magdala and Dalmanutha. These towns are understood to have been so close together as to virtually make the latter a suburb of the other. Here the party was met by the ever-vigilant Pharisees, who on this occasion were accompanied by their usually unfriendly rivals, the Sadducees. That the two parties had temporarily laid aside their mutual differences, and had combined their forces in the common cause of opposition to Christ, is a demonstration of the determined purpose of the ecclesiastical authorities to find occasion against Him, and, if possible, destroy Him. Their immediate object was to further alienate the common people, and to counteract the influence of His former teachings with the masses. They set anew the old-time snare of demanding from Him a supernatural sign of His Messiahship, though thrice already had they or others of their kind so attempted to entrap Him, and thrice had they been foiled.[759] Before them, Satan in person had similarly tried and failed.[760] To their present impertinent and impious demand He gave a brief and definite refusal coupled with an exposure of their hypocrisy. This was His reply: **"When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed."**[761]

## THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES AND OF THE SADDUCEES [762]

Again with the Twelve upon the water, since on the Galilean coast neither peace nor opportunity for effective teaching was found, Jesus directed the vessel's course toward the north-easterly shore. When well out from land, He said to His companions: "**Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees,**" and, as Mark adds, "**and of the leaven of Herod.**" In their hasty departure the disciples had forgotten to take a supply of food; they had with them but a single loaf. They construed His words respecting leaven as a reference to bread, and possibly as a reproof for their neglect. Jesus chided them as of little faith for thinking then of material bread, and refreshed their recollection of the miracles by which the multitudes had been fed, so that their lack of loaves would not further trouble them. Finally they were made to understand that the Master's warning was directed against the false doctrines of the Pharisees and those of the Sadducees, and against the political aspirations of the scheming Herodians.[763]

The party left the boat near the site of the first miraculous feeding of the multitude, and made their way to Bethsaida Julias. A blind man was brought, and Jesus was asked to touch him. He took the sightless one by the hand, led him outside the town, applied saliva to his eyes, laid hands upon him in a ministration, and asked him if he could see. The man answered that he saw dimly, but was unable to distinguish men from trees. Applying His hands to the man's eyes, Jesus told him to look up; the man did so and saw clearly. Bidding him not to enter the town, nor to tell of his deliverance from blindness to any in the place, the Lord sent him away rejoicing. This miracle presents the unique feature of Jesus healing a person by stages; the result of the first ministration was but a partial recovery. No explanation of the exceptional circumstance is given.

## "THOU ART THE CHRIST" [764]

Accompanied by the Twelve, Jesus continued His way northward to the neighborhood or "coasts" of Cæsarea Philippi, an inland city situated near the eastern and principal source of the Jordan, and near the foot of Mount Hermon.[765] The journey afforded opportunity for special and confidential instruction to the apostles. Of them Jesus asked: "**Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?**" In reply they reported the rumors and popular fancies that had come to their notice. Some people, sharing the superstitious fears of the conscience-stricken Herod Antipas, said that Jesus was John the Baptist returned to life, though such a belief could not have been entertained seriously by many, as John and Jesus were known to have been contemporaries; others said He was Elias, or more exactly, Elijah; still others suggested He was Jeremiah or some other one of the ancient prophets of Israel. It is significant that among all the conceptions of the people as to the identity of Jesus there was no intimation of belief that He was the Messiah. Neither by word nor deed had He measured up to the popular and traditional standard of the expected Deliverer and King of Israel. Fleeting

manifestations of evanescent hope that He might prove to be the looked-for Prophet, like unto Moses, had not been lacking; but all such incipient conceptions had been neutralized by the hostile activity of the Pharisees and their kind. To them it was a matter of supreme though evil determination to maintain in the minds of the people the thought of a yet future, not a present, Messiah.

With deep solemnity, and as a soul-searching test for which the Twelve had been in unconscious preparation through many months of close and privileged companionship with their Lord, Jesus asked of them: "**But whom say ye that I am?**" Answering for all, but more particularly testifying as to his own conviction, Peter, with all the fervor of his soul, voiced the great confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was no avowal of mere belief, no expression of a result at which he had arrived by mental process, no solution of a problem laboriously worked out, no verdict based on the weighing of evidence; he spoke in the sure knowledge that knows no question and from which doubt and reservation are as far removed as is the sky from the ground.

**"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."** Peter's knowledge, which was also that of his brethren, was of a kind apart from all that man may find out for himself; it was a divine bestowal, in comparison with which human wisdom is foolishness and the treasure of earth but dross, Addressing Himself further to the first of the apostles, Jesus continued: "**And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.**"

Through direct revelation from God, Peter knew that Jesus was the Christ; and upon revelation, as a rock of secure foundation, the Church of Christ was to be built.[766] Though torrents should fall, floods roll, winds rage, and all beat together upon that structure, it would not, could not, fall, for it was founded upon a rock;[767] and even the powers of hell would be impotent to prevail against it. By revelation alone could or can the Church of Jesus Christ be builded and maintained; and revelation of necessity implies revelators, through whom the will of God may be made known respecting His Church. As a gift from God comes the testimony of Jesus into the heart of man. This principle was comprised in the Master's teachings at Capernaum, that none could come to Him save such as the Father would bring.[768] The Lord's promise, that unto Peter He would give "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," embodies the principle of divine authority in the Holy Priesthood, and of the commission of presidency. Allusion to keys as symbolical of power and authority is not uncommon in Jewish literature, as was well understood in that period and is generally current today.[769] So also the analogies of binding and loosing as indicative of official acts were then usual, as they are now, particularly in connection with judicial functions. Peter's presidency among the apostles

was abundantly manifest and generally recognized after the close of our Lord's mortal life. Thus, it was he who spoke in behalf of the Eleven, in the council meeting at which a successor to the traitor Iscariot was chosen; he was the spokesman of his brethren on the occasion of the Pentecostal conversion; it was he who opened the doors of the Church to the Gentiles;[770] and his office of leadership is apparent throughout the apostolic period.

The confession by which the apostles avowed their acceptance of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, was evidence of their actual possession of the spirit of the Holy Apostleship, by which they were made particular witnesses of their Lord. The time for a general proclamation of their testimony had not arrived, however; nor did it come until after Christ had emerged from the tomb a resurrected, immortalized Personage. For the time being they were charged "that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." Proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah, particularly if made by the apostles who were publicly known as His most intimate disciples and associates, or open assumption of the Messianic title by Himself, would have aggravated the hostility of the rulers, which had already become a grave interference if not an actual menace to the Savior's ministry; and seditious uprisings against the political government of Rome might easily have resulted. A yet deeper reason for the secrecy enjoined upon the Twelve appears in the fact that the Jewish nation was not prepared to accept their Lord; and to ignore Him through lack of certain knowledge involved a lesser degree of culpability than would have attached to an unpalliated rejection. The particular mission of the apostles at a time then future was to proclaim to all nations Jesus, the crucified and resurrected Christ.

From the time of Peter's confession however, Jesus instructed the Twelve more plainly and with greater intimacy concerning the future developments of His mission, and particularly as touching His appointed death. On earlier occasions He had referred in their hearing to the cross, and to His approaching death, burial and ascension; but the mention in each case was in a measure figurative, and they had apprehended but imperfectly if at all. Now, however, He began to show, and often afterward made plain unto them, "how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

Peter was shocked at this unqualified declaration, and, yielding to impulse, remonstrated with Jesus, or, as two of the evangelists state, "began to rebuke him," even going so far as to say: "**This shall not be unto thee.**"[771] The Lord turned upon him with this sharp reproof: "**Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.**" Peter's words constituted an appeal to the human element in Christ's nature; and the sensitive feelings of Jesus were wounded by this suggestion of unfaithfulness to His trust, coming from the man whom He had so signally honored but a few moments before. Peter saw mainly as men see, understanding but imperfectly the deeper purposes of God. Though

deserved, the rebuke he received was severe. The adjuration, "Get thee behind me, Satan," was identical with that used against the arch-tempter himself, who had sought to beguile Jesus from the path upon which He had entered,[772] and the provocation in the two instances was in some respects similar – the temptation to evade sacrifice and suffering, though such was the world's ransom, and to follow a more comfortable way.[773] The forceful words of Jesus show the deep emotion that Peter's ill-considered attempt to counsel if not to tempt his Lord had evoked.

Beside the Twelve, who were immediately about the Lord's person, others were nearby; it appears that even in those remote parts, far removed from the borders of Galilee – the habitat of a heathen population, with whom, however, many Jews were intermixed – the people gathered around the Master. These He now called together, and to them and the disciples said: "**If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.**" Here the frightful figure of the cross was again made prominent. There was left no shadow of excuse for the thought that devotion to Christ would not mean denial and privation. He who would save his life at the cost of duty, as Peter had just suggested that Christ should do, would surely lose it in a sense worse than that of physical death; whereas he who stood willing to lose all, even life itself, should find the life that is eternal.

As evincing the soundness of His teachings, Jesus uttered what has since become an inspiring aphorism of life: "**For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**" Whosoever is ashamed of Christ because of His lowly estate, or through offense at His teachings, shall yet find that the Son of Man, when He comes in the glory of the Father, with attending cohorts of angels, will be ashamed of that man. The record of this memorable day in the Savior's life closes with His blessed promise: "**Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.**"[774]

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 22

**1. Passover Celebrations Comprised within the Period of Our Lord's Public Ministry** – The dates on which specific acts occurred in the ministry of Jesus are difficult if not impossible to fix, except in few instances; and as heretofore stated and reiterated, even the order of events is often found to be uncertain. It will be remembered that Jesus was in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover soon after His baptism, and that on the visit referred to He forcibly cleared the temple courts of traffickers and their property. This is known as the *first* Passover during the public life of Jesus. If the unnamed "feast of the Jews" referred to by John (5:1) was a Passover, as many Bible students hold, it marked the close of the year following the cleansing the temple; it is commonly spoken of and written about as the *second* Passover in the course of our

Lord's ministry. Then the Passover near which Jesus fed the five thousand (John 6:4) would be the *third*, and would mark the expiration of two years and a fraction since the baptism of Jesus; it certainly marks the beginning of the last year of the Savior's life on earth.

*Just before the first Passover – the time of Christ's baptism – the start of His ministry – Jesus clears the Temple*

*The second Passover – Possible, Feast of the Jews – one year into His ministry*

*The third Passover – Jesus feeds the five thousand – two years into His ministry*

*The last Passover – The Saviour is Crucified – His earthly ministry is concluded*

**2. Ceremonial Ablutions**—The numerous washings required by Jewish custom in the time of Christ were admittedly incident to rabbinism and "the tradition of the elders" and not in compliance with the Mosaic law. Under certain conditions, successive washings were prescribed, in connection with which we find mention of "first," "second" and "other" waters, the "second water" being necessary to wash away the "first water," which had become defiled by contact with the "common" hands; and so further with the later waters. Sometimes the hands had to be dipped or immersed; at other times they were to be cleansed by pouring, it being necessary that the water be allowed to run to the wrist or the elbow according to the degree of supposed defilement; then again, as the disciples of Rabbi Shammai held, only the finger tips, or the fingers up to the knuckles, needed to be wetted under particular circumstances. Rules for the cleansing of vessels and furniture were detailed and exacting; distinct methods applied respectively to vessels of clay, wood, and metal. Fear of unwittingly defiling the hands led to many extreme precautions. It being known that the Roll of the Law, the Roll of the Prophets, and other scriptures, when laid away were sometimes touched, scratched, or even gnawed by mice, there was issued a rabbinical decree, that the Holy Scriptures, or any part thereof comprising as many as eighty-five letters (the shortest section in the law having just that number), defiled the hands by mere contact. Thus the hands had to be ceremonially cleansed after touching a copy of the scriptures, or even a written passage therefrom.

Emancipation from these and "many such like things" must have been relief indeed. Escape from this thrallldom Jesus freely offered, saying: "**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.**" (Matt. 11:28-30.)

**3. "Corban," a Gift**—The law of Moses prescribed rules relating to vows (Lev. 27; Numb. 30). "Upon these rules," says the writer in Smith's *Bible Dict.*, "the traditionalists

enlarged, and laid down that a man might interdict himself by vow, not only from using for himself, but from giving to another or receiving from him, some particular object whether of food or any other kind whatsoever. The thing thus interdicted was considered as corban. A person might thus exempt himself from any inconvenient obligation under plea of corban. Our Lord denounced practices of this sort (Matt. 15:5; Mark 7:11), as annulling the spirit of the law."

The revised version, Matt. 15:5 is made to read "**But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God; he shall not honor his father (or, his mother).**" The following account of this pernicious custom appears in the *Commentary on The Holy Bible* edited by Dummelow, "'Corban,' meaning originally a sacrifice or a gift to God, was used in New Testament times as a mere word of vowing, without implying that the thing vowed would actually be offered or given to God. Thus a man would say 'Corban to me is wine for such a time,' meaning that he took a vow to abstain from wine. Or a man would say to a friend 'Corban to me for such a time is whatsoever I might be profited by thee,' meaning that for such a time he vowed that he would receive neither hospitality nor any other benefit from his friend. Similarly, if a son said to his father or mother, 'Corban is whatsoever thou mightest have profited by me' he took a vow not to assist his father or mother in any way, however much they might require it. A vow of this kind was held by the scribes to excuse a man from the duty of supporting his parents, and thus by their tradition they made void the word of God."

**4. The "Dogs" that Eat of the Crumbs** – The woman's fervid rejoinder, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table," (Matt. 15:27), is thus commented upon and paraphrased by Trench (*Notes on the Miracles*, p. 271): "The rendering of her answer in our translation is not, however, altogether satisfactory. For, indeed, she accepts the Lord's declaration, not immediately to make exception against the conclusion which He draws from it, but to show how in that very declaration is involved the granting of her petition. 'Saidest thou dogs? It is well; I accept the title and the place; for the dogs have a portion of the meal, – not the first, not the children's portion, but a portion still, – the crumbs which fall from the master's table. In this very putting of the case, Thou bringest us heathen, Thou bringest me, within the circle of the blessings which God, the Great Householder, is ever dispensing to His family. We also belong to His household, though we occupy but the lowest place therein."

The Dummelow *Commentary*, on Matt. 15:26, reads in part as follows: "The rabbis often spoke of the Gentiles as dogs, e.g. 'He who eats with an idolater is like one who eats with a dog.' ... 'The nations of the world are compared to dogs.' 'The holy convocation belongs to you, not to the dogs.' Yet Jesus in adopting the contemptuous expression slightly softens it. He says not 'dogs,' but 'little dogs,' i.e. household, favorite, dogs; and the woman cleverly catches at the expression, arguing that if the Gentiles are household dogs, then it is only right that they should be fed with the crumbs that fall from their

masters' table." Edersheim, referring to the original text, says: "The term means 'little dogs,' or 'house dogs.'"

**5. Decapolis** – The name means "the ten cities," and was applied to a region of indefinite boundaries lying mostly on the east of Jordan and southerly from the sea of Galilee. Scythopolis, which Josephus (*Wars of the Jews*, iii, 9:7) refers to as the largest of the ten cities, was on the west side of the river. There is lack of agreement among historians as to the cities comprised under the name. Biblical mention (Matt. 4:25; Mark 5:20; 7:31) implies a general region rather than a definite area.

**6. The Coasts of Cæsarea Philippi** – The term "coast" as it appears in the Bible (authorized, or King James version), is used to connote boundary, limit, or border, and not distinctively a seashore. (For examples see Exo. 10:4, 14, 19; Josh. 15:1, 4; Judg. 11:20; Matt. 2:16, etc.) It is applied therefore to inland areas, and frequently occurs as indicating a vicinity or neighborhood.

Cæsarea Philippi, a town located, as stated in the text, near Mount Hermon at the source of the Jordan, had been enlarged and beautified by Philip the tetrarch, and by him was named Cæsarea in honor of the Roman emperor. It was called Cæsarea Philippi to distinguish it from the already existing Cæsarea, which was situated on the Mediterranean shore of Samaria, and which in later literature came to be known as Cæsarea Palestina. Cæsarea Philippi is believed to be identical with the ancient Baal Gad (Josh. 11:17) and Baal Hermon (Judg. 3:3). It was known as a place of idolatrous worship, and while under Greek sovereignty was called Paneas in recognition of the mythological deity Pan. See Josephus, *Ant.* xviii, 2:1; this designation persists in the present Arabic name of the place, Banias.

**7. Simon Peter and the "Rock" of Revelation** – Simon the son of Jonas, on the occasion of his first recorded interview with Jesus had received from the Lord's lips the distinguishing name-title "Peter," or in the Aramaic tongue "Cephas," the English equivalent of which is "a rock" or "a stone" (John 1:42; see also chapter 11 herein). The name was confirmed upon the apostle on the occasion now under consideration (Matt. 16:18). Jesus said to him "thou art Peter," adding, "and upon this rock I will build my church." In the course of the general apostasy subsequent to the ancient apostolic ministry, the Bishop of Rome laid claim to supreme authority as the alleged lineal successor to Peter; and an erroneous doctrine gained currency to the effect that Peter was the "rock" upon which the Church of Christ was founded. Detailed consideration of this inconsistent and infamous claim cannot be undertaken here; it is sufficient to say that a church founded or dependent upon Peter or any other man would be Peter's or the other man's church, and not the Church of Jesus Christ. (See *The Great Apostasy*, chap 9; also B. of M., 3 Nephi 27:1-8; also chapter 40 herein). That upon Peter rested the responsibility of presidency in the ministry, after the ascension of the resurrected Christ, is not questioned; but that he was, even typically, the foundation upon which

the Church was built, is at once unscriptural and untrue. The Church of Jesus Christ must authoritatively bear His name, and be guided by revelation, direct and continuous, as the conditions of its building require. Revelation from God to His servants invested with the Holy Priesthood through authorized ordination as was Peter, is the impregnable "rock" upon which the Church is built. (See *Articles of Faith*, xvi, – "Revelation.")

**8. Christ's Rebuke to Peter** – In addressing Peter as "Satan," Jesus was obviously using a forceful figure of speech, and not a literal designation; for Satan is a distinct personage, Lucifer, that fallen, unembodied son of the morning (see chapter 2); and certainly Peter was not he. In his remonstrance or "rebuke" addressed to Jesus, Peter was really counseling what Satan had before attempted to induce Christ to do, or tempting, as Satan himself had tempted. The command, "Get thee behind me, Satan," as directed to Peter, is rendered in English by some authorities "Get thee behind me, tempter." The essential meaning attached to both Hebrew and Greek originals for our word "Satan" is that of an adversary, or "one who places himself in another's way and thus opposes him." (Zenos.) The expression "Thou art an offense unto me" is admittedly a less literal translation than "Thou art a stumbling-block unto me." The man whom Jesus had addressed as Peter – "the rock," was now likened to a stone in the path, over which the unwary might stumble.

**9. Some to Live Until Christ Returns** – The Savior's declaration to the apostles and others in the neighborhood of Cæsarea Philippi, "**Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom,**" (Matt. 16:28; compare Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27), has occasioned great and diverse comment. The event referred to, that of the Son of Man coming in the glory of His Father attended by the angels, is yet future. At least a partial fulfillment of the prediction is presented in the prolongation of the life of John the apostle, who was there present, and who yet lives in the flesh according to his desire (John 21:20-24; see further B. of M., 3 Nephi 28:1-6; Doc. and Cov. Sec. 7).

**10. "Thou Art the Christ"** – Peter's solemn and soulful confession of Jesus as the Christ is worded differently by each of the three synoptists. To many the most expressive version is that of Luke: "The Christ of God." On earlier occasions, some or all of the Twelve had acknowledged Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, e.g. following the miracle of walking upon the sea (Matt. 14:33), and again, after the crucial sermon at Capernaum (John 6:69); but it is evident that Peter's upwelling and reverential confession in answer to the Lord's question "But whom say ye that I am?" had a significance, greater in assurance and more exalted in kind, than had any prior expression of his conception concerning his Lord. Yet even the conviction given through direct revelation (Matt. 16:17) did not at the time comprise a comprehensive knowledge of the Savior's mission. Indeed, a fullness of understanding and assurance came to the apostles after the Lord's resurrection (compare Romans 1:4). Nevertheless, Peter's testimony in the land of

Cæsarea Philippi evidences a very exalted attainment. At that stage of the Savior's ministry, the public proclamation of His divine status would have been as the casting of pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6); therefore the Lord instructed the apostles that at that time "they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ."

## FOOTNOTES

[736] John 6:4. Note 1, end of chapter.

[737] Mark 12:37.

[738] Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13.

[739] As the Oxford marginal note shows "beds" is a more literal rendering than "tables", the couches upon which the eaters reclined at table being meant. See chapter 18 herein.

[740] Note 2, end of chapter.

[741] Mark 7:6, 7; see also Matt. 15:7-9; Isa. 29:13; compare the words of the resurrected Christ to the prophet Joseph Smith, in the present dispensation, P. of G.P., Joseph Smith, 2:19.

[742] Exo. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Exo. 21:17; Lev. 20:9.

[743] Note 3, end of chapter.

[744] Matt. 15:10-20; compare Mark 7:14-23.

[745] Matt. 11:6; Luke 7:23; See chapter 18 herein.

[746] Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:21-30.

[747] Mark 3:8; Luke 6:17.

[748] See marginal reading in Oxford and Bagster Bibles; see also Note 2, See chapter 21 herein.

[749] Matt. 10:5, 6; see also chapter 21 herein.

[750] Deut. 23:18; 1 Sam. 17:43; 24:14; 2 Sam. 3:8; 16:9; Job 30:1; Matt. 7:6; Philip 3:2; Rev. 22:15.

[751] Note 4, end of chapter.

[752] Luke 18:1-8. See chapter 26 herein.

[753] Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15.

[754] Acts 3:25, 26; 13:46-48; Rom. 15:8.

[755] Mark 7:31-37; compare Matt. 15:29-31.

[756] Note 5, end of chapter.

[757] Matt. 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9.

[758] Matt. 15:29; 16:1-5; Mark 8:10-13.

[759] John 2:18; 6:30; Matt. 12:38.

[760] Matt. 4:6, 7; Luke 4:9-12.

[761] Matt. 16:2-4; compare 12:38-41; See chapter 12 herein.

[762] Matt. 16:6-12; Mark 8:14-21; compare Luke 12:1.

[763] See chapter 6 herein.

[764] Matt. 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21. Note 10, end of chapter.

[765] Note 6, end of chapter.

[766] Note 7, end of chapter.

[767] Compare Matt. 7:24, 25.

[768] John 6:46; compare verses 37, 39, 40.

[769] See Isa. 22:22; Luke 11:52; Rev. 1:18; 3:7; compare Doc. and Cov. 6:28; 7:7; 27:5, 6, 9; 28:7; 42:69; 84:26; etc.

[770] Acts 1:15-26; 2:14-40; chap. 10, compare with 15:7.

[771] Matt. 16:22, 23; Mark 8:32, 33.

[772] Luke 4:8.

[773] Note 8, end of chapter.

[774] Note 9, end of chapter.

# 23

## THE TRANSFIGURATION

Of the week following the events last considered, no record is found in the Gospels. We may safely assume that the time was devoted, in part at least, to the further instruction of the Twelve respecting the rapidly approaching consummation of the Savior's mission on earth, the awful circumstances of which the apostles were loath to believe possible. When the week had passed[775] Jesus took Peter, James, and John[776] and with them ascended a high mountain, where they would be reasonably safe from human intrusion.[777] There the three apostles witnessed a heavenly manifestation, which stands without parallel in history; in our Bible captions it is known as the Transfiguration of Christ.[778]

One purpose of the Lord's retirement was that of prayer, and a transcendent investiture of glory came upon Him as He prayed. The apostles had fallen asleep, but were awakened by the surpassing splendor of the scene, and gazed with reverent awe upon their glorified Lord. **"The fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening."** His garments, though made of earth-woven fabric, "became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them;" "and his face did shine as the sun." Thus was Jesus transfigured before the three privileged witnesses.

With Him were two other personages, who also were in a state of glorified radiance, and who conversed with the Lord. These, as the apostles learned by means not stated though probably as gathered from the conversation in progress, were Moses and Elias, or more literally to us, Elijah; and the subject of their conference with Christ was **"his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."** As the prophet visitants were about to depart, "Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said." Undoubtedly Peter and his fellow apostles were bewildered, "sore afraid" indeed; and this condition may explain the suggestion respecting the three tabernacles. **"He wist not what to say;"** yet, though his remark appears confused and obscure, it becomes somewhat plainer when we remember that, at the annual feast of Tabernacles, it was customary to erect a little bower, or booth of wattled boughs, for each individual worshiper, into which he might retire for devotion. So far as there was a purpose in Peter's proposition, it seems to have been that of delaying the departure of the visitants.

The sublime and awful solemnity of the occasion had not yet reached its climax. Even as Peter spake, "behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of

**the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."** It was Elohim,[779] the Eternal Father, who spake; and at the sound of that voice of supreme Majesty, the apostles fell prostrate. Jesus came and touched them, saying, "**Arise, and be not afraid.**" When they looked they saw that again they were alone with Him.

The impression made upon the three apostles by this manifestation was one never to be forgotten; but they were expressly charged to speak of it to no man until after the Savior had risen from the dead. They were puzzled as to the significance of the Lord's reference to His prospective rising from the dead. They had heard with great sorrow, and reluctantly they were being brought to understand it to be an awful certainty, that their beloved Master was to "suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed." [780] Such had been declared to them before, in language devoid of ambiguity and admitting of no figurative construction; and with equal plainness they had been told that Jesus would rise again; but of this latter eventuality they had but dim comprehension. The present reiteration of these teachings seems to have left the three with no clearer understanding of their Lord's resurrection from the dead than they had before. They seem to have had no definite conception as to what was meant by a resurrection; "**And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.**" [781]

The comprehensiveness of the Lord's injunction, that until after His rising from the dead they tell no man of their experiences on the mount, prohibited them from informing even their fellows of the Twelve. Later, after the Lord had ascended to His glory, Peter testified to the Church of the wondrous experience, in this forceful way: "**For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.**" [782] And John, reverently confessing before the world the divinity of the Word, the Son of God who had been made flesh to dwell among men, solemnly affirmed: "**And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**" [783]

The divine purpose as shown forth in the Transfiguration may be as incomprehensible to the human mind as is a full conception of the attendant splendor from verbal description; some features of the results achieved are apparent, however. Unto Christ the manifestation was strengthening and encouraging. The prospect of the experiences immediately ahead must naturally have been depressing and disheartening in the extreme. In faithfully treading the path of His life's work, He had reached the verge of the valley of the shadow of death; and the human part of His nature called for

refreshing. As angels had been sent to minister unto Him after the trying scenes of the forty days' fast and the direct temptation of Satan,[784] and as, in the agonizing hour of His bloody sweat, He was to be sustained anew by angelic ministry,[785] so at this critical and crucial period, the beginning of the end, visitants from the unseen world came to comfort and support Him. What of actual communication passed in the conference of Jesus with Moses and Elijah is not of full record in the New Testament Gospels.

The voice of His Father, to whom He was the Firstborn in the spirit-world, and the Only Begotten in the flesh, was of supreme assurance; yet that voice had been addressed to the three apostles rather than to Jesus, who had already received the Father's acknowledgment and attestation on the occasion of His baptism. The fullest version of the Father's words to Peter, James, and John is that recorded by Matthew: "**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.**" Aside from the proclamation of the Son's divine nature, the Father's words were otherwise decisive and portentous. Moses, the promulgator of the law, and Elijah the representative of the prophets and especially distinguished among them as the one who had not died,[786] had been seen ministering unto Jesus and subservient to Him. The fulfillment of the law and the superseding of the prophets by the Messiah was attested in the command – Hear ye *Him*. A new dispensation had been established, that of the gospel, for which the law and the prophets had been but preparatory. The apostles were to be guided neither by Moses nor Elijah, but by *Him*, their Lord, Jesus the Christ.

The three selected apostles, "the Man of Rock and the Sons of Thunder" had seen the Lord in glory; and they marveled that such a thing could be at that time, since as they had interpreted the scriptures, it had been predicted that Elijah should precede the Messiah's triumphal advent. As they wended their way down the mountain-side, they asked the Master:[787] "**Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?**" Jesus confirmed the prophecy that Elias should first come, that is, before the Lord's advent in glory, which event they had in mind; "But," He added, "**I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.**" That John the Baptist would officiate "in the spirit and power of Elias," as the forerunner of the Christ, had been announced by the angel Gabriel to Zacharias,[788] before the Baptist's birth; and that John was *that* particular Elias had been shown by Jesus in His memorable tribute to the Baptist's fidelity and greatness. That His words would not be generally accepted with understanding is evidenced by the context; Jesus, on that occasion, had said: "And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."[789]

It is not possible that Jesus could have meant that John was the same individual as Elijah; nor could the people have so understood His words, since the false doctrine of transmigration or reincarnation of spirits was repudiated by the Jews.[790] The seeming

difficulty is removed when we consider that, as the name appears in the New Testament, "Elias" is used for "Elijah,"[791] with no attempt at distinction between Elijah the Tishbite, and any other person known as Elias. Gabriel's declaration that the then unborn John should manifest "the spirit and power of Elias" indicates that "Elias" is a title of office; every restorer, forerunner, or one sent of God to prepare the way for greater developments in the gospel plan, is an Elias. The appellative "Elias" is in fact both a personal name and a title.

*...I had always wondered who made up the reincarnation false doctrine.*

In the present dispensation both the ancient Elias, who belonged to the Abrahamic dispensation and in the spirit of whose office many have officiated in different periods, and also the prophet Elijah, have appeared in person and have conferred their particular and separate authority upon latter-day bearers of the Holy Priesthood, and the keys of the powers exercised by them while on earth are today inherent in the restored Church of Jesus Christ. The authority of Elias is inferior to that of Elijah, the first being a function of the Lesser or Aaronic order of Priesthood, while the latter belongs to the Higher or Melchizedek Priesthood. Malachi's prediction, that before "the great and dreadful day of the Lord" Elijah the prophet would be sent to earth to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers,"[792] did not reach fulfillment in the mission of John the Baptist, nor in that of any other "Elias";[793] its complete realization was inaugurated on the third day of April, 1836, when Elijah appeared in the temple at Kirtland, Ohio, and committed to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the keys of the authority theretofore vested in himself. "**The great and dreadful day of the Lord" was not the meridian of time; that awful though blessed period of consummation is yet future, but "near, even at the doors.**"[794]

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 23

**1. Interval Between Time of Peter's Confession and that of the Transfiguration.** — Both Matthew (17:1) and Mark (9:2) state that the Transfiguration occurred "after six days" following the time of Peter's great confession that Jesus was the Christ; while Luke (9:28) notes an interval of "about an eight days." It is probable that the six-day period was meant to be exclusive of the day on which the earlier events had occurred and of that on which Jesus and the three apostles retired to the mountain; and that Luke's "about an eight days" was made to include these two days. There is here no ground for a claim of discrepancy.

**2. Peter, James, and John** who were selected from among the Twelve as the only earthly witnesses of the transfiguration of Christ, had been similarly chosen as witnesses of a special manifestation, that of the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51);

and, later, the same three were the sole witnesses of our Lord's night agony in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37; Mark 14:33).

**3. Place of the Transfiguration** – The mountain on which the Transfiguration occurred is neither named nor otherwise indicated by the Gospel-writers in such a way as to admit of its positive identification. Mount Tabor, in Galilee, has long been held by tradition as the site, and in the sixth century three churches were erected on its plateau-like summit, possibly in commemoration of Peter's desire to make three tabernacles or booths, one each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Later a monastery was built there. Nevertheless, Mt. Tabor is now rejected by investigators, and Mt. Hermon is generally regarded as the place. Hermon stands near the northerly limits of Palestine, just beyond Cæsarea Philippi, where Jesus is known to have been a week before the Transfiguration. Mark (9:30) distinctly tells us that after His descent from the mount, Jesus and the apostles departed and went through Galilee. Weight of evidence is in favor of Hermon as the Mount of Transfiguration, though nothing that may be called decisive is known in the matter.

**4. The Names "Elias" and "Elijah"** – The following statement which appears in Smith's *Bible Dictionary* is supported by authorities in general: "Elias" is "the Greek and Latin form of 'Elijah' given in the Authorized Version of the Apocrypha and New Testament."

**5. "The Spirit and Power of Elias"** – That John the Baptist, in his capacity as a restorer, a forerunner, or as one sent to prepare the way for a work greater than his own, did officiate as an "Elias" is attested by both ancient and latter-day scripture. Through him water baptism for the remission of sins was preached and administered, and the higher baptism, that of the Spirit, was made possible. True to his mission, he has come in the last dispensation, and has restored by ordination the Priesthood of Aaron, which has authority to baptize. He thus prepared the way for the vicarious labor of baptism for the dead, the authority for which was restored by Elijah and which is preeminently the work by which the children and the fathers shall be united in an eternal bond.

On the 10th of March, 1844, the Prophet Joseph Smith gave the following exposition of the power of Elias as compared with higher authority: "**The spirit of Elias is first, Elijah second, and Messiah last. Elias is a forerunner to prepare the way, and the spirit and power of Elijah is to come after, holding the keys of power, building the temple to the cap-stone, placing the seals of the Melchizedek Priesthood upon the house of Israel, and making all things ready; then Messiah comes to His temple, which is last of all.**"

"**Messiah is above the spirit and power of Elijah, for He made the world, and was that spiritual rock unto Moses in the wilderness. Elijah was to come and prepare the way and build up the kingdom before the coming of the great day of the Lord, although the spirit of Elias might begin it.**" – *Hist. of the Church*, under date named.

**6. Mention of the Lord's Approaching "Decease"** – Of the three synoptists, Luke alone makes even brief mention of the matter upon which Moses and Elijah conversed with the Lord at the Transfiguration. The record states that the visitants, who appeared in glory, "spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). It is significant that the *decease*, which the Lord should *accomplish*, not the *death* that He should *suffer* or *die*, was the subject of that exalted communion. The Greek word of which "**decease**" appears as the English equivalent in many of the MSS. of the Gospels, is one connoting "exodus," or "departure," and the word occurring in other early versions signifies glory. So also the Greek original of "accomplish," in the account of the Transfiguration, connotes the successful filling out or completion of a specific undertaking, and not distinctively the act of dying. Both the letter of the record and the spirit in which the recorder wrote indicate that Moses and Elijah conversed with their Lord on the glorious consummation of His mission in mortality – a consummation recognized in the law (personified in Moses) and the prophets (represented by Elijah) – and an event of supreme import, determining the fulfillment of both the law and the prophets, and the glorious inauguration of a new and higher order as part of the divine plan. The *decease* that the Savior was then so soon to *accomplish* was the voluntary surrender of His life in fulfillment of a purpose at once exalted and foreordained, not a *death* by which He would passively *die* through conditions beyond His control. (See chapters 25 and 35).

## FOOTNOTES

[775] Note 1, end of chapter.

[776] Note 2, end of chapter.

[777] Note 3, end of chapter.

[778] Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36.

[779] See chapter 4 herein.

[780] Mark 8:31. Note 6, end of chapter.

[781] Mark 9:10.

[782] 2 Peter 1:16-18.

[783] John 1:14.

[784] Matt. 4:11; Mark 1:13.

[785] Luke 22:43; compare John 12:27-28.

[786] 2 Kings 2:11.

[787] Matt. 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13.

[788] Luke 1:17; See chapters 7 and 18 herein.

[789] Matt. 11:14.

[790] Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus," vol. ii, p. 79.

[791] Note 4, end of chapter.

[792] Mal. 4:5, 6; See chapter 11 herein.

[793] Note 5, end of chapter.

[794] Doc. and Cov. 110:13-16. See chapter 41, herein.