

**JAMES  
EDWARD  
TALMAGE**

JESUS THE CHRIST

James Talmage  
**Jesus the Christ**

«Public Domain»

**Talmage J.**

Jesus the Christ / J. Talmage — «Public Domain»,

# Содержание

PREFACE	6
PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION	7
CHAPTER 1.	8
CHAPTER 2.	11
NOTES TO CHAPTER 2	16
CHAPTER 3.	18
NOTES TO CHAPTER 3	24
CHAPTER 4.	27
NOTES TO CHAPTER 4	32
CHAPTER 5.	34
NOTES TO CHAPTER 5	40
CHAPTER 6.	43
NOTES TO CHAPTER 6	49
CHAPTER 7.	53
JOHN THE FORERUNNER	53
THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE VIRGIN	56
MARY'S VISIT TO HER COUSIN ELISABETH	58
MARY AND JOSEPH	59
NOTES TO CHAPTER 7	61
CHAPTER 8.	64
THE BIRTH OF JESUS	64
REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW STRICTLY OBSERVED	66
WISE MEN SEARCH FOR THE KING	68
THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT	70
BIRTH OF JESUS MADE KNOWN TO THE NEPHITES	71
THE TIME OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS	72
NOTES TO CHAPTER 8	74
CHAPTER 9.	78
NOTES TO CHAPTER 9	82
CHAPTER 10.	84
THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS	84
THE BAPTISM OF JESUS—TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS	87
THE TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST	88
NOTES TO CHAPTER 10	92
CHAPTER 11.	94
THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY OF JESUS	94
THE FIRST DISCIPLES OF JESUS. 317	95
"THE SON OF MAN."	97
THE MIRACLE AT CANA IN GALILEE	99
MIRACLES IN GENERAL	101
NOTES TO CHAPTER 11	103
CHAPTER 12.	106
FIRST CLEARING OF THE TEMPLE	106
JESUS AND NICODEMUS. 364	109
FROM CITY TO COUNTRY	112

NOTES TO CHAPTER 12	114
CHAPTER 13.	119
JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN	119
JESUS AGAIN IN GALILEE: AT CANA AND NAZARETH	122
IN CAPERNAUM	124
NOTES TO CHAPTER 13	126
CHAPTER 14.	129
A LEPER MADE CLEAN	129
A PALSIED MAN HEALED AND FORGIVEN	130
PUBLICANS AND SINNERS	132
THE OLD AND THE NEW	133
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	134

**James E. Talmage**  
**Jesus the Christ / A Study of the Messiah**  
**and His Mission According to Holy /**  
**Scriptures Both Ancient and Modern**

**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 comprizes 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.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

It is a matter of history that, at or near the beginning of what has since come to be known as the Christian era, the Man Jesus, surnamed the Christ, was born in Bethlehem of Judea.<sup>1</sup> The principal data as to His birth, life, and death are so well attested as to be reasonably indisputable; they are facts of record, and are accepted as essentially authentic by the civilized world at large. True, there are diversities of deduction based on alleged discrepancies in the records of the past as to circumstantial details; but such differences are of strictly minor importance, for none of them nor all taken together cast a shadow of rational doubt upon the historicity of the earthly existence of the Man known in literature as Jesus of Nazareth.

As to who and what He was there are dissensions of grave moment dividing the opinions of men; and this divergence of conception and belief is most pronounced upon those matters to which the greatest importance attaches. The solemn testimonies of millions dead and of millions living unite in proclaiming Him as divine, the Son of the Living God, the Redeemer and Savior of the human race, the Eternal Judge of the souls of men, the Chosen and Anointed of the Father—in short, the Christ. Others there are who deny His Godhood while extolling the transcendent qualities of His unparalleled and unapproachable Manhood.

To the student of history this Man among men stands first, foremost, and alone, as a directing personality in the world's progression. Mankind has never produced a leader to rank with Him. Regarded solely as a historic personage He is unique. Judged by the standard of human estimation, Jesus of Nazareth is supreme among men by reason of the excellence of His personal character, the simplicity, beauty, and genuine worth of His precepts, and the influence of His example and doctrines in the advancement of the race. To these distinguishing characteristics of surpassing greatness the devout Christian soul adds an attribute that far exceeds the sum of all the others—the divinity of Christ's origin and the eternal reality of His status as Lord and God.

Christian and unbeliever alike acknowledge His supremacy as a Man, and respect the epoch-making significance of His birth. Christ was born in the meridian of time;<sup>2</sup> and His life on earth marked at once the culmination of the past and the inauguration of an era distinctive in human hope, endeavor, and achievement. His advent determined a new order in the reckoning of the years; and by common consent the centuries antedating His birth have been counted backward from the pivotal event and are designated accordingly. The rise and fall of dynasties, the birth and dissolution of nations, all the cycles of history as to war and peace, as to prosperity and adversity, as to health and pestilence, seasons of plenty and of famine, the awful happenings of earthquake and storm, the triumphs of invention and discovery, the epochs of man's development in godliness and the long periods of his dwindling in unbelief—all the occurrences that make history—are chronicled throughout Christendom by reference to the year before or after the birth of Jesus Christ.

His earthly life covered a period of thirty-three years; and of these but three were spent by Him as an acknowledged Teacher openly engaged in the activities of public ministry. He was brought to a violent death before He had attained what we now regard as the age of manhood's prime. As an individual He was personally known to but few; and His fame as a world character became general only after His death.

Brief account of some of His words and works has been preserved to us; and this record, fragmentary and incomplete though it be, is rightly esteemed as the world's greatest treasure. The

---

<sup>1</sup> As to the year of Christ's birth, see [chapter 8](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [chapter 6](#).

earliest and most extended history of His mortal existence is embodied within the compilation of scriptures known as the New Testament; indeed but little is said of Him by secular historians of His time. Few and short as are the allusions to Him made by non-scriptural writers in the period immediately following that of His ministry, enough is found to corroborate the sacred record as to the actuality and period of Christ's earthly existence.

No adequate biography of Jesus as Boy and Man has been or can be written, for the sufficing reason that a fulness of data is lacking. Nevertheless, man never lived of whom more has been said and sung, none to whom is devoted a greater proportion of the world's literature. He is extolled by Christian, Mohammedan and Jew, by skeptic and infidel, by the world's greatest poets, philosophers, statesmen, scientists, and historian. Even the profane sinner in the foul, sacrilege of his oath acclaims the divine supremacy of Him whose name he desecrates.

The purpose of the present treatise is that of considering the life and mission of Jesus *as* the Christ. In this undertaking we are to be guided by the light of both ancient and modern scriptures; and, thus led, we shall discover, even in the early stages of our course, that the word of God as revealed in latter days is effective in illumining and making plain the Holy Writ of ancient times, and this, in many matters of the profoundest imports.<sup>3</sup>

Instead of beginning our study with the earthly birth of the Holy Babe of Bethlehem, we shall consider the part taken by the Firstborn Son of God in the primeval councils of heaven, at the time when He was chosen and ordained to be the Savior of the unborn race of mortals, the Redeemer of a world then in its formative stages of development. We are to study Him as the Creator of the world, as the Word of Power, through whom the purposes of the Eternal Father were realized in the preparation of the earth for the abode of His myriad spirit-children during the appointed period of their mortal probation. Jesus Christ was and is Jehovah, the God of Adam and of Noah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, the God at whose instance the prophets of the ages have spoken, the God of all nations, and He who shall yet reign on earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

His wondrous yet natural birth, His immaculate life in the flesh, and His voluntary death as a consecrated sacrifice for the sins of mankind, shall claim our reverent attention; as shall also His redeeming service in the world of disembodied spirits; His literal resurrection from bodily death to immortality; His several appearings to men and His continued ministry as the Resurrected Lord on both continents; the reestablishment of His Church through His personal presence and that of the Eternal Father in the latter days; and His coming to His temple in the current dispensation. All these developments in the ministration of the Christ are already of the past. Our proposed course of investigation will lead yet onward, into the future concerning which the word of divine revelation is of record. We shall consider the conditions incident to the Lord's return in power and glory to inaugurate the dominion of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and to usher in the predicted Millennium of peace and righteousness. And yet beyond we shall follow Him, through the post-Millennial conflict between the powers of heaven and the forces of hell, to the completion of His victory over Satan, sin, and death, when He shall present the glorified earth and its sanctified hosts, spotless and celestialized, unto the Father.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affirms her possession of divine authority for the use of the sacred name, Jesus Christ, as the essential part of her distinctive designation. In view of this exalted claim, it is pertinent to inquire as to what special or particular message the Church has to give to the world concerning the Redeemer and Savior of the race, and as to what she has to say in justification of her solemn affirmation, or in vindication of her exclusive name and title. As we proceed with our study, we shall find that among the specific teachings of the Church respecting the Christ are these:

---

<sup>3</sup> The Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price constitute the standard works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These will be cited alike as Scriptures in the following pages, for such they are.

(1) The unity and continuity of His mission in all ages—this of necessity involving the verity of His preexistence and foreordination. (2) The fact of His antemortal Godship. (3) The actuality of His birth in the flesh as the natural issue of divine and mortal parentage. (4) The reality of His death and physical resurrection, as a result of which the power of death shall be eventually overcome. (5) The literalness of the atonement wrought by Him, including the absolute requirement of individual compliance with the laws and ordinances of His gospel as the means by which salvation may be attained. (6) The restoration of His Priesthood and the reestablishment of His Church in the current age, which is verily the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. (7) The certainty of His return to earth in the near future, with power and great glory, to reign in Person and bodily presence as Lord and King.

## CHAPTER 2. PREEXISTENCE AND FOREORDINATION OF THE CHRIST

We affirm, on the authority of Holy Scripture, that the Being who is known among men as Jesus of Nazareth, and by all who acknowledge His Godhood as Jesus the Christ, existed with the Father prior to birth in the flesh; and that in the preexistent state He was chosen and ordained to be the one and only Savior and Redeemer of the human race. Foreordination implies and comprizes preexistence as an essential condition; therefore scriptures bearing upon the one are germane to the other; and consequently in this presentation no segregation of evidence as applying specifically to the preexistence of Christ or to His foreordination will be attempted.

John the Revelator beheld in vision some of the scenes that had been enacted in the spirit-world before the beginning of human history. He witnessed strife and contention between loyalty and rebellion, with the hosts defending the former led by Michael the archangel, and the rebellious forces captained by Satan, who is also called the devil, the serpent, and the dragon. We read: "And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels."<sup>4</sup>

In this struggle between unembodied hosts the forces were unequally divided; Satan drew to his standard only a third part of the children of God, who are symbolized as the "stars of heaven";<sup>5</sup> the majority either fought with Michael, or at least refrained from active opposition, thus accomplishing the purpose of their "first estate"; while the angels who arrayed themselves on the side of Satan "kept not their first estate",<sup>6</sup> and therefore rendered themselves ineligible for the glorious possibilities of an advanced condition or "second estate".<sup>7</sup> The victory was with Michael and his angels; and Satan or Lucifer, theretofore a "son of the morning", was cast out of heaven, yea "he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him".<sup>8</sup> The prophet Isaiah, to whom these momentous occurrences had been revealed about eight centuries prior to the time of John's writings, laments with inspired pathos the fall of so great a one; and specifies selfish ambition as the occasion: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascent into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."<sup>9</sup>

Justification for citing these scriptures in connection with our present consideration will be found in the cause of the great contention—the conditions that led to this war in heaven. It is plain from the words of Isaiah that Lucifer, already of exalted rank, sought to aggrandize himself without regard to the rights and agency of others. The matter is set forth, in words that none may misapprehend, in a revelation given to Moses and repeated through the first prophet of the present dispensation: "And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying: That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind,

---

<sup>4</sup> Rev. 12:7; see also verses 8 and 9.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. 12:4; see also Doc. and Cov. 29:36-38; and 76:25-27.

<sup>6</sup> Jude 6.

<sup>7</sup> P. of G.P., Abraham 3:26.

<sup>8</sup> Rev. 12:9.

<sup>9</sup> Isa. 14:12-15; compare Doc. and Cov. 29:36-38; and 76:23-27.

that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor. But, behold, my Beloved son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me—Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever. Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down; and he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice."<sup>10</sup>

Thus it is shown that prior to the placing of man upon the earth, how long before we do not know, Christ and Satan, together with the hosts of the spirit-children of God, existed as intelligent individuals,<sup>11</sup> possessing power and opportunity to choose the course they would pursue and the leaders whom they would follow and obey.<sup>12</sup> In that great concourse of spirit-intelligences, the Father's plan, whereby His children would be advanced to their second estate, was submitted and doubtless discussed. The opportunity so placed within the reach of the spirits who were to be privileged to take bodies upon the earth was so transcendently glorious that those heavenly multitudes burst forth into song and shouted for joy.<sup>13</sup>

Satan's plan of compulsion, whereby all would be safely conducted through the career of mortality, bereft of freedom to act and agency to choose, so circumscribed that they would be compelled to do right—that one soul would not be lost—was rejected; and the humble offer of Jesus the First-born—to assume mortality and live among men as their Exemplar and Teacher, observing the sanctity of man's agency but teaching men to use aright that divine heritage—was accepted. The decision brought war, which resulted in the vanquishment of Satan and his angels, who were cast out and deprived of the boundless privileges incident to the mortal or second estate.

In that august council of the angels and the Gods, the Being who later was born in flesh as Mary's Son, Jesus, took prominent part, and there was He ordained of the Father to be the Savior of mankind. As to time, the term being used in the sense of all duration past, this is our earliest record of the Firstborn among the sons of God; to us who read, it marks the beginning of the written history of Jesus the Christ.<sup>14</sup>

Old Testament scriptures, while abounding in promises relating to the actuality of Christ's advent in the flesh, are less specific in information concerning His antemortal existence. By the children of Israel, while living under the law and still unprepared to receive the gospel, the Messiah was looked for as one to be born in the lineage of Abraham and David, empowered to deliver them from personal and national burdens, and to vanquish their enemies. The actuality of the Messiah's status as the chosen Son of God, who was with the Father from the beginning, a Being of preexistent power and glory, was but dimly perceived, if conceived at all, by the people in general; and although to prophets specially commissioned in the authorities and privileges of the Holy Priesthood, revelation of the great truth was given,<sup>15</sup> they transmitted it to the people rather in the language of imagery and parable than in words of direct plainness. Nevertheless the testimony of the evangelists and the apostles, the attestation of the Christ Himself while in the flesh, and the revelations given in the present dispensation leave us without dearth of scriptural proof.

In the opening lines of the Gospel book written by John the apostle, we read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made....

---

<sup>10</sup> P. of G.P., Moses 4:1-4; see also Abraham 3:27, 28.

<sup>11</sup> For a further treatment of the preexistence of spirits see the author's "Articles of Faith" x:21-30.

<sup>12</sup> [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>13</sup> Job 38:7.

<sup>14</sup> [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 25:14; Amos 3:7.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."<sup>16</sup>

The passage is simple, precise and unambiguous. We may reasonably give to the phrase "In the beginning" the same meaning as attaches thereto in the first line of Genesis; and such signification must indicate a time antecedent to the earliest stages of human existence upon the earth. That the Word is Jesus Christ, who was with the Father in that beginning and who was Himself invested with the powers and rank of Godship, and that He came into the world and dwelt among men, are definitely affirmed. These statements are corroborated through a revelation given to Moses, in which he was permitted to see many of the creations of God, and to hear the voice of the Father with respect to the things that had been made: "And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth."<sup>17</sup>

John the apostle repeatedly affirms the preexistence of the Christ and the fact of His authority and power in the antemortal state.<sup>18</sup> To the same effect is the testimony of Paul<sup>19</sup> and of Peter. Instructing the saints concerning the basis of their faith, the last-named apostle impressed upon them that their redemption was not to be secured through corruptible things nor by the outward observance of traditional requirements, "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."<sup>20</sup>

Even more impressive and yet more truly conclusive are the personal testimonies of the Savior as to His own pre-existent life and the mission among men to which He had been appointed. No one who accepts Jesus as the Messiah can consistently reject these evidences of His eternal nature. When, on a certain occasion, the Jews in the synagogue disputed among themselves and murmured because of their failure to understand aright His doctrine concerning Himself, especially as touching His relationship with the Father, Jesus said unto them: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." And then, continuing the lesson based upon the contrast between the manna with which their fathers had been fed in the wilderness and the bread of life which He had to offer, He added: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven," and again declared "the living Father hath sent me." Not a few of the disciples failed to comprehend His teachings; and their complaints drew from Him these words: "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"<sup>21</sup>

To certain wicked Jews, wrapped in the mantle of racial pride, boastful of their descent through the lineage of Abraham, and seeking to excuse their sins through an unwarranted use of the great patriarch's name, our Lord thus proclaimed His own preeminence: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."<sup>22</sup> The fuller significance of this remark will be treated later; suffice it in the present connection to consider this scripture as a plain avowal of our Lord's seniority and supremacy over Abraham. But as Abraham's birth had preceded that of Christ by more than nineteen centuries, such seniority must have reference to a state of existence antedating that of mortality.

When the hour of His betrayal was near, in the last interview with the apostles prior to His agonizing experience in Gethsemane, Jesus comforted them saying: "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the

---

<sup>16</sup> John 1:1-3, 14; see also 1 John 1:1; 5: 7; Rev. 19:13; compare Doc. and Cov. 93:1-17, 21.

<sup>17</sup> P. of C.P., Moses 1:32, 33; see also 2:5.

<sup>18</sup> 1 John 1:1-3; 2:13, 14; 4:9; Rev. 3:14.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Tim. 1:9, 10; Rom. 16:25; Eph. 1:4; 3:9, 11; Titus 1:2. See especially Rom. 3:25; and note the marginal rendering—"foreordained"—making the passage read: "Whom God hath foreordained to be a propitiation."

<sup>20</sup> 1 Peter 1:19, 20.

<sup>21</sup> John 6:38, 51, 57, 61, 62.

<sup>22</sup> John 8:58; see also 17:5, 24; and compare Exo. 3:14. Page [37](#).

Father, and am come into the world again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, in the course of upwelling prayer for those who had been true to their testimony of His Messiahship, He addressed the Father with this solemn invocation: "And this is the life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father glorify thou with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."<sup>24</sup>

Book of Mormon scriptures are likewise explicit in proof of the preexistence of the Christ and of His foreappointed mission. One only of the many evidences therein found will be cited here. An ancient prophet, designated in the record as the brother of Jared,<sup>25</sup> once pleaded with the Lord in special supplication: "And the Lord said unto him, Believest thou the words which I shall speak? And he answered, Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie. And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord shewed himself unto him, and said, Because thou knowest these things, ye are redeemed from the fall: therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I shew myself unto you. Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have light, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters. And never have I shewed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning, after mine own image. Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit, will I appear unto my people in the flesh."<sup>26</sup> The main facts attested by this scripture as having a direct bearing upon our present subject are those of the Christ manifesting Himself while yet in His antemortal state, and of His declaration that He had been chosen from the foundation of the world as the Redeemer.

Revelation given through the prophets of God in the present dispensation is replete with evidence of Christ's appointment and ordination in the primeval world; and the whole tenor of the scriptures contained in the Doctrine and Covenants may be called in witness. The following instances are particularly in point. In a communication to Joseph Smith the prophet, in May, 1833, the Lord declared Himself as the One who had previously come into the world from the Father, and of whom John had borne testimony as the Word; and the solemn truth is reiterated that He, Jesus Christ, "was in the beginning, before the world was", and further, that He was the Redeemer who "came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men." Again, He is referred to as "the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh." In the course of the same revelation the Lord said: "And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father and am the firstborn."<sup>27</sup> On an earlier occasion, as the modern prophet testifies, he and an associate in the priesthood were enlightened by the Spirit so that they were able to see and understand the things of God—"Even those things which were from the beginning before the world was, which were ordained of the Father, through his Only Begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, even from the beginning, of whom we bear record, and the record which we bear is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Son, whom we saw and with whom we conversed in the heavenly vision."<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> John 16:27, 28; see also 13:3.

<sup>24</sup> John 17:3-5; see also verses 24, 25.

<sup>25</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

<sup>26</sup> B. of M., Ether 3:11-16. See also 1 Nephi 17:30; 19:7; 2 Nephi 9:5; 11:7; 25:12; 26:12; Mosiah 3:5; 4:2; 7:27; 13:34; 15:1; Alma 11:40; Hel. 14:12; 3 Nephi 9:15.

<sup>27</sup> Doc. and Cov. 93:1-17, 21.

<sup>28</sup> Doc. and Cov. 76:13, 14.

The testimony of scriptures written on both hemispheres, that of records both ancient and modern, the inspired utterances of prophets and apostles, and the words of the Lord Himself, are of one voice in proclaiming the preexistence of the Christ and His ordination as the chosen Savior and Redeemer of mankind—in the beginning, yea, even before the foundation of the world.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

**1. Graded Intelligences in the Antemortal State.**—That the spirits of men existed as individual intelligences, of varying degrees of ability and power, prior to the inauguration of the mortal state upon this earth and even prior to the creation of the world as a suitable abode for human beings, is shown in great plainness through a divine revelation to Abraham: "Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; and God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born." (P. of G.P., Abraham 3:22, 23.)

That both Christ and Satan were among those exalted intelligences, and that Christ was chosen while Satan was rejected as the future Savior of mankind, are shown by the portions of the revelation immediately following that above quoted: "And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; and they who keep their first estate shall be added upon, and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads forever and ever. And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him" (verses 24-28).

**2. The Primeval Council in the Heavens.**—"It is definitely stated in the Book of Genesis that God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;' and again, after Adam had taken of the forbidden fruit the Lord said, 'Behold, the man has become as one of us;' and the inference is direct that in all that related to the work of the creation of the world there was a consultation; and though God spake as it is recorded in the Bible, yet it is evident He counseled with others. The scriptures tell us there are 'Gods many and Lords many. But to us there is but one God, the Father' (1 Cor. 8:5). And for this reason, though there were others engaged in the creation of the worlds, it is given to us in the Bible in the shape that it is; for the fulness of these truths is only revealed to highly favored persons for certain reasons known to God; as we are told in the scriptures: 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.'—Psalms 25:14.

"It is consistent to believe that at this Council in the heavens the plan that should be adopted in relation to the sons of God who were then spirits, and had not yet obtained tabernacles, was duly considered. For, in view of the creation of the world and the placing of men upon it, whereby it would be possible for them to obtain tabernacles, and in those tabernacles obey laws of life, and with them again be exalted among the Gods, we are told that at that time, 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' The question then arose, how, and upon what principle, should the salvation, exaltation and eternal glory of God's sons be brought about? It is evident that at that Council certain plans had been proposed and discussed, and that after a full discussion of those principles, and the declaration of the Father's will pertaining to His design, Lucifer came before the Father with a plan of his own, saying, 'Behold [here am] I; send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore, give me thine honor.' But Jesus, on hearing this statement made by Lucifer, said, 'Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.' From these remarks made by the well beloved Son, we should naturally infer that in the discussion of this subject the Father had made known His will and developed His plan and design pertaining to these matters, and all that His well beloved Son wanted to do was to carry

out the will of His Father, as it would appear had been before expressed. He also wished the glory to be given to His Father, who, as God the Father, and the originator and designer of the plan, had a right to all the honor and glory. But Lucifer wanted to introduce a plan contrary to the will of his Father, and then wanted His honor, and said: 'I will save every soul of man, wherefore give me thine honor.' He wanted to go contrary to the will of his Father, and presumptuously sought to deprive man of his free agency, thus making him a serf, and placing him in a position in which it was impossible for him to obtain that exaltation which God designed should be man's, through obedience to the law which He had suggested; and again, Lucifer wanted the honor and power of his Father, to enable him to carry out principles which were contrary to the Father's wish."—John Taylor—*Mediation and Atonement*, pp. 93, 94.

**3. The Jaredites.**—"Of the two nations whose histories constitute the Book of Mormon, the first in order of time consisted of the people of Jared, who followed their leader from the Tower of Babel at the time of the confusion of tongues. Their history was written on twenty-four plates of gold by Ether, the last of their prophets, who, foreseeing the destruction of his people because of their wickedness, hid away the historical plates. They were afterward found, B.C. 123, by an expedition sent out by King Limhi, a Nephite ruler. The record engraved on these plates was subsequently abridged by Moroni, and the condensed account was attached by him to the Book of Mormon record; it appears in the modern translation under the name of the Book of Ether.

"The first and chief prophet of the Jaredites is not mentioned by name in the record as we have it; he is known only as the brother of Jared. Of the people, we learn that, amid the confusion of Babel, Jared and his brother importuned the Lord that He would spare them and their associates from the impending disruption. Their prayer was heard, and the Lord led them with a considerable company, who, like themselves, were free from the taint of idolatry, away from their homes, promising to conduct them to a land choice above all other lands. Their course of travel is not given with exactness; we learn only that they reached the ocean, and there constructed eight vessels, called barges, in which they set out upon the waters. These vessels were small and dark within; but the Lord made luminous certain stones, which gave light to the imprisoned voyagers. After a passage of three hundred and forty-four days, the colony landed on the western shore of North America, probably at a place south of the Gulf of California, and north of the Isthmus of Panama.

"Here they became a flourishing nation; but, giving way in time to internal dissensions, they divided into factions, which warred with one another until the people were totally destroyed. This destruction, which occurred near the hill Ramah, afterward known among the Nephites as Cumorah, probably took place at about the time of Lehi's landing in South America—590 B.C."—The author, *Articles of Faith*, xiv:10-12.

## CHAPTER 3. THE NEED OF A REDEEMER

We have heretofore shown that the entire human race existed as spirit-beings in the primeval world, and that for the purpose of making possible to them the experiences of mortality this earth was created. They were endowed with the powers of agency or choice while yet but spirits; and the divine plan provided that they be free-born in the flesh, heirs to the inalienable birthright of liberty to choose and to act for themselves in mortality. It is undeniably essential to the eternal progression of God's children that they be subjected to the influences of both good and evil, that they be tried and tested and proved withal, "to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."<sup>29</sup> Free agency is an indispensable element of such a test.

The Eternal Father well understood the diverse natures and varied capacities of His spirit-offspring; and His infinite foreknowledge made plain to Him, even in the beginning, that in the school of life some of His children would succeed and others would fail; some would be faithful, others false; some would choose the good, others the evil; some would seek the way of life while others would elect to follow the road to destruction. He further foresaw that death would enter the world, and that the possession of bodies by His children would be of but brief individual duration. He saw that His commandments would be disobeyed and His law violated; and that men, shut out from His presence and left to themselves, would sink rather than rise, would retrograde rather than advance, and would be lost to the heavens. It was necessary that a means of redemption be provided, whereby erring man might make amends, and by compliance with established law achieve salvation and eventual exaltation in the eternal worlds. The power of death was to be overcome, so that, though men would of necessity die, they would live anew, their spirits clothed with immortalized bodies over which death could not again prevail.

Let not ignorance and thoughtlessness lead us into the error of assuming that the Father's foreknowledge as to what *would be*, under given conditions, determined that such *must be*. It was not His design that the souls of mankind be lost; on the contrary it was and is His work and glory, "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless He saw the evil into which His children would assuredly fall; and with infinite love and mercy did He ordain means of averting the dire effect, provided the transgressor would elect to avail himself thereof.<sup>31</sup> The offer of the firstborn Son to establish through His own ministry among men the gospel of salvation, and to sacrifice Himself, through labor, humiliation and suffering even unto death, was accepted and made the foreordained plan of man's redemption from death, of his eventual salvation from the effects of sin, and of his possible exaltation through righteous achievement.

In accordance with the plan adopted in the council of the Gods, man was created as an embodied spirit; his tabernacle of flesh was composed of the elements of earth.<sup>32</sup> He was given commandment and law, and was free to obey or disobey—with the just and inevitable condition that he should enjoy or suffer the natural results of his choice.<sup>33</sup> Adam, the first man<sup>34</sup> placed upon the earth in pursuance of the established plan, and Eve who was given unto him as companion and

---

<sup>29</sup> P. of G.P., Abraham 3:25. For a fuller treatment of man's Free Agency, see the author's "Articles of Faith," iii:1-10, and the numerous references there given.

<sup>30</sup> P. of G.P., Moses 1:39; compare 6:59. [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>31</sup> [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>32</sup> Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:7; compare P. of G.P., Moses 2:26, 27; 3:7; Abraham 4:26-28; 5:7.

<sup>33</sup> Gen. 1:28-31; 2:16, 17; compare P. of G.P., Moses 2:28-31; 3:16, 17; Abraham 4:28-31; 5:12, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Gen. 2:8; compare statement in verse 5—that prior to that time there was "not a man to till the ground"; see also P. of G.P., Moses 3:7; Abraham 1:3; and B. of M., 1 Nephi 5:11.

associate, indispensable to him in the appointed mission of peopling the earth, disobeyed the express commandment of God and so brought about the "fall of man", whereby the mortal state, of which death is an essential element, was inaugurated.<sup>35</sup> It is not proposed to consider here at length the doctrine of the fall; for the present argument it is sufficient to establish the fact of the momentous occurrence and its portentous consequences.<sup>36</sup> The woman was deceived, and in direct violation of counsel and commandment partook of the food that had been forbidden, as a result of which act her body became degenerate and subject to death. Adam realized the disparity that had been brought between him and his companion, and with some measure of understanding followed her course, thus becoming her partner in bodily degeneracy. Note in this matter the words of Paul the apostle: "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."<sup>37</sup>

The man and the woman had now become mortal; through indulgence in food unsuited to their nature and condition and against which they had been specifically warned, and as the inevitable result of their disobeying the divine law and commandment, they became liable to the physical ailments and bodily frailties to which mankind has since been the natural heir.<sup>38</sup> Those bodies, which before the fall had been perfect in form and function, were now subjects for eventual dissolution or death. The arch-tempter through whose sophistries, half-truths and infamous falsehoods, Eve had been beguiled, was none other than Satan, or Lucifer, that rebellious and fallen "son of the morning", whose proposal involving the destruction of man's liberty had been rejected in the council of the heavens, and who had been "cast out into the earth", he and all his angels as unbodied spirits, never to be tabernacled in bodies of their own.<sup>39</sup> As an act of diabolic reprisal following his rejection in the council, his defeat by Michael and the heavenly hosts, and his ignominious expulsion from heaven, Satan planned to destroy the bodies in which the faithful spirits—those who had kept their first estate—would be born; and his beguilement of Eve was but an early stage of that infernal scheme.

Death has come to be the universal heritage; it may claim its victim in infancy or youth, in the period of life's prime, or its summons may be deferred until the snows of age have gathered upon the hoary head; it may befall as the result of accident or disease, by violence, or as we say, through natural causes; but come it must, as Satan well knows; and in this knowledge is his present though but temporary triumph. But the purposes of God, as they ever have been and ever shall be, are infinitely superior to the deepest designs of men or devils; and the Satanic machinations to make death inevitable, perpetual and supreme were provided against even before the first man had been created in the flesh. The atonement to be wrought by Jesus the Christ was ordained to overcome death and to provide a means of ransom from the power of Satan.

As the penalty incident to the fall came upon the race through an individual act, it would be manifestly unjust, and therefore impossible as part of the divine purpose, to make all men suffer the results thereof without provision for deliverance.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, since by the transgression of one man sin came into the world and death was entailed upon all, it is consistent with reason that the atonement thus made necessary should be wrought by one.<sup>41</sup> "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ... Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."<sup>42</sup> So taught the apostle Paul; and,

---

<sup>35</sup> Gen. chap. 3; compare P. of G.P., Moses chap. 4.

<sup>36</sup> See "Articles of Faith," iii:21-32.

<sup>37</sup> 1 Tim. 2:14; see also 2 Cor. 11:3.

<sup>38</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

<sup>39</sup> See page 7.

<sup>40</sup> [Note 4](#), end of chapter.

<sup>41</sup> [Note 5](#), end of chapter.

<sup>42</sup> Rom. 5:12, 18.

further: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."<sup>43</sup>

The atonement was plainly to be a vicarious sacrifice, voluntary and love-inspired on the Savior's part, universal in its application to mankind so far as men shall accept the means of deliverance thus placed within their reach. For such a mission only one who was without sin could be eligible. Even the altar victims of ancient Israel offered as a provisional propitiation for the offenses of the people under the Mosaic law had to be clean and devoid of spot or blemish; otherwise they were unacceptable and the attempt to offer them was sacrilege.<sup>44</sup> Jesus Christ was the only Being suited to the requirements of the great sacrifice:

1—As the one and only sinless Man;

2—As the Only Begotten of the Father and therefore the only Being born to earth possessing in their fulness the attributes of both Godhood and manhood;

3—As the One who had been chosen in the heavens and foreordained to this service.

What other man has been without sin, and therefore wholly exempt from the dominion of Satan, and to whom death, the wage of sin, is not naturally due? Had Jesus Christ met death as other men have done—the result of the power that Satan has gained over them through their sins—His death would have been but an individual experience, expiatory in no degree of any faults or offenses but His own. Christ's absolute sinlessness made Him eligible, His humility and willingness rendered Him acceptable to the Father, as the atoning sacrifice whereby propitiation could be made for the sins of all men.

What other man has lived with power to withstand death, over whom death could not prevail except through his own submission? Yet Jesus Christ could not be slain until His "hour had come", and that, the hour in which He voluntarily surrendered His life, and permitted His own decease through an act of will. Born of a mortal mother He inherited the capacity to die; begotten by an immortal Sire He possessed as a heritage the power to withstand death indefinitely. He literally gave up His life; to this effect is His own affirmation: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."<sup>45</sup> And further: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."<sup>46</sup> Only such a One could conquer death; in none but Jesus the Christ was realized this requisite condition of a Redeemer of the world.

What other man has come to earth with such appointment, clothed with the authority of such foreordination? The atoning mission of Jesus Christ was no self-assumption. True, He had offered Himself when the call was made in the heavens; true, He had been accepted, and in due time came to earth to carry into effect the terms of that acceptance; but He was chosen by One greater than Himself. The burden of His confession of authority was ever to the effect that He operated under the direction of the Father, as witness these words: "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."<sup>47</sup> "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."<sup>48</sup> "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which hath sent me."<sup>49</sup>

Through the atonement accomplished by Jesus Christ—a redeeming service, vicariously rendered in behalf of mankind, all of whom have become estranged from God by the effects of sin both inherited and individually incurred—the way is opened for a reconciliation whereby man may

---

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor. 15:21, 22.

<sup>44</sup> Lev. 22:20; Deut. 15:21; 17:1; Mal. 1:8, 14; compare Heb. 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19.

<sup>45</sup> John 10:17-18

<sup>46</sup> John 5:26

<sup>47</sup> John 6:38

<sup>48</sup> John 4:34

<sup>49</sup> John 5:30; see also verse 19; also Matt. 26:42; compare Doc. and Cov. 19:2; 20:24.

come again into communion with God, and be made fit to dwell anew and forever in the presence of his Eternal Father. This basal thought is admirably implied in our English word, "atonement," which, as its syllables attest, is *at-one-ment*, "denoting reconciliation, or the bringing into agreement of those who have been estranged."<sup>50</sup> The effect of the atonement may be conveniently considered as twofold:

1—The universal redemption of the human race from death invoked by the fall of our first parents; and,

2—Salvation, whereby means of relief from the results of individual sin are provided.

The victory over death was made manifest in the resurrection of the crucified Christ; He was the first to pass from death to immortality and so is justly known as "the first fruits of them that slept."<sup>51</sup> That the resurrection of the dead so inaugurated is to be extended to every one who has or shall have lived is proved by an abundance of scriptural evidence. Following our Lord's resurrection, others who had slept in the tomb arose and were seen of many, not as spirit-appearitions but as resurrected beings possessing immortalized bodies: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."<sup>52</sup>

Those who thus early came forth are spoken of as "the saints"; and other scriptures confirm the fact that only the righteous shall be brought forth in the earlier stages of the resurrection yet to be consummated; but that all the dead shall in turn resume bodies of flesh and bones is placed beyond doubt by the revealed word. The Savior's direct affirmation ought to be conclusive: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.... Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."<sup>53</sup> The doctrine of a universal resurrection was taught by the apostles of old,<sup>54</sup> as also by the Nephite prophets;<sup>55</sup> and the same is confirmed by revelation incident to the present dispensation.<sup>56</sup> Even the heathen who have not known God shall be brought forth from their graves; and, inasmuch as they have lived and died in ignorance of the saving law, a means of making the plan of salvation known unto them is provided. "And then shall the heathen nations be redeemed, and they that knew no law shall have part in the first resurrection."<sup>57</sup>

Jacob, a Nephite prophet, taught the universality of the resurrection, and set forth the absolute need of a Redeemer, without whom the purposes of God in the creation of man would be rendered futile. His words constitute a concise and forceful summary of revealed truth directly bearing upon our present subject:

"For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen, they were cut off from the presence of the Lord; wherefore it must needs be an infinite atonement; save it should be an infinite atonement, this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man, must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more. O the wisdom of God!

---

<sup>50</sup> New Standard Dictionary under "propitiation."

<sup>51</sup> 1 Cor. 15:20; see also Acts 26:23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5.

<sup>52</sup> Matt. 27:52, 53.

<sup>53</sup> John 5:25, 28, 29. A modern scripture attesting the same truth reads: "They who have done good in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil in the resurrection of the unjust."—Doc. and Cov. 76:17.

<sup>54</sup> For instances see Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:12, 13.

<sup>55</sup> For instances see B. of M., 2 Nephi 9:6, 12, 13, 21, 22; Helaman 14:15-17; Mosiah 15:20-24; Alma 40:2-16; Mormon 9:13, 14.

<sup>56</sup> For instances see Doc. and Cov. 18:11, 12; 45:44, 45; 88:95-98.

<sup>57</sup> Doc. and Cov. 45:54.

his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more, our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents; who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder, and all manner of secret works of darkness. O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit. And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave. And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel. O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh; save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect."<sup>58</sup>

The application of the atonement to individual transgression, whereby the sinner may obtain absolution through compliance with the laws and ordinances embodied in the gospel of Jesus Christ, is conclusively attested by scripture. Since forgiveness of sins can be secured in none other way, there being either in heaven or earth no name save that of Jesus Christ whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men,<sup>59</sup> every soul stands in need of the Savior's mediation, since all are sinners. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God", said Paul of old,<sup>60</sup> and John the apostle added his testimony in these words: "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."<sup>61</sup>

Who shall question the justice of God, which denies salvation to all who will not comply with the prescribed conditions on which alone it is declared obtainable? Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him",<sup>62</sup> and God "will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil."<sup>63</sup>

Such then is the need of a Redeemer, for without Him mankind would forever remain in a fallen state, and as to hope of eternal progression would be inevitably lost.<sup>64</sup> The mortal probation is provided as an opportunity for advancement; but so great are the difficulties and the dangers, so strong is the influence of evil in the world, and so weak is man in resistance thereto, that without the aid of a power above that of humanity no soul would find its way back to God from whom it came. The need of a Redeemer lies in the inability of man to raise himself from the temporal to the spiritual plane, from the lower kingdom to the higher. In this conception we are not without analogies

---

<sup>58</sup> B. of M., 2 Nephi 9:6-13; read the entire chapter.

<sup>59</sup> P. of G.P., Moses 6:52; compare B. of M., 2 Nephi 25:20; Mosiah 3:17; 5:8; Doc. and Cov. 76:1.

<sup>60</sup> Rom. 3:23; see also verse 9; Gal. 3:22.

<sup>61</sup> 1 John 1:8.

<sup>62</sup> Heb. 5:9.

<sup>63</sup> Rom. 2:6-9.

<sup>64</sup> No special treatment relating to the Fall, the Atonement, or the Resurrection has been either attempted or intended in this chapter. For such the student is referred to doctrinal works dealing with these subjects. See the author's "Articles of Faith," lectures iii, iv, and xxi.

in the natural world. We recognize a fundamental distinction between inanimate and living matter, between the inorganic and the organic, between the lifeless mineral on the one hand and the living plant or animal on the other. Within the limitations of its order the dead mineral grows by accretion of substance, and may attain a relatively perfect condition of structure and form as is seen in the crystal. But mineral matter, though acted upon favorably by the forces of nature—light, heat, electric energy and others—can never become a living organism; nor can the dead elements, through any process of chemical combination dissociated from life, enter into the tissues of the plant as essential parts thereof. But the plant, which is of a higher order, sends its rootlets into the earth, spreads its leaves in the atmosphere, and through these organs absorbs the solutions of the soil, inspires the gases of the air, and from such lifeless materials weaves the tissue of its wondrous structure. No mineral particle, no dead chemical substance has ever been made a constituent of organic tissue except through the agency of life. We may, perhaps with profit, carry the analogy a step farther. The plant is unable to advance its own tissue to the animal plane. Though it be the recognized order of nature that the "animal kingdom" is dependent upon the "vegetable kingdom" for its sustenance, the substance of the plant may become part of the animal organism only as the latter reaches down from its higher plane and by its own vital action incorporates the vegetable compounds with itself. In turn, animal matter can never become, even transitorily, part of a human body, except as the living man assimilates it, and by the vital processes of his own existence lifts, for the time being, the substance of the animal that supplied him food to the higher plane of his own existence. The comparison herein employed is admittedly defective if carried beyond reasonable limits of application; for the raising of mineral matter to the plane of the plant, vegetable tissue to the level of the animal, and the elevation of either to the human plane, is but a temporary change; with the dissolution of the higher tissues the material thereof falls again to the level of the inanimate and the dead. But, as a means of illustration the analogy may not be wholly without value.

So, for the advancement of man from his present fallen and relatively degenerate state to the higher condition of spiritual life, a power above his own must cooperate. Through the operation of the laws obtaining in the higher kingdom man may be reached and lifted; himself he cannot save by his own unaided effort.<sup>65</sup> A Redeemer and Savior of mankind is beyond all question essential to the realization of the plan of the Eternal Father, "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man";<sup>66</sup> and that Redeemer and Savior is Jesus the Christ, beside whom there is and can be none other.

---

<sup>65</sup> A comparison related to that given in the text is treated at length by Henry Drummond in his essay, "Biogenesis," which the reader may study with profit.

<sup>66</sup> P. of G.P., Moses 1:39.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

**1. God's Foreknowledge Not a Determining Cause.**—"Respecting the foreknowledge of God, let it not be said that divine omniscience is of itself a determining cause whereby events are inevitably brought to pass. A mortal father, who knows the weaknesses and frailties of his son, may by reason of that knowledge sorrowfully predict the calamities and sufferings awaiting his wayward boy. He may foresee in that son's future a forfeiture of blessings that could have been won, loss of position, self-respect, reputation and honor; even the dark shadows of a felon's cell and the night of a drunkard's grave may appear in the saddening visions of that fond father's soul; yet, convinced by experience of the impossibility of bringing about that son's reform, he foresees the dread developments of the future, and he finds but sorrow and anguish in his knowledge. Can it be said that the father's foreknowledge is a cause of the son's sinful life? The son, perchance, has reached his maturity; he is the master of his own destiny; a free agent unto himself. The father is powerless to control by force or to direct by arbitrary command; and, while he would gladly make any effort or sacrifice to save his son from the fate impending, he fears for what seems to be an awful certainty. But surely that thoughtful, prayerful, loving parent does not, because of his knowledge, contribute to the son's waywardness. To reason otherwise would be to say that a neglectful father, who takes not the trouble to study the nature and character of his son, who shuts his eyes to sinful tendencies, and rests in careless indifference as to the probable future, will by his very heartlessness be benefitting his child, because his lack of forethought cannot operate as a contributory cause to dereliction.

"Our Heavenly Father has a full knowledge of the nature and disposition of each of His children, a knowledge gained by long observation and experience in the past eternity of our primeval childhood; a knowledge compared with which that gained by earthly parents through mortal experience with their children is infinitesimally small. By reason of that surpassing knowledge, God reads the future of child and children, of men individually and of men collectively as communities and nations; He knows what each will do under given conditions, and sees the end from the beginning. His foreknowledge is based on intelligence and reason. He foresees the future as a state which naturally and surely will be; not as one which must be because He has arbitrarily willed that it shall be."—From the author's *Great Apostasy*, pp. 19, 20.

**2. Man Free to Choose for Himself.**—"The Father of souls has endowed His children with the divine birthright of free agency; He does not and will not control them by arbitrary force; He impels no man toward sin; He compels none to righteousness. Unto man has been given freedom to act for himself; and, associated with this independence, is the fact of strict responsibility and the assurance of individual accountability. In the judgment with which we shall be judged, all the conditions and circumstances of our lives shall be considered. The inborn tendencies due to heredity, the effect of environment whether conducive to good or evil, the wholesome teachings of youth, or the absence of good instruction—these and all other contributory elements must be taken into account in the rendering of a just verdict as to the soul's guilt or innocence. Nevertheless, the divine wisdom makes plain what will be the result with given conditions operating on known natures and dispositions of men, while every individual is free to choose good or evil within the limits of the many conditions existing and operative."—*Great Apostasy*, p. 21; see also *Articles of Faith*, iii:1, 2.

**3. The Fall a Process of Physical Degeneracy.**—A modern revelation given to the Church in 1833 (Doc. and Cov. Sec. 89), prescribes rules for right living, particularly as regards the uses of stimulants, narcotics, and foods unsuited to the body. Concerning the physical causes by which the fall was brought about, and the close relation between those causes and current violations of the Word of Wisdom embodied in the revelation referred to above, the following is in point. "This, [the Word of Wisdom] like other revelations that have come in the present dispensation, is not wholly new. It is as old as the human race. The principle of the Word of Wisdom was revealed unto Adam. All the

essentials of the Word of Wisdom were made known unto him in his immortal state, before he had taken into his body those things that made of it a thing of earth. He was warned against that very practise. He was not told to treat his body as something to be tortured. He was not told to look upon it as the fakir of India has come to look upon his body, or professes to look upon it, as a thing to be utterly contemned; but he was told that he must not take into that body certain things which were there at hand. He was warned that, if he did, his body would lose the power which it then held of living for ever, and that he would become subject to death. It was pointed out to him, as it has been pointed out to you, that there are many good fruits to be plucked, to be eaten, to be enjoyed. We believe in enjoying good food. We think that these good things are given us of God. We believe in getting all the enjoyment out of eating that we can; and, therefore, we should avoid gluttony, and we should avoid extremes in all our habits of eating; and as was told unto Adam, so is it told unto us: Touch not these things; for in the day that thou doest it thy life shall be shortened and thou shalt die.

"Here let me say that therein consisted the fall—the eating of things unfit, the taking into the body of the things that made of that body a thing of earth: and I take this occasion to raise my voice against the false interpretation of scripture, which has been adopted by certain people, and is current in their minds, and is referred to in a hushed and half-secret way, that the fall of man consisted in some offense against the laws of chastity and of virtue. Such a doctrine is an abomination. What right have we to turn the scriptures from their proper sense and meaning? What right have we to declare that God meant not what He said? The fall was a natural process, resulting through the incorporation into the bodies of our first parents of the things that came from food unfit, through the violation of the command of God regarding what they should eat. Don't go around whispering that the fall consisted in the mother of the race losing her chastity and her virtue. It is not true; the human race is not born of fornication. These bodies that are given unto us are given in the way that God has provided. Let it not be said that the patriarch of the race, who stood with the gods before he came here upon the earth, and his equally royal consort, were guilty of any such foul offense. The adoption of that belief has led many to excuse departures from the path of chastity and the path of virtue, by saying that it is the sin of the race, that it is as old as Adam. It was not introduced by Adam. It was not committed by Eve. It was the introduction of the devil and came in order that he might sow the seeds of early death in the bodies of men and women, that the race should degenerate as it has degenerated whenever the laws of virtue and of chastity have been transgressed.

"Our first parents were pure and noble, and when we pass behind the veil we shall perhaps learn something of their high estate, more than we know now. But be it known that they were pure; they were noble. It is true that they disobeyed the law of God, in eating things they were told not to eat; but who amongst you can rise up and condemn?"—From an address by the author at the Eighty-fourth Semiannual Conference of the Church, Oct. 6, 1913; published in the Proceedings of the Conference, pp. 118, 119.

**4. Christ Wrought Redemption from the Fall.**—"The Savior thus becomes master of the situation—the debt is paid, the redemption made, the covenant fulfilled, justice satisfied, the will of God done, and all power is now given into the hands of the Son of God—the power of the resurrection, the power of the redemption, the power of salvation, the power to enact laws for the carrying out and accomplishment of this design. Hence life and immortality are brought to light, the gospel is introduced, and He becomes the author of eternal life and exaltation. He is the Redeemer, the Resurrector, the Savior of man and the world; and He has appointed the law of the gospel as the medium which must be complied with in this world or the next, as He complied with His Father's law; hence 'he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.' The plan, the arrangement, the agreement, the covenant was made, entered into and accepted before the foundation of the world; it was prefigured by sacrifices, and was carried out and consummated on the cross. Hence being the mediator between God and man, He becomes by right the dictator and director on earth and in heaven for the living and for the dead, for the past, the present and the future, pertaining

to man as associated with this earth or the heavens, in time or eternity, the Captain of our salvation, the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, the Lord and Giver of life."—John Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement*, p. 171.

**5. Redemption from the Effect of the Fall.**—"Mormonism' accepts the doctrine of the fall, and the account of the transgression in Eden, as set forth in Genesis; but it affirms that none but Adam is or shall be answerable for Adam's disobedience; that mankind in general are absolutely absolved from responsibility for that 'original sin,' and that each shall account for his own transgressions alone; that the fall was foreknown of God, that it was turned to good effect by which the necessary condition of mortality should be inaugurated; and that a Redeemer was provided before the world was; that general salvation, in the sense of redemption from the effects of the fall, comes to all without their seeking it; but that individual salvation or rescue from the effects of personal sins is to be acquired by each for himself by faith and good works through the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ."—From the author's *Story and Philosophy of 'Mormonism,'* p. 111.

## CHAPTER 4. THE ANTEMORTAL GODSHIP OF CHRIST

It now becomes our purpose to inquire as to the position and status of Jesus the Christ in the antemortal world, from the period of the solemn council in heaven, in which He was chosen to be the future Savior and Redeemer of mankind, to the time at which He was born in the flesh.

We claim scriptural authority for the assertion that Jesus Christ was and is God the Creator, the God who revealed Himself to Adam, Enoch, and all the antediluvial patriarchs and prophets down to Noah; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the God of Israel as a united people, and the God of Ephraim and Judah after the disruption of the Hebrew nation; the God who made Himself known to the prophets from Moses to Malachi; the God of the Old Testament record; and the God of the Nephites. We affirm that Jesus Christ was and is Jehovah, the Eternal One.

The scriptures specify three personages in the Godhead; (1) God the Eternal Father, (2) His Son Jesus Christ, and (3) the Holy Ghost. These constitute the Holy Trinity, comprizing three physically separate and distinct individuals, who together constitute the presiding council of the heavens.<sup>67</sup> At least two of these appear as directing participants in the work of creation; this fact is instanced by the plurality expressed in Genesis: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"; and later, in the course of consultation concerning Adam's act of transgression, "the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us."<sup>68</sup> From the words of Moses, as revealed anew in the present dispensation, we learn more fully of the Gods who were actively engaged in the creation of this earth: "And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Then, further, with regard to the condition of Adam after the fall: "I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten: Behold, the man is become as one of us."<sup>69</sup> In the account of the creation recorded by Abraham, "the Gods" are repeatedly mentioned.<sup>70</sup>

As heretofore shown in another connection, the Father operated in the work of creation through the Son, who thus became the executive through whom the will, commandment, or word of the Father was put into effect. It is with incisive appropriateness therefore, that the Son, Jesus Christ, is designated by the apostle John as the Word; or as declared by the Father "the word of my power".<sup>71</sup> The part taken by Jesus Christ in the creation, a part so prominent as to justify our calling Him the Creator, is set forth in many scriptures. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers in this wise distinctively to the Father and the Son as separate though associated Beings: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."<sup>72</sup> Paul is even more explicit in his letter to the Colossians, wherein, speaking of Jesus the Son, he says: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."<sup>73</sup> And here let be repeated the testimony of John, that by the Word, "who was with God, and who was God even in the beginning, all things were made; and without him was not anything made that was made."<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> See "God and the Godhead," in the author's "Articles of Faith," lecture ii.

<sup>68</sup> Gen. 1:26; and 3:22.

<sup>69</sup> P. of G.P., Moses 2:26; and 4:28.

<sup>70</sup> P. of G.P., Abraham, chaps. 4 and 5.

<sup>71</sup> See page [10](#); John 1:1; and P. of G.P., Moses 1:32.

<sup>72</sup> Heb. 1:1, 2; see also 1 Cor. 8:6.

<sup>73</sup> Colos. 1:16, 17.

<sup>74</sup> John 1:1-3.

That the Christ who was to come was in reality God the Creator was revealed in plainness to the prophets on the western hemisphere. Samuel, the converted Lamanite, in preaching to the unbelieving Nephites justified his testimony as follows: "And also that ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things, from the beginning; and that ye might know of the signs of his coming, to the intent that ye might believe on his name."<sup>75</sup>

To these citations of ancient scripture may most properly be added the personal testimony of the Lord Jesus after He had become a resurrected Being. In His visitation to the Nephites He thus proclaimed Himself: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name."<sup>76</sup> To the Nephites, who failed to comprehend the relation between the gospel declared unto them by the Resurrected Lord, and the Mosaic law which they held traditionally to be in force, and who marveled at His saying that old things had passed away, He explained in this wise: "Behold I say unto you, that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel: therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end."<sup>77</sup>

Through revelation in the present or last dispensation the voice of Jesus Christ, the Creator of heaven and earth, has been heard anew: "Hearken, O ye people of my church to whom the kingdom has been given—hearken ye and give ear to him who laid the foundation of the earth, who made the heavens and all the hosts thereof, and by whom all things were made which live, and move, and have a being."<sup>78</sup> And again, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, who created the heavens and the earth; a light which cannot be hid in darkness."<sup>79</sup>

The divinity of Jesus Christ is indicated by the specific names and titles authoritatively applied to Him. According to man's judgment there may be but little importance attached to names; but in the nomenclature of the Gods every name is a title of power or station. God is righteously zealous of the sanctity of His own name<sup>80</sup> and of names given by His appointment. In the case of children of promise names have been prescribed before birth; this is true of our Lord Jesus and of the Baptist, John, who was sent to prepare the way for the Christ. Names of persons have been changed by divine direction, when not sufficiently definite as titles denoting the particular service to which the bearers were called, or the special blessings conferred upon them.<sup>81</sup>

*Jesus* is the individual name of the Savior, and as thus spelled is of Greek derivation; its Hebrew equivalent was *Yehoshua* or *Yeshua*, or, as we render it in English, *Joshua*. In the original the name was well understood as meaning "Help of Jehovah", or "Savior". Though as common an appellation as John or Henry or Charles today, the name was nevertheless divinely prescribed, as already stated. Thus, unto Joseph, the espoused husband of the Virgin, the angel said, "And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."<sup>82</sup>

*Christ* is a sacred title, and not an ordinary appellation or common name; it is of Greek derivation, and in meaning is identical with its Hebrew equivalent *Messiah* or *Messias*, signifying the *Anointed One*.<sup>83</sup> Other titles, each possessing a definitive meaning, such as *Emmanuel*, *Savior*, *Redeemer*, *Only Begotten Son*, *Lord*, *Son of God*, *Son of Man*, and many more, are of scriptural

---

<sup>75</sup> B. of M., Helaman 14:12; see also Mosiah 3:8; 4:2; Alma 11:39.

<sup>76</sup> B. of M., 3 Nephi 9:15.

<sup>77</sup> B. of M., 3 Nephi 15:4, 5.

<sup>78</sup> Doc. and Cov. 45:1.

<sup>79</sup> Doc. and Cov. 14:9; see also 29:1, 31; 76:24.

<sup>80</sup> Exo. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 5:11.

<sup>81</sup> [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>82</sup> Matt. 1:21; see also verses 23, 25; Luke 1:31.

<sup>83</sup> John 1:41; 4:25.

occurrence; the fact of main present importance to us is that these several titles are expressive of our Lord's divine origin and Godship. As seen, the essential names or titles of Jesus the Christ were made known before His birth, and were revealed to prophets who preceded Him in the mortal state.<sup>84</sup>

*Jehovah* is the Anglicized rendering of the Hebrew, *Yahveh* or *Jahveh*, signifying the *Self-existent One*, or *The Eternal*. This name is generally rendered in our English version of the Old Testament as LORD, printed in capitals.<sup>85</sup> The Hebrew, *Ehyeh*, signifying *I Am*, is related in meaning and through derivation with the term *Yahveh* or *Jehovah*; and herein lies the significance of this name by which the Lord revealed Himself to Moses when the latter received the commission to go into Egypt and deliver the children of Israel from bondage: "Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."<sup>86</sup> In the succeeding verse the Lord declares Himself to be "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." While Moses was in Egypt, the Lord further revealed Himself, saying "I am the LORD: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them."<sup>87</sup> The central fact connoted by this name, *I Am*, or *Jehovah*, the two having essentially the same meaning, is that of existence or duration that shall have no end, and which, judged by all human standards of reckoning, could have had no beginning; the name is related to such other titles as *Alpha and Omega*, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.<sup>88</sup>

Jesus, when once assailed with question and criticism from certain Jews who regarded their Abrahamic lineage as an assurance of divine preferment, met their abusive words with the declaration: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am".<sup>89</sup> The true significance of this saying would be more plainly expressed were the sentence punctuated and pointed as follows: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham, was I AM;" which means the same as had He said—Before Abraham, was I, Jehovah. The captious Jews were so offended at hearing Him use a name which, through an erroneous rendering of an earlier scripture,<sup>90</sup> they held was not to be uttered on pain of death, that they immediately took up stones with the intent of killing Him. The Jews regarded *Jehovah* as an ineffable name, not to be spoken; they substituted for it the sacred, though to them the not-forbidden name, *Adonai*, signifying *the Lord*. The original of the terms *Lord* and *God* as they appear in the Old Testament, was either *Yahveh* or *Adonai*; and the divine Being designated by these sacred names was, as shown by the scriptures cited, Jesus the Christ. John, evangelist and apostle, positively identifies Jesus Christ with *Adonai*, or the Lord who spoke through the voice of Isaiah,<sup>91</sup> and with *Jehovah* who spoke through *Zechariah*.<sup>92</sup>

The name *Elohim* is of frequent occurrence in the Hebrew texts of the Old Testament, though it is not found in our English versions. In form the word is a Hebrew plural noun;<sup>93</sup> but it connotes the plurality of excellence or intensity, rather than distinctively of number. It is expressive of supreme

---

<sup>84</sup> Luke 1:31; 2:21; Matt. 1:21, 25; see also verse 23 and compare Isa. 7:14; Luke 2:11. See further P. of G.P., Moses 6:51, 57; 7:20; 8:24. B. of M., 1 Nephi 10:4; 2 Nephi 10:3; Mosiah 3:8.

<sup>85</sup> The name appears thus in Gen. 2:5; see also Exo. 6:2-4; and read for comparison Gen. 17:1; 35:11.

<sup>86</sup> Exo. 3:13, 14; compare with respect to the fact of eternal duration expressed in this name, Isa. 44:6; John 8:58; Colos. 1:17; Heb. 13:8; Rev. 1:4; see also P. of G.P., Moses 1:3 and the references there given.

<sup>87</sup> Exo. 6:2, 3. [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>88</sup> Rev. 1:11, 17; 2:8; 22:13; compare Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12.

<sup>89</sup> John 8:58.

<sup>90</sup> Lev. 24:16. [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

<sup>91</sup> Isa. 6:8-11; and compare John 12:40, 41.

<sup>92</sup> Zech. 12:10; compare John 19:37.

<sup>93</sup> The singular, "Eloah," appears only in poetic usage.

or absolute exaltation and power. *Elohim*, as understood and used in the restored Church of Jesus Christ, is the name-title of God the Eternal Father, whose firstborn Son in the spirit is *Jehovah*—the Only Begotten in the flesh, Jesus Christ.

Jesus of Nazareth, who in solemn testimony to the Jews declared Himself the *I Am* or *Jehovah*, who was God before Abraham lived on earth, was the same Being who is repeatedly proclaimed as the God who made covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the God who led Israel from the bondage of Egypt to the freedom of the promised land, the one and only God known by direct and personal revelation to the Hebrew prophets in general.

The identity of Jesus Christ with the Jehovah of the Israelites was well understood by the Nephite prophets, and the truth of their teachings was confirmed by the risen Lord who manifested Himself unto them shortly after His ascension from the midst of the apostles at Jerusalem. This is the record: "And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying, Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world."<sup>94</sup>

It would appear unnecessary to cite at greater length in substantiating our affirmation that Jesus Christ was God even before He assumed a body of flesh. During that antemortal period there was essential difference between the Father and the Son, in that the former had already passed through the experiences of mortal life, including death and resurrection, and was therefore a Being possessed of a perfect, immortalized body of flesh and bones, while the Son was yet unembodied. Through His death and subsequent resurrection Jesus the Christ is today a Being like unto the Father in all essential characteristics.

A general consideration of scriptural evidence leads to the conclusion that God the Eternal Father has manifested Himself to earthly prophets or revelators on very few occasions, and then principally to attest the divine authority of His Son, Jesus Christ. As before shown, the Son was the active executive in the work of creation; throughout the creative scenes the Father appears mostly in a directing or consulting capacity. Unto Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Moses the Father revealed Himself, attesting the Godship of the Christ, and the fact that the Son was the chosen Savior of mankind.<sup>95</sup> On the occasion of the baptism of Jesus, the Father's voice was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased";<sup>96</sup> and at the transfiguration a similar testimony was given by the Father.<sup>97</sup> On an occasion yet later, while Jesus prayed in anguish of soul, submitting Himself that the Father's purposes be fulfilled and the Father's name glorified, "Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."<sup>98</sup> The resurrected and glorified Christ was announced by the Father to the Nephites on the western hemisphere, in these words: "Behold my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name: hear ye him."<sup>99</sup> From the time of the occurrence last noted, the voice of the Father was not heard again among men, so far as the scriptures aver, until the spring of 1820, when both the Father and the Son ministered unto the prophet Joseph Smith, the Father saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear him!"<sup>100</sup> These are the instances of record in which the Eternal Father has been manifest in personal utterance

---

<sup>94</sup> B. of M., 3 Nephi 11:13, 14; also 1 Nephi 17:40 and observe from verse 30 that the Redeemer is here spoken of as the God who delivered Israel. See further Mosiah 7:19. [Chapter 39](#) herein.

<sup>95</sup> P. of G.P., Moses 1:6, 31-33; 2:1, 4-2, 3; 6:57; compare 7:35, 39, 47, 53-59; 8:16, 19, 23, 24; Abraham 3:22-28. See [chapter 5](#) herein.

<sup>96</sup> Matt. 3:17; also Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22.

<sup>97</sup> Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:35.

<sup>98</sup> John 12:28.

<sup>99</sup> B. of M., 3 Nephi 11:7.

<sup>100</sup> P. of G.P. Joseph Smith 2:17.

or other revelation to man apart from the Son. God the Creator, the Jehovah of Israel, the Savior and Redeemer of all nations, kindreds and tongues, are the same, and He is Jesus the Christ.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

**1. Names Given of God.**—The significance of names when given of God finds illustration in many scriptural instances. The following are examples: "Jesus" meaning *Savior* (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31); "John," signifying *Jehovah's gift*, specifically applied to the Baptist, who was sent to earth to prepare the way for Jehovah's coming in the flesh (Luke 1:13); "Ishmael," signifying *God shall hear him* (Gen. 16:11); "Isaac," meaning *laughter* (Gen. 17:19, compare 18:10-15). As instances of names changed by divine authority to express added blessings, or special callings, consider the following: "Abram," which connoted *nobility* or *exaltation* and as usually rendered, *father of elevation*, was changed to "Abraham," *father of a multitude* which expressed the reason for the change as given at the time thereof, "for a father of many nations have I made thee" (Gen. 17:5). "Sarai," the name of Abraham's wife, and of uncertain distinctive meaning, was substituted by "Sarah" which signified *the princess* (Gen 17:15). "Jacob," a name given to the son of Isaac with reference to a circumstance attending his birth, and signifying *a supplanter*, was superseded by "Israel" meaning *a soldier of God, a prince of God*; as expressed in the words effecting the change, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." (Gen. 32:28; compare 35:9, 10.) "Simon," meaning *a hearer*, the name of the man who became the chief apostle of Jesus Christ, was changed by the Lord to "Cephas" (Aramaic) or "Peter" (Greek) meaning *a rock* (John 1:42; Matt 16:18; Luke 6:14). On James and John the sons of Zebedee, the Lord conferred the name or title "Boanerges" meaning *sons of thunder* (Mark 3:17).

The following is an instructive excerpt: "*Name* in the scriptures not only = that by which a person is designated, but frequently = all that is known to belong to the person having this designation, and the person himself. Thus 'the name of God' or 'of Jehovah,' etc., indicates His authority (Deut. 18:20; Matt. 21:9, etc.), His dignity and glory (Isa. 48:9, etc.), His protection and favor (Prov. 18:10, etc.), His character (Exo. 34:5, 14, compare 6, 7, etc.), His divine attributes in general (Matt. 6:9, etc.), etc. The Lord is said to set or put His name where the revelation or manifestation of His perfections is made (Deut. 12:5, 14:24, etc.). To believe in or on the name of Christ is to receive and treat Him in accordance with the revelation which the scriptures make of Him (John 1:12; 2:23), etc."—Smith's *Comprehensive Dictionary of the Bible*, article "Name."

**2. Jesus Christ, the God of Israel.**—"That Jesus Christ was the same Being who called Abraham from his native country, who led Israel out of the land of Egypt with mighty miracles and wonders, who made known to them His law amid the thunderings of Sinai, who delivered them from their enemies, who chastened them for their disobedience, who inspired their prophets, and whose glory filled Solomon's temple, is evident from all the inspired writings, and in none more so than in the Bible.

"His lamentation over Jerusalem evidences that, in His humanity, He had not forgotten His former exalted position: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together ... and ye would not!' (Matt. 23:37). It was this Creator of the world, this mighty Ruler, this Controller of the destinies of the human family, who, in His last moments, cried out in the agony of His soul, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" (Mark 15:34.)—From *Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel*, by Franklin D. Richards and James A. Little.

**3. "Jehovah" a Name Not Uttered by the Jews.**—Long prior to the time of Christ, certain schools among the Jews, ever intent on the observance of the letter of the law, though not without disregard of its spirit, had taught that the mere utterance of the name of God was blasphemous, and that the sin of so doing constituted a capital offense. This extreme conception arose from the accepted though uninspired interpretation of Lev. 24:16, "And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger,

as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death." We take the following from Smith's *Comprehensive Dictionary of the Bible*, article "Jehovah": "The true pronunciation of this name, [Yehovah] by which God was known to the Hebrews, has been entirely lost, the Jews themselves scrupulously avoiding every mention of it, and substituting in its stead one or other of the words with whose proper vowel-points it may happen to be written [*Adonai*, Lord, or *Elohim*, God].... According to Jewish tradition it was pronounced but once a year by the high priest on the day of atonement when he entered the Holy of Holies; but on this point there is some doubt."

## **CHAPTER 5.**

### **EARTHLY ADVENT OF THE CHRIST PREDICTED**

The coming of Christ to earth to tabernacle in the flesh was no unexpected or unheralded event. For centuries prior to the great occurrence the Jews had professed to be looking for the advent of their King; and, in the appointed ceremonials of worship as in private devotions, the coming of the promised Messiah was prominent as a matter of the supplication of Israel to Jehovah. True, there was much diversity in lay opinion and in rabbinical exposition as to the time and manner of His appearing; but the certainty thereof was fundamentally established in the beliefs and hopes of the Hebrew nation.

The records known to us as the books of the Old Testament, together with other inspired writings once regarded as authentic but excluded from later compilations as not strictly canonical, were current among the Hebrews at and long before the time of Christ's birth. These scriptures had their beginning in the proclamation of the law through Moses,<sup>101</sup> who wrote the same, and delivered the writing into the official custody of the priests with an express command that it be read in the assemblies of the people at stated times. To these earlier writings were added the utterances of divinely commissioned prophets, the records of appointed historians, and the songs of inspired poets, as the centuries passed; so that at the time of our Lord's ministry the Jews possessed a great accumulation of writings accepted and revered by them as authoritative.<sup>102</sup> These records are rich in prediction and promise respecting the earthly advent of the Messiah, as are other scriptures to which the Israel of old had not access.

Adam, the patriarch of the race, rejoiced in the assurance of the Savior's appointed ministry, through the acceptance of which, he, the transgressor, might gain redemption. Brief mention of the plan of salvation, the author of which is Jesus Christ, appears in the promise given of God following the fall—that though the devil, represented by the serpent in Eden, should have power to bruise the heel of Adam's posterity, through the seed of the woman should come the power to bruise the adversary's head.<sup>103</sup> It is significant that this assurance of eventual victory over sin and its inevitable effect, death, both of which were introduced to earth through Satan the arch-enemy of mankind, was to be realized through the offspring of woman; the promise was not made specifically to the man, nor to the pair. The only instance of offspring from woman dissociated from mortal fatherhood is the birth of Jesus the Christ, who was the earthly Son of a mortal mother, begotten by an immortal Father. He is the Only Begotten of the Eternal Father in the flesh, and was born of woman.

Through scriptures other than those embodied in the Old Testament we learn with greater fulness of the revelations of God to Adam respecting the coming of the Redeemer. As a natural and inevitable result of his disobedience, Adam had forfeited the high privilege he once enjoyed—that of holding direct and personal association with his God; nevertheless in his fallen state he was visited by an angel of the Lord, who revealed unto him the plan of redemption: "And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son for evermore. And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father

---

<sup>101</sup> Deut. 31:9, 24-26; compare 17:18-20.

<sup>102</sup> "Articles of Faith," xiii:7-10.

<sup>103</sup> Gen. 3:15; compare Heb. 2:14; Rev. 12:9; 20:3.

from the beginning, henceforth and for ever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will."<sup>104</sup>

The Lord's revelation to Adam making known the ordained plan whereby the Son of God was to take upon Himself flesh in the meridian of time, and become the Redeemer of the world, was attested by Enoch, son of Jared and father of Methuselah. From the words of Enoch we learn that to him as to his great progenitor, Adam, the very name by which the Savior would be known among men was revealed—"which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men."<sup>105</sup> The recorded covenant of God with Abraham, and the reiteration and confirmation thereof with Isaac and in turn with Jacob—that through their posterity should all nations of the earth be blessed—presaged the birth of the Redeemer through that chosen lineage.<sup>106</sup> Its fulfilment is the blessed heritage of the ages.

In pronouncing his patriarchal blessing upon the head of Judah, Jacob prophesied: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."<sup>107</sup> That by Shiloh is meant the Christ is evidenced by the fulfilment of the conditions set forth in the prediction, in the state of the Jewish nation at the time of our Lord's birth.<sup>108</sup>

Moses proclaimed the coming of a great Prophet in Israel, whose ministry was to be of such importance that all men who would not accept Him would be under condemnation; and that this prediction had sole reference to Jesus Christ is conclusively shown by later scriptures. Thus spake the Lord unto Moses: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."<sup>109</sup> The system of sacrifice expressly enjoined in the Mosaic code was essentially a prototype of the sacrificial death to be accomplished by the Savior on Calvary. The blood of countless altar victims, slain by Israel's priests in the course of prescribed ritual, ran throughout the centuries from Moses to Christ as a prophetic flood in similitude of the blood of the Son of God appointed to be shed as an expiatory sacrifice for the redemption of the race. But, as already shown, the institution of bloody sacrifice as a type of the future death of Jesus Christ dates from the beginning of human history; since the offering of animal sacrifices through the shedding of blood was required of Adam, to whom the significance of the ordinance, as "a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father", was expressly defined.<sup>110</sup>

The paschal lamb, slain for every Israelitish household at the annually recurring feast of the Passover, was a particular type of the Lamb of God who in due time would be slain for the sins of the world. The crucifixion of Christ was effected at the Passover season; and the consummation of the supreme Sacrifice, of which the paschal lambs had been but lesser prototypes, led Paul the apostle to affirm in later times: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."<sup>111</sup>

Job in the day of dire affliction rejoiced in his testimony of the coming Messiah, and declared with prophetic conviction: "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day

---

<sup>104</sup> P. of G.P., Moses 5:6-9. [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>105</sup> P. of G.P., Moses 6:52; study paragraphs 50-56; see also Gen. 5:18, 21-24; Jude 14. [Note 4](#), end of chapter.

<sup>106</sup> Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; compare Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8.

<sup>107</sup> Gen. 49:10.

<sup>108</sup> [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>109</sup> Deut. 18:15-19; compare John 1:45; Acts 3:22; 7:37; see also a specific confirmation by our Lord after His resurrection, 3 Nephi 20:23.

<sup>110</sup> [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>111</sup> 1 Cor. 5:7. For references to Christ as the Lamb of God, see John 1:29, 36; 1 Peter 1:19; Rev. chaps. 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22; also B. of M., 1 Nephi 10:10, and chaps. 11, 12, 13, 14; 2 Nephi 31:4, 5, 6; 33:14; Alma 7:14; Mormon 9:2, 3; Doc. and Cov. 58:11; 132:19.

upon the earth."<sup>112</sup> The songs of David the psalmist abound in oft-recurring allusion to the earthly life of Christ, many circumstances of which are described in detail, and, as to these, corroboration of the utterances is found in New Testament scriptures.<sup>113</sup>

Isaiah, whose prophetic office was honored by the personal testimony of Christ and the apostles, manifested in numerous passages the burden of his conviction relating to the great event of the Savior's advent and ministry on earth. With the forcefulness of direct revelation he told of the Virgin's divine maternity, whereof Immanuel should be born, and his prediction was reiterated by the angel of the Lord, over seven centuries later.<sup>114</sup> Looking down through the ages the prophet saw the accomplishment of the divine purposes as if already achieved, and sang in triumph: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever."<sup>115</sup>

Immediately prior to its fulfilment, the blessed promise was repeated by Gabriel, sent from the presence of God to the chosen Virgin of Nazareth.<sup>116</sup> As made known to the prophet and by him proclaimed, the coming Lord was the living Branch that should spring from the undying root typified in the family of Jesse;<sup>117</sup> the foundation Stone insuring the stability of Zion;<sup>118</sup> the Shepherd of the house of Israel;<sup>119</sup> the Light of the world,<sup>120</sup> to Gentile as well as Jew; the Leader and Commander of His people.<sup>121</sup> The same inspired voice predicted the forerunner who should cry in the wilderness: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."<sup>122</sup>

Isaiah was permitted to read the scroll of futurity as to many distinguishing conditions to attend the Messiah's lowly life and atoning death. In Him the prophet saw One who would be despized and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, One to be wounded and bruised for the transgressions of the race, on whom would be laid the iniquity of us all—a patient and willing Sacrifice, silent under affliction, as a lamb brought to the slaughter. The Lord's dying with sinners, and His burial in the tomb of the wealthy were likewise declared with prophetic certainty.<sup>123</sup>

Unto Jeremiah came the word of the Lord in terms of plainness, declaring the sure advent of the King by whom the safety of both Judah and Israel should be assured,<sup>124</sup> the Prince of the House of David, through whom the divine promise to the son of Jesse should be realized.<sup>125</sup> Under the same spirit prophesied Ezekiel,<sup>126</sup> Hosea,<sup>127</sup> and Micah.<sup>128</sup> Zechariah broke off in the midst of

<sup>112</sup> Job 19:25; see also verses 26-27.

<sup>113</sup> Instances: Psalm 2:7; compare Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5. Psa. 16:10; compare Acts 13:34-37. Psa. 22:18; compare Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24. Psa. 41:9; compare John 13:18. Psa. 69:9 and 21; compare Matt. 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23; John 19:29; and John 2:17. Psa. 110:1 and 4; compare Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44; and Heb. 5:6. Psa. 118:22, 23; compare Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4, 7. The following are known specifically as Messianic Psalms: 2, 21, 22, 45, 67, 69, 89, 96, 110, 132; in them the psalmist extols in poetic measure the excellencies of the Messiah, and the certainty of His coming.

<sup>114</sup> Isa. 7:14; compare Matt. 1:21-23.

<sup>115</sup> Isa. 9:6,7.

<sup>116</sup> Luke 1:26-33.

<sup>117</sup> Isa. 11:1 and 10; compare Rom. 15:12; Rev. 5:5; 22:16; see also Jer. 23:5, 6.

<sup>118</sup> Isa. 28:16; compare Psa. 118:22; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; 10:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6-8.

<sup>119</sup> Isa. 40:9-11; compare John 10:11, 14; Heb. 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; see also Ezek. 34:23.

<sup>120</sup> Isa. 42:1; see also 9:2; 49:6; 60:3; compare Matt. 4:14-16; Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; 26:18; Eph. 5:8, 14.

<sup>121</sup> Isa. 55:4; compare John 18:37.

<sup>122</sup> Isa. 40:3; compare Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23.

<sup>123</sup> Isa. 53; study the entire chapter; compare Acts 8:32-35.

<sup>124</sup> Jer. 23:5, 6; see also 33:14-16.

<sup>125</sup> Jer. 30:9.

<sup>126</sup> Ezek. 34:23; 37:24, 25.

fateful prediction to voice the glad song of thanksgiving and praise as he beheld in vision the simple pageantry of the King's triumphal entry into the city of David.<sup>129</sup> Then the prophet bewailed the grief of the conscience-smitten nation, by whom, as was foreseen, the Savior of humankind would be pierced, even unto death;<sup>130</sup> and showed that, when subdued by contrition His own people would ask, "What are these wounds in thy hands?", the Lord would answer: "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."<sup>131</sup> The very price to be paid for the betrayal of the Christ to His death was foretold as in parable.<sup>132</sup>

The fact, that these predictions of the Old Testament prophets had reference to Jesus Christ and to Him only, is put beyond question by the attestation of the resurrected Lord. To the assembled apostles He said: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."<sup>133</sup>

John the Baptist, whose ministry immediately preceded that of the Christ, proclaimed the coming of One mightier than himself, One who should baptize with the Holy Ghost, and specifically identified Jesus of Nazareth as that One, the Son of God, the Lamb who should assume the burden of the world's sins.<sup>134</sup>

The predictions thus far cited as relating to the life, ministry, and death of the Lord Jesus, are the utterances of prophets who, excepting Adam and Enoch, lived and died on the eastern hemisphere. All save John the Baptist are of Old Testament record, and he, a contemporary of the Christ in mortality, figures in the early chapters of the Gospels. It is important to know that the scriptures of the western hemisphere are likewise explicit in the declaration of the great truth that the Son of God would be born in the flesh. The Book of Mormon contains a history of a colony of Israelites, of the tribe of Joseph, who left Jerusalem 600 B.C., during the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, on the eve of the subjugation of Judea by Nebuchadnezzar and the inauguration of the Babylonian captivity. This colony was led by divine guidance to the American continent, whereon they developed into a numerous and mighty people; though, divided by dissension, they formed two opposing nations known respectively as Nephites and Lamanites. The former cultivated the arts of industry and refinement, and preserved a record embodying both history and scripture, while the latter became degenerate and debased. The Nephites suffered extinction about 400 A.D., but the Lamanites lived on in their degraded course, and are today extant upon the land as the American Indians.<sup>135</sup>

The Nephite annals from the beginning thereof down to the time of our Lord's birth abound in prediction and promise of the Christ; and this chronicle is followed by a record of the actual visitation of the resurrected Savior to the Nephites, and the establishment of His Church among them. Unto Lehi, the leader of the colony, the Lord revealed the time, place, and manner of Christ's then future advent, together with many important facts of His ministry, and the preparatory work of John the forerunner. This revelation was given while the company was journeying in the wilderness of Arabia, prior to their crossing the great waters. The prophecy is thus written by Nephi, a son of Lehi and his successor in the prophetic calling: "Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father

---

<sup>127</sup> Hos. 11:11; compare Matt. 2:15.

<sup>128</sup> Mic. 5:2; compare Matt 2:6; John 7:42.

<sup>129</sup> Zech. 9:9; compare Matt. 21:4-9.

<sup>130</sup> Zech. 12:10; compare John 19:37.

<sup>131</sup> Zech. 13:6.

<sup>132</sup> Zech. 11:12, 13; compare Matt. 26:15; 27:3-10.

<sup>133</sup> Luke 24:44, 46; see also verses 25-27.

<sup>134</sup> Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:15, 26, 27, 29-36; see also Acts 1:5, 8; 11:16; 19:4.

<sup>135</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews; even a Messiah; or, in other words, a Savior of the world. And he also spake concerning the prophets, how great a number had testified of these things concerning this Messiah, of whom he had spoken, or this Redeemer of the world. Wherefore all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be, save they should rely on this Redeemer. And he spake also concerning a prophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord; yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. And much spake my father concerning this thing. And my father said he should baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; and he also said he should baptize with water; even that he should baptize the Messiah with water. And after he had baptized the Messiah with water, he should behold and bear record, that he had baptized the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world. And it came to pass after my father had spoken these words, he spake unto my brethren concerning the gospel which should be preached among the Jews; and also concerning the dwindling of the Jews in unbelief. And after they had slain the Messiah, who should come, and after he had been slain, he should rise from the dead, and should make himself manifest, by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles."<sup>136</sup>

At a later time Nephi writes, not as his father's scribe, but as a prophet and revelator voicing the word of God as made known to himself. He was permitted to behold in vision and to declare to his people the circumstances of the Messiah's birth, His baptism by John and the ministration of the Holy Ghost with its accompanying sign of the dove; he beheld our Lord moving as a Teacher of righteousness among the people, healing the afflicted and rebuking spirits of evil; he saw and bore record of the dread scenes of Calvary; he beheld and predicted the calling of the chosen Twelve, the apostles of the Lamb, for so these were designated by Him who vouchsafed the vision. Moreover he told of the iniquity of the Jews, who were seen in contention with the apostles; and thus concludes the portentous prophecy: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying, Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb."<sup>137</sup> Soon after the defection whereby the distinction between Nephites and Lamanites was established, Jacob, a brother of Nephi, continued in prophecy of the assured coming of the Messiah, specifically declaring that He would minister at Jerusalem and affirming the necessity of His atoning death as the ordained means of human redemption.<sup>138</sup> The prophet Abinadi, in his fearless denunciation of sin to the wicked king Noah, preached the Christ who was to come;<sup>139</sup> and righteous Benjamin, who was at once prophet and king, proclaimed the same great truth to his people about 125 B.C. So taught Alma<sup>140</sup> in his inspired admonition to his wayward son, Corianton; and so also Amulek<sup>141</sup> in his contention with Zeezrom. So proclaimed the Lamanite prophet, Samuel, only five years prior to the actual occurrence; furthermore he specified the signs by which the birth of Jesus in Judea would be made known to the people of the western world. Said he: "Behold, I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name. And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day, therefore there shall be one day and a night, and a day, as if it were one day, and there were no night; and this shall be unto you for a sign; for ye shall know of the rising of the sun, and also of its setting; therefore they

---

<sup>136</sup> B. of M., 1 Nephi 10:4-11.

<sup>137</sup> B. of M., 1 Nephi chapters 11 and 12; see also 19:10.

<sup>138</sup> B. of M., 2 Nephi 9:5, 6; 10:3. See also Nephi's prophecy 25:12-14; and [chap. 26](#).

<sup>139</sup> B. of M., Mosiah 13:33-35; 15:1-13.

<sup>140</sup> B. of M., Alma 39:15; 40:1-3.

<sup>141</sup> B. of M., Alma 11:31-44.

shall know of a surety that there shall be two days and a night; nevertheless the night shall not be darkened; and it shall be the night before he is born. And behold there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld; and this also shall be a sign unto you. And behold this is not all, there shall be many signs and wonders in heaven."<sup>142</sup>

Thus the scriptures of both hemispheres and in all ages of ante-meridian time bore solemn testimony to the certainty of Messiah's advent; thus the holy prophets of old voiced the word of revelation predicting the coming of the world's King and Lord, through whom alone is salvation provided, and redemption from death made sure. It is a characteristic of prophets sent of God that they possess and proclaim a personal assurance of the Christ, "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."<sup>143</sup> Not a word of inspired prophecy relating to the great event has been found void. The literal fulfilment of the predictions is ample attestation of their origin in divine revelation, and proof conclusive of the divinity of Him whose coming was so abundantly foretold.

---

<sup>142</sup> B. of M., Helaman 14:1-6; compare 3 Nephi 1:4-21.

<sup>143</sup> Rev. 19:10.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

**1. The Antiquity of Sacrifice as a Prototype of Christ's Atoning Death.**—While the Biblical record expressly attests the offering of sacrifices long prior to Israel's exodus from Egypt—e.g. by Abel and by Cain (Gen. 4:3, 4); by Noah after the deluge (Gen. 8:20); by Abraham (Gen. 22:2, 13); by Jacob (Gen. 31:54; 46:1)—it is silent concerning the divine origin of sacrifice as a propitiatory requirement prefiguring the atoning death of Jesus Christ. The difficulty of determining time and circumstance, under which the offering of symbolical sacrifices originated amongst mankind, is recognized by all investigators save those who admit the validity of modern revelation. The necessity of assuming early instruction from God to man on the subject has been asserted by many Bible scholars. Thus, the writer of the article "Sacrifice" in the *Cassell Bible Dictionary* says: "The idea of sacrifice is prominent throughout the scriptures, and one of the most ancient and widely recognized in the rites of religion throughout the world. There is also a remarkable similarity in the developments and applications of the idea. On these and other accounts it has been judiciously inferred that sacrifice formed an element in the primeval worship of man; and that its universality is not merely an indirect argument for the unity of the human race, but an illustration and confirmation of the first inspired pages of the world's history. The notion of sacrifice can hardly be viewed as a product of unassisted human nature, and must therefore be traced to a higher source and viewed as a divine revelation to primitive man."

Smith's *Dic. of the Bible* presents the following: "In tracing the history of sacrifice from its first beginning to its perfect development in the Mosaic ritual, we are at once met by the long-disputed question as to the origin of sacrifice, whether it arose from a natural instinct of man, sanctioned and guided by God, or was the subject of some distinct primeval revelation. There can be no doubt that sacrifice was sanctioned by God's Law, with a special, typical reference to the Atonement of Christ; its universal prevalence, independent of, and often opposed to, man's natural reasonings on his relation to God, shows it to have been primeval, and deeply rooted in the instincts of humanity. Whether it was first enjoined by an external command, or was based on that sense of sin and lost communion with God, which is stamped by His hand on the heart of man—is an historical question, perhaps insoluble."

The difficulty vanishes, and the "historical question" as to the origin of sacrifice is definitely solved by the revelations of God in the current dispensation, whereby parts of the record of Moses—not contained in the Bible—have been restored to human knowledge. The scripture quoted in the text (pp. 43, 44) makes clear the fact that the offering of sacrifices was required of Adam after his transgression, and that the significance of the divinely established requirement was explained in fulness to the patriarch of the race. The shedding of the blood of animals in sacrifice to God, as a prototype "of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father," dates from the time immediately following the fall. Its origin is based on a specific revelation to Adam. See P. of G.P., Moses 5:5-8.

**2. Jacob's Prophecy Concerning "Shiloh."**—The prediction of the patriarch Jacob—that the sceptre should not depart from Judah before the coming of Shiloh—has given rise to much disputation among Bible students. Some insist that "Shiloh" is the name of a place and not that of a person. That there was a place known by that name is beyond question (see Josh. 18:1; 19:51; 21:2; 22:9; 1 Sam. 1:3; Jer. 7:12); but the name occurring in Gen. 49:10 is plainly that of a person. It should be known that the use of the word in the King James or authorized version of the Bible is held to be correct by many eminent authorities. Thus, in Dummelow's *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, we read: "This verse has always been regarded by both Jews and Christians as a remarkable prophecy of the coming of the Messiah.... On the rendering given above, the whole verse foretells that Judah would retain authority until the advent of the rightful ruler, the Messiah, to whom all peoples would gather. And, broadly speaking, it may be said that the last traces of Jewish legislative power (as vested in the Sanhedrin)

did not disappear until the coming of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem, from which time His kingdom was set up among men."

Adam Clarke, in his exhaustive Bible Commentary, briefly analyzes the objections urged against the admissibility of this passage as applying to the Messiah's advent, and dismisses them all as unfounded. His conclusion as to the meaning of the passage is thus worded: "Judah shall continue a distinct tribe until the Messiah shall come; and it did so; and after His coming it was confounded with the others, so that all distinction has been ever since lost."

Prof. Douglas, as cited in Smith's Dictionary, "claims that something of Judah's sceptre still remained, a total eclipse being no proof that the day is at an end—that the proper fulfilment of the prophecy did not begin till David's time, and is consummated in Christ according to Luke 1:32, 33."

The accepted meaning of the word by derivation is "Peaceable," and this is applicable to the attributes of the Christ, who in Isa. 9:6, is designated the Prince of Peace.

Eusebius, who lived between 260 and 339 A.D., and is known in ecclesiastical history as Bishop of Cæsarea, wrote: "At the time that Herod was king, who was the first foreigner that reigned over the Jewish people, the prophecy recorded by Moses received its fulfilment, viz. 'That a prince should not fail of Judah, nor a ruler from his loins, until He should come for whom it is reserved, the expectation of nations.'" (The quoted passage is founded on the Septuagint rendering of Genesis 49:10).

Some critics have held that in Jacob's use of the word "Shiloh" he did not intend it as a name or proper noun at all. The writer of the article "Shiloh" in Cassell's *Bible Dictionary* says: "The preponderance of evidence is in favor of the Messianic interpretation, but opinions are very divided respecting the retention of the word 'Shiloh' as a proper name.... Notwithstanding all the objections that are urged against it being so regarded, we are of the opinion that it is rightly considered to be a proper name, and that the English version represents the true sense of the passage. We recommend those who wish to enter more fully into a question which cannot well be discussed without Hebrew criticism, to the excellent notes upon Gen. 49:10 in the 'Commentary on the Pentateuch' by Keil and Delitzsch. Here the text is thus rendered: 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, till Shiloh come, and the willing obedience of the nations be to him.'

"Notwithstanding the slight put upon the Messianic interpretation by some writers, even those from whom we should scarcely expect it, we see this explanation confirmed and not weakened in the events of history. The text is not taken to mean that Judah should at no time be without a royal ruler of his own, but that the regal power should not finally cease from Judah until Shiloh had come. The objections founded on the Babylonian captivity, and similar intermissions, are of no force, because it is the complete and final termination which is pointed out, and that only happened after the time of Christ." See further *The Book of Prophecy*, by G. Smith, LL.D., p. 320. See also *Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel*, by Franklin D. Richards and James A. Little, article "Christ's First Coming."

**3. Nephites and Lamanites.**—The progenitors of the Nephite nation were led from Jerusalem, 600 B.C., by Lehi, a Jewish prophet of the tribe of Manasseh. His immediate family, at the time of their departure from Jerusalem, comprized his wife Sariah, and their sons, Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi; at a later stage of the history, daughters are mentioned, but whether any of these were born before the family exodus we are not told. Beside his own family, the colony of Lehi included Zoram, and Ishmael, the latter an Israelite of the tribe of Ephraim. Ishmael, with his family, joined Lehi in the wilderness; and his descendants were numbered with the nation of whom we are speaking. The company journeyed somewhat east of south, keeping near the borders of the Red Sea; then, changing their course to the eastward, crossed the peninsula of Arabia; and there, on the shores of the Arabian Sea, built and provisioned a vessel in which they committed themselves to divine care upon the waters. Their voyage carried them eastward across the Indian Ocean, then over the south Pacific Ocean to the western coast of South America, whereon they landed (590 B.C.).... The people established themselves on what to them was the land of promise; many children were born, and in the course of a few generations a numerous posterity held possession of the land. After the death

of Lehi, a division occurred, some of the people accepting as their leader, Nephi, who had been duly appointed to the prophetic office; while the rest proclaimed Laman, the eldest of Lehi's sons, as their chief. Henceforth the divided people were known as Nephites and Lamanites respectively. At times they observed toward each other fairly friendly relations; but generally they were opposed, the Lamanites manifesting implacable hatred and hostility toward their Nephite kindred. The Nephites advanced in the arts of civilization, built large cities and established prosperous commonwealths; yet they often fell into transgression; and the Lord chastened them by allowing their foes to become victorious. They spread northward, occupying the northern part of South America; then, crossing the Isthmus, they extended their domain over the southern, central and eastern portions of what is now the United States of America. The Lamanites, while increasing in numbers, fell under the curse of darkness; they became dark in skin and benighted in spirit, forgot the God of their fathers, lived a wild nomadic life, and degenerated into the fallen state in which the American Indians—their lineal descendants—were found by those who rediscovered the western continent in later times. See the author's *Articles of Faith* xiv:7, 8.

**4. The First Gospel Dispensation.**—The gospel of Jesus Christ was revealed to Adam. Faith in God the Eternal Father, and in His Son the Savior of Adam and all his posterity, repentance of sin, water baptism by immersion, and the reception of the Holy Ghost as a divine bestowal were proclaimed in the beginning of human history as the essentials to salvation. The following scriptures attest this fact. "And thus the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice and by the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Moses 5:58). The prophet Enoch thus testified: "But God hath made known unto our fathers that all men must repent. And he called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh. And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you" (Moses 6:50-52; read also 53-61). "And now, behold, I say unto you: This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time" (62). "And it came to pass, when the Lord had spoken with Adam, our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water. And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit and became quickened in the inner man. And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and for ever" (64-66). Compare Doc. and Cov 29:42.

## CHAPTER 6. THE MERIDIAN OF TIME

Unto Moses, with whom the Lord spake "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend,"<sup>144</sup> the course of the human race, both as then past and future, was made known; and the coming of the Redeemer was recognized by him as the event of greatest import in all the happenings to which the earth and its inhabitants would be witness. The curse of God had aforesaid fallen upon the wicked, and upon the earth because of them, "For they would not hearken unto his voice, nor believe on his Only Begotten Son, even him whom he declared should come in the meridian of time, who was prepared from before the foundation of the world."<sup>145</sup> In this scripture appears the earliest mention of the expressive and profoundly significant designation of the period in which the Christ should appear—the meridian of time. If the expression be regarded as figurative, be it remembered the figure is the Lord's.

The term "meridian", as commonly used, conveys the thought of a principal division of time or space<sup>146</sup> thus we speak of the hours before the daily noon as ante-meridian (a.m.) and those after noon as post-meridian (p.m.). So the years and the centuries of human history are divided by the great event of the birth of Jesus Christ. The years preceding that epoch-making occurrence are now designated as time *Before Christ* (B.C.); while subsequent years are each specified as a certain *Year of our Lord*, or, as in the Latin tongue, *Anno Domini* (A.D.). Thus the world's chronology has been adjusted and systematized with reference to the time of the Savior's birth; and this method of reckoning is in use among all Christian nations. It is instructive to note that a similar system was adopted by the isolated branch of the house of Israel that had been brought from the land of Palestine to the western continent; for from the appearance of the promised sign among the people betokening the birth of Him who had been so abundantly predicted by their prophets, the Nephite reckoning of the years, starting with the departure of Lehi and his colony from Jerusalem, was superseded by the annals of the new era.<sup>147</sup>

The occasion of the Savior's advent was preappointed; and the time thereof was specifically revealed through authorized prophets on each of the hemispheres. The long history of the Israelitish nation had unfolded a succession of events that found a relative culmination in the earthly mission of the Messiah. That we may the better comprehend the true significance of the Lord's life and ministry while in the flesh, some consideration should be given to the political, social, and religious condition of the people amongst whom He appeared and with whom He lived and died. Such consideration involves at least a brief review of the antecedent history of the Hebrew nation. The posterity of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob had early come to be known by the title in which they took undying pride and found inspiring promise, Israelites, or the children of Israel.<sup>148</sup> Collectively they were so designated throughout the dark days of their bondage in Egypt;<sup>149</sup> so during the four decades of the exodus and the return to the land of promise,<sup>150</sup> and on through the period of their prosperity as a

---

<sup>144</sup> Exo. 33:11; see also Numb. 12:8; Deut. 34:10; compare P. of G.P., Moses 1:2, 11, 31.

<sup>145</sup> P. of G.P., Moses 5:57; for later mention of the "meridian of time," see 6:56-62; and 7:46; and compare Doc. and Cov. 20:26; 39:3.

<sup>146</sup> "Meridian: ... figuratively, the highest point or culminating-point of anything; the zenith; as the meridian of life."—"New Stand. Dict."

<sup>147</sup> B. of M., 3 Nephi 2:8; compare 4 Nephi 1:1, 21; Mormon 8:6; Moroni 10:1.

<sup>148</sup> Gen. 32:28; 35:10.

<sup>149</sup> Exo. 1:1, 7; 9:6, 7; 12:3, etc.

<sup>150</sup> Exo. 12:35, 40; 13:19; 15:1; Numb. 20:1, 19, 24, etc.

mighty people under the administration of the judges, and as a united monarchy during the successive reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon.<sup>151</sup>

Immediately following the death of Solomon, about 975 B.C. according to the most generally accepted chronology, the nation was disrupted by revolt. The tribe of Judah, part of the tribe of Benjamin, and small remnants of a few other tribes remained true to the royal succession, and accepted Rehoboam, son of Solomon, as their king; while the rest, usually spoken of as the Ten Tribes, broke their allegiance to the house of David, and made Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, their king. The Ten Tribes retained the title Kingdom of Israel though also known as Ephraim.<sup>152</sup> Rehoboam and his adherents were distinctively called the Kingdom of Judah. For about two hundred and fifty years the two kingdoms maintained their separate autonomy; then, about 722 or 721 B.C., the independent status of the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and the captive people were transported to Assyria by Shalmanezar and others. Subsequently they disappeared so completely as to be called the Lost Tribes. The Kingdom of Judah was recognized as a nation for about one hundred and thirty years longer; then, about 588 B.C., it was brought into subjection by Nebuchadnezzar, through whom the Babylonian captivity was inaugurated. For three score years and ten Judah was kept in exile and virtual bondage, in consequence of their transgression as had been predicted through Jeremiah.<sup>153</sup> Then the Lord softened the hearts of their captors, and their restoration was begun under the decree of Cyrus the Persian, who had subdued the Babylonian kingdom. The Hebrew people were permitted to return to Judea, and to enter upon the work of rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem.<sup>154</sup>

A great company of the exiled Hebrews availed themselves of this opportunity to return to the lands of their fathers, though many elected to remain in the country of their captivity, preferring Babylon to Israel. The "whole congregation" of the Jews who returned from the Babylonian exile were but "forty and two thousand three hundred and three score, beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven." The relatively small size of the migrating nation is further shown by the register of their beasts of burden.<sup>155</sup> While those who did return strove valiantly to reestablish themselves as the house of David, and to regain some measure of their former prestige and glory, the Jews were never again a truly independent people. In turn they were preyed upon by Greece, Egypt, and Syria; but about 164-163 B.C., the people threw off, in part at least, the alien yoke, as a result of the patriotic revolt led by the Maccabees, the most prominent of whom was Judas Maccabeus. The temple service, which had been practically abolished through the proscription of victorious foes, was reestablished.<sup>156</sup> In the year 163 B.C., the sacred structure was rededicated, and the joyful occasion was thereafter celebrated in annual festival as the Feast of Dedication.<sup>157</sup> During the reign of the Maccabees, however, the temple fell into an almost ruinous condition, more as a result of the inability of the reduced and impoverished people to maintain it than through any further decline of religious zeal. In the hope of insuring a greater measure of national protection, the Jews entered into an unequal alliance with the Romans and eventually became tributary to them, in which condition the Jewish nation continued throughout the period of our Lord's ministry. In the meridian of time Rome was virtually mistress of the world. When Christ was born Augustus Cæsar<sup>158</sup> was emperor of Rome, and the Idumean, Herod,<sup>159</sup> surnamed the Great, was the vassal king of Judea.

<sup>151</sup> See mention throughout the books of Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and references therein.

<sup>152</sup> Isa. 11:13; 17:3; Ezek, 37:16-22; Hos. 4:17.

<sup>153</sup> Jer. 25:11, 12; see also 29:10.

<sup>154</sup> Ezra 1:1-4; the author, "House of the Lord," pp. 47-53; also "Articles of Faith" xvii:1-22.

<sup>155</sup> Ezra 2:64-67.

<sup>156</sup> "House of the Lord," pp. 51-53.

<sup>157</sup> Josephus, Ant. xii:6 and 7; 2 Maccabees 2:19; 10:1-8; also John 10:22.

<sup>158</sup> Luke 2:1.

<sup>159</sup> Matt. 2:1. Page [106](#).

Some semblance of national autonomy was maintained by the Jews under Roman dominion, and their religious ceremonials were not seriously interfered with. The established orders in the priesthood were recognized, and the official acts of the national council, or Sanhedrin,<sup>160</sup> were held to be binding by Roman law; though the judicial powers of this body did not extend to the infliction of capital punishment without the sanction of the imperial executive. It was the established policy of Rome to allow to her tributary and vassal peoples freedom in worship so long as the mythological deities, dear to the Romans, were not maligned nor their altars desecrated.<sup>161</sup>

Needless to say, the Jews took not kindly to alien domination, though for many generations they had been trained in that experience, their reduced status having ranged from nominal vassalage to servile bondage. They were already largely a dispersed people. All the Jews in Palestine at the time of Christ's birth constituted but a small remnant of the great Davidic nation. The Ten Tribes, distinctively the aforesaid kingdom of Israel, had then long been lost to history, and the people of Judah had been widely scattered among the nations.

In their relations with other peoples the Jews generally endeavored to maintain a haughty exclusiveness, which brought upon them Gentile ridicule. Under Mosaic law Israel had been required to keep apart from other nations; they attached supreme importance to their Abrahamic lineage as children of the covenant, "an holy people unto the Lord," whom He had chosen "to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth".<sup>162</sup> Judah had experienced the woful effects of dalliance with pagan nations, and, at the time we are now considering, a Jew who permitted himself unnecessary association with a Gentile became an unclean being requiring ceremonial cleansing to free him from defilement. Only in strict isolation did the leaders find hope of insuring the perpetuity of the nation.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Jews hated all other peoples and were reciprocally despised and contemned by all others. They manifested especial dislike for the Samaritans, perhaps because this people persisted in their efforts to establish some claim of racial relationship. These Samaritans were a mixed people, and were looked upon by the Jews as a mongrel lot, unworthy of decent respect. When the Ten Tribes were led into captivity by the king of Assyria, foreigners were sent to populate Samaria.<sup>163</sup> These intermarried with such Israelites as had escaped the captivity; and some modification of the religion of Israel, embodying at least the profession of Jehovah worship, survived in Samaria. The Samaritan rituals were regarded by the Jews as unorthodox, and the people as reprobate. At the time of Christ the enmity between Jew and Samaritan was so intense that travelers between Judea and Galilee would make long detours rather than pass through the province of Samaria which lay between. The Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans.<sup>164</sup>

The proud feeling of self-sufficiency, the obsession for exclusiveness and separation—so distinctively a Jewish trait at that time—was inculcated at the maternal knee and emphasized in synagog and school. The Talmud,<sup>165</sup> which in codified form post-dates the time of Christ's ministry, enjoined all Jews against reading the books of alien nations, declaring that none who so offended could consistently hope for Jehovah's favor.<sup>166</sup> Josephus gives his endorsement to similar injunction, and records that wisdom among the Jews meant only familiarity with the law and ability to discourse thereon.<sup>167</sup> A thorough acquaintanceship with the law was demanded as strongly as other studies were discountenanced. Thus the lines between learned and unlearned came to be rigidly drawn; and, as

---

<sup>160</sup> [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>161</sup> Deut. 7:6; see also 10:15; Exo. 19:5, 6; Psa. 135:4; Isa. 41:8; 45:4; compare 1 Peter 2:9.

<sup>162</sup> [Note 6](#), end of chapter.

<sup>163</sup> 2 Kings 17:24.

<sup>164</sup> John 4:9; Luke 9:51-53. Pages [172](#), [183](#) herein.

<sup>165</sup> [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>166</sup> Bab. Talmud, Sanhedrin, 90.

<sup>167</sup> Josephus, Ant. xx, 11:2.

an inevitable consequence those who were accounted learned, or so considered themselves, looked down upon their unscholarly fellows as a class distinct and inferior.<sup>168</sup>

Long before the birth of Christ, the Jews had ceased to be a united people even in matters of the law, though the law was their chief reliance as a means of maintaining national solidarity. As early as four score years after the return from the Babylonian exile, and we know not with accuracy how much earlier, there had come to be recognized, as men having authority, certain scholars afterward known as scribes, and honored as rabbis<sup>169</sup> or teachers. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah these specialists in the law constituted a titled class, to whom deference and honor were paid. Ezra is designated "the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel".<sup>170</sup> The scribes of those days did valuable service under Ezra, and later under Nehemiah, in compiling the sacred writings then extant; and in Jewish usage those appointed as guardians and expounders of the law came to be known as members of the Great Synagog, or Great Assembly, concerning which we have little information through canonical channels. According to Talmudic record, the organization consisted of one hundred and twenty eminent scholars. The scope of their labors, according to the admonition traditionally perpetuated by themselves, is thus expressed: *Be careful in judgment; set up many scholars, and make a hedge about the law.* They followed this behest by much study and careful consideration of all traditional details in administration; by multiplying scribes and rabbis unto themselves; and, as some of them interpreted the requirement of setting up many scholars, by writing many books and tractates; moreover, they made a fence or hedge about the law by adding numerous rules, which prescribed with great exactness the officially established proprieties for every occasion.

Scribes and rabbis were exalted to the highest rank in the estimation of the people, higher than that of the Levitical or priestly orders; and rabbinical sayings were given precedence over the utterances of the prophets, since the latter were regarded as but messengers or spokesmen, whereas the living scholars were of themselves sources of wisdom and authority. Such secular powers as Roman suzerainty permitted the Jews to retain were vested in the hierarchy, whose members were able thus to gather unto themselves practically all official and professional honors. As a natural result of this condition, there was practically no distinction between Jewish civil and ecclesiastical law, either as to the code or its administration. Rabbinism comprized as an essential element the doctrine of the equal authority of oral rabbinical tradition with the written word of the law. The aggrandizement implied in the application of the title "Rabbi" and the self-pride manifest in welcoming such adulation were especially forbidden by the Lord, who proclaimed Himself the one Master; and, as touching the interpretation of the title held by some as "father", Jesus proclaimed but one Father and He in heaven: "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ."<sup>171</sup>

The scribes, whether so named or designated by the more distinguishing appellation, rabbis, were repeatedly denounced by Jesus, because of the dead literalism of their teachings, and the absence of the spirit of righteousness and virile morality therefrom; and in such denunciations the Pharisees are often coupled with the scribes. The judgment of the Christ upon them is sufficiently expressed by His withering imprecation: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"<sup>172</sup>

<sup>168</sup> Note the emphasis given to this distinction in John 7:45-49; see also 9:34.

<sup>169</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

<sup>170</sup> Ezra 7:11; see also verses 6, 10, 12.

<sup>171</sup> Matt. 23:8-10; see also John 1:38; 3:2.

<sup>172</sup> Matt. 23:13, 14, 15, 23. etc., read the entire chapter; compare Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:46; see also as instances of special denunciation of the Pharisees Luke 11:37-44. Note also that the lawyers, who were professionally associated with the scribes, are included in the sweeping criticism: verses 45-54. See pages [552-560](#) herein.

The origin of the Pharisees is not fixed by undisputed authority as to either time or circumstance; though it is probable that the sect or party had a beginning in connection with the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. New ideas and added conceptions of the meaning of the law were promulgated by Jews who had imbibed of the spirit of Babylon; and the resulting innovations were accepted by some and rejected by others. The name "Pharisee" does not occur in the Old Testament, nor in the Apocrypha, though it is probable that the Assideans mentioned in the books of the Maccabees<sup>173</sup> were the original Pharisees. By derivation the name expresses the thought of separatism; the Pharisee, in the estimation of his class, was distinctively set apart from the common people, to whom he considered himself as truly superior as the Jews regarded themselves in contrast with other nations. Pharisees and scribes were one in all essentials of profession, and rabbinism was specifically their doctrine.

In the New Testament the Pharisees are often mentioned as in opposition to the Sadducees; and such were the relations of the two parties that it becomes a simpler matter to contrast one with the other than to consider each separately. The Sadducees came into existence as a reactionary organization during the second century B.C., in connection with an insurgent movement against the Maccabean party. Their platform was that of opposition to the ever-increasing mass of traditional lore, with which the law was not merely being fenced or hedged about for safety, but under which it was being buried. The Sadducees stood for the sanctity of the law as written and preserved, while they rejected the whole mass of rabbinical precept both as orally transmitted and as collated and codified in the records of the scribes. The Pharisees formed the more popular party; the Sadducees figured as the aristocratic minority. At the time of Christ's birth the Pharisees existed as an organized body numbering over six thousand men, with Jewish women very generally on their side in sympathy and effort;<sup>174</sup> while the Sadducees were so small a faction and of such limited power that, when they were placed in official positions, they generally followed the policy of the Pharisees as a matter of incumbent expediency. The Pharisees were the Puritans of the time, unflinching in their demand for compliance with the traditional rules as well as the original law of Moses. In this connection note Paul's confession of faith and practise when arraigned before Agrippa—"That after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."<sup>175</sup> The Sadducees prided themselves on strict compliance with the law, as they construed it, irrespective of all scribes or rabbis. The Sadducees stood for the temple and its prescribed ordinances, the Pharisees for the synagog and its rabbinical teachings. It is difficult to decide which were the more technical if we judge each party by the standard of its own profession. By way of illustration: the Sadducees held to the literal and full exaction of the Mosaic penalty—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth<sup>176</sup>—while the Pharisees contended on the authority of rabbinical dictum, that the wording was figurative, and that therefore the penalty could be met by a fine in money or goods.

Pharisees and Sadducees differed on many important if not fundamental matters of belief and practise, including the preexistence of spirits, the reality of a future state involving reward and punishment, the necessity for individual self-denial, the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection from the dead; in each of which the Pharisees stood for the affirmative while the Sadducees denied.<sup>177</sup> Josephus avers—the doctrine of the Sadducees is that the soul and body perish together; the law is all that they are concerned to observe.<sup>178</sup> They were "a skeptical school of aristocratic traditionalists; adhering only to the Mosaic law."<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>173</sup> 1 Maccabees 2:42; 7:13-17; 2 Maccabees 14:6.

<sup>174</sup> Josephus, Antiquities, xvii, 2:4.

<sup>175</sup> Acts 26:5; see also 23:6; Philip. 3:5.

<sup>176</sup> Exo. 21:23-35; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21; contrast Matt 5:38-44.

<sup>177</sup> [Note 4](#), end of chapter.

<sup>178</sup> Josephus, Antiquities xviii, 1:4.

<sup>179</sup> "New Stand. Dict.," under "Sadducees."

Among the many other sects and parties established on the ground of religious or political differences, or both, are the Essenes, the Nazarites, the Herodians and the Galileans. The Essenes were characterized by professions of ultra-piety; they considered even the strictness of Pharisaic profession as weak and insufficient; they guarded membership in their order by severe exactions extending through a first and a second novitiate; they were forbidden even to touch food prepared by strangers; they practised strict temperance and rigid self-denial, indulged in hard labor—preferably that of agriculture, and were forbidden to trade as merchants, to take part in war, or to own or employ slaves.<sup>180</sup> Nazarites are not named in the New Testament, though of specific record in the earlier scriptures;<sup>181</sup> and from sources other than scriptural we learn of their existence at and after the time of Christ. The Nazarite was one of either sex who was bound to abstinence and sacrifice by a voluntary vow for special service to God; the period of the vow might be limited or for life. While the Essenes cultivated an ascetic brotherhood, the Nazarites were devoted to solitary discipline.

The Herodians constituted a politico-religious party who favored the plans of the Herods under the professed belief that through that dynasty alone could the status of the Jewish people be maintained and a reestablishment of the nation be secured. We find mention of the Herodians laying aside their partisan antipathies and acting in concert with the Pharisees in the effort to convict the Lord Jesus and bring Him to death.<sup>182</sup> The Galileans or people of Galilee were distinguished from their fellow Israelites of Judea by greater simplicity and less ostentatious devotion in matters pertaining to the law. They were opposed to innovations, yet were generally more liberal or less bigoted than some of the professedly devout Judeans. They were prominent as able defenders in the wars of the people, and won for themselves a reputation for bravery and patriotism. They are mentioned in connection with certain tragical occurrences during our Lord's lifetime.<sup>183</sup>

The authority of the priesthood was outwardly acknowledged by the Jews at the time of Christ; and the appointed order of service for priest and Levite was duly observed. During the reign of David, the descendants of Aaron, who were the hereditary priests in Israel, had been divided into twenty-four courses,<sup>184</sup> and to each course the labors of the sanctuary were allotted in turn. Representatives of but four of these courses returned from the captivity, but from these the orders were reconstructed on the original plan. In the days of Herod the Great the temple ceremonies were conducted with great display and outward elaborateness, as an essential matter of consistency with the splendor of the structure, which surpassed in magnificence all earlier sanctuaries.<sup>185</sup> Priests and Levites, therefore, were in demand for continuous service, though the individuals were changed at short intervals according to the established system. In the regard of the people the priests were inferior to the rabbis, and the scholarly attainments of a scribe transcended in honor that pertaining to ordination in the priesthood. The religion of the time was a matter of ceremony and formality, of ritual and performance; it had lost the very spirit of worship, and the true conception of the relationship between Israel and Israel's God was but a dream of the past.

Such in brief were the principal features of the world's condition, and particularly as concerns the Jewish people, when Jesus the Christ was born in the meridian of time.

---

<sup>180</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* xviii, 1:5.

<sup>181</sup> Numb. 6:2-21; Judges 13:5, 7; 16:17; Amos. 2:11, 12. Page [87](#).

<sup>182</sup> Matt. 22:15, 16; Mark 12:13.

<sup>183</sup> Luke 13:1, 2; see also John 4:45; Mark 14:70; Acts 2:7.

<sup>184</sup> 1 Chron. 24:1-18.

<sup>185</sup> [Note 5](#), end of chapter.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

**1. The Sanhedrin.**—This, the chief court or high council of the Jews, derives its name from the Greek *sunedrion*, signifying "a council." In English it is sometimes though inaccurately, written "Sanhedrim." The Talmud traces the origin of this body to the calling of the seventy elders whom Moses associated with himself, making seventy-one in all, to administer as judges in Israel (Numb. 11:16, 17). The Sanhedrin in the time of Christ, as also long before, comprized seventy-one members, including the high-priest who presided in the assembly. It appears to have been known in its earlier period as the Senate, and was occasionally so designated even after Christ's death (Josephus, *Antiquities* xii, 3:3; compare Acts 5:21); the name "Sanhedrin" came into general use during the reign of Herod the Great; but the term is not of Biblical usage; its equivalent in the New Testament is "council" (Matt. 5:22; 10:17; 26:59) though it must be remembered that the same term is applied to courts of lesser jurisdiction than that of the Sanhedrin, and to local tribunals. (Matt 5:22; 10:17; 26:59; Mark 13:9; see also Acts 25:12.)

The following, from the *Standard Bible Dictionary*, is instructive: "Those qualified to be members were in general of the priestly house and especially of the Sadducean nobility. But from the days of Queen Alexandra (69-68 B.C.) onward, there were with these chief priests also many Pharisees in it under the name of scribes and elders. These three classes are found combined in Matt. 27:41; Mark 11:27; 14:43, 53; 15:1. How such members were appointed is not entirely clear. The aristocratic character of the body and the history of its origin forbid the belief that it was by election. Its nucleus probably consisted of the members of certain ancient families, to which, however, from time to time others were added by the secular rulers. The presiding officer was the high priest, who at first exercised in it more than the authority of a member, claiming a voice equal to that of the rest of the body. But after the reduction of the high priesthood from a hereditary office to one bestowed by the political ruler according to his pleasure, and the frequent changes in the office introduced by the new system, the high priest naturally lost his prestige. Instead of holding in his hands the 'government of the nation,' he came to be but one of many to share this power; those who had served as high priests being still in esteem among their nation, and having lost their office not for any reason that could be considered valid by the religious sense of the community, exerted a large influence over the decisions of the assembly. In the New Testament they are regarded as the rulers (Matt. 26:59; 27:41; Acts 4:5, 8; Luke 23:13, 35; John 7:26), and Josephus' testimony supports this view. The functions of the Sanhedrin were religious and moral, and also political. In the latter capacity they further exercised administrative as well as judicial functions. As a religious tribunal, the Sanhedrin wielded a potent influence over the whole of the Jewish world (Acts 9:2); but as a court of justice, after the division of the country upon the death of Herod, its jurisdiction was limited to Judea. Here, however, its power was absolute even to the passing of sentence of death (Josephus, *Ant.* xiv, 9:3, 4; Matt. 26:3; Acts 4:5; 6:12; 22:30), although it had no authority to carry the sentence into execution except as approved and ordered by the representative of the Roman government. The law by which the Sanhedrin governed was naturally the Jewish, and in the execution of it this tribunal had a police of its own, and made arrests at its discretion (Matt 26:47).... While the general authority of the Sanhedrin extended over the whole of Judea, the towns in the country had local councils of their own (Matt. 5:22; 10:17; Mark 13:9; Josephus, *B. J.* ii, 14:1), for the administration of local affairs. These were constituted of elders (Luke 7:3), at least seven in number, (Josephus, *Ant.* iv, 8:14; *B. J.* ii, 20:5), and in some of the largest towns as many as twenty-three. What the relation of these to the central council in Jerusalem was does not appear clearly.... Some sort of mutual recognition existed among them; for whenever the judges of the local court could not agree it seems that they were in the habit of referring their cases to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. (Josephus, *Ant.* iv, 8:14; *Mishna*, *Sanh.* 11:2)."

**2. Talmud.**—"The body of Jewish civil and religious law (and discussion directly or remotely relating thereto) not comprized in the Pentateuch, commonly including the *Mishna* and the *Gemara*, but sometimes limited to the latter; written in Aramaic. It exists in two great collections, the *Palestinian Talmud*, or *Talmud of the Land of Israel*, or *Talmud of the West*, or, more popularly, *Jerusalem Talmud*, embodying the discussions on the Mishna of the Palestinian doctors from the 2d to the middle of the 5th century; and the *Babylonian*, embodying those of the Jewish doctors in Babylonia, from about 190 to the 7th century."—*New Standard Dict.* The Mishna comprizes the earlier portions of the Talmud; the Gemara is made up of later writings and is largely an exposition of the Mishna. An edition of the Babylonian Talmud alone (issued at Vienna in 1682) comprized twenty-four tomes. (Geikie.)

**3. Rabbis.**—The title Rabbi is equivalent to our distinctive appellations Doctor, Master, or Teacher. By derivation it means Master or my Master, thus connoting dignity and rank associated with politeness of address. A definite explanation of the term is given by John (1:38), and the same meaning attaches by implication to its use as recorded by Matthew (23:8). It was applied as a title of respect to Jesus on several occasions (Matt. 23:7, 8; 26:25, 49; Mark 9:5; 11:21; 14:45; John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8). The title was of comparatively recent usage in the time of Christ, as it appears to have first come into general use during the reign of Herod the Great, though the earlier teachers, of the class without the name of Rabbis, were generally revered, and the title was carried back to them by later usage. Rab was an inferior title and Rabban a superior one to Rabbi. Rabboni was expressive of most profound respect, love and honor (see John 20:16). At the time of our Lord's ministry the Rabbis were held in high esteem, and rejoiced in the afflations of precedence and honor among men. They were almost exclusively of the powerful Pharisaic party.

The following is from Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. I, chap. 6: "If the most important figures in the society of Christ's day were the Pharisees, it was because they were the Rabbis or teachers of the Law. As such they received superstitious honor, which was, indeed, the great motive, with many, to court the title or join the party. The Rabbis were classed with Moses, the patriarchs, and the prophets, and claimed equal reverence. Jacob and Joseph were both said to have been Rabbis. The Targum of Jonathan substitutes Rabbis, or Scribes, for the word 'prophets' where it occurs. Josephus speaks of the prophets of Saul's day as Rabbis. In the Jerusalem Targum all the patriarchs are learned Rabbis.... They were to be dearer to Israel than father or mother—because parents avail only in this world [as was then taught] but the Rabbi forever. They were set above kings, for is it not written 'Through me kings reign'? Their entrance into a house brought a blessing; to live or to eat with them was the highest good fortune.... The Rabbis went even further than this in exalting their order. The Mishna declares that it is a greater crime to speak anything to their discredit, than to speak against the words of the Law.... Yet in form, the Law received boundless honor. Every saying of the Rabbis had to be based on some words of it, which were, however, explained in their own way. The spirit of the times, the wild fanaticism of the people, and their own bias, tended alike to make them set value only on ceremonies and worthless externalisms, to the utter neglect of the spirit of the sacred writings. Still it was held that the Law needed no confirmation, while the words of the Rabbis did. So far as the Roman authority under which they lived left them free, the Jews willingly put all power in the hands of the Rabbis. They or their nominees filled every office, from the highest in the priesthood to the lowest in the community. They were the casuists, the teachers, the priests, the judges, the magistrates, and the physicians of the nation.... The central and dominant characteristic of the teaching of the Rabbis was the certain advent of a great national Deliverer—the Messiah or Anointed of God or in the Greek translation of the title, the Christ. In no other nation than the Jews has such a conception ever taken such root or shown such vitality.... It was agreed among the Rabbis that His birthplace must be Bethlehem, and that He must rise from the tribe of Judah."

Individual rabbis gathered disciples about them, and, inevitably, rivalry became manifest. Rabbinical schools and academies were established, each depending for its popularity on the greatness

of some rabbi. The most famous of these institutions in the time of Herod I. were the school of Hillel and that of his rival Shammai. Later, tradition invested these with the title "the fathers of old." It appears from the trifling matters over which the followers of these two disagreed, that only by opposition could either maintain a distinguishing status. Hillel is reputed as the grandfather of Gamaliel, the rabbi and doctor of the law at whose feet Saul of Tarsus, afterward Paul the apostle, received his early instruction (Acts 22:3). So far as we have historic record of the views, principles or beliefs advocated by the rival schools of Hillel and Shammai, it appears that the former stood for a greater degree of liberality and tolerance, while the later emphasized a strict and possibly narrow interpretation of the law and its associated traditions. The dependence of the rabbinical schools on the authority of tradition is illustrated by an incident of record to the effect that even the prestige of the great Hillel did not insure him against uproar when once he spoke without citing precedent; only when he added that so had his masters Abtalion and Shemajah spoken did the tumult subside.

**4. Sadducean Denial of the Resurrection.**—As set forth in the text, the Sadducees formed an association numerically small as compared with the more popular and influential Pharisees. In the Gospels the Pharisees are of frequent mention, and very commonly in connection with the scribes, while the Sadducees are less frequently named. In the Acts of the Apostles, the Sadducees appear frequently as opponents of the Church. This condition was doubtless due to the prominence given the resurrection from the dead among the themes of the apostolic preaching, the Twelve continually bearing testimony to the actual resurrection of Christ. Sadducean doctrine denied the actuality and possibility of a bodily resurrection, the contention resting mainly on the ground that Moses, who was regarded as the supreme mortal lawgiver in Israel, and the chief mouthpiece of Jehovah, had written nothing concerning life after death. The following is taken from Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, article "Sadducees," as touching this matter: "The denial of man's resurrection after death followed in the conception of the Sadducees as a logical conclusion from their denial that Moses had revealed to the Israelites the Oral Law. For on a point so momentous as a second life beyond the grave, no religious party among the Jews would have deemed themselves bound to accept any doctrine as an article of faith, unless it had been proclaimed by Moses, their great legislator; and it is certain that in the written Law of the Pentateuch there is a total absence of any assertion by Moses of the resurrection of the dead. This fact is presented to Christians in a striking manner by the well-known words of the Pentateuch which are quoted by Christ in argument with the Sadducees on this subject (Exo. 3:6, 16; Mark 12:26, 27; Matt. 22:31, 32; Luke 20:37). It cannot be doubted that in such a case Christ would quote to His powerful adversaries the most cogent text in the Law; and yet the text actually quoted does not do more than suggest an inference on this great doctrine. It is true that passages in other parts of the Old Testament express a belief in the resurrection (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Job 19:26; and in some of the Psalms); and it may at first sight be a subject of surprize that the Sadducees were not convinced by the authority of those passages. But although the Sadducees regarded the books which contained these passages as sacred, it is more than doubtful whether any of the Jews regarded them as sacred in precisely the same sense as the written Law. To the Jews Moses was and is a colossal form, preeminent in authority above all subsequent prophets."

**5. The Temple of Herod.**—"Herod's purpose in the great undertaking [that of restoring the temple, and of enlarging it on a plan of unprecedented magnificence] was that of aggrandizing himself and the nation, rather than the rendering of homage to Jehovah. His proposition to rebuild or restore the temple on a scale of increased magnificence was regarded with suspicion and received with disfavor by the Jews, who feared that were the ancient edifice demolished, the arbitrary monarch might abandon his plan and the people would be left without a temple. To allay these fears the king proceeded to reconstruct and restore the old edifice, part by part, directing the work so that at no time was the temple service seriously interrupted. So little of the ancient structure was allowed to stand, however, that the temple of Herod must be regarded as a new creation. The work was begun about sixteen years before the birth of Christ; and while the Holy House itself was practically completed

within a year and a half, this part of the labor having been performed by a body of one thousand priests specially trained for the purpose, the temple area was a scene of uninterrupted building operations down to the year 63 A.D. We read that in the time of Christ's ministry the temple had been forty-six years in building; and at that time it was unfinished.

"The Biblical record gives us little information regarding this the last and the greatest of ancient temples; for what we know concerning it we are indebted, mainly to Josephus, with some corroborative testimony found in the Talmud. In all essentials the Holy House, or Temple proper, was similar to the two earlier houses of sanctuary, though externally far more elaborate and imposing than either; but in the matter of surrounding courts and associated buildings, the Temple of Herod preeminently excelled.... Yet its beauty and grandeur lay in architectural excellence rather than in the sanctity of its worship or in the manifestation of the Divine Presence within its walls. Its ritual and service were largely man-prescribed; for while the letter of the Mosaic Law was professedly observed, the law had been supplemented and in many features supplanted by rule and priestly prescription. The Jews professed to consider it holy, and by them it was proclaimed as the House of the Lord. Devoid though it was of the divine accompaniments of earlier shrines accepted of God, and defiled as it was by priestly arrogance and usurpation, as also by the selfish interest of traffic and trade, it was nevertheless recognized even by our Lord the Christ as His Father's House. (Matt. 21:12; compare Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45.).... For thirty or more years after the death of Christ, the Jews continued the work of adding to and embellishing the temple buildings. The elaborate design conceived and projected by Herod had been practically completed; the temple was well-nigh finished, and, as soon afterward appeared, was ready for destruction. Its fate had been definitely foretold by the Savior Himself."—From the author's *House of the Lord*, pp. 54-61.

**6. State of the World at the Time of the Savior's Birth.**—At the beginning of the Christian era, the Jews, in common with most other nations, were subjects of the Roman empire. They were allowed a considerable degree of liberty in maintaining their religious observances and national customs generally, but their status was far from that of a free and independent people. The period was one of comparative peace—a time marked by fewer wars and less dissension than the empire had known for many years. These conditions were favorable for the mission of the Christ, and for the founding of His Church on earth. The religious systems extant at the time of Christ's earthly ministry may be classified in a general way as Jewish and Pagan, with a minor system—the Samaritan—which was essentially a mixture of the other two. The children of Israel alone proclaimed the existence of the true and living God; they alone looked forward to the advent of the Messiah, whom mistakenly they awaited as a prospective conqueror coming to crush the enemies of their nation. All other nations, tongues, and peoples, bowed to pagan deities, and their worship comprized nought but the sensual rites of heathen idolatry. Paganism was a religion of form and ceremony, based on polytheism—a belief in the existence of a multitude of gods, which deities were subject to all the vices and passions of humanity, while distinguished by immunity from death. Morality and virtue were unknown as elements of heathen service; and the dominant idea in pagan worship was that of propitiating the gods, in the hope of averting their anger and purchasing their favor.—See the author's *The Great Apostasy*, 1:2-4, and notes following the chapter cited.

## CHAPTER 7. GABRIEL'S ANNUNCIATION OF JOHN AND OF JESUS

### JOHN THE FORERUNNER

Associated with the prophecies of the birth of Christ are predictions concerning one who should precede Him, going before to prepare the way. It is not surprising that the annunciation of the immediate advent of the forerunner was speedily followed by that of the Messiah; nor that the proclamations were made by the same heavenly ambassador—Gabriel, sent from the presence of God.<sup>186</sup>

About fifteen months prior to the Savior's birth, Zacharias, a priest of the Aaronic order, was officiating in the functions of his office in the temple at Jerusalem. His wife, Elisabeth, was also of a priestly family, being numbered among the descendants of Aaron. The couple had never been blessed with children; and at the time of which we speak they were both well stricken in years and had sorrowfully given up hope of posterity. Zacharias belonged to the course of priests named after Abijah, and known in later time as the course of Abia. This was the eighth in the order of the twenty-four courses established by David the king, each course being appointed to serve in turn a week at the sanctuary.<sup>187</sup> It will be remembered that on the return of the people from Babylon only four of the courses were represented; but of these four each averaged over fourteen hundred men.<sup>188</sup>

During his week of service each priest was required to maintain scrupulously a state of ceremonial cleanliness of person; he had to abstain from wine, and from food except that specifically prescribed; he had to bathe frequently; he lived within the temple precincts and thus was cut off from family association; he was not allowed to come near the dead, nor to mourn in the formal manner if death should rob him of even his nearest and dearest of kin. We learn that the daily selection of the priest who should enter the Holy Place, and there burn incense on the golden altar, was determined by lot;<sup>189</sup> and furthermore we gather, from non-scriptural history, that because of the great number of priests the honor of so officiating seldom fell twice to the same person.

On this day the lot had fallen to Zacharias. It was a very solemn occasion in the life of the humble Judean priest—this one day in his life on which the special and particularly sacred service was required of him. Within the Holy Place he was separated by the veil of the temple only from the Oracle or Holy of Holies—the inner sanctuary into which none but the high priest might enter, and he only on the Day of Atonement, after long ceremonial preparation.<sup>190</sup> The place and the time were conducive to the highest and most reverential feelings. As Zacharias ministered within the Holy Place, the people without bowed themselves in prayer, watching for the clouds of incense smoke to appear above the great partition which formed the barrier between the place of general assembly and the Holy Place, and awaiting the reappearance of the priest and his pronouncement of the benediction.

Before the astonished gaze of Zacharias, at this supreme moment of his priestly service, there appeared, standing on the right of the golden altar of incense, an angel of the Lord. Many generations had passed in Jewry since any visible presence other than mortal had been manifest within the temple, either in the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies; the people regarded personal visitations of heavenly

---

<sup>186</sup> Luke 1:19, 26; see also Dan. 8:16; 9:21-23.

<sup>187</sup> Luke 1:5; compare 1 Chron. 24:10.

<sup>188</sup> Ezra 2:36-39.

<sup>189</sup> Luke 1:8, 9; read the entire chapter.

<sup>190</sup> Lev. chap. 16; Heb. 9:1-7; see also "House of the Lord," p. 59, and compare pp. 24 and 39. [Note 6](#), end of chapter.

beings as occurrences of the past; they had come almost to believe that there were no longer prophets in Israel. Nevertheless, there was always a feeling of anxiety, akin to that of troubled expectancy, whenever a priest approached the inner sanctuary, which was regarded as the particular abode of Jehovah should He ever again condescend to visit His people. In view of these conditions we read without surprize that this angelic presence troubled Zacharias and caused fear to fall upon him. The words of the heavenly visitant, however, were comforting though of startling import, embodying as they did the unqualified assurance that the man's prayers had been heard, and that his wife should bear him a son, who must be named John.<sup>191</sup> The promise went even further, specifying that the child to be born of Elisabeth would be a blessing to the people; many would rejoice at his birth; he would be great in the sight of the Lord, and must be guarded against wine and strong drink;<sup>192</sup> he would be filled with the Holy Ghost, would be the means of turning many souls to God, and would go before to make ready a people prepared to receive the Messiah.

Doubtless Zacharias recognised in the predicted future of the yet unborn child the great forerunner, of whom the prophets had told and the psalmist had sung; but that such a one should be offspring of himself and his aged wife seemed impossible despite the angel's promise. The man doubted, and asked whereby he should know that what his visitant had spoken was true: "And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."<sup>193</sup> When the highly blessed though sorely smitten priest at length came from within and appeared before the expectant congregation, already made anxious by his delayed return, he could but mutely dismiss the assembly and by signs indicate that he had seen a vision. The penalty for doubt was already operative; Zacharias was dumb.

In due time the child was born, there in the hill country of Judea<sup>194</sup> where Zacharias and Elisabeth had their home; and, on the eighth day following the birth the family assembled in accordance with custom and Mosaic requirement, to name the babe in connection with the rite of circumcision.<sup>195</sup> All suggestions that he be called after his father were overruled by Zacharias, who wrote with decisive finality: "His name is John." Thereupon the dumb<sup>196</sup> priest's tongue was loosed, and being filled with the Holy Ghost he burst forth in prophecy, praise and song; his inspired utterances have been set to music and are sung in worship by many Christian congregations as the Benedictus:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people

---

<sup>191</sup> Page 45. For other instances of children promised in spite of barrenness due to age or other causes, see Isaac (Gen. 17:16, 17 and 21:1-3); Samson, (Judges, chap. 13); Samuel (1 Sam. chap. 1); son of the Shunammite (2 Kings 4:14-17).

<sup>192</sup> [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>193</sup> Luke 1:19, 20.

<sup>194</sup> Luke 1:57; compare verse 39.

<sup>195</sup> [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>196</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."<sup>197</sup>

The last words Zacharias had uttered prior to the infliction of dumbness were words of doubt and unbelief, words in which he had called for a sign as proof of authority of one who came from the presence of the Almighty; the words with which he broke his long silence were words of praise unto God in whom he had all assurance, words that were as a sign to all who heard, and the fame whereof spread throughout the region.

The unusual circumstances attending the birth of John, notably the months of dumbness passed by the father and his sudden recovery of speech on the bestowal of the fore-appointed name, caused many to marvel and some to fear, as they asked: "What manner of child shall this be?" When, a man grown, John raised his voice in the wilderness, again in fulfillment of prophecy, the people questioned as to whether he was not the Messiah.<sup>198</sup> Of his life between infancy and the beginning of his public ministry, a period of approximately thirty years, we have of record but a single sentence: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel."<sup>199</sup>

---

<sup>197</sup> Luke 1:68-79.

<sup>198</sup> Luke 1:65, 66; see also 3:15.

<sup>199</sup> Luke 1:80.

## THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE VIRGIN

Six months after the visitation of Gabriel to Zacharias, and three months prior to the birth of John, the same heavenly messenger was sent to a young woman named Mary, who lived at Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was of the lineage of David; and though unmarried was betrothed or espoused to a man named Joseph, who also was of royal descent through the Davidic line. The angel's salutation, while full of honor and blessing, caused Mary to wonder and to feel troubled. "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women";<sup>200</sup> thus did Gabriel greet the virgin.

In common with other daughters of Israel, specifically those of the tribe of Judah and of known descent from David, Mary had doubtless contemplated, with holy joy and ecstasy, the coming of the Messiah through the royal line; she knew that some Jewish maiden was yet to become the mother of the Christ. Was it possible that the angel's words to her had reference to this supreme expectation and hope of the nation? She had little time to turn these things in her mind, for the angel continued: "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."<sup>201</sup>

Even yet she comprehended but in part the import of this momentous visitation. Not in the spirit of doubt such as had prompted Zacharias to ask for a sign, but through an earnest desire for information and explanation, Mary, conscious of her unmarried status and sure of her virgin condition, asked: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" The answer to her natural and simple inquiry was the announcement of a miracle such as the world had never known—not a miracle in the sense of a happening contrary to nature's law, nevertheless a miracle through the operation of higher law, such as the human mind ordinarily fails to comprehend or regard as possible. Mary was informed that she would conceive and in time bring forth a Son, of whom no mortal man would be the father:—"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."<sup>202</sup>

Then the angel told her of the blessed condition of her cousin Elisabeth, who had been barren; and by way of sufficient and final explanation added: "For with God nothing shall be impossible." With gentle submissiveness and humble acceptance, the pure young virgin replied: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

His message delivered, Gabriel departed, leaving the chosen Virgin of Nazareth to ponder over her wondrous experience. Mary's promised Son was to be "The Only Begotten" of the Father in the flesh; so it had been both positively and abundantly predicted. True, the event was unprecedented; true also it has never been paralleled; but that the virgin birth would be unique was as truly essential to the fulfilment of prophecy as that it should occur at all. That Child to be born of Mary was begotten of Elohim, the Eternal Father, not in violation of natural law but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof; and, the offspring from that association of supreme sanctity, celestial Sireship, and pure though mortal maternity, was of right to be called the "Son of the Highest." In His nature would be combined the powers of Godhood with the capacity and possibilities of mortality; and this through the ordinary operation of the fundamental law of heredity, declared of God, demonstrated by science, and admitted by philosophy, that living beings shall propagate—after their kind. The Child

---

<sup>200</sup> Luke 1:28.

<sup>201</sup> Luke 1:30-33.

<sup>202</sup> Luke 1:35; see also preceding verses, 31-33.

Jesus was to inherit the physical, mental, and spiritual traits, tendencies, and powers that characterized His parents—one immortal and glorified—God, the other human—woman.

Jesus Christ was to be born of mortal woman, but was not directly the offspring of mortal man, except so far as His mother was the daughter of both man and woman. In our Lord alone has been fulfilled the word of God spoken in relation to the fall of Adam, that the *seed of the woman* should have power to overcome Satan by bruising the serpent's head.<sup>203</sup>

In respect to place, condition, and general environment, Gabriel's annunciation to Zacharias offers strong contrast to the delivery of his message to Mary. The prospective forerunner of the Lord was announced to his father within the magnificent temple, and in a place the most exclusively sacred save one other in the Holy House, under the light shed from the golden candlestick, and further illumined by the glow of living coals on the altar of gold; the Messiah was announced to His mother in a small town far from the capital and the temple, most probably within the walls of a simple Galilean cottage.

---

<sup>203</sup> Page [43](#); and Gen. 3:15.

## MARY'S VISIT TO HER COUSIN ELISABETH

It was natural that Mary, left now to herself with a secret in her soul, holier, greater, and more thrilling than any ever borne before or since, should seek companionship, and that of some one of her own sex, in whom she could confide, from whom she might hope to derive comfort and support, and to whom it would be not wrong to tell what at that time was probably known to no mortal save herself. Her heavenly visitant had indeed suggested all this in his mention of Elisabeth, Mary's cousin, herself a subject of unusual blessing, and a woman through whom another miracle of God had been wrought. Mary set out with haste from Nazareth for the hill country of Judea, on a journey of about a hundred miles if the traditional account be true that the little town of Juttah was the home of Zacharias. There was mutual joy in the meeting between Mary the youthful virgin, and Elisabeth, already well advanced in life. From what of Gabriel's words her husband had communicated, Elisabeth must have known that the approaching birth of her son would soon be followed by that of the Messiah, and that therefore the day for which Israel had waited and prayed through the long dark centuries was about to dawn. When Mary's salutation fell upon her ears, the Holy Ghost bore witness that the chosen mother of the Lord stood before her in the person of her cousin; and as she experienced the physical thrill incident to the quickening spirit of her own blessed conception, she returned the greeting of her visitor with reverence: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"<sup>204</sup> Mary responded with that glorious hymn of praise, since adopted in the musical ritual of churches as the Magnificat:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."<sup>205</sup>

---

<sup>204</sup> Luke 1:42; read verses 39-56.

<sup>205</sup> Luke 1:46-55.

## MARY AND JOSEPH

The visit lasted about three months, after which time Mary returned to Nazareth. The real embarrassment of her position she had now to meet. At the home of her cousin she had been understood; her condition had served to confirm the testimony of Zacharias and Elisabeth; but how would her word be received at her own home? And especially, how would she be regarded by her espoused husband?<sup>206</sup> Betrothal, or espousal, in that time was in some respects as binding as the marriage vow, and could only be set aside by a ceremonial separation akin to divorce; yet an espousal was but an engagement to marry, not a marriage. When Joseph greeted his promised bride after her three months' absence, he was greatly distressed over the indications of her prospective maternity. Now the Jewish law provided for the annulment of a betrothal in either of two ways—by public trial and judgment, or by private agreement attested by a written document signed in the presence of witnesses. Joseph was a just man, a strict observer of the law, yet no harsh extremist; moreover he loved Mary and would save her all unnecessary humiliation, whatever might be his own sorrow and suffering. For Mary's sake he dreaded the thought of publicity; and therefore determined to have the espousal annulled with such privacy the law allowed. He was troubled and thought much of his duty in the matter, when, "behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."<sup>207</sup>

Great was Joseph's relief of mind; and great his joy in the realization that the long predicted coming of the Messiah was at hand; the words of the prophets would be fulfilled; a virgin, and she the one in the world most dear to him, had conceived, and in due time would bring forth that blessed Son, Emmanuel, which name by interpretation means "God with us."<sup>208</sup> The angel's salutation was significant; "Joseph, thou son of David," was the form of address; and the use of that royal title must have meant to Joseph that, though he was of kingly lineage, marriage with Mary would cast no shadow upon his family status. Joseph waited not; to insure Mary all possible protection and establish his full legal right as her lawful guardian he hastened the solemnization of the marriage, and "did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."<sup>209</sup>

The national hope of a Messiah based on promise and prophecy had become confused in the Jewish mind, through the influence of rabbinism with its many vagaries, and its "private interpretation"<sup>210</sup> made to appear authoritative by the artificially sustained prestige of the expositors; yet certain conditions had been emphasized as essential, even by the rabbis, and by these essentials would be judged the claim of any Jew who might declare himself to be the long expected One. It was beyond question that the Messiah was to be born within the tribe of Judah and through the line of descent from David, and, being of David He must of necessity be of the lineage of Abraham, through whose posterity, according to the covenant, all nations of the earth were to be blessed.<sup>211</sup>

Two genealogical records, purporting to give the lineage of Jesus are found in the New Testament, one in the first chapter of Matthew, the other in the third chapter of Luke. These records present several apparent discrepancies, but such have been satisfactorily reconciled by the research

---

<sup>206</sup> [Note 4](#), end of chapter.

<sup>207</sup> Matt. 1:20, 21; read 18-25.

<sup>208</sup> Matt. 1:22-23; compare Isa. 7:14; see also 9:6.

<sup>209</sup> Matt. 1:24, 25.

<sup>210</sup> 2 Peter 1:20.

<sup>211</sup> Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; compare Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8.

of specialists in Jewish genealogy. No detailed analysis of the matter will be attempted here; but it should be borne in mind that the consensus of judgment on the part of investigators is that Matthew's account is that of the royal lineage, establishing the order of sequence among the legal successors to the throne of David, while the account given by Luke is a personal pedigree, demonstrating descent from David without adherence to the line of legal succession to the throne through primogeniture or nearness of kin.<sup>212</sup> Luke's record is regarded by many, however, as the pedigree of Mary, while Matthew's is accepted as that of Joseph. The all important fact to be remembered is that the Child promised by Gabriel to Mary, the virginal bride of Joseph, would be born in the royal line. A personal genealogy of Joseph was essentially that of Mary also, for they were cousins. Joseph is named as son of Jacob by Matthew, and as son of Heli by Luke; but Jacob and Heli were brothers, and it appears that one of the two was the father of Joseph and the other the father of Mary and therefore father-in-law to Joseph. That Mary was of Davidic descent is plainly set forth in many scriptures; for since Jesus was to be born of Mary, yet was not begotten by Joseph, who was the reputed, and, according to the law of the Jews, the legal, father, the blood of David's posterity was given to the body of Jesus through Mary alone. Our Lord, though repeatedly addressed as Son of David, never repudiated the title but accepted it as rightly applied to Himself.<sup>213</sup> Apostolic testimony stands in positive assertion of the royal heirship of Christ through earthly lineage, as witness the affirmation of Paul, the scholarly Pharisee: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;" and again: "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead."<sup>214</sup>

In all the persecutions waged by His implacable haters, in all the false accusations brought against Him, in the specific charges of sacrilege and blasphemy based on His acknowledgment of the Messiahship as His own, no mention is found of even an insinuation that He could not be the Christ through any ineligibility based on lineage. Genealogy was assiduously cared for by the Jews before, during, and after the time of Christ; indeed their national history was largely genealogical record; and any possibility of denying the Christ because of unattested descent would have been used to the fullest extent by insistent Pharisee, learned scribe, haughty rabbi, and aristocratic Sadducee.

At the time of the Savior's birth, Israel was ruled by alien monarchs. The rights of the royal Davidic family were unrecognized; and the ruler of the Jews was an appointee of Rome. Had Judah been a free and independent nation, ruled by her rightful sovereign, Joseph the carpenter would have been her crowned king; and his lawful successor to the throne would have been Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

Gabriel's annunciation to Mary was that of the Son of David, on whose coming the hope of Israel rested as on a sure foundation. The One, thus announced, was Emmanuel, even God who was to dwell in flesh with His people,<sup>215</sup> the Redeemer of the world, Jesus the Christ.

---

<sup>212</sup> [Note 5](#), end of chapter.

<sup>213</sup> For instances see Matt. 9:27; 15:22; 21:9; 20:30, 31, with which compare Luke 18:38, 39.

<sup>214</sup> Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; see also Acts 2:30; 13:23; compare Psa. 132:11; see also Luke 1:32.

<sup>215</sup> Matt. 1:23.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

**1. John the Baptist Regarded as a Nazarite.**—The instruction of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, that the promised son, John, was to "drink neither wine nor strong drink," and the adult life of John as a dweller in the desert, together with his habit of wearing rough garb, have led commentators and Biblical specialists to assume that he was a "Nazarite for life." It is to be remembered, however, that nowhere in scripture extant is John the Baptist definitely called a Nazarite. A Nazarite, the name signifying *consecrated* or *separated*, was one, who by personal vow or by that made for him by his parents, was set apart to some special labor or course of life involving self denial. (See page 67). Smith's *Comp. Dict. of the Bible* says: "There is no notice in the Pentateuch of Nazarites for life; but the regulations for the vow of a Nazarite of days are given (Numb. 6:1-2). The Nazarite, during the term of his consecration, was bound to abstain from wine, grapes, and every production of the vine, and from every kind of intoxicating drink. He was forbidden to cut the hair of his head, or to approach any dead body, even that of his nearest relation." The sole instance of a Nazarite for life named in the scriptures is that of Samson, whose mother was required to put herself under Nazarite observances prior to his birth, and the child was to be a Nazarite to God from his birth (Judges 13:3-7, 14). In the strictness of his life, John the Baptist is to be credited with all the personal discipline required of Nazarites whether he was under voluntary or parental vows or was not so bound.

**2. Circumcision**, while not exclusively a Hebrew or an Israelitish practise, was made a definite requirement through the revelations of God to Abraham, as the sign of the covenant between Jehovah and the patriarch. (Gen. 17:9-14.) This covenant was made to include the establishment of Abraham's posterity as a great nation, and provided that through his descendants should all nations of the earth be blessed (Gen. 22:18)—a promise which has been proved to mean that through that lineage should the Messiah be born. Circumcision was a binding condition; and its practise therefore became a national characteristic. Every male was to be circumcized eight days after birth (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3). This requirement as to age came to be so rigidly enforced, that even if the eighth day fell on a Sabbath the rite had to be performed on that day (John 7:22, 23). All male slaves had to be circumcized (Gen. 17:12, 13) and even strangers who sojourned with the Hebrews and desired to partake of the Passover with them had to submit to the requirement (Exo. 12:48). From the *Standard Bible Dictionary* we take the following: "The ceremony indicated the casting off of uncleanness as a preparation for entrance into the privileges of membership in Israel. In the New Testament, with its transfer of emphasis from the external and formal to the inner and spiritual side of things, it was first declared unnecessary for Gentile converts to the gospel to be circumcized (Acts 15:28), and afterward the rite was set aside even by Jewish Christians." It became customary to name a child at the time it was circumcized, as is instanced in the case of John, son of Zacharias (Luke 1:59).

**3. Zacharias' Affliction.**—The sign for which Zacharias asked was thus given by the angel: "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." (Luke 1:20.) From the account of the circumcision and naming of the boy, John, it is held by some that the afflicted father was also deaf, as the company "made signs" to him as to how he would have his son named (verse 62).

**4. Jewish Betrothal.**—The vow of espousal, or betrothal, has always been regarded as sacred and binding in Jewish law. In a manner it was as binding as a marriage ceremony, though it carried none of the particular rights of marriage. The following succinct statements are taken from Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. I. p. 99: "Among the Jews of Mary's day it was even more of an actual engagement [than it later came to be]. The betrothal was formally made with rejoicings in the house of the bride under a tent or slight canopy raised for the purpose. It was called the 'making sacred' as the bride thenceforth was sacred to her husband in the strictest sense. To make it legal, the bridegroom gave his betrothed a piece of money, or the worth of it, before witnesses, with the words, 'Lo, thou

art betrothed unto me,' or by a formal writing in which similar words and the maiden's name were given, and this in the same way was handed to her before witnesses."

**5. Genealogies of Joseph and Mary.**—"It is now almost certain that the genealogies in both Gospels are genealogies of Joseph, which if we may rely on early traditions of their consanguinity involve genealogies of Mary also. The Davidic descent of Mary is implied in Acts 2:30; 13:23; Rom. 1:3; Luke 1:32, etc. St. Matthew gives the legal descent of Joseph through the elder and regal line, as heir to the throne of David; St. Luke gives the natural descent. Thus, the real father of Salathiel was heir of the house of Nathan, but the childless Jeconiah (Jer. 22:30) was the last lineal representative of the elder kingly line. The omission of some obscure names and the symmetrical arrangement, into tesseradecads were common Jewish customs. It is not too much to say that after the labors of Mill (*On the Mythical Interpretation of the Gospels*, pp. 147-217) and Lord A. C. Hervey (*On the Genealogies of Our Lord*, 1853) scarcely a single difficulty remains in reconciling the apparent divergencies. And thus in this as in so many other instances, the very discrepancies which appear to be most irreconcilable, and most fatal to the historic accuracy of the four evangelists, turn out, on closer and more patient investigation, to be fresh proofs that they are not only entirely independent, but also entirely trustworthy."—Farrar, *Life of Christ*, p. 27, note.

The writer of the article "Genealogy of Jesus Christ" in Smith's *Bible Dict*, says: "The New Testament gives us the genealogy of but one person, our Savior (Matt. 1; Luke 3)... The following propositions will explain the true construction of these genealogies (so Lord A. C. Hervey): 1. They are both the genealogies of Joseph, i.e. of Jesus Christ, as the reputed and legal son of Joseph and Mary. 2. The genealogy of Matthew is, as Grotius asserted, Joseph's genealogy as legal successor to the throne of David. That of Luke is Joseph's private genealogy, exhibiting his real birth, as David's son, and thus showing why he was heir to Solomon's crown. The simple principle that one evangelist exhibits that genealogy which contained the successive heirs to David's and Solomon's throne, while the other exhibits the paternal stem of him who was the heir, explains all the anomalies of the two pedigrees, their agreements as well as their discrepancies, and the circumstance of there being two at all. 3. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was probably the daughter of Jacob, and first cousin to Joseph her husband."

A valuable contribution to the literature of this subject appears in the *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute, or Philosophical Society of Great Britain*, 1912, vol. 44, pp. 9-36, as an article, "The Genealogies of our Lord," by Mrs. A. S. Lewis, and discussion thereof by many scholars of acknowledged ability. The author, Mrs. Lewis, is an authority on Syriac manuscripts, and is one of the two women who, in 1892, discovered in the library of St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai, the Syriac palimpsest MS. of the four Gospels. The gifted author holds that Matthew's account attests the royal pedigree of Joseph, and that Luke's genealogical table proves the equally royal descent of Mary. Mrs. Lewis says: "The Sinai Palimpsest also tells us that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, to be enrolled there, because they were both of the house and lineage of David."

Canon Girdlestone, in discussing the article, says in pertinent emphasis of Mary's status as a princess of royal blood through descent from David: "When the angel was foretelling to Mary the birth of the Holy Child, he said, 'The Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David.' Now if Joseph, her betrothed, had alone been descended from David, Mary would have answered, 'I am not yet married to Joseph,' whereas she did answer simply, 'I am an unmarried woman,' which plainly implies—if I were married, since I am descended from David, I could infuse my royal blood into a son, but how can I have a royal son while I am a virgin?"

After brief mention of the Jewish law relating to adoption, wherein it is provided (according to Hammurabi's Code, section 188), that if a man teach his adopted son a handicraft, the son is thereby confirmed in all the rights of heirship, Canon Girdlestone adds: "If the crown of David had been assigned to his successor in the days of Herod it would have been placed on the head of Joseph. And

who would have been the legal successor to Joseph? Jesus of Nazareth would have been then the King of the Jews, and the title on the cross spoke the truth. God had raised Him up to the house of David."

**6. The Inner Sanctuary of the Temple.**—The Holy of Holies in the Temple of Herod retained the form and dimensions of the Oracle in the Temple of Solomon; it was therefore a cube, twenty cubits in each principal measurement. Between this and the Holy Place hung a double veil, of finest material, elaborately embroidered. The outer of the two veils was open at the north end, the inner at the south; so that the high priest who entered at the appointed time once a year could pass between the veils without exposing the Holy of Holies. The sacred chamber was empty save for a large stone upon which the high priest sprinkled the sacrificial blood on the Day of Atonement; this stone occupied the place of the Ark and its Mercy Seat. Outside the veil, in the Holy Place, stood the altar of incense, the seven-branched candlestick, and the table of shewbread.—*The House of the Lord*, p. 59.

## CHAPTER 8. THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM

### THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Equally definite with the prophecies declaring that the Messiah would be born in the lineage of David are the predictions that fix the place of His birth at Bethlehem, a small town in Judea. There seems to have been no difference of opinion among priests, scribes, or rabbis on the matter, either before or since the great event. Bethlehem, though small and of little importance in trade or commerce, was doubly endeared to the Jewish heart as the birthplace of David and as that of the prospective Messiah. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth of Galilee, far removed from Bethlehem of Judea; and, at the time of which we speak, the maternity of the Virgin was fast approaching.

At that time a decree went out from Rome ordering a taxing of the people in all kingdoms and provinces tributary to the empire; the call was of general scope, it provided "that all the world should be taxed."<sup>216</sup> The taxing herein referred to may properly be understood as an enrolment,<sup>217</sup> or a registration, whereby a census of Roman subjects would be secured, upon which as a basis the taxation of the different peoples would be determined. This particular census was the second of three such general registrations recorded by historians as occurring at intervals of about twenty years. Had the census been taken by the usual Roman method, each person would have been enrolled at the town of his residence; but the Jewish custom, for which the Roman law had respect, necessitated registration at the cities or towns claimed by the respective families as their ancestral homes. As to whether the requirement was strictly mandatory that every family should thus register at the city of its ancestors, we need not be specially concerned; certain it is that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, the city of David, to be inscribed under the imperial decree.<sup>218</sup>

The little town was crowded at the time, most likely by the multitude that had come in obedience to the same summons; and, in consequence, Joseph and Mary failed to find the most desirable accommodations and had to be content with the conditions of an improvised camp, as travelers unnumbered had done before, and as uncounted others have done since, in that region and elsewhere. We cannot reasonably regard this circumstance as evidence of extreme destitution; doubtless it entailed inconvenience, but it gives us no assurance of great distress or suffering.<sup>219</sup> It was while she was in this situation that Mary the Virgin gave birth to her firstborn, the Son of the Highest, the Only Begotten of the Eternal Father, Jesus the Christ.

But few details of attendant circumstances are furnished us. We are not told how soon the birth occurred after the arrival of Mary and her husband at Bethlehem. It may have been the purpose of the evangelist who made the record to touch upon matters of purely human interest as lightly as was consistent with the narration of fact, in order that the central truth might neither be hidden nor overshadowed by unimportant incident. We read in Holy Writ this only of the actual birth: "And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them at the inn."<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>216</sup> Luke 2:1; see also verses 2-4. [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>217</sup> Note marginal reading, Oxford and Bagster Bibles.

<sup>218</sup> [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>219</sup> [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>220</sup> Luke 2:6, 7.

In vivid contrast with the simplicity and brevity of the scriptural account and of its paucity of incidental details, is the mass of circumstance supplied by the imagination of men, much of which is wholly unsupported by authoritative record and in many respects is plainly inconsistent and untrue. It is the part of prudence and wisdom to segregate and keep distinctly separate the authenticated statements of fact, in so momentous a matter, from the fanciful commentaries of historians, theologians, and writers of fiction, as also from the emotional rhapsodies of poets and artistic extravaganzas wrought by chisel or brush.

From the period of its beginning, Bethlehem had been the home of people engaged mostly in pastoral and agricultural pursuits. It is quite in line with what is known of the town and its environs to find at the season of Messiah's birth, which was in the springtime of the year, that flocks were in the field both night and day under the watchful care of their keepers. Unto certain of these humble shepherds came the first proclamation that the Savior had been born. Thus runs the simple record: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."<sup>221</sup>

Tidings of such import had never before been delivered by angel or received by man—good tidings of great joy, given to but few and those among the humblest of earth, but destined to spread to all people. There is sublime grandeur in the scene, as there is divine authorship in the message, and the climax is such as the mind of man could never have conceived—the sudden appearance of a multitude of the heavenly host, singing audibly to human ears the briefest, most consistent and most truly complete of all the songs of peace ever attuned by mortal or spirit choir. What a consummation to be wished—Peace on earth! But how can such come except through the maintenance of good will toward men? And through what means could glory to God in the highest be more effectively rendered?

The trustful and unsophisticated keepers of sheep had not asked for sign or confirmation; their faith was in unison with the heavenly communication; nevertheless the angel had given them what he called a sign, to guide them in their search. They waited not, but went in haste, for in their hearts they believed, yea, more than believed, they knew, and this was the tenor of their resolve: "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."<sup>222</sup> They found the Babe in the manger, with the mother and Joseph near by; and, having seen, they went out and testified to the truth concerning the Child. They returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

There is meaning as deep as the pathos that all must feel in the seemingly parenthetical remark by Luke. "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."<sup>223</sup> It is apparent that the great truth as to the personality and mission of her divine Son had not yet unfolded itself in its fulness to her mind. The whole course of events, from the salutation of Gabriel to the reverent testimony of the shepherds concerning the announcing angel and the heavenly hosts, was largely a mystery to that stainless mother and wife.

---

<sup>221</sup> Luke 2:8-14.

<sup>222</sup> Luke 2:15.

<sup>223</sup> Luke 2:19.

## REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW STRICTLY OBSERVED

The Child was born a Jew; the mother was a Jewess, and the reputed and legal father, Joseph, was a Jew. The true paternity of the Child was known to but few, perhaps at that time to none save Mary, Joseph, and possibly Elisabeth and Zacharias; as He grew He was regarded by the people as Joseph's son.<sup>224</sup> The requirements of the law were carried out with exactitude in all matters pertaining to the Child. When eight days old He was circumcized, as was required of every male born in Israel;<sup>225</sup> and at the same time He received as an earthly bestowal the name that had been prescribed at the annunciation. He was called JESUS, which, being interpreted is Savior; the name was rightfully His for He came to save the people from their sins.<sup>226</sup>

Part of the law given through Moses to the Israelites in the wilderness and continued in force down through the centuries, related to the procedure prescribed for women after childbirth.<sup>227</sup> In compliance therewith, Mary remained in retirement forty days following the birth of her Son; then she and her husband brought the Boy for presentation before the Lord as prescribed for the male firstborn of every family. It is manifestly impossible that all such presentations could have taken place in the temple, for many Jews lived at great distances from Jerusalem; it was the rule, however, that parents should present their children in the temple when possible. Jesus was born within five or six miles from Jerusalem; He was accordingly taken to the temple for the ceremonial of redemption from the requirement applying to the firstborn of all Israelites except Levites. It will be remembered that the children of Israel had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt with the accompaniment of signs and wonders. Because of Pharaoh's repeated refusals to let the people go, plagues had been brought upon the Egyptians, one of which was the death of the firstborn throughout the land, excepting only the people of Israel. In remembrance of this manifestation of power, the Israelites were required to dedicate their firstborn sons to the service of the sanctuary.<sup>228</sup> Subsequently the Lord directed that all males belonging to the tribe of Levi should be devoted to this special labor instead of the firstborn in every tribe; nevertheless the eldest son was still claimed as particularly the Lord's own, and had to be formally exempted from the earlier requirement of service by the paying of a ransom.<sup>229</sup>

In connection with the ceremony of purification, every mother was required to furnish a yearling lamb for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or dove for a sin offering; but in the case of any woman who was unable to provide a lamb, a pair of doves or pigeons might be offered. We learn of the humble circumstances of Joseph and Mary from the fact that they brought the less costly offering, two doves or pigeons, instead of one bird and a lamb.

Among the righteous and devout Israelites were some who, in spite of traditionalism, rabbinism, and priestly corruption, still lived in righteous expectation of inspired confidence, awaiting patiently the consolation of Israel.<sup>230</sup> One of these was Simeon, then living in Jerusalem. Through the power of the Holy Ghost he had gained the promise that he should not see death until he had looked upon the Lord's Christ in the flesh. Prompted by the Spirit he repaired to the temple on the day of the presentation of Jesus, and recognized in the Babe the promised Messiah. In the moment of realization that the hope of his life had found glorious consummation, Simeon raised the Child

---

<sup>224</sup> Luke 4:22; Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3.

<sup>225</sup> Gen. 17:12, 13; Lev. 12:3; compare John 7:22. Page 88.

<sup>226</sup> Luke 2:21; compare 1:31; Matt. 1:21, 25.

<sup>227</sup> Lev. chap. 12.

<sup>228</sup> Exo. 12:29; 13:2, 12; 22:29, 30.

<sup>229</sup> Numb. 8:15-18; 18:15, 16.

<sup>230</sup> Luke 2:25; see also verse 38; Mark 15:43; compare Psa. 40:1.

reverently in his arms, and, with the simple but undying eloquence that comes of God uttered this splendid supplication, in which thanksgiving, resignation and praise are so richly blended:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."<sup>231</sup>

Then under the spirit of prophecy, Simeon told of the greatness of the Child's mission, and of the anguish that the mother would be called to endure because of Him, which would be even like unto that of a sword piercing her soul. The Spirit's witness to the divinity of Jesus was not to be confined to a man. There was at that time in the temple a godly woman of great age, Anna, a prophetess who devoted herself exclusively to temple service; and she, being inspired of God, recognized her Redeemer, and testified of Him to all about her. Both Joseph and Mary marveled at the things that were spoken of the Child; seemingly they were not yet able to comprehend the majesty of Him who had come to them through so miraculous a conception and so marvelous a birth.

---

<sup>231</sup> Luke 2:29-32. These verses are known in Christian hymnology as the Nunc Dimittis; the name has reference to the first two words of the Latin version.

## WISE MEN SEARCH FOR THE KING

Some time after the presentation of Jesus in the temple, though how long we are not told, possibly but a few days, possibly weeks or even months, Herod, king of Judea, was greatly troubled, as were the people of Jerusalem in general, over the report that a Child of Prophecy—one destined to become King of the Jews—had been born. Herod was professedly an adherent of the religion of Judah, though by birth an Idumean, by descent an Edomite or one of the posterity of Esau, all of whom the Jews hated; and of all Edomites not one was more bitterly detested than was Herod the king. He was tyrannical and merciless, sparing neither foe nor friend who came under suspicion of being a possible hindrance to his ambitious designs. He had his wife and several of his sons, as well as others of his blood kindred, cruelly murdered; and he put to death nearly all of the great national council, the Sanhedrin. His reign was one of revolting cruelty and unbridled oppression. Only when in danger of inciting a national revolt or in fear of incurring the displeasure of his imperial master, the Roman emperor, did he stay his hand in any undertaking.<sup>232</sup>

Rumors of the birth of Jesus reached Herod's ears in this way. There came to Jerusalem certain men from afar, wise men they were called, and they asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."<sup>233</sup> Herod summoned "all the chief priests and scribes of the people," and demanded of them where, according to the prophets, Christ should be born. They answered him: "In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."<sup>234</sup>

Herod sent secretly for the wise men, and inquired of them as to the source of their information, and particularly as to the time at which the star, to which they attached such significance, had appeared. Then he directed them to Bethlehem, saying: "Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also." As the men set out from Jerusalem on the last stage of their journey of inquiry and search, they rejoiced exceedingly, for the new star they had seen in the east was again visible. They found the house wherein Mary was living with her husband and the Babe, and as they recognized the royal Child they "fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."<sup>235</sup> Having thus gloriously accomplished the purpose of their pilgrimage, these devout and learned travelers prepared to return home, and would have stopped at Jerusalem to report to the king as he had requested, but "being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."<sup>236</sup>

Much has been written, beyond all possible warrant of scriptural authority, concerning the visit of the magi, or wise men, who thus sought and found the infant Christ. As a matter of fact, we are left without information as to their country, nation, or tribal relationship; we are not even told how many they were, though unauthenticated tradition has designated them as "the three wise men," and has even given them names; whereas they are left unnamed in the scriptures, the only true record of them extant, and may have numbered but two or many. Attempts have been made to identify the star whose appearance in their eastern sky had assured the magi that the King was born; but astronomy furnishes no satisfactory confirmation. The recorded appearance of the star has been associated by both ancient and modern interpreters with the prophecy of Balaam, who, though not an Israelite had

---

<sup>232</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

<sup>233</sup> Matt. 2:2; read 1-10.

<sup>234</sup> Matt. 2:5, 6; compare Micah 5:2; John 7:42.

<sup>235</sup> [Note 4](#), end of chapter.

<sup>236</sup> [Note 5](#), end of chapter.

blessed Israel, and under divine inspiration had predicted: "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."<sup>237</sup> Moreover, as already shown, the appearance of a new star was a predicted sign recognized and acknowledged among the people of the western world as witness of Messiah's birth.<sup>238</sup>

---

<sup>237</sup> Numb. 24:17.

<sup>238</sup> B. of M., Helaman 14:5; 3 Nephi 1:21. Pp. [52](#), [101](#) and [721](#) herein.

## THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Herod's perfidy in directing the magi to return and report to him where the royal Infant was to be found, falsely professing that he wished to worship Him also, while in his heart he purposed taking the Child's life, was thwarted by the divine warning given to the wise men as already noted. Following their departure, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, saying: "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."<sup>239</sup> In obedience to this command, Joseph took Mary and her Child, and set out by night on the journey to Egypt; and there the family remained until divinely directed to return. When it was apparent to the king that the wise men had ignored his instructions, he was exceedingly angry; and, estimating the earliest time at which the birth could have occurred according to the magis' statement of the star's appearing, he ruthlessly ordered the slaughter of "all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under."<sup>240</sup> In this massacre of the innocents, the evangelist found a fulfilment of Jeremiah's fateful voicing of the word of the Lord, spoken six centuries earlier and expressed in the forceful past tense as though then already accomplished: "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."<sup>241</sup>

---

<sup>239</sup> Matt. 2:13.

<sup>240</sup> Matt. 2:16.

<sup>241</sup> Matt. 2:17, 18; compare Jer. 31:15.

## BIRTH OF JESUS MADE KNOWN TO THE NEPHITES

As heretofore shown, the prophets of the western hemisphere had foretold in great plainness the earthly advent of the Lord, and had specifically set forth the time, place, and circumstances of His birth.<sup>242</sup> As the time drew near the people were divided by conflicting opinions concerning the reliability of these prophecies; and intolerant unbelievers cruelly persecuted those, who, like Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, and other righteous ones in Palestine, had maintained in faith and trust their unwavering expectation of the coming of the Lord. Samuel, a righteous Lamanite, who, because of his faithfulness and sacrificing devotion had been blessed with the spirit and power of prophecy, fearlessly proclaimed the birth of Christ as near: "And behold, he said unto them, Behold I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name."<sup>243</sup> The prophet told of many signs and wonders, which were to mark the great event. As the five years ran their course, the believers grew more steadfast, the unbelievers more violent, until the last day of the specified period dawned; and this was the "day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death, except the sign should come to pass which had been given by Samuel the prophet."<sup>244</sup>

Nephi, a prophet of the time, cried unto the Lord in anguish of soul because of the persecution of which his people were the victims; "and behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, Lift up your head and be of good cheer, for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to shew unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets. Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men, from the foundation of the world, and do the will, both of the Father, and of the Son; of the Father, because of me, and of the Son, because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given."<sup>245</sup>

The words of the prophet were fulfilled that night; for though the sun set in its usual course there was no darkness; and on the morrow the sun rose on a land already illumined; a day and a night and another day had been as one day; and this was but one of the signs. A new star appeared in the firmament of the west, even as was seen by the magi in the east; and there were many other marvelous manifestations as the prophets had predicted. All these things occurred on what is now known as the American continent, six hundred years after Lehi and his little company had left Jerusalem to come hither.

---

<sup>242</sup> Page 49.

<sup>243</sup> B. of M., Helaman 14:2; read 1-9.

<sup>244</sup> B. of M., 3 Nephi 1:9; read verses 4-21.

<sup>245</sup> B. of M., 3 Nephi 1:12-21.

## THE TIME OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS

The time of Messiah's birth is a subject upon which specialists in theology and history, and those who are designated in literature "the learned," fail to agree. Numerous lines of investigation have been followed, only to reach divergent conclusions, both as to the year and as to the month and day within the year at which the "Christian era" in reality began. The establishment of the birth of Christ as an event marking a time from which chronological data should be calculated, was first effected about 532 A.D. by Dionysius Exiguus; and as a basis for the reckoning of time this method has come to be known as the Dionysian system, and takes for its fundamental datum A.U.C. 753, that is to say 753 years after the founding of Rome, as the year of our Lord's birth. So far as there exists any consensus of opinion among later scholars who have investigated the subject, it is to the effect that the Dionysian calculation is wrong, in that it places the birth of Christ between three and four years too late; and that therefore our Lord was born in the third or fourth year before the beginning of what is designated by the scholars of Oxford and Cambridge, "the Common Account called Anno Domini."<sup>246</sup>

Without attempting to analyze the mass of calculation data relating to this subject, we accept the Dionysian basis as correct with respect to the year, which is to say that we believe Christ to have been born in the year known to us as B.C. 1, and, as shall be shown, in an early month of that year. In support of this belief we cite the inspired record known as the "Revelation on Church Government, given through Joseph the Prophet, in April, 1830," which opens with these words: "The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the flesh."<sup>247</sup>

Another evidence of the correctness of our commonly accepted chronology is furnished by the Book of Mormon record. Therein we read that "in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah," the word of the Lord came to Lehi at Jerusalem, directing him to take his family and depart into the wilderness.<sup>248</sup> In the early stages of their journey toward the sea, Lehi prophesied, as had been shown him of the Lord, concerning the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews. Furthermore, he predicted the eventual return of the people of Judah from their exile in Babylon, and the birth of the Messiah, which latter event he definitely declared would take place six hundred years from the time he and his people had left Jerusalem.<sup>249</sup> This specification of time was repeated by later prophecy;<sup>250</sup> and the signs of the actual fulfilment are recorded as having been realized "six hundred years from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem."<sup>251</sup> These scriptures fix the time of the beginning of Zedekiah's reign as six hundred years before the birth of Christ. According to the commonly accepted reckoning, Zedekiah was made king in the year 597 B.C.<sup>252</sup> This shows a discrepancy of about three years between the commonly accepted date of Zedekiah's inauguration as king and that given in the Book of Mormon statement; and, as already seen, there is a difference of between three and four years between the Dionysian reckoning and the nearest approach to an agreement among scholars concerning the beginning of the current era. Book of Mormon chronology therefore sustains in general the correctness of the common or Dionysian system.

---

<sup>246</sup> Marginal reading, Oxford and Bagster Bibles, Matt. 2:1.

<sup>247</sup> Doc. and Cov. 20:1; compare 21:3. [Note 6](#), end of chapter.

<sup>248</sup> B. of M., 1 Nephi 1:4; 2:2-4.

<sup>249</sup> B. of M., 1 Nephi 10:4.

<sup>250</sup> B. of M., 1 Nephi 19:8; 2 Nephi 25:19.

<sup>251</sup> B. of M., 3 Nephi 1:1.

<sup>252</sup> "Standard Bible Dictionary," edited by Jacobus, Nourse, and Zenos, pub. by Funk & Wagnalls Co., New York and London, 1909, p. 915, article "Zedekiah."

As to the season of the year in which Christ was born, there is among the learned as great a diversity of opinion as that relating to the year itself. It is claimed by many Biblical scholars that December 25th, the day celebrated in Christendom as Christmas, cannot be the correct date. We believe April 6th to be the birthday of Jesus Christ as indicated in a revelation of the present dispensation already cited,<sup>253</sup> in which that day is made without qualification the completion of the one thousand eight hundred and thirtieth year since the coming of the Lord in the flesh. This acceptance is admittedly based on faith in modern revelation, and in no wise is set forth as the result of chronological research or analysis. We believe that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, April 6, B.C. 1.

---

<sup>253</sup> Doc. and Cov. 20:1; compare 21:2

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

**1. The "Taxing."**—Regarding the presence of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem, far from their Galilean home, and the imperial decree by compliance with which they were led there, the following notes are worthy of consideration. Farrar (*Life of Christ*, p. 24, note), says: "It appears to be uncertain whether the journey of Mary with her husband was obligatory or voluntary.... Women were liable to a capitation tax, if this enrolment also involved taxation. But, apart from any legal necessity, it may easily be imagined that at such a moment Mary would desire not to be left alone. The cruel suspicion of which she had been the subject, and which had almost led to the breaking off of her betrothal (Matt. 1:19) would make her cling all the more to the protection of her husband." The following excerpt is from Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. 1, chap. 9; p. 108: "The Jewish nation had paid tribute to Rome through their rulers, since the days of Pompey; and the methodical Augustus, who now reigned, and had to restore order and soundness to the finances of the empire, after the confusion and exhaustion of the civil wars, took good care that this obligation should neither be forgotten nor evaded. He was accustomed to require a census to be taken periodically in every province of his vast dominions, that he might know the number of soldiers he could levy in each, and the amount of taxes due to the treasury.... In an empire embracing the then known world, such a census could hardly have been made simultaneously, or in any short or fixed time; more probably it was the work of years, in successive provinces or kingdoms. Sooner or later, however, even the dominions of vassal kings like Herod had to furnish the statistics demanded by their master. He had received his kingdom on the footing of a subject, and grew more entirely dependent on Augustus as years passed, asking his sanction at every turn for steps he proposed to take. He would, thus, be only too ready to meet his wish, by obtaining the statistics he sought, as may be judged from the fact that in one of the last years of his life, just before Christ's birth, he made the whole Jewish nation take a solemn oath of allegiance to the emperor as well as to himself.

"It is quite probable that the mode of taking the required statistics was left very much to Herod, at once to show respect to him before his people, and from the known opposition of the Jews to anything like a general numeration, even apart from the taxation to which it was designed to lead. At the time to which the narrative refers, a simple registration seems to have been made, on the old Hebrew plan of enrolling by families in their ancestral districts, of course for future use; and thus it passed over quietly.... The proclamation having been made through the land, Joseph had no choice but to go to Bethlehem, the city of David, the place in which his family descent, from the house and lineage of David, required him to be inscribed."

**2. Jesus Born Amidst Poor Surroundings.**—Undoubtedly the accommodations for physical comfort amidst which Jesus was born were few and poor. But the environment, considered in the light of the customs of the country and time, was far from the state of abject deprivation which modern and western ways would make it appear. "Camping out" was no unusual exigency among travelers in Palestine at the time of our Lord's birth; nor is it considered such to-day. It is, however, beyond question that Jesus was born into a comparatively poor family, amidst humble surroundings associated with the inconveniences incident to travel. Cunningham Geikie, *Life and Words of Christ*, chap. 9, pp. 112, 113, says: "It was to Bethlehem that Joseph and Mary were coming, the town of Ruth and Boaz, and the early home of their own great forefather David. As they approached it from Jerusalem they would pass, at the last mile, a spot sacred to Jewish memory, where the light of Jacob's life went out, when his first love, Rachel, died, and was buried, as her tomb still shows, 'in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.' ... Traveling in the East has always been very different from Western ideas. As in all thinly-settled countries, private hospitality, in early times, supplied the want of inns, but it was the peculiarity of the East that this friendly custom continued through a long series of ages. On the great roads through barren or uninhabited parts, the need of shelter led, very early, to the erection of

rude and simple buildings, of varying size, known as khans, which offered the wayfarer the protection of walls and a roof, and water, but little more. The smaller structures consisted of sometimes only a single empty room, on the floor of which the traveler might spread his carpet for sleep; the larger ones, always built in a hollow square, enclosing a court for the beasts, with water in it for them and their masters. From immemorial antiquity it has been a favorite mode of benevolence to raise such places of shelter, as we see so far back as the times of David, when Chimham built a great khan near Bethlehem, on the caravan road to Egypt."

Canon Farrar (*Life of Christ*, chap. 1) accepts the traditional belief that the shelter within which Jesus was born was that of one of the numerous limestone caves which abound in the region, and which are still used by travelers as resting places. He says: "In Palestine it not infrequently happens that the entire khan, or at any rate the portion of it in which the animals are housed, is one of those innumerable caves which abound in the limestone rocks of its central hills. Such seems to have been in the case at the little town of Bethlehem-Ephratah, in the land of Judah. Justin Martyr, the Apologist, who, from his birth at Shechem, was familiar with Palestine, and who lived less than a century after the time of our Lord, places the scene of the nativity in a cave. This is, indeed, the ancient and constant tradition both of the Eastern and the Western Churches, and it is one of the few to which, though unrecorded in the Gospel history, we may attach a reasonable probability."

**3. Herod the Great.**—The history of Herod I, otherwise known as Herod the Great, must be sought in special works, in which the subject is treated at length. Some of the principal facts should be considered in our present study, and for the assistance of the student a few extracts from works regarded as reliable are presented herewith.

Condensed from part of article in the *Standard Bible Dictionary*, edited by Jacobus, Nourse, and Zenos; published by Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1909:—Herod I, the son of Antipater, was early given office by his father, who had been made procurator of Judea. The first office which Herod held was that of governor of Galilee. He was then a young man of about twenty-five, energetic and athletic. Immediately he set about the eradication of the robber bands that infested his district, and soon was able to execute the robber chief Hezekiah and several of his followers. For this he was summoned to Jerusalem by the Sanhedrin, tried and condemned, but with the connivance of Hyrcanus II [the high priest and ethnarch] he escaped by night.—He went to Rome where he was appointed King of Judea by Antony and Octavius.—For the next two years he was engaged in fighting the forces of Antigonus, whom he finally defeated, and in 37 B.C. gained possession of Jerusalem.—As king, Herod confronted serious difficulties. The Jews objected to him because of his birth and reputation. The Asmonean family regarded him as a usurper, notwithstanding the fact that he had married Mariamne. The Pharisees were shocked at his Hellenistic sympathies, as well as at his severe methods of government. On the other hand the Romans held him responsible for the order of his kingdom, and the protection of the eastern frontier of the Republic. Herod met these various difficulties with characteristic energy and even cruelty, and generally with cold sagacity. Although he taxed the people severely, in times of famine he remitted their dues and even sold his plate to get means to buy them food. While he never became actually friendly with the Pharisees, they profited by his hostility to the party of the Asmoneans, which led at the beginning of his reign to the execution of a number of Sadducees who were members of the Sanhedrin.

From Smith's *Comprehensive Dictionary of the Bible*: The latter part "of the reign of Herod was undisturbed by external troubles, but his domestic life was embittered by an almost uninterrupted series of injuries and cruel acts of vengeance. The terrible acts of bloodshed which Herod perpetrated in his own family were accompanied by others among his subjects equally terrible, from the number who fell victims to them. According to the well-known story, he ordered the nobles whom he had called to him in his last moments to be executed immediately after his decease, that so at least his death might be attended by universal mourning. It was at the time of his fatal illness that he must have caused the slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem" (Matt. 2:16-18).

The mortal end of the tyrant and multi-murderer is thus treated by Farrar in his *Life of Christ*, pp. 54, 55:—"It must have been very shortly after the murder of the innocents that Herod died. Only five days before his death he had made a frantic attempt at suicide, and had ordered the execution of his eldest son Antipater. His death-bed, which once more reminds us of Henry VIII., was accompanied by circumstances of peculiar horror; and it has been asserted that he died of a loathsome disease, which is hardly mentioned in history, except in the case of men who have been rendered infamous by an atrocity of persecuting zeal. On his bed of intolerable anguish, in that splendid and luxurious palace which he had built for himself, under the palms of Jericho, swollen with disease and scorched by thirst, ulcerated externally and glowing inwardly with a 'soft slow fire,' surrounded by plotting sons and plundering slaves, detesting all and detested by all, longing for death as a release from his tortures yet dreading it as the beginning of worse terrors, stung by remorse yet still unslaked with murder, a horror to all around him yet in his guilty conscience a worse terror to himself, devoured by the premature corruption of an anticipated grave, eaten of worms as though visibly smitten by the finger of God's wrath after seventy years of successful villainy, the wretched old man, whom men had called the Great, lay in savage frenzy awaiting his last hour. As he knew that none would shed one tear for him, he determined that they should shed many for themselves, and issued an order that, under pain of death, the principal families of the kingdom and the chiefs of the tribes should come to Jericho. They came, and then, shutting them in the hippodrome, he secretly commanded his sister Salome that at the moment of his death they should all be massacred. And so, choking as it were with blood, devising massacres in its very delirium, the soul of Herod passed forth into the night."

For mention of the Temple of Herod see [Note 5](#), following [Chapter 6](#).

**4. Gifts from the Wise Men to the Child Jesus.**—The scriptural account of the visit of the wise men to Jesus and His mother states that they "fell down and worshipped him," and furthermore that "when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." The offering of gifts to a superior in rank, either as to worldly status or recognized spiritual endowment, was a custom of early days and still prevails in many oriental lands. It is worthy of note that we have no record of these men from the east offering gifts to Herod in his palace; they did, however, impart of their treasure to the lowly Infant, in whom they recognized the King they had come to seek. The tendency to ascribe occult significance to even trifling details mentioned in scripture, and particularly as regards the life of Christ, has led to many fanciful suggestions concerning the gold and frankincense and myrrh specified in this incident. Some have supposed a half-hidden symbolism therein—gold a tribute to His royal estate, frankincense an offering in recognition of His priesthood, and myrrh for His burial. The sacred record offers no basis for such conjecture. Myrrh and frankincense are aromatic resins derived from plants indigenous to eastern lands, and they have been used from very early times in medicine and in the preparation of perfumes and incense mixtures. They were presumably among the natural productions of the lands from which the magi came, though probably even there they were costly and highly esteemed. Such, together with gold, which is of value among all nations, were most appropriate as gifts for a king. Any mystical significance one may choose to attach to the presents must be remembered as his own supposition or fancy, and not as based on scriptural warrant.

**5. Testimonies from Shepherds and Magi.**—The following instructive note on the testimonies relating to Messiah's birth, is taken from the *Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association Manual* for 1897-8: "It will be observed that the testimonies concerning the birth of the Messiah are from two extremes, the lowly shepherds in the Judean field, and the learned magi from the far east. We cannot think this is the result of mere chance, but that in it may be discerned the purpose and wisdom of God. All Israel was looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, and in the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, the hope of Israel—though unknown to Israel—is fulfilled. Messiah, of whom the prophet spake, is born. But there must be those who can testify of that truth, and hence to the shepherds who watched their flocks by night an angel was sent to say: 'Fear not, behold I

bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord.' And for a sign of the truth of the message, they were to find the child wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger in Bethlehem. And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger; and when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. God had raised up to Himself witnesses among the people to testify that Messiah was born, that the hope of Israel was fulfilled. But there were classes of people among the Jews whom these lowly shepherd witnesses could not reach, and had they been able to reach them, the story of the angel's visit, and the concourse of angels singing the magnificent song of 'Peace on earth, good will to men,' would doubtless have been accounted an idle tale of superstitious folk, deceived by their own over-wrought imaginations or idle dreams. Hence God raised up another class of witnesses—the 'wise men from the east'—witnesses that could enter the royal palace of proud King Herod and boldly ask: 'Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him'; a testimony that startled Herod and troubled all Jerusalem. So that indeed God raised up witnesses for Himself to meet all classes and conditions of men—the testimony of angels for the poor and the lowly; the testimony of wise men for the haughty king and proud priests of Judea. So that of the things concerning the birth of Messiah, no less than of the things of His death and resurrection from the dead, His disciples could say, 'these things were not done in a corner.'

**6. The Year of Christ's Birth.**—In treating this topic Dr. Charles F. Deems (*The Light of the Nations*, p. 28), after giving careful consideration of the estimates, calculations, and assumptions of men who have employed many means in their investigation and reach only discordant results says: "It is annoying to see learned men use the same apparatus of calculation and reach the most diverse results. It is bewildering to attempt a reconciliation of these varying calculations." In an appended note the same author states: "For example: the birth of our Lord is placed in B.C. 1 by Pearson and Hug; B.C. 2 by Scalinger; B.C. 3 by Baronius and Paulus; B.C. 4 by Bengel, Wieseler, and Greswell; B.C. 5 by Usher and Petavius; B.C. 6 by Strong, Luvin, and Clark; B.C. 7 by Ideler and Sanclemente."

## CHAPTER 9. THE BOY OF NAZARETH

Joseph, Mary, and her Son remained in Egypt until after the death of Herod the Great, which event was made known by another angelic visitation. Their stay in the foreign land was probably brief, for Herod did not long survive the babes he had slain in Bethlehem. In the return of the family from Egypt the evangelist finds a fulfilment of Hosea's prophetic vision of what should be: "Out of Egypt have I called my son."<sup>254</sup>

It appears to have been Joseph's intention to make a home for the family in Judea, possibly at Bethlehem—the city of his ancestors and a place now even more endeared to him as the birthplace of Mary's Child—but, learning on the way that Herod's son Archelaus ruled in the place of his wicked father, Joseph modified his purpose; and, "being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."<sup>255</sup>

While Archelaus, who appears to have been a natural heir to his infamous father's wickedness and cruelty, ruled in Judea,<sup>256</sup> for a short time as king, then with the less exalted title of ethnarch, which had been decreed to him by the emperor, his brother Antipas governed as tetrarch in Galilee. Herod Antipas was well nigh as vicious and reprobate as others of his unprincipled family, but he was less aggressive in vindictiveness, and in that period of his reign was comparatively tolerant.<sup>257</sup>

Concerning the home life of Joseph and his family in Nazareth, the scriptural record makes but brief mention. The silence with which the early period of the life of Jesus is treated by the inspired historians is impressive; while the fanciful accounts written in later years by unauthorized hands are full of fictitious detail, much of which is positively revolting in its puerile inconsistency. None but Joseph, Mary, and the other members of the immediate family or close associates of the household could have furnished the facts of daily life in the humble home at Nazareth; and from these qualified informants Matthew and Luke probably derived the knowledge of which they wrote. The record made by those who knew is marked by impressive brevity. In this absence of detail we may see evidence of the genuineness of the scriptural account. Inventive writers would have supplied, as, later, such did supply, what we seek in vain within the chapters of the Gospels. With hallowed silence do the inspired scribes honor the boyhood of their Lord; he who seeks to invent circumstances and to invest the life of Christ with fictitious additions, dishonors Him. Read thoughtfully the attested truth concerning the childhood of the Christ: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him."<sup>258</sup>

In such simplicity is the normal, natural development of the Boy Jesus made clear. He came among men to experience all the natural conditions of mortality; He was born as truly a dependent, helpless babe as is any other child; His infancy was in all common features as the infancy of others; His boyhood was actual boyhood, His development was as necessary and as real as that of all children. Over His mind had fallen the veil of forgetfulness common to all who are born to earth, by which the remembrance of primeval existence is shut off. The Child grew, and with growth there came to Him expansion of mind, development of faculties, and progression in power and understanding. His advancement was from one grace to another, not from gracelessness to grace; from good to greater

---

<sup>254</sup> Matt. 2:15; compare Hos. 11:1.

<sup>255</sup> Matt. 2:19-23. [Note 5](#), end of chapter.

<sup>256</sup> [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>257</sup> [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>258</sup> Luke 2:40.

good, not from evil to good; from favor with God to greater favor, not from estrangement because of sin to reconciliation through repentance and propitiation.<sup>259</sup>

Our knowledge of Jewish life in that age justifies the inference that the Boy was well taught in the law and the scriptures, for such was the rule. He garnered knowledge by study, and gained wisdom by prayer, thought, and effort. Beyond question He was trained to labor, for idleness was abhorred then as it is now; and every Jewish boy, whether carpenter's son, peasant's child, or rabbi's heir, was required to learn and follow a practical and productive vocation. Jesus was all that a boy should be, for His development was unretarded by the dragging weight of sin; He loved and obeyed the truth and therefore was free.<sup>260</sup>

Joseph and Mary, devout and faithful in all observances of the law, went up to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. This religious festival, it should be remembered, was one of the most solemn and sacred among the many ceremonial commemorations of the Jews; it had been established at the time of the peoples' exodus from Egypt, in remembrance of the outstretched arm of power by which God had delivered Israel after the angel of destruction had slain the firstborn in every Egyptian home and had mercifully passed over the houses of the children of Jacob.<sup>261</sup> It was of such importance that its annual recurrence was made the beginning of the new year. The law required all males to present themselves before the Lord at the feast. The rule was that women should likewise attend if not lawfully detained; and Mary appears to have followed both the spirit of the law and the letter of the rule, for she habitually accompanied her husband to the annual gathering at Jerusalem.

When Jesus had attained the age of twelve years He was taken by His mother and Joseph to the feast as the law required; whether the Boy had ever before been present on such an occasion we are not told: At twelve years of age a Jewish boy was recognized as a member of his home community; he was required then to enter with definite purpose upon his chosen vocation; he attained an advanced status as an individual in that thereafter he could not be arbitrarily disposed of as a bond-servant by his parents; he was appointed to higher studies in school and home; and, when accepted by the priests, he became a "son of the law." It was the common and very natural desire of parents to have their sons attend the feast of the Passover and be present at the temple ceremonies as recognized members of the congregation when of the prescribed age. Thus came the Boy Jesus to the temple.

The feast proper lasted seven days, and in the time of Christ was annually attended by great concourses of Jews; Josephus speaks of such a Passover gathering as "an innumerable multitude."<sup>262</sup> The people came from distant provinces in large companies and caravans, as a matter of convenience and as a means of common protection against the marauding bands which are known to have infested the country. As members of such a company Joseph and his family traveled.

When, following the conclusion of the Passover, the Galilean company had gone a day's journey toward home, Joseph and Mary discovered to their surprize and deep concern that Jesus was not with their company. After a fruitless search among their friends and acquaintances, they turned back toward Jerusalem seeking the Boy. Their inquiries brought little comfort or assistance until three days had passed; then "they, found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions."<sup>263</sup> It was no unusual thing for a twelve year old boy to be questioned by priests, scribes, or rabbis, nor to be permitted to ask questions of these professional expounders of the law, for such procedure was part of the educational training of Jewish youths; nor was there anything surprizing in such a meeting of students and teachers within the temple courts, for the rabbis of that time were accustomed to give instruction there; and people, young and old, gathered about

---

<sup>259</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

<sup>260</sup> Compare His teachings after He had reached manhood, e.g. John 8:32.

<sup>261</sup> Deut. 16:1-6; compare Exo. 12:2.

<sup>262</sup> Josephus; Wars of the Jews, ii, 1:3.

<sup>263</sup> Luke 2:46; read 41-52.

them, sitting at their feet to learn; but there was much that was extraordinary in this interview as the demeanor of the learned doctors showed, for never before had such a student been found, inasmuch as "all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." The incident furnishes evidence of a wellspent boyhood and proof of unusual attainments.<sup>264</sup>

The amazement of Mary and her husband on finding the Boy in such distinguished company, and so plainly the object of deference and respect, and the joy of seeing again the beloved One who to them had been lost, did not entirely banish the memory of the anguish His absence had caused them. In words of gentle yet unmistakable reproof the mother said: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." The Boy's reply astonished them, in that it revealed, to an extent they had not before realized, His rapidly maturing powers of judgment and understanding. Said He: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Let us not say that there was unkind rebuke or unfilial reproof in the answer of this most dutiful of sons to His mother. His reply was to Mary a reminder of what she seems to have forgotten for the moment—the facts in the matter of her Son's paternity. She had used the words "thy father and I;" and her Son's response had brought anew to her mind the truth that Joseph was not the Boy's father. She appears to have been astonished that One so young should so thoroughly understand His position with respect to herself. He had made plain to her the inadvertent inaccuracy of her words; His Father had not been seeking Him; for was He not even at that moment in His Father's house, and particularly engaged in His Father's business, the very work to which His Father had appointed Him?

He had in no wise intimated a doubt as to Mary's maternal relationship to Himself; though He had indisputably shown that He recognized as His Father, not Joseph of Nazareth, but the God of Heaven. Both Mary and Joseph failed to comprehend the full import of His words. Though He understood the superior claim of duty based on His divine Sonship, and had shown to Mary that her authority as earthly mother was subordinate to that of His immortal and divine Father, nevertheless He obeyed her. Interested as were the doctors in this remarkable Boy, much as He had given them to ponder over through His searching questions and wise answers, they could not detain Him, for the very law they professed to uphold enjoined strict obedience to parental authority. "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart."

What marvelous and sacred secrets were treasured in that mother's heart; and what new surprizes and grave problems were added day after day in the manifestations of unfolding wisdom displayed by her more than mortal Son! Though she could never have wholly forgotten, at times she seemingly lost sight of her Son's exalted personality. That such conditions should exist was perhaps divinely appointed. There could scarcely have been a full measure of truly human experience in the relationship between Jesus and His mother, or between Him and Joseph, had the fact of His divinity been always dominant or even prominently apparent. Mary appears never to have fully understood her Son; at every new evidence of His uniqueness she marveled and pondered anew. He was hers, and yet in a very real sense not wholly hers. There was about their relation to each other a mystery, awful yet sublime, a holy secret which that chosen and blessed mother hesitated even to tell over to herself. Fear must have contended with joy within her soul because of Him. The memory of Gabriel's glorious promises, the testimony of the rejoicing shepherds, and the adoration of the magi must have struggled with that of Simeon's portentous prophecy, directed to herself in person: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also."<sup>265</sup>

As to the events of the eighteen years following the return of Jesus from Jerusalem to Nazareth, the scriptures are silent save for one rich sentence of greatest import: "And Jesus increased in wisdom

---

<sup>264</sup> Compare Matt. 7:28, 29; 13:54; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:22.

<sup>265</sup> Luke 2:35.

and stature, and in favor with God and man."<sup>266</sup> Plainly this Son of the Highest was not endowed with a fulness of knowledge, nor with the complete investiture of wisdom, from the cradle.<sup>267</sup> Slowly the assurance of His appointed mission as the Messiah, of whose coming He read in the law, the prophets, and the psalms, developed within His soul; and in devoted preparation for the ministry that should find culmination on the cross He passed the years of youth and early manhood. From the chronicles of later years we learn that He was reputed without question to be the son of Joseph and Mary, and was regarded as the brother of other and younger children of the family. He was spoken of both as a carpenter and a carpenter's son; and, until the beginning of His public ministry He appears to have been of little prominence even in the small home community.<sup>268</sup>

He lived the simple life, at peace with His fellows, in communion with His Father, thus increasing in favor with God and men. As shown by His public utterances after He had become a man, these years of seclusion were spent in active effort, both physical and mental. Jesus was a close observer of nature and men. He was able to draw illustrations with which to point His teachings from the varied occupations, trades and professions; the ways of the lawyer and the physician, the manners of the scribe, the Pharisee and the rabbi, the habits of the poor, the customs of the rich, the life of the shepherd, the farmer, the vinedresser and the fisherman—were all known to Him. He considered the lilies of the field, and the grass in meadow and upland, the birds which sowed not nor gathered into barns but lived on the bounty of their Maker, the foxes in their holes, the petted house dog and the vagrant cur, the hen sheltering her brood beneath protecting wings—all these had contributed to the wisdom in which He grew, as had also the moods of the weather, the recurrence of the seasons, and all the phenomena of natural change and order.

Nazareth was the abode of Jesus until He was about thirty years of age; and, in accordance with the custom of designating individuals by the names of their home towns as additions to their personal names,<sup>269</sup> our Lord came to be generally known as Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>270</sup> He is also referred to as a Nazarene, or a native of Nazareth, and this fact is cited by Matthew as a fulfilment of earlier prediction, though our current compilation of scriptures constituting the Old Testament contains no record of such prophecy. It is practically certain that this prediction was contained in some one of the many scriptures extant in earlier days but since lost.<sup>271</sup> That Nazareth was an obscure village, of little honor or renown, is evidenced by the almost contemptuous question of Nathanael, who, on being informed that the Messiah had been found in Jesus of Nazareth, asked: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"<sup>272</sup> The incredulous query has passed into a proverb current even today as expressive of any unpopular or unpromising source of good. Nathanael lived in Cana, but a few miles from Nazareth, and his surprize at the tidings brought by Philip concerning the Messiah incidentally affords evidence of the seclusion in which Jesus had lived.

So passed the boyhood, youth, and early manhood of the Savior of mankind.

---

<sup>266</sup> Luke 2:52.

<sup>267</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

<sup>268</sup> Matt. 13:55, 56; Mark 6:3; Luke 4:22; compare Matt. 12:46, 47; Gal. 1:19.

<sup>269</sup> For illustrative examples see Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43); Mary Magdalene, so known from her native town of Magdala (Matt. 27:56); Judas Iscariot, possibly named after his home in Kerioth (Matt. 10:4; see page [225](#) herein.)

<sup>270</sup> Matt. 21:11; John 18:5; 19:19; Acts 2:22; 3:6; see also Luke 4:16.

<sup>271</sup> [Note 4](#), end of chapter.

<sup>272</sup> John 1:45, 46.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

**1. Archelaus Reigned in Herod's Stead.**—"At his death Herod [the Great] left a will according to which his kingdom was to be divided among his three sons. Archelaus was to have Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, with the title of king (Matt 2:22). Herod Antipas was to receive Galilee and Perea, with the title of tetrarch; Philip was to come into possession of the trans-Jordan territory with the title of tetrarch (Luke 3:1). This will was ratified by Augustus with the exception of the title given to Archelaus. Archelaus, after the ratification of Herod's will by Augustus, succeeded to the rule of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, having the title of ethnarch, with the understanding that, if he ruled well, he was to become king. He was, however, highly unpopular with the people, and his reign was marked by disturbances and acts of oppression. The situation became finally so intolerable that the Jews appealed to Augustus, and Archelaus was removed and sent into exile. This accounts for the statement in Matt. 2:22, and possibly also suggested the point of the parable (Luke 19:12, etc.)."—*Standard Bible Dictionary*, Funk and Wagnalls Co., article "Herod." Early in his reign he wreaked summary vengeance on the people who ventured to protest against a continuation of his father's violence, by slaughtering three thousand or more; and the awful deed of carnage was perpetrated in part within the precincts of the temple. (Josephus, *Antiquities* xvii, 9:1-3.)

**2. Herod Antipas.**—Son of Herod I (the Great) by a Samaritan woman, and full brother to Archelaus. By the will of his father he became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (Matt. 14:1; Luke 3:19; 9:7; Acts 13:1; compare Luke 3:1). He repudiated his wife, a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia Petraea, and entered into an unlawful union with Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Herod Philip I (not the tetrarch Philip). John the Baptist was imprisoned and finally put to death, through the anger of Herodias over his denunciation of her union with Herod Antipas. Herodias urged Antipas to go to Rome and petition Cæsar for the title of king (compare Mark 6:14, etc.). Antipas is the Herod most frequently mentioned in the New Testament (Mark 6:17; 8:15; Luke 3:1; 9:7; 13:31; Acts 4:27; 13:1). He was the Herod to whom Pilate sent Jesus for examination, taking advantage of Christ being known as a Galilean, and of the coincident fact of Herod's presence in Jerusalem at the time in attendance at the Passover (Luke 23:6, etc.). For further details see Smith's, Cassell's, or the *Standard Bible Dictionary*.

**3. Testimony of John the Apostle Concerning Christ's Development in Knowledge and Grace.**—In a modern revelation, Jesus the Christ has confirmed the record of John the apostle, which record appears but in part in our compilation of ancient scriptures. John thus attests the actuality of natural development in the growth of Jesus from childhood to maturity: "And I, John, saw that he received not of the fullness at the first, but received grace for grace; and he received not of the fullness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fullness; and thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fullness at the first." (Doc. and Cov. 93:12-14). Notwithstanding this graded course of growth and development after His birth in the flesh, Jesus Christ had been associated with the Father from the beginning, as is set forth in the revelation cited. We read therein: "And he [John] bore record, saying, I saw his glory that he was in the beginning before the world was; therefore in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation, the light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men. The worlds were made by him: men were made by him: all things were made by him, and through him, and of him. And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us" (verses 7-11).

**4. Missing Scripture.**—Matthew's commentary on the abode of Joseph, Mary and Jesus at Nazareth, "and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was

spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene" (2:23), with the fact that no such saying of the prophets is found in any of the books contained in the Bible, suggests the certainty of lost scripture. Those who oppose the doctrine of continual revelation between God and His Church, on the ground that the Bible is complete as a collection of sacred scriptures, and that alleged revelation not found therein must therefore be spurious, may profitably take note of the many books not included in the Bible, yet mentioned therein, generally in such a way as to leave no doubt that they were once regarded as authentic. Among these extra-Biblical scriptures, the following may be named; some of them are in existence to-day, and are classed with the Apocrypha; but the greater number are unknown. We read of the Book of the Covenant (Exo. 24:7); Book of the Wars of the Lord (Numb. 21:14); Book of Jasher (Josh. 10:13); Book of the Statutes (1 Sam. 10:25); Book of Enoch (Jude 14); Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41); Book of Nathan the Prophet, and that of Gad the Seer (1 Chron. 29:29); Book of Ahijah the Shilonite, and visions of Iddo the Seer (2 Chron. 9:29); Book of Shemaiah (2 Chron. 12:15); Story of the Prophet Iddo (2 Chron. 13:22); Book of Jehu (2 Chron. 20:34); the Acts of Uzziah, by Isaiah, the son of Amoz (2 Chron. 26:22); Sayings of the Seers (2 Chron. 33:19); a missing epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:9); a missing epistle to the Ephesians (Eph. 3:3); missing epistle to the Colossians, written from Laodicea (Col. 4:16); a missing epistle of Jude (Jude 3).

**5. Nazareth.**—A town or "city" in Galilee, of which Biblical mention is found in the New Testament only. Josephus says nothing concerning the place. The name of the existing village, or the Nazareth of to-day, is *En-Nazirah*. This occupies an upland site on the southerly ridge of Lebanon, and "commands a splendid view of the Plain of Esdraelon and Mount Carmel, and is very picturesque in general" (Zenos). The author of the article "Nazareth" in Smith's *Bible Dict.* identifies the modern En-Nazirah, with the Nazareth of old on the following grounds: "It is on the lower declivities of a hill or mountain (Luke 4:29); it is within the limits of the province of Galilee (Mark 1:9); it is near Cana (John 2:1, 2, 11); a precipice exists in the neighborhood (Luke 4:29); and a series of testimonials reaching back to Eusebius represent the place as having occupied the same position." The same writer adds: "Its population is 3000 or 4000; a few are Mohammedans, the rest Latin and Greek Christians. Most of the houses are well built of stone, and appear neat and comfortable. The streets or lanes are narrow and crooked, and after rain are so full of mud and mire as to be almost impassable." At the time of Christ's life the town was not only regarded as unimportant by the Judeans who professed but little respect for Galilee or the Galileans, but as without honor by the Galileans themselves, as appears from the fact that the seemingly contemptuous question, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" was uttered by Nathanael (John 1:46), who was a Galilean and a native of Cana, a neighboring town to Nazareth (John 21:2). Nazareth owes its celebrity to its association with events in the life of Jesus Christ (Matt. 2:23; 13:54; Mark 1:9; 6:1; Luke 1:26; 2:4; 4:23,34; John 1:45,46; 19:19; Acts 2:22).

## CHAPTER 10. IN THE WILDERNESS OF JUDEA

### THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

At a time definitely stated as the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome, the people of Judea were greatly aroused over the strange preaching of a man theretofore unknown. He was of priestly descent, but untrained in the schools; and, without authorization of the rabbis or license from the chief priests, he proclaimed himself as one sent of God with a message to Israel. He appeared not in the synagogs nor within the temple courts, where scribes and doctors taught, but cried aloud in the wilderness. The people of Jerusalem and of adjacent rural parts went out in great multitudes to hear him. He disdained the soft garments and flowing robes of comfort, and preached in his rough desert garb, consisting of a garment of camel's hair held in place by a leathern girdle. The coarseness of his attire was regarded as significant. Elijah the Tishbite, that fearless prophet whose home had been the desert, was known in his day as "an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins;"<sup>273</sup> and rough garments had come to be thought of as a distinguishing characteristic of prophets.<sup>274</sup> Nor did this strange preacher eat the food of luxury and ease, but fed on what the desert supplied, locusts and wild honey.<sup>275</sup>

The man was John, son of Zacharias, soon to be known as the Baptist. He had spent many years in the desert, apart from the abodes of men, years of preparation for his particular mission. He had been a student under the tutelage of divine teachers; and there in the wilderness of Judea the word of the Lord reached him;<sup>276</sup> as in similar environment it had reached Moses<sup>277</sup> and Elijah<sup>278</sup> of old. Then was heard "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."<sup>279</sup> It was the voice of the herald, the messenger who, as the prophets had said, should go before the Lord to prepare His way.<sup>280</sup> The burden of his message was "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And to such as had faith in his words and professed repentance, confessing their sins, he administered baptism by immersion in water—proclaiming the while, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."<sup>281</sup>

Neither the man nor his message could be ignored; his preaching was specific in promise to the repentant soul, and scathingly denunciatory to the hypocrite and the hardened sinner. When Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism, prating of the law, the spirit of which they ceased not to transgress, and of the prophets, whom they dishonored, he denounced them as a generation of vipers, and demanded of them: "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" He brushed aside their oft-repeated boasts that they were the children of Abraham, saying, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our

---

<sup>273</sup> 2 Kings 1:8.

<sup>274</sup> [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>275</sup> Matt. 3:1-5; compare Lev. 11:22; see also Mark 1:1-8. [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>276</sup> Luke 3:2.

<sup>277</sup> Exo. 3:1, 2.

<sup>278</sup> 1 Kings 17:2-7.

<sup>279</sup> Mark 1:3.

<sup>280</sup> Mark 1:2; compare Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; Matt. 11:10; Luke 7:27.

<sup>281</sup> Matt. 3:11.

father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."<sup>282</sup> The ignoring of their claims to preferment as the children of Abraham was a strong rebuke, and a cause of sore affront alike to aristocratic Sadducee and rule-bound Pharisee. Judaism held that the posterity of Abraham had an assured place in the kingdom of the expected Messiah, and that no proselyte from among the Gentiles could possibly attain the rank and distinction of which the "children" were sure. John's forceful assertion that God could raise up, from the stones on the river bank, children to Abraham, meant to those who heard that even the lowest of the human family might be preferred before themselves unless they repented and reformed.<sup>283</sup> Their time of wordy profession had passed; fruits were demanded, not barren though leafy profusion; the ax was ready, aye, at the very root of the tree; and every tree that produced not good fruit was to be hewn down and cast into the fire.

The people were astonished; and many, seeing themselves in their actual condition of dereliction and sin, as John, with burning words laid bare their faults, cried out: "What shall we do then?"<sup>284</sup> His reply was directed against ceremonialism, which had caused spirituality to wither almost to death in the hearts of the people. Unselfish charity was demanded—"He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." The publicans or tax-farmers and collectors, under whose unjust and unlawful exactions the people had suffered so long, came asking: "Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you." To the soldiers who asked what to do he replied: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."<sup>285</sup>

The spirit of his demands was that of a practical religion, the only religion of any possible worth—the religion of right living. With all his vigor, in spite of his brusqueness, notwithstanding his forceful assaults on the degenerate customs of the times, this John was no agitator against established institutions, no inciter of riot, no advocate of revolt, no promoter of rebellion. He did not assail the tax system but the extortions of the corrupt and avaricious publicans; he did not denounce the army, but the iniquities of the soldiers, many of whom had taken advantage of their position to bear false witness for the sake of gain and to enrich themselves by forcible seizure. He preached, what in the now current dispensation we call the first or fundamental principles of the gospel—"the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,"<sup>286</sup> comprizing faith, which is vitalized belief, in God; genuine repentance, which comprizes contrition for past offenses and a resolute determination to turn from sin; baptism by immersion in water at his hands as the hands of one having authority; and the higher baptism by fire or the bestowal of the Holy Ghost by an authority greater than that possessed by himself. His preaching was positive, and in many respects opposed to the conventions of the times; he made no appeal to the people through the medium of miraculous manifestations;<sup>287</sup> and though many of his hearers attached themselves to him as disciples,<sup>288</sup> he established no formal organization, nor did he attempt to form a cult. His demand for repentance was an individual call, as unto each acceptable applicant the rite of baptism was individually administered.

To the Jews, who were living in a state of expectancy, waiting for the long-predicted Messiah, the words of this strange prophet in the wilderness were fraught with deep portent. Could it be that he was the Christ? He spoke of One yet to come, mightier than himself, whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to loosen,<sup>289</sup> One who would separate the people as the thresher, fan in hand, blew the

<sup>282</sup> Matt. 3:7-10; see also Luke 3:3-9.

<sup>283</sup> Compare a later instance, in which Christ similarly taught (John 8:33-59).

<sup>284</sup> Luke 3:10; compare Acts 2:37.

<sup>285</sup> Luke 3:10-15.

<sup>286</sup> Mark 1:1.

<sup>287</sup> John 10:41.

<sup>288</sup> John 1:35, 37; Matt. 11:2; Luke 7:18.

<sup>289</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

chaff from the wheat; and, he added, that mightier One "will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."<sup>290</sup>

In such wise did the predicted herald of the Lord deliver his message. Himself he would not exalt; his office, however, was sacred to him, and with its functions he brooked no interference from priest, Levite, or rabbi. He was no respecter of persons; sin he denounced, sinners he excoriated, whether in priestly vestments, peasant garb, or royal robes. All the claims the Baptist had made for himself and his mission were later confirmed and vindicated by the specific testimony of Christ.<sup>291</sup> John was the harbinger not alone of the kingdom but of the King; and to him the King in person came.

---

<sup>290</sup> Luke 3:17; see also Matt. 3:12; compare Mal. 3:2.

<sup>291</sup> Matt. 11:11-14; 17:12; Luke 7:24-30.

## THE BAPTISM OF JESUS—TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

When Jesus "began to be about thirty years of age," He journeyed from His home in Galilee "to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him."<sup>292</sup>

John and Jesus were second cousins; as to whether there had existed any close companionship between the two as boys or men we are not told. It is certain, however, that when Jesus presented Himself for baptism, John recognized in Him a sinless Man who stood in no need of repentance; and, as the Baptist had been commissioned to baptize for the remission of sins, he saw no necessity of administering the ordinance to Jesus. He who had received the confessions of multitudes now reverently confessed to One whom he knew was more righteous than himself. In the light of later events it appears that at this time John did not know that Jesus was the Christ, the Mightier One for whom he waited and whose forerunner he knew himself to be. When John expressed his conviction that Jesus needed no baptismal cleansing, our Lord, conscious of His own sinlessness, did not deny the Baptist's imputation, but nevertheless pressed His application for baptism with the significant explanation: "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." If John was able to comprehend the deeper meaning of this utterance, he must have found therein the truth that water baptism is not alone the means provided for gaining remission of sins, but is also an indispensable ordinance established in righteousness and required of all mankind as an essential condition for membership in the kingdom of God.<sup>293</sup>

Jesus Christ thus humbly complied with the will of the Father, and was baptized of John by immersion in water. That His baptism was accepted as a pleasing and necessary act of submission was attested by what immediately ensued: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."<sup>294</sup> Then John knew his Redeemer.

The four Gospel-writers record the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the baptized Jesus as accompanied by a visible manifestation "like a dove;" and this sign had been indicated to John as the foreappointed means by which the Messiah should be made known to him; and to that sign, before specified, was now added the supreme testimony of the Father as to the literal Sonship of Jesus. Matthew records the Father's acknowledgment as given in the third person, "This is my beloved Son;" while both Mark and Luke give the more direct address, "Thou art my beloved Son." The variation, slight and essentially unimportant as it is though bearing on so momentous a subject, affords evidence of independent authorship and discredits any insinuation of collusion among the writers.

The incidents attending the emergence of Jesus from the baptismal grave demonstrate the distinct individuality of the three Personages of the Godhead. On that solemn occasion Jesus the Son was present in the flesh; the presence of the Holy Ghost was manifest through the accompanying sign of the dove, and the voice of the Eternal Father was heard from heaven. Had we no other evidence of the separate personality of each member of the Holy Trinity, this instance should be conclusive; but other scriptures confirm the great truth.<sup>295</sup>

---

<sup>292</sup> Luke 3:23.

<sup>293</sup> For treatment of Baptism as a universal requirement, see the author's "Articles of Faith" vi:18-29. Note 6, end of chapter.

<sup>294</sup> Matt. 3:16, 17; compare Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22.

<sup>295</sup> Shortly before His death, the Savior promised the apostles that the Father would send unto them the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost (John 14:26, and 15:26). See the author's "Articles of Faith" ii:20-24.

## THE TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST

Soon after His baptism, immediately thereafter as Mark asserts, Jesus was constrained by the promptings of the Spirit to withdraw from men and the distractions of community life, by retiring into the wilderness where He would be free to commune with His God. So strong was the influence of the impelling force that He was led thereby, or, as stated by the evangelist, driven, into solitary seclusion, in which He remained during forty days, "with the wild beasts" of the desert. This remarkable episode in our Lord's life is described, though not with equal fulness, in three of the Gospels;<sup>296</sup> John is silent thereon.

The circumstances attending this time of exile and test must have been related by Jesus Himself, for of other human witnesses there were none. The recorded narratives deal principally with events marking the close of the forty-day period, but considered in their entirety they place beyond doubt the fact that the season was one of fasting and prayer. Christ's realization that He was the chosen and foreordained Messiah came to Him gradually. As shown by His words to His mother on the occasion of the memorable interview with the doctors in the temple courts, He knew, when but a Boy of twelve years, that in a particular and personal sense He was the Son of God; yet it is evident that a comprehension of the full purport of His earthly mission developed within Him only as He progressed step by step in wisdom. His acknowledgment by the Father, and the continued companionship of the Holy Ghost, opened His soul to the glorious fact of His divinity. He had much to think about, much that demanded prayer and the communion with God that prayer alone could insure. Throughout the period of retirement, he ate not, but chose to fast, that His mortal body might the more completely be subjected to His divine spirit.

Then, when He was hungry and physically weak, the tempter came with the insidious suggestion that He use His extraordinary powers to provide food. Satan had chosen the most propitious time for his evil purpose. What will mortals not do, to what lengths have men not gone, to assuage the pangs of hunger? Esau bartered his birthright for a meal. Men have fought like brutes for food. Women have slain and eaten their own babes rather than endure the gnawing pangs of starvation. All this Satan knew when he came to the Christ in the hour of extreme physical need, and said unto Him: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." During the long weeks of seclusion, our Lord had been sustained by the exaltation of spirit that would naturally attend such all-absorbing concentration of mind as His protracted meditation and communion with the heavens undoubtedly produced; in such profound devotion of spirit, bodily appetites were subdued and superseded; but the reaction of the flesh was inevitable.

Hungry as Jesus was, there was a temptation in Satan's words even greater than that embodied in the suggestion that He provide food for His famishing body—the temptation to put to proof the possible doubt implied in the tempter's "If." The Eternal Father had proclaimed Jesus as His Son; the devil tried to make the Son doubt that divine relationship. Why not prove the Father's interest in His Son at this moment of dire necessity? Was it proper that the Son of God should go hungry? Had the Father so soon forgotten as to leave His Beloved Son thus to suffer? Was it not reasonable that Jesus, faint from long abstinence, should provide for Himself, and particularly so since He could provide, and that by a word of command, *if* the voice heard at His baptism was that of the Eternal Father. *If* thou be in reality the Son of God, demonstrate thy power, and at the same time satisfy thy hunger—such was the purport of the diabolical suggestion. To have yielded would have been to manifest positive doubt of the Father's acknowledgment.

Moreover, the superior power that Jesus possessed had not been given to Him for personal gratification, but for service to others. He was to experience all the trials of mortality; another man, as

---

<sup>296</sup> Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13.

hungry as He, could not provide for himself by a miracle; and though by miracle such a one might be fed, the miraculous supply would have to be given, not provided by himself. It was a necessary result of our Lord's dual nature, comprizing the attributes of both God and man, that He should endure and suffer as a mortal while possessing at all times the ability to invoke the power of His own Godhood by which all bodily needs could be supplied or overcome. His reply to the tempter was sublime and positively final: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."<sup>297</sup> The word that had proceeded from the mouth of God, upon which Satan would have cast mistrust, was that Jesus was the Beloved Son with whom the Father was well pleased. The devil was foiled; Christ was triumphant.

Realizing that he had utterly failed in his attempt to induce Jesus to use His inherent power for personal service, and to trust in Himself rather than rely upon the Father's providence, Satan went to the other extreme and tempted Jesus to wantonly throw Himself upon the Father's protection.<sup>298</sup> Jesus was standing upon one of the high parts of the temple, a pinnacle or battlement, overlooking the spacious courts, when the devil said unto Him: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Again appears the implication of doubt.<sup>299</sup> *If* Jesus was in fact the Son of God, could He not trust His Father to save Him, and particularly so as it was written<sup>300</sup> that angels would guard Him and bear Him up? Christ's reply to the tempter in the wilderness had embodied a scriptural citation, and this He had introduced with the impressive formula common to expounders of sacred writ—"It is written." In the second attempt, the devil tried to support his suggestion by scripture, and employed a similar expression—"for it is written." Our Lord met and answered the devil's quotation with another, saying: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."<sup>301</sup>

Beside the provocation to sin by wantonly placing Himself in danger, so that the Father's love might be manifested in a miraculous rescue, or by refusing so to challenge the Father's interposition demonstrate that He doubted His status as the Beloved Son, there lurked an appeal to the human side of Christ's nature, in thought of the fame which an astounding exploit, such as that of leaping from the dizzy height of the temple turrets and alighting unhurt, would surely bring. We cannot resist the thought, though we be not justified in saying that any such had even momentary place in the Savior's mind, that to act upon Satan's suggestion, provided of course the outcome proved to be such as he had indicated, would have been to insure public recognition of Jesus as a Being superior to mortals. It would have been a sign and a wonder indeed, the fame of which would have spread as fire in the dry grass; and all Jewry would have been aflame with excitement and interest in the Christ.

The glaring sophistry of Satan's citation of scripture was unworthy a categorical reply; his doctrine deserved neither logic nor argument; his misapplication of the written word was nullified by scripture that was germane; the lines of the psalmist were met by the binding fiat of the prophet of the exodus, in which he had commanded Israel that they should not provoke nor tempt the Lord to work miracles among them. Satan tempted Jesus to tempt the Father. It is as truly a blasphemous interference with the prerogatives of Deity to set limitations or make fixations of time or place at which the divine power shall be made manifest as it is to attempt to usurp that power. God alone must decide when and how His wonders shall be wrought. Once more the purposes of Satan were thwarted and Christ again was victor.

---

<sup>297</sup> Matt. 4:4; compare Deut. 8:3.

<sup>298</sup> [Note 4](#), end of chapter.

<sup>299</sup> [Note 5](#), end of chapter. Page [658](#) herein.

<sup>300</sup> Matt. 4:6; Psalm 91:11, 12.

<sup>301</sup> Matt. 4:5-7; compare Deut. 6:16.

In the third temptation the devil refrained from further appeal to Jesus to put either His own power or that of the Father to the test. Twice completely foiled, the tempter abandoned that plan of assault; and, discarding all disguise of purpose, submitted a definite proposition. From the top of a high mountain Jesus looked over the land with its wealth of city and field, of vineyard and orchard, of flocks and of herds; and in vision He saw the kingdoms of the world and contemplated the wealth, the splendor, the earthly glory of them all. Then saith Satan unto Him: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." So wrote Matthew; the more extended version by Luke follows: "And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." We need not concern ourselves with conjecture as to whether Satan could have made good his promise in the event of Christ's doing him homage; certain it is Christ could have reached out, and have gathered to Himself the wealth and glory of the world had He willed so to do, and thereby have failed in His Messianic mission. This fact Satan knew full well. Many men have sold themselves to the devil for a kingdom and for less, aye, even for a few paltry pence.

The effrontery of his offer was of itself diabolical. Christ, the Creator of heaven and earth, tabernacled as He then was in mortal flesh, may not have remembered His preexistent state, nor the part He had taken in the great council of the Gods,<sup>302</sup> while Satan, an unembodied spirit—he the disinherited, the rebellious and rejected son—seeking to tempt the Being through whom the world was created by promising Him part of what was wholly His, still may have had, as indeed he may yet have, a remembrance of those primeval scenes. In that distant past, antedating the creation of the earth, Satan, then Lucifer, a son of the morning, had been rejected; and the Firstborn Son had been chosen. Now that the Chosen One was subject to the trials incident to mortality, Satan thought to thwart the divine purpose by making the Son of God subject to himself. He who had been vanquished by Michael and his hosts and cast down as a defeated rebel, asked the embodied Jehovah to worship him. "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him."<sup>303</sup>

It is not to be supposed that Christ's victorious emergence from the dark clouds of the three specified temptations exempted Him from further assaults by Satan, or insured Him against later trials of faith, trust, and endurance. Luke closes his account of the temptations following the forty-day fast as follows: "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."<sup>304</sup> This victory over the devil and his wiles, this triumph over the cravings of the flesh, the harassing doubts of the mind, the suggested reaching out for fame and material wealth, were great but not final successes in the struggle between Jesus, the embodied God, and Satan, the fallen angel of light. That Christ was subject to temptation during the period of His association with the apostles He expressly affirmed.<sup>305</sup> That His temptations extended even to the agony in Gethsemane will appear as we proceed with this study. It is not given to the rest of us, nor was it given to Jesus, to meet the foe, to fight and overcome in a single encounter, once for all time. The strife between the immortal spirit and the flesh, between the offspring of God on the one hand, the world and the devil on the other, is persistent through life.

Few events in the evangelical history of Jesus of Nazareth have given rise to more discussion, fanciful theory, and barren speculation, than have the temptations. All such surmises we may with propriety ignore. To any believer in the holy scriptures, the account of the temptations therein given is sufficiently explicit to put beyond doubt or question the essential facts; to the unbeliever neither

---

<sup>302</sup> Pages 6-9.

<sup>303</sup> Matt. 4:10, 11; compare Exo. 20:3; Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Josh. 24:14; 1 Sam. 7:3.

<sup>304</sup> Luke 4:13.

<sup>305</sup> Luke 22:28.

the Christ nor His triumph appeals. What shall it profit us to speculate as to whether Satan appeared to Jesus in visible form, or was present only as an unseen spirit; whether he spoke in audible voice, or aroused in the mind of his intended victim the thoughts later expressed by the written lines; whether the three temptations occurred in immediate sequence or were experienced at longer intervals? With safety we may reject all theories of myth or parable in the scriptural account, and accept the record as it stands; and with equal assurance may we affirm that the temptations were real, and that the trials to which our Lord was put constituted an actual and crucial test. To believe otherwise, one must regard the scriptures as but fiction.

A question deserving some attention in this connection is that of the peccability or impeccability of Christ—the question as to whether He was capable of sinning. Had there been no possibility of His yielding to the lures of Satan, there would have been no real test in the temptations, no genuine victory in the result. Our Lord was sinless yet peccable; He had the capacity, the ability to sin had He willed so to do. Had He been bereft of the faculty to sin, He would have been shorn of His free agency; and it was to safeguard and insure the agency of man that He had offered Himself, before the world was, as a redeeming sacrifice. To say that He could not sin because He was the embodiment of righteousness is no denial of His agency of choice between evil and good. A thoroughly truthful man cannot culpably lie; nevertheless his insurance against falsehood is not that of external compulsion, but of internal restraint due to his cultivated companionship of the spirit of truth. A really honest man will neither take nor covet his neighbor's goods, indeed it may be said that he cannot steal; yet he is capable of stealing should he so elect. His honesty is an armor against temptation; but the coat of mail, the helmet, the breastplate, and the greaves, are but an outward covering; the man within may be vulnerable if he can be reached.

But why proceed with labored reasoning, which can lead to but one conclusion, when our Lord's own words and other scriptures confirm the fact? Shortly before His betrayal, when admonishing the Twelve to humility, He said: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations."<sup>306</sup> While here we find no exclusive reference to the temptations immediately following His baptism, the exposition is plain that He had endured temptations, and by implication, these had continued throughout the period of His ministry. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews expressly taught that Christ was peccable, in that He was tempted "in all points" as are the rest of mankind. Consider the unambiguous declaration: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."<sup>307</sup> And further: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."<sup>308</sup>

---

<sup>306</sup> Luke 22:28.

<sup>307</sup> Heb. 4:14, 15.

<sup>308</sup> Heb. 5:8.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 10

**1. Raiment of Camel's Hair.**—Through the prophet Zechariah (13:4) a time was foretold in which professing prophets would no longer "wear a rough garment to deceive." Of the raiment of camel's hair worn by John the Baptist, the Oxford and other marginal readings render the expression "a garment of hair" as more literal than the Bible text. Deems (*Light of the Nations*, p. 74, note) says: "The garment of camel's hair was not the camel's skin with the hair on, which would be too heavy to wear, but raiment woven of camel's hair, such as Josephus speaks of (B. J. i, 24:3)."

**2. Locusts and Wild Honey.**—Insects of the locust or grasshopper kind were specifically declared clean and suitable for food in the law given to Israel in the wilderness. "Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind." (Lev. 11:21, 22.) At the present time locusts are used as food by many oriental peoples, though usually by the poorer classes only. Of the passage referring to locusts as part of the Baptist's food while he lived as a recluse in the desert, Farrar (*Life of Christ*, p. 97, note,) says: "The fancy that it means the pods of the so-called locust tree (carob) is a mistake. Locusts are sold as articles of food in regular shops for the purpose at Medina; they are plunged into salt boiling water, dried in the sun, and eaten with butter, but only by the poorest beggars." Geikie (*Life and Words of Christ*, vol. 1, pp. 354, 355) gives place to the following as applied to the Baptist's life: "His only food was the locusts which leaped or flew on the bare hills, and the honey of wild bees which he found, here and there, in the cliffs of the rocks, and his only drink a draught of water from some rocky hollow. Locusts are still the food of the poor in many parts of the East. 'All the Bedouins of Arabia, and the inhabitants of towns in Nedj and Hedjaz, are accustomed to eat them,' says Burckhardt. 'I have seen at Medina and Tayi, locust shops, where they are sold by measure. In Egypt and Nubia they are eaten only by the poorest beggars. The Arabs, in preparing them for eating, throw them alive into boiling water, with which a good deal of salt has been mixed, taking them out after a few minutes, and drying them in the sun. The head, feet, and wings, are then torn off, the bodies cleansed from the salt, and perfectly dried. They are sometimes eaten boiled in butter, or spread on unleavened bread mixed with butter.' In Palestine, they are eaten only by the Arabs on the extreme frontiers; elsewhere they are looked on with disgust and loathing, and only the very poorest use them. Tristram, however, speaks of them as 'very palatable.' 'I found them very good,' says he, 'when eaten after the Arab fashion, stewed with butter. They tasted somewhat like shrimps, but with less flavour.' In the wilderness of Judea, various kinds abound at all seasons, and spring up with a drumming sound, at every step, suddenly spreading their bright hind wings, of scarlet, crimson, blue, yellow, white, green, or brown, according to the species. They were 'clean,' under the Mosaic Law, and hence could be eaten by John without offence."

Concerning the mention of wild honey as food used by John, the author last quoted says in a continuation of the same paragraph: "The wild bees in Palestine are far more numerous than those kept in hives, and the greater part of the honey sold in the southern districts is obtained from wild swarms. Few countries, indeed, are better adapted for bees. The dry climate, and the stunted but varied flora, consisting largely of aromatic thymes, mints, and other similar plants, with crocuses in the spring, are very favourable to them, while the dry recesses of the limestone rocks everywhere afford them shelter and protection for their combs. In the wilderness of Judea, bees are far more numerous than in any other part of Palestine, and it is, to this day, part of the homely diet of the Bedouins, who squeeze it from the combs and store it in skins."

**3. John's Inferiority to the Mightier One He Proclaimed.**—"One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose" (Luke 3:16), or "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (Matt. 3:11); this was the way by which the Baptist declared his inferiority to the Mightier

One, who was to succeed and supersede him; and a more effective illustration would be difficult to frame. To loosen the shoe latchet or sandal thong, or to carry the shoes of another, "was a menial office betokening great inferiority on the part of the person performing it." (Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*.) A passage in the Talmud (*Tract. Kidduschin xxii:2*) requires a disciple to do for his teacher whatever a servant might be required to do for his master, except the loosing of his sandal thong. Some teachers urged that a disciple should carry his humility even to the extreme of carrying his master's shoes. The humility of the Baptist, in view of the widespread interest his call aroused, is impressive.

**4. The Order in which the Temptations Were Presented.**—But two of the Gospel-writers specify the temptations to which Christ was subjected immediately after His baptism; Mark merely mentions the fact that Jesus was tempted. Matthew and Luke place first the temptation that Jesus provide for Himself by miraculously creating bread; the sequence of the later trials is not the same in the two records. The order followed in the text is that of Matthew.

**5. The Devil's "If."**—Note the later taunting use of that diabolical *if* as the Christ hung upon the cross. The rulers of the Jews, mocking the crucified Jesus in His agony said, "Let him save himself *if* he be the Christ." And the soldier, reading the inscription at the head of the cross derided the dying God, saying: "*If* thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself." And yet again, the unrepentant malefactor by His side cried but, "*If* thou be Christ, save thyself and us." (Luke 23:35-39.) How literally did those railers and mockers quote the very words of their father the devil (see John 8:44). See further, page 658 herein.

**6. Baptism Required of All.**—Baptism is required of all persons who live to the age of accountability in the flesh. None are exempt. Jesus Christ, who lived as a Man without sin in the midst of a sinful world, was baptized "to fulfil all righteousness." Six centuries before this event, Nephi, prophesying to the people on the western continent, foretold the baptism of the Savior, and thus drew therefrom the necessity of baptism as a universal requirement: "And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water.... Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he sheweth unto the children of men, that according to the flesh, he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments" (B. of M., 2 Nephi 31:5, 7). See *The Articles of Faith*, vi:18-29.

## CHAPTER 11. FROM JUDEA TO GALILEE

### THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY OF JESUS

During the period of our Lord's retirement in the wilderness the Baptist continued his ministry, crying repentance to all who would pause to hear, and administering baptism to such as came duly prepared and asking with right intent. The people generally were greatly concerned over the identity of John; and as the real import of the voice<sup>309</sup> dawned upon them, their concern deepened into fear. The ever recurring question was, Who is this new prophet? Then the Jews, by which expression we may understand the rulers of the people, sent a delegation of priests and Levites of the Pharisaic party to personally question him. He answered without evasion, "I am not the Christ," and with equal decisiveness denied that he was Elias, or more accurately, Elijah, the prophet who, the rabbis said through a misinterpretation of Malachi's prediction, was to return to earth as the immediate precursor of the Messiah.<sup>310</sup> Furthermore, he declared that he was not "that prophet," by which was meant the Prophet whose coming Moses had foretold,<sup>311</sup> and who was not universally identified in the Jewish mind with the expected Messiah. "Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias."<sup>312</sup> The Pharisaic envoys then demanded of him his authority for baptizing; in reply he affirmed that the validity of his baptisms would be attested by One who even then was amongst them, though they knew Him not, and averred: "He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."<sup>313</sup>

John's testimony, that Jesus was the Redeemer of the world, was declared as boldly as had been his message of the imminent coming of the Lord. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," he proclaimed; and, that none might fail to comprehend his identification of the Christ, he added: "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water."<sup>314</sup> That the attestation of the ministering presence of the Holy Ghost through the material appearance "like a dove" was convincing to John is shown by his further testimony: "And John bare record saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."<sup>315</sup> On the day following that of the utterance last quoted, John repeated his testimony to two of his disciples, or followers, as, Jesus passed, saying again: "Behold the Lamb of God."<sup>316</sup>

---

<sup>309</sup> Luke 3:4.

<sup>310</sup> John 1:21; compare Mal. 4:5. [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>311</sup> Deut. 18:15, 18; see page [45](#) herein.

<sup>312</sup> John 1:22, 23; compare Isa. 40:3.

<sup>313</sup> John 1:25-27.

<sup>314</sup> John 1:29-31.

<sup>315</sup> John 1:32, 34; also verses 35, 36. [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>316</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

## THE FIRST DISCIPLES OF JESUS.<sup>317</sup>

Two of the Baptist's followers, specifically called disciples, were with him when for the second time he expressly designated Jesus as the Lamb of God. These were Andrew and John; the latter came to be known in after years as the author of the fourth Gospel. The first is mentioned by name, while the narrator suppresses his own name as that of the second disciple. Andrew and John were so impressed by the Baptist's testimony that they immediately followed Jesus; and He, turning toward them asked: "What seek ye?" Possibly somewhat embarrassed by the question, or with a real desire to learn where He might be found later, they replied by another inquiry: "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" Their use of the title Rabbi was a mark of honor and respect, to which Jesus did not demur. His courteous reply to their question assured them that their presence was no unwelcome intrusion. "Come and see," said He.<sup>318</sup> The two young men accompanied Him, and remained with Him to learn more. Andrew, filled with wonder and joy over the interview so graciously accorded, and thrilled with the spirit of testimony that had been enkindled within his soul, hastened to seek his brother Simon, to whom he said: "We have found the Messiah." He brought Simon to see and hear for himself; and Jesus, looking upon Andrew's brother, called him by name and added an appellation of distinction by which he was destined to be known throughout all later history: "Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas." The new name thus bestowed is the Aramaic or Syro-Chaldaic equivalent of the Greek "Petros," and of the present English "Peter," meaning "a stone."<sup>319</sup>

On the following day Jesus set out for Galilee, possibly accompanied by some or all of his newly-made disciples; and on the way He found a man named Philip, in whom He recognized another choice son of Israel. Unto Philip He said: "Follow me." It was customary with rabbis and other teachers of that time to strive for popularity, that many might be drawn to them to sit at their feet and be known as their disciples. Jesus, however, selected His own immediate associates; and, as He found them and discerned in them the spirits who, in their preexistent state had been chosen for the earthly mission of the apostleship, He summoned them. They were the servants; He was the Master.<sup>320</sup>

Philip soon found his friend Nathanael, to whom he testified that He of whom Moses and the prophets had written had at last been found; and that He was none other than Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael, as his later history demonstrates, was a righteous man, earnest in his hope and expectation of the Messiah, yet seemingly imbued with the belief common throughout Jewry—that the Christ was to come in royal state as seemed befitting the Son of David. The mention of such a One coming from Nazareth, the reputed son of a humble carpenter, provoked wonder if not incredulity in the guileless mind of Nathanael, and he exclaimed: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip's answer was a repetition of Christ's words to Andrew and John—"Come and see." Nathanael left his seat under the fig tree,<sup>321</sup> where Philip had found him, and went to see for himself. As he approached, Jesus said: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Nathanael saw that Jesus could read his mind, and asked in surprize: "Whence knowest thou me?" In reply Jesus showed even greater powers of penetration and perception under conditions that made ordinary observation unlikely if not impossible: "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Nathanael replied with conviction: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Earnest as the man's testimony was, it rested mainly on his recognition of what he took to be a supernatural

---

<sup>317</sup> John 1:35-51.

<sup>318</sup> [Note 4](#), end of chapter.

<sup>319</sup> The name thus given was afterward confirmed, with accompaniments of promise; Matt. 16:18.

<sup>320</sup> To the apostles the Lord said on a subsequent occasion: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16; see also 6:70).

<sup>321</sup> A favorite situation for rest, meditation, and study; 1 Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4.

power in Jesus; our Lord assured him that he should see yet greater things: "And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

## "THE SON OF MAN."

In the promise and prediction made by Christ to Nathanael, we find the significant title—The Son of Man—appearing for the first time, chronologically speaking, in the New Testament. It recurs, however, about forty times, excluding repetitions in parallel accounts in the several Gospels. In each of these passages it is used by the Savior distinctively to designate Himself. In three other instances the title appears in the New Testament, outside the Gospels; and in each case it is applied to the Christ with specific reference to His exalted attributes as Lord and God.<sup>322</sup>

In the Old Testament, the phrase "son of man" occurs in ordinary usage, denoting any human son<sup>323</sup> and it appears over ninety times as an appellation by which Jehovah addressed Ezekiel, though it is never applied by the prophet to himself.<sup>324</sup> The context of the passages in which Ezekiel is addressed as "son of man" indicates the divine intention of emphasizing the human status of the prophet as contrasted with the divinity of Jehovah.

The title is used in connection with the record of Daniel's vision,<sup>325</sup> in which was revealed the consummation, yet future, when Adam—the Ancient of Days—shall sit to judge his posterity;<sup>326</sup> on which great occasion, the Son of Man is to appear and receive a dominion that shall be everlasting, transcendently superior to that of the Ancient of Days, and embracing every people and nation, all of whom shall serve the Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.<sup>327</sup>

In applying the designation to Himself, the Lord invariably uses the definite article. "The Son of Man" was and is, specifically and exclusively, Jesus Christ. While as a matter of solemn certainty He was the only male human being from Adam down who was not the son of a mortal man, He used the title in a way to conclusively demonstrate that it was peculiarly and solely His own. It is plainly evident that the expression is fraught with a meaning beyond that conveyed by the words in common usage. The distinguishing appellation has been construed by many to indicate our Lord's humble station as a mortal, and to connote that He stood as the type of humanity, holding a particular and unique relationship to the entire human family. There is, however, a more profound significance attaching to the Lord's use of the title "The Son of Man"; and this lies in the fact that He knew His Father to be the one and only supremely exalted Man,<sup>328</sup> whose Son Jesus was both in spirit and in body—the Firstborn among all the spirit-children of the Father, the Only Begotten in the flesh—and therefore in sense applicable to Himself alone, He was and is the Son of the "Man of Holiness," Elohim,<sup>329</sup> the Eternal Father. In His distinctive titles of Sonship, Jesus expressed His spiritual and bodily descent from, and His filial submission to, that exalted Father.

As revealed to Enoch the Seer, "Man of Holiness" is one of the names by which God the Eternal Father is known; "and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ." We learn further that the Father of Jesus Christ thus proclaimed Himself to Enoch: "Behold, I am God; Man of Holiness is my name; Man of Counsel is my name; and Endless and Eternal is my name, also."<sup>330</sup> "The

---

<sup>322</sup> Acts 7:56; Rev. 1:13; 14:14.

<sup>323</sup> Job 25:6; Psalms 144:3; 146:3; see also 8:4 and compare Heb. 2:6-9.

<sup>324</sup> Ezek. 2:1, 3, 6, 8; 3:1, 3, 4; 4:1; etc.

<sup>325</sup> Dan. 7:13.

<sup>326</sup> Doc. and Cov. 27:11; 78:15, 16; 107:54-57; 116.

<sup>327</sup> Doc. and Cov. 49:6; 58:65; 65:5; 122:8. Observe that in modern revelation the title is used only as applying to the Christ in His resurrected and glorified state.

<sup>328</sup> [Note 5](#), end of chapter.

<sup>329</sup> [Page 38](#).

<sup>330</sup> P. of G.P., Moses 6:57; 7:35; see also 7:24, 47, 54, 56, 59, 65. Observe that Satan addressed Moses as "son of man" in a blasphemous attempt to coerce Moses into worshiping him by emphasizing the mortal weakness and inferiority of the man in contrast with his own false pretension of godship. (Moses 1:12.)

"Son of Man" is in great measure synonymous with "The Son of God," as a title denoting divinity, glory, and exaltation; for the "Man of Holiness," whose Son Jesus Christ reverently acknowledges Himself to be, is God the Eternal Father.

## THE MIRACLE AT CANA IN GALILEE

Soon after the arrival of Jesus in Galilee we find Him and His little company of disciples at a marriage party in Cana, a neighboring town to Nazareth. The mother of Jesus was at the feast; and for some reason not explained in John's narrative,<sup>331</sup> she manifested concern and personal responsibility in the matter of providing for the guests. Evidently her position was different from that of one present by ordinary invitation. Whether this circumstance indicates the marriage to have been that of one of her own immediate family, or some more distant relative, we are not informed.

It was customary to provide at wedding feasts a sufficiency of wine, the pure though weak product of the local vineyards, which was the ordinary table beverage of the time. On this occasion the supply of wine was exhausted, and Mary told Jesus of the deficiency. Said He: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." The noun of address, "Woman," as applied by a son to his mother may sound to our ears somewhat harsh, if not disrespectful; but its use was really an expression of opposite import.<sup>332</sup> To every son, the mother ought to be preeminently the woman of women; she is the one woman in the world to whom the son owes his earthly existence; and though the title "Mother" belongs to every woman who has earned the honors of maternity, yet to no child is there more than one woman whom by natural right he can address by that title of respectful acknowledgment. When, in the last dread scenes of His mortal experience, Christ hung in dying agony upon the cross, He looked, down upon the weeping Mary, His mother, and commended her to the care of the beloved apostle John, with the words: "Woman, behold thy son!"<sup>333</sup> Can it be thought that in this supreme moment, our Lord's concern for the mother from whom He was about to be separated by death was associated with any emotion other than that of honor, tenderness and love?<sup>334</sup>

Nevertheless, His words to Mary at the marriage feast may have conveyed a gentle reminder of her position as the mother of a Being superior to herself; even as on that earlier occasion when she had found her Boy, Jesus, in the temple, He had brought home to her the fact that her jurisdiction over Him was not supreme. The manner in which she told Him of the insufficiency of wine probably suggested an intimation that He use His more than human power, and by such means supply the need. It was not her function to direct or even to suggest the exercise of the power inherent in Him as the Son of God; such had not been inherited from her. "What have I to do with thee?" He asked; and added: "Mine hour is not yet come." Here we find no disclaimer of the ability to do what she apparently wanted Him to do, but the plain implication that He would act only when the time was right for the purpose, and that He, not she, must decide when that time had come. She understood His meaning, in part at least, and contented herself by instructing the servants to do whatsoever He directed. Here again is evidence of her position of responsibility and domestic authority at the social gathering.

The time for His intervention soon arrived. There stood within the place six water pots;<sup>335</sup> these He directed the servants to fill with water. Then, without audible command or formula of invocation, as best we know, He caused to be effected a transmutation within the pots, and when the servants drew therefrom, it was wine, not water that issued. At a Jewish social gathering, such as was this wedding festival, some one, usually a relative of the host or hostess, or some other one worthy of the honor, was made governor of the feast, or, as we say in this day, chairman, or master of ceremonies. To this functionary the new wine was first served; and he, calling the bridegroom, who was the real

---

<sup>331</sup> John 2:1-11.

<sup>332</sup> "The address 'Woman' was so respectful that it might be and was, addressed to the queenliest."—(Farrar, "The Life of Christ," p. 134.)

<sup>333</sup> John 19:26.

<sup>334</sup> On a few occasions Jesus used the address "Woman" in a general way: Matt. 15:28; Luke 13:12; John 4:21; 8:10; etc.

<sup>335</sup> [Note 6](#), end of chapter.

host, asked him why he had reserved his choice wine till the last, when the usual custom was to serve the best at the beginning, and the more ordinary later. The immediate result of this, the first recorded of our Lord's miracles, is thus tersely stated by the inspired evangelist: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."<sup>336</sup>

The circumstances incident to the miraculous act are instructive to contemplate. The presence of Jesus at the marriage, and His contribution to the successful conduct of the feast, set the seal of His approval upon the matrimonial relationship and upon the propriety of social entertainment. He was neither a recluse nor an ascetic; He moved among men, eating and drinking, as a natural, normal Being.<sup>337</sup> On the occasion of the feast He recognized and heeded the demands of the liberal hospitality of the times, and provided accordingly. He, who but a few days before had revolted at the tempter's suggestion that He provide bread for His impoverished body, now used His power to supply a luxury for others. One effect of the miracle was to confirm the trust of those whose belief in Him as the Messiah was yet young and untried. "His disciples believed on him"; surely they had believed in some measure before, otherwise they would not have followed Him; but their belief was now strengthened and made to approach, if indeed it did not attain, the condition of abiding faith in their Lord. The comparative privacy attending the manifestation is impressive; the moral and spiritual effect was for the few, the inauguration of the Lord's ministry was not to be marked by public display.

---

<sup>336</sup> John 2:11.

<sup>337</sup> The absence of all false austerity and outward show of abnormal abstinence in His life furnished an imagined excuse for unfounded charges of excess, through which He was said to be a glutton and a winebibber. (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34.)

## MIRACLES IN GENERAL

The act of transmutation whereby water became wine was plainly a miracle, a phenomenon not susceptible of explanation, far less of demonstration, by what we consider the ordinary operation of natural law. This was the beginning of His miracles, or as expressed in the revised version of the New Testament, "his signs." In many scriptures miracles are called signs, as also wonders, powers, works, wonderful works, mighty works,<sup>338</sup> etc. The spiritual effect of miracles would be unattained were the witnesses not caused to inwardly wonder, marvel, ponder and inquire; mere surprize or amazement may be produced by deception and artful trickery. Any miraculous manifestation of divine power would be futile as a means of spiritual effect were it unimpressive. Moreover, every miracle is a sign of God's power; and signs in this sense have been demanded of prophets who professed to speak by divine authority, though such signs have not been given in all cases. The Baptist was credited with no miracle, though he was pronounced by the Christ as more than a prophet;<sup>339</sup> and the chronicles of some earlier prophets<sup>340</sup> are devoid of all mention of miracles. On the other hand, Moses, when commissioned to deliver Israel from Egypt, was made, to understand that the Egyptians would look for the testimony of miracles, and he was abundantly empowered therefore.<sup>341</sup>

Miracles cannot be in contravention of natural law, but are wrought through the operation of laws not universally or commonly recognized. Gravitation is everywhere operative, but the local and special application of other agencies may appear to nullify it—as by muscular effort or mechanical impulse a stone is lifted from the ground, poised aloft, or sent hurtling through space. At every stage of the process, however, gravity is in full play, though its effect is modified by that of other and locally superior energy. The human sense of the miraculous wanes as comprehension of the operative process increases. Achievements made possible by modern invention of telegraph and telephone with or without wires, the transmutation of mechanical power into electricity with its manifold present applications and yet future possibilities, the development of the gasoline motor, the present accomplishments in aerial navigation—these are no longer miracles in man's estimation, because they are all in some degree understood, are controlled by human agency, and, moreover, are continuous in their operation and not phenomenal. We arbitrarily classify as miracles only such phenomena as are unusual, special, transitory, and wrought by an agency beyond the power of man's control.

In a broader sense, all nature is miracle. Man has learned that by planting the seed of the grape in suitable soil, and by due cultivation, he may conduce to the growth of what shall be a mature and fruitful vine; but is there no miracle, even in the sense of inscrutable processes, in that development? Is there less of real miracle in the so-called natural course of plant development—the growth of root, stem, leaves, and fruit, with the final elaboration of the rich nectar of the vine—than there was in what appears supernatural in the transmutation of water into wine at Cana?

In the contemplation of the miracles wrought by Christ, we must of necessity recognize the operation of a power transcending our present human understanding. In this field, science has not yet advanced far enough to analyze and explain. To deny the actuality of miracles on the ground that, because we cannot comprehend the means, the reported results are fictitious, is to arrogate to the human mind the attribute of omniscience, by implying that what man cannot comprehend cannot be, and that therefore he is able to comprehend all that is. The miracles of record in the Gospels are as fully supported by evidence as are many of the historical events which call forth neither protest

---

<sup>338</sup> Matt. 7:22; 11:20; 12:38; 16:1; 24:24; Mark 6:14; Luke 10:13; John 2:18; 7:21; 10:25; 14:11; Acts 6:8; 8:6; 14:3; 19:11; Rom. 15:19; Rev. 13:13; etc.

<sup>339</sup> John 10:41; Matt. 11:9.

<sup>340</sup> For example Zechariah and Malachi.

<sup>341</sup> Exo. 3:20; 4:1-9. [Note 8](#), end of chapter.

nor demand for further proof. To the believer in the divinity of Christ, the miracles are sufficiently attested; to the unbeliever they appear but as myths and fables.<sup>342</sup>

To comprehend the works of Christ, one must know Him as the Son of God; to the man who has not yet learned to know, to the honest soul who would inquire after the Lord, the invitation is ready; let him "Come and see."

---

<sup>342</sup> [Note 7](#), end of chapter.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 11

**1. Misunderstanding of Malachi's Prediction.**—In the closing chapter of the compilation of scriptures known to us as the Old Testament, the prophet Malachi thus describes a condition incident to the last days, immediately preceding the second coming of Christ: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." The fateful prophecy concludes with the following blessed and far-reaching promise: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." (Malachi 4:1, 2, 5, 6.) It has been held by theologians and Bible commentators that this prediction had reference to the birth and ministry of John the Baptist, (compare Matt. 11:14; 17:11; Mark 9:11; Luke 1:17), upon whom rested the spirit and power of Elias (Luke 1:17). However, we have no record of Elijah having ministered unto the Baptist, and furthermore, the latter's ministry, glorious though it was, justifies no conclusion that in him did the prophecy find its full realization. In addition, it should be remembered, that the Lord's declaration through Malachi, relative to the day of burning in which the wicked would be destroyed as stubble, yet awaits fulfilment. It is evident, therefore, that the commonly accepted interpretation is at fault, and that we must look to a later date than the time of John for the fulfilment of Malachi's prediction. The later occasion has come; it belongs to the present dispensation, and marks the inauguration of a work specially reserved for the Church in these latter days. In the course of a glorious manifestation to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, in the temple at Kirtland, Ohio, April 3d, 1836, there appeared unto them Elijah, the prophet of old, who had been taken from earth while still in the body. He declared unto them: "Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi, testifying that he (Elijah) should be sent before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse. Therefore the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands, and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors." (Doc. and Cov. 110:13-16.) See also *The House of the Lord*, pp. 82-83.

**2. The Sign of the Dove.**—"John the Baptist ... had the privilege of beholding the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove, or rather in the *sign* of the dove, in witness of that administration. The sign of the dove was instituted before the creation of the world, a witness for the Holy Ghost, and the devil cannot come in the sign of a dove. The Holy Ghost is a personage, and is in the form of a personage. It does not confine itself to the *form* of the dove, but in *sign* of the dove. The Holy Ghost cannot be transformed into a dove; but the sign of a dove was given to John to signify the truth of the deed, as the dove is an emblem or token of truth and innocence."—From Sermon by Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 260-261.

**3. The Testimony of John the Baptist.**—Observe that the Baptist's testimony to the divinity of Christ's mission is recorded as having been given after the period of our Lord's forty-day fast and temptations, and therefore approximately six weeks subsequent to the baptism of Jesus. To the deputation of priests and Levites of the Pharisaic party, who visited him by direction of the rulers, probably by appointment from the Sanhedrin, John, after disavowing that he was the Christ or any one of the prophets specified in the inquiry, said: "There standeth one among you whom ye know not; he it is who coming after me is preferred before me." On the next day, and again on the day following that, he bore public testimony to Jesus as the Lamb of God; and on the third day after the visit of the priests and Levites to John, Jesus started on the journey to Galilee (John 1:19-43).

John's use of the designation "Lamb of God" implied his conception of the Messiah as One appointed for sacrifice, and his use of the term is the earliest mention found in the Bible. For later Biblical applications, direct or implied, see Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19; Rev. 5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 17; etc.

**4. "Come and See."**—The spirit of our Lord's invitation to the young truth seekers, Andrew and John, is manifest in a similar privilege extended to all. The man who would know Christ must come to Him, to see and hear, to feel and know. Missionaries may carry the good tidings, the message of the gospel, but the response must be an individual one. Are you in doubt as to what that message means to-day? Then come and see for yourself. Would you know where Christ is to be found? Come and see.

**5. The Eternal Father a Resurrected, Exalted Being.**—"As the Father hath power in himself, so hath the Son power in himself, to lay down his life and take it again, so he has a body of his own. The Son doeth what he hath seen the Father do: then the Father hath some day laid down his life and taken it again; so he has a body of his own; each one will be in his own body."—Joseph Smith; see *Hist. of the Church*, vol. 5, p. 426.

"God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted Man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil was rent to-day, and the Great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him to-day, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image, and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another."—Joseph Smith; see *Compendium*, p. 190.

**6. Waterpots for Ceremonial Cleansing.**—In the house at Cana there stood in a place specially reserved, six waterpots of stone "after the manner of the purifying of the Jews." Vessels of water were provided as a matter of prescribed order in Jewish homes, to facilitate the ceremonial washings enjoined by the law. From these pots or jars the water was drawn off as required; they were reservoirs holding the supply, not vessels used in the actual ablution.

**7. "The Attitude of Science Towards Miracles"** is the subject of a valuable article by Prof. H. L. Orchard, published in *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute, or Philosophical Society of Great Britain*, 1910, Vol. 42, pp. 81-122. This article was the Gunning Prize Essay for 1909. After a lengthy analytical treatment of his subject, the author presents the following summation, which was concurred in by those who took part in the ensuing discussions: "We here complete our scientific investigation of Bible Miracles. It has embraced (1) the *nature* of the phenomenon; (2) the *conditions* under which it is alleged to have occurred; (3) the character of the *testimony* to its occurrence. To the inquiry—Were the Bible miracles probable? science answers in the affirmative. To the further inquiry—Did they actually occur? the answer of science is again, and very emphatically, in the affirmative. If we liken them to gold, she has made her assay and says the gold is pure. Or the Bible miracles may be compared to a string of pearls. If science seeks to know whether the pearls are genuine, she may apply chemical and other tests to the examination of their *character*; she may search into the *conditions and circumstances* in which the alleged pearls were found. Were they first found in an oyster, or in some manufacturing laboratory? And she may investigate the *testimony* of experts. Should the result of any one of these examinations affirm the genuineness of the pearls, science will be slow to believe that they are 'paste'; if all the results declare their genuineness, science will not hesitate to say that they are true pearls. This, as we have seen, is the case of the Bible miracles. Science, therefore, affirms *their actual occurrence*."

**8. The Testimony of Miracles.**—The Savior's promise in a former day (Mark 16:17-18), as in the present dispensation (Doc. and Cov. 84:65-73), is definite, to the effect that specified gifts of the Spirit are to follow the believer as signs of divine favor. The possession and exercise of such gifts may be taken therefore as essential features of the Church of Christ. Nevertheless we are not

justified in regarding the evidence of miracles as infallible testimony of authority from heaven; on the other hand, the scriptures furnish abundant proof that spiritual powers of the baser sort have wrought miracles, and will continue so to do, to the deceiving of many who lack discernment. If miracles be accepted as infallible evidence of godly power, the magicians of Egypt, through the wonders which they accomplished in opposition to the ordained plan for Israel's deliverance, have as good a claim to our respect as has Moses (Exo. 7:11). John the Revelator saw in vision a wicked power working miracles, and thereby deceiving many; doing great wonders, even bringing fire from heaven (Rev. 13:11-18). Again, he saw three unclean spirits, whom he knew to be "the spirits of devils working miracles" (Rev. 16:13-14). Consider, in connection with this, the prediction made by the Savior:— There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect (Matt. 24:24). The invalidity of miracles as a proof of righteousness is indicated in an utterance of Jesus Christ regarding the events of the great judgment:—"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22-23). The Jews, to whom these teachings were addressed, knew that wonders could be wrought by evil powers; for they charged Christ with working miracles by the authority of Beelzebub the prince of devils (Matt. 12:22-30; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15).—From the author's *The Articles of Faith*, xii:25, 26.

## CHAPTER 12.

# EARLY INCIDENTS IN OUR LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY

### FIRST CLEARING OF THE TEMPLE

Soon after the marriage festivities in Cana, Jesus, accompanied by His disciples, as also by His mother and other members of the family, went to Capernaum, a town pleasantly situated near the northerly end of the Sea of Galilee or Lake of Gennesaret<sup>343</sup> and the scene of many of our Lord's miraculous works; indeed it came to be known as His own city.<sup>344</sup> Because of the unbelief of its people it became a subject of lamentation to Jesus when in sorrow He prefigured the judgment that would befall the place.<sup>345</sup> The exact site of the city is at present unknown. On this occasion Jesus tarried but a few days at Capernaum; for the time of the annual Passover was near, and in compliance with Jewish law and custom He went up to Jerusalem.

The synoptic Gospels,<sup>346</sup> which are primarily devoted to the labors of Christ in Galilee, contain no mention of His attendance at the paschal festival between His twelfth year and the time of His death; to John alone are we indebted for the record of this visit at the beginning of Christ's public ministry. It is not improbable that Jesus had been present at other Passovers during the eighteen years over which the evangelists pass in complete and reverent silence; but at any or all such earlier visits, He, not being thirty years old, could not have assumed the right or privilege of a teacher without contravening established customs.<sup>347</sup> It is worth our attention to note that on this, the first recorded appearance of Jesus in the temple subsequent to His visit as a Boy, He should resume His "Father's business" where He had before been engaged. It was in His Father's service that He had been found in discussion with the doctors of the law,<sup>348</sup> and in His Father's cause He was impelled to action on this later occasion.

The multitudinous and mixed attendance at the Passover celebration has already received passing mention;<sup>349</sup> some of the unseemly customs that prevailed are to be held in mind. The law of Moses had been supplemented by a cumulative array of rules, and the rigidly enforced requirements as to sacrifices and tribute had given rise to a system of sale and barter within the sacred precincts of the House of the Lord. In the outer courts were stalls of oxen, pens of sheep, cages of doves and pigeons; and the ceremonial fitness of these sacrificial victims was cried aloud by the sellers, and charged for in full measure. It was the custom also to pay the yearly poll tribute of the sanctuary at this season—the ransom offering required of every male in Israel, and amounting to half a shekel<sup>350</sup> for each, irrespective of his relative poverty or wealth. This was to be paid "after the shekel of the sanctuary," which limitation, as rabbis had ruled, meant payment in temple coin. Ordinary money, varieties of which bore effigies and inscriptions of heathen import, was not acceptable, and as a result, money-changers plied a thriving trade on the temple grounds.

---

<sup>343</sup> [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>344</sup> John 2:12; compare Matt. 4:13; 9:1.

<sup>345</sup> Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15.

<sup>346</sup> [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>347</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

<sup>348</sup> Page [114](#); Luke 2:46-49.

<sup>349</sup> Page [113](#). [Note 4](#), end of chapter.

<sup>350</sup> Exo. 30:11-16. [Note 11](#), end of chapter.

Righteously indignant at what He beheld, zealous for the sanctity of His Father's House, Jesus essayed to clear the place;<sup>351</sup> and, pausing not for argument in words, He promptly applied physical force almost approaching violence—the one form of figurative language that those corrupt barterers for pelf could best understand. Hastily improvising a whip of small cords, He laid about Him on every side, liberating and driving out sheep, oxen, and human traffickers, upsetting the tables of the exchangers and pouring out their heterogeneous accumulations of coin. With tender regard for the imprisoned and helpless birds He refrained from assaulting their cages; but to their owners He said: "Take these things hence;" and to all the greedy traders He thundered forth a command that made them quail: "Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." His disciples saw in the incident a realization of the psalmist's line: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."<sup>352</sup>

The Jews, by which term we mean the priestly officials and rulers of the people, dared not protest this vigorous action on the ground of unrighteousness; they, learned in the law, stood self-convicted of corruption, avarice, and of personal responsibility for the temple's defilement. That the sacred premises were in sore need of a cleansing they all knew; the one point upon which they dared to question the Cleanser was as to why He should thus take to Himself the doing of what was their duty. They practically submitted to His sweeping intervention, as that of one whose possible investiture of authority they might be yet compelled to acknowledge. Their tentative submission was based on fear, and that in turn upon their sin-convicted consciences. Christ prevailed over those haggling Jews by virtue of the eternal principle that right is mightier than wrong, and of the psychological fact that consciousness of guilt robs the culprit of valor when the imminence of just retribution is apparent to his soul.<sup>353</sup> Yet, fearful lest He should prove to be a prophet with power, such as no living priest or rabbi even professed to be, they timidly asked for credentials of His authority—"What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" Curtly, and with scant respect for this demand, so common to wicked and adulterous men,<sup>354</sup> Jesus replied: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."<sup>355</sup>

Blinded by their own craft, unwilling to acknowledge the Lord's authority, yet fearful of the possibility that they were opposing one who had the right to act, the perturbed officials found in the words of Jesus reference to the imposing temple of masonry within whose walls they stood. They took courage; this strange Galilean, who openly flouted their authority, spoke irreverently of their temple, the visible expression of the profession they so proudly flaunted in words—that they were children of the covenant, worshipers of the true and living God, and hence superior to all heathen and pagan peoples. With seeming indignation they rejoined: "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?"<sup>356</sup> Though frustrated in their desire to arouse popular indignation against Jesus at this time, the Jews refused to forget or forgive His words. When afterward He stood an undefended prisoner, undergoing an illegal pretense of trial before a sin-impeached court, the blackest perjury uttered against Him was that of the false witnesses who testified: "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands."<sup>357</sup> And while He hung in mortal suffering, the scoffers who passed by the cross wagged their heads and taunted the dying Christ with "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross."<sup>358</sup> Yet His words to the Jews who had demanded the credentials of a sign had no reference to the colossal Temple of Herod,

<sup>351</sup> John 2:14-17.

<sup>352</sup> Compare Psalm 69:9.

<sup>353</sup> [Note 5](#), end of chapter.

<sup>354</sup> Matt. 12:38, 39; compare 16:1; Mark 8:11; John 6:30; 1 Cor. 1:22.

<sup>355</sup> John 2:19; read verses 18-22.

<sup>356</sup> [Note 6](#), end of chapter.

<sup>357</sup> Mark 14:58. Page [624](#) herein.

<sup>358</sup> Mark 15:29, 30.

but to the sanctuary of His own body, in which, more literally than in the man-built Holy of Holies, dwelt the ever living Spirit of the Eternal God. "The Father is in me" was His doctrine.<sup>359</sup>

"He spake of the temple of His body," the real tabernacle of the Most High.<sup>360</sup> This reference to the destruction of the temple of His body, and the renewal thereof after three days, is His first recorded prediction relating to His appointed death and resurrection. Even the disciples did not comprehend the profound meaning of His words until after His resurrection from the dead; then they remembered and understood. The priestly Jews were not as dense as they appeared to be, for we find them coming to Pilate while the body of the crucified Christ lay in the tomb, saying: "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again."<sup>361</sup> Though we have many records of Christ having said that He would die and on the third day would rise again, the plainest of such declarations were made to the apostles rather than openly to the public. The Jews who waited upon Pilate almost certainly had in mind the utterance of Jesus when they had stood, nonplussed before Him, at the clearing of the temple courts.<sup>362</sup>

Such an accomplishment as that of defying priestly usage and clearing the temple purlieus by force could not fail to impress, with varied effect, the people in attendance at the feast; and they, returning to their homes in distant and widely separated provinces, would spread the fame of the courageous Galilean Prophet. Many in Jerusalem believed on Him at the time, mainly because they were attracted by the miracles He wrought; but He refused to "commit himself unto them," realizing the insecure foundation of their professions. Popular adulation was foreign to His purpose; He wanted no motley following, but would gather around Him such as received the testimony of His Messiahship from the Father. "He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."<sup>363</sup>

The incident of Christ's forcible clearing of the temple is a contradiction of the traditional conception of Him as of One so gentle and unassertive in demeanor as to appear unmanly. Gentle He was, and patient under affliction, merciful and long-suffering in dealing with contrite sinners, yet stern and inflexible in the presence of hypocrisy, and unsparing in His denunciation of persistent evil-doers. His mood was adapted to the conditions to which He addressed Himself; tender words of encouragement or burning expletives of righteous indignation issued with equal fluency from His lips. His nature was no poetic conception of cherubic sweetness ever present, but that of a Man, with the emotions and passions essential to manhood and manliness. He, who often wept with compassion, at other times evinced in word and action the righteous anger of a God. But of all His passions, however gently they rippled or strongly surged, He was ever master. Contrast the gentle Jesus moved to hospitable service by the needs of a festal party in Cana, with the indignant Christ plying His whip, and amidst commotion and turmoil of His own making, driving cattle and men before Him as an unclean herd.

---

<sup>359</sup> John 10:38; 17:21.

<sup>360</sup> John 2:19-22; compare 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; see further Col. 2:9; Heb. 8:2.

<sup>361</sup> Matt. 27:63. Page [665](#).

<sup>362</sup> As Canon Farrar has tersely written, "Unless the 'we remember' was a distinct falsehood, they could have been referring to no other occasion than this." ("Life of Christ," p. 155.)

<sup>363</sup> John 2:23-25.

## JESUS AND NICODEMUS.<sup>364</sup>

That the wonderful deeds wrought by Christ at and about the time of this memorable Passover had led some of the learned, in addition to many of the common people, to believe in Him, is evidenced by the fact that Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee in profession and who occupied a high place as one of the rulers of the Jews, came to Him on an errand of inquiry. There is significance in the circumstance that this visit was made at night. Apparently the man was impelled by a genuine desire to learn more of the Galilean, whose works could not be ignored; though pride of office and fear of possible suspicion that he had become attached to the new Prophet led him to veil his undertaking with privacy.<sup>365</sup> Addressing Jesus by the title he himself bore, and which he regarded as one of honor and respect, he said: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."<sup>366</sup> Whether his use of the plural pronoun "we" indicates that he was sent by the Sanhedrin, or by the society of Pharisees—the members of which were accustomed to so speak, as representatives of the order—or was employed in the rhetorical sense as indicating himself alone, is of little importance. He acknowledged Jesus as a "teacher come from God," and gave reasons for so regarding Him. Whatever of feeble faith might have been stirring in the heart of the man, such was founded on the evidence of miracles, supported mainly by the psychological effect of signs and wonders. We must accord him credit for sincerity and honesty of purpose.

Without waiting for specific questions, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus appears to have been puzzled; he asked how such a rejuvenation was possible. "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" We do Nicodemus no injustice in assuming that he as a rabbi, a man learned in the scriptures, ought to have known that there was other meaning in the words of Jesus than that of a mortal, literal birth. Moreover, were it possible that a man could be born a second time literally and in the flesh, how could such a birth profit him in spiritual growth? It would be but a reentrance on the stage of physical existence, not an advancement. The man knew that the figure of a new birth was common in the teachings of his day. Every proselyte to Judaism was spoken of at the time of his conversion as one new-born.

The surprize manifested by Nicodemus was probably due, in part at least, to the universality of the requirement as announced by Christ. Were the children of Abraham included? The traditionalism of centuries was opposed to any such view. Pagans had to be born again through a formal acceptance of Judaism, if they would become even small sharers of the blessings that belonged as a heritage to the house of Israel; but Jesus seemed to treat all alike, Jews and Gentiles, heathen idolaters and the people who with their lips at least called Jehovah, God.

Jesus repeated the declaration, and with precision, emphasizing by the impressive "Verily, verily," the greatest lesson that had ever saluted the ears of this ruler in Israel: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." That the new birth thus declared to be absolutely essential as a condition of entrance into the kingdom of God, applicable to every man, without limitation or qualification, was a spiritual regeneration, was next explained to the wondering rabbi: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Still the learned Jew pondered yet failed to comprehend. Possibly the sound of the night breeze was heard at that moment; if so, Jesus was but utilizing the incident as a skilful teacher would do to impress a lesson when He

---

<sup>364</sup> John 3:1-21.

<sup>365</sup> [Note 7](#), end of chapter.

<sup>366</sup> John 3:2; read verses 1-21.

continued: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Plainly stated, Nicodemus was given to understand that his worldly learning and official status availed him nothing in any effort to understand the things of God; through the physical sense of hearing he knew that the wind blew; by sight he could be informed of its passage: yet what did he know of the ultimate cause of even this simple phenomenon? If Nicodemus would really be instructed in spiritual matters, he had to divest himself of the bias due to his professed knowledge of lesser things.

Rabbi and eminent Sanhedrist though he was, there at the humble lodging of the Teacher from Galilee, he was in the presence of a Master. In the bewilderment of ignorance he asked, "How can these things be?" The reply must have been humbling if not humiliating to the man: "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Plainly a knowledge of some of the fundamental principles of the gospel had been before accessible; Nicodemus was held in reproach for his lack of knowledge, particularly as he was a teacher of the people. Then our Lord graciously expounded at greater length, testifying that He spoke from sure knowledge, based upon what He had seen, while Nicodemus and his fellows were unwilling to accept the witness of His words. Furthermore, Jesus averred His mission to be that of the Messiah, and specifically foretold His death and the manner thereof—that He, the Son of Man, must be lifted up, even as Moses had lifted the serpent in the wilderness as a prototype, whereby Israel might escape the fatal plague.<sup>367</sup>

The purpose of the foreappointed death of the Son of Man was: "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life"; for to this end, and out of His boundless love to man had the Father devoted His Only Begotten Son. And further, while it was true that in His mortal advent the Son had not come to sit as a judge, but to teach, persuade and save, nevertheless condemnation would surely follow rejection of that Savior, for light had come, and wicked men avoided the light, hating it in their preference for the darkness in which they hoped to hide their evil deeds. Here again, perhaps, Nicodemus experienced a twinge of conscience, for had not he been afraid to come in the light, and had he not chosen the dark hours for his visit? Our Lord's concluding words combined both instruction and reproof: "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

The narrative of this interview between Nicodemus and the Christ constitutes one of our most instructive and precious scriptures relating to the absolute necessity of unreserved compliance with the laws and ordinances of the gospel, as the means indispensable to salvation. Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, through whom alone men may gain eternal life; the forsaking of sin by resolute turning away from the gross darkness of evil to the saving light of righteousness; the unqualified requirement of a new birth through baptism in water, and this of necessity by the mode of immersion, since otherwise the figure of a birth would be meaningless; and the completion of the new birth through baptism by the Spirit—all these principles are taught herein in such simplicity and plainness as to make plausible no man's excuse for ignorance.

If Jesus and Nicodemus were the only persons present at the interview, John, the writer, must have been informed thereof by one of the two. As John was one of the early disciples, afterward one of the apostles, and as he was distinguished in the apostolic company by his close personal companionship with the Lord, it is highly probable that he heard the account from the lips of Jesus. It was evidently John's purpose to record the great lesson of the occasion rather than to tell the circumstantial story. The record begins and ends with equal abruptness; unimportant incidents are omitted; every line is of significance; the writer fully realized the deep import of his subject and treated it accordingly. Later mention of Nicodemus tends to confirm the estimate of the man as he appears in this meeting with Jesus—that of one who was conscious of a belief in the Christ, but

---

<sup>367</sup> Numb. 21:7-9.

whose belief was never developed into such genuine and virile faith as would impel to acceptance and compliance irrespective of cost or consequence.<sup>368</sup>

---

<sup>368</sup> [Note 8](#), end of chapter. See "Articles of Faith," v:1-5.

## FROM CITY TO COUNTRY

Leaving Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples went into the rural parts of Judea, and there tarried, doubtless preaching as opportunity was found or made; and those who believed on Him were baptized.<sup>369</sup> The prominent note of His early public utterances was that of His forerunner in the wilderness: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."<sup>370</sup> The Baptist continued his labors; though doubtless, since his recognition of the Greater One for whose coming he had been sent to prepare, he considered the baptism he administered as of somewhat different significance. He had at first baptized in preparation for One who was to come; now he baptized repentant believers unto Him who had come.

Disputation had arisen between some of John's zealous adherents and one or more Jews<sup>371</sup> concerning the doctrine of purifying. The context<sup>372</sup> leaves little room for doubt that a question was involved as to the relative merits of John's baptism and that administered by the disciples of Jesus. With excusable ardor and well-intended zeal for their master, the disciples of John, who had been embroiled in the dispute, came to him saying: "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him." John's supporters were concerned at the success of One whom they regarded in some measure as a rival to their beloved teacher. Had not John given to Jesus His first attestation? "He to whom thou bearest witness" said they, not deigning even to designate Jesus by name. Following the example of Andrew, and of John the future apostle, the people were leaving the Baptist and gathering about the Christ. John's reply to his ardent followers constitutes a sublime instance of self-abnegation. His answer was to this effect: A man receives only as God gives unto him. It is not given to me to do the work of Christ. Ye yourselves are witnesses that I disclaimed being the Christ, and that I said I was one sent before Him. He is as the Bridegroom; I am only as the friend of the bridegroom,<sup>373</sup> His servant; and I rejoice greatly in being thus near Him; His voice gives me happiness; and thus my joy is fulfilled. He of whom you speak stands at the beginning of His ministry; I near the end of mine. He must increase but I must decrease. He came from heaven and therefore is superior to all things of earth; nevertheless men refuse to receive His testimony. To such a One, the Spirit of God is not apportioned; it is His in full measure. The Father loveth Him, the Son, and hath given all things into His hand, and: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."<sup>374</sup>

In such a reply, under the existent conditions, is to be found the spirit of true greatness, and of a humility that could rest only on a conviction of divine assurance to the Baptist as to himself and the Christ. In more than one sense was John great among all who are born of women.<sup>375</sup> He had entered upon his work when sent of God so to do;<sup>376</sup> he realized that his work had been in a measure superseded, and he patiently awaited his release, in the meantime continuing in the ministry, directing souls to his Master. The beginning of the end was near. He was soon seized and thrown into a dungeon; where, as shall be shown, he was beheaded to sate the vengeance of a corrupt woman whose sins he had boldly denounced.<sup>377</sup>

---

<sup>369</sup> John 3:22; compare 4:2.

<sup>370</sup> Matt. 4:17; compare Mark 1:15.

<sup>371</sup> [Note 9](#), end of chapter.

<sup>372</sup> John 3:25-36.

<sup>373</sup> [Note 10](#), end of chapter.

<sup>374</sup> John 3:27-36.

<sup>375</sup> Matt. 11:11.

<sup>376</sup> Luke 3:2,3.

<sup>377</sup> Matt. 14:3-12.

The Pharisees observed with increasing apprehension the growing popularity of Jesus, evidenced by the fact that even more followed after Him and accepted baptism at the hands of His disciples than had responded to the Baptist's call. Open opposition was threatened; and as Jesus desired to avert the hindrance to His work which such persecution at that time would entail, He withdrew from Judea and retired to Galilee, journeying by way of Samaria. This return to the northern province was effected after the Baptist had been cast into prison.<sup>378</sup>

---

<sup>378</sup> Matt. 4:12.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 12

**1. Sea of Galilee.**—This, the largest body of fresh water in Palestine, is somewhat pear-shape in outline and measures approximately thirteen miles in extreme length on a northerly-southerly line and between six and seven miles in greatest width. The river Jordan enters it at the northeast extremity and flows out at the south-west; the lake may be regarded, therefore, as a great expansion of the river, though the water-filled depression is about two hundred feet in depth. The outflowing Jordan connects the sea of Galilee with the Dead Sea, the latter a body of intensely saline water, which in its abundance of dissolved salts and in the consequent density of its brine is comparable to the Great Salt Lake in Utah, though the chemical composition of the waters is materially different. The sea of Galilee is referred to by Luke, in accordance with its more appropriate classification as a lake (Luke 5:1, 2; 8:22, 23, 33). Adjoining the lake on the north-west is a plain, which in earlier times was highly cultivated: this was known as the land of Gennesaret (Matt. 14:34; Mark 6:53); and the water body came to be known as the sea or lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1). From the prominence of one of the cities on its western shore, it was known also as the sea of Tiberias (John 6:1,23; 21:1). In the Old Testament it is called the sea of Chinnereth (Numb. 34:11) or Chinneroth (Josh. 12:3) after the name of a contiguous city (Josh. 19:35). The surface of the lake or sea is several hundred feet below normal sea-level, 681 feet lower than the Mediterranean according to Zenos, or 700 feet as stated by some others. This low-lying position gives to the region a semi-tropical climate. Zenos, in the *Standard Bible Dictionary*, says: "The waters of the lake are noted for abundant fish. The industry of fishing was accordingly one of the most stable resources of the country round about.... Another feature of the sea of Galilee is its susceptibility to sudden storms. These are occasioned partly by its lying so much lower than the surrounding tableland (a fact that creates a difference of temperature and consequent disturbances in the atmosphere), and partly by the rushing of gusts of wind down the Jordan valley from the heights of Hermon. The event recorded in Matt. 8:24 is no extraordinary case. Those who ply boats on the lake are obliged to exercise great care to avoid peril from such storms. The shores of the sea of Galilee as well as the lake itself were the scenes of many of the most remarkable events recorded in the Gospels."

**2. The Four Gospels.**—All careful students of the New Testament must have observed that the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, treat the events of the Savior's sayings and doings in Galilee with greater fulness than they accord to His work in Judea; the book or Gospel of John, on the other hand, treats particularly the incidents of our Lord's Judean ministry, without excluding, however, important events that occurred in Galilee. In style of writing and method of treatment, the authors of the first three Gospels (evangelists as they and John are collectively styled in theologic literature) differ more markedly from the author of the fourth Gospel than among themselves. The events recorded by the first three can be more readily classified, collated, or arranged, and in consequence the Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke are now commonly known as the Synoptics, or Synoptic Gospels.

**3. Thirty Years of Age.**—According to Luke (3:23) Jesus was about thirty years of age at the time of His baptism, and we find that soon thereafter, He entered publicly upon the work of His ministry. The law provided that at the age of thirty years the Levites were required to enter upon their special service (Numb. 4:3). Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, treating the passage in Luke 3:23, says: "This was the age required by the law to which the priests must arrive before they could be installed in their office." Jesus may possibly have had regard for what had become a custom of the time, in waiting until He had attained that age before entering publicly on the labors of a Teacher among the people. Not being of Levitical descent He was not eligible to priestly ordination in the Aaronic order, and therefore, certainly did not wait for such before beginning His ministry. To have taught in public

at an earlier age would have been to arouse criticism, and objection, which might have resulted in serious handicap or hindrance at the outset.

**4. Throngs and Confusion at the Passover Festival.**—While it is admittedly impossible that even a reasonably large fraction of the Jewish people could be present at the annual Passover gatherings at Jerusalem, and in consequence provision was made for local observance of the feast, the usual attendance at the temple celebration in the days of Jesus was undoubtedly enormous. Josephus calls the Passover throngs "an innumerable multitude" (Wars, ii, 1:3), and in another place (Wars, vi, 9:3) states that the attendance reached the enormous aggregate of three millions of souls; such is the record, though many modern writers treat the statement as an exaggeration. Josephus says that for the purpose of giving the emperor Nero information as to the numerical strength of the Jewish people, particularly in Palestine, the chief priests were asked by Cestius to count the number of lambs slain at the feast, and the number reported was 256,500, which on the basis of between ten and eleven persons to each paschal table would indicate the presence, he says, of at least 2,700,200, not including visitors other than Jews, and such of the people of Israel as were debarred from participation in the paschal meal because of ceremonial unfitness.

The scenes of confusion, inevitable under the conditions then prevailing, are admirably summarized by Geikie (*Life and Words of Christ*, chap. 30), who cites many earlier authorities for his statements: "The streets were blocked by the crowds from all parts, who had to make their way to the Temple, past flocks of sheep, and droves of cattle, pressing on in the sunken middle part of each street reserved for them, to prevent contact and defilement. Sellers of all possible wares beset the pilgrims, for the great feasts were, as has been said, the harvest time of all trades at Jerusalem, just as, at Mecca, even at this day, the time of the great concourse of worshippers at the tomb of the Prophet, is that of the busiest trade among the merchant pilgrims, who form the caravans from all parts of the Mohammedan world.

"Inside the Temple space, the noise and pressure were, if possible, worse. Directions were posted up to keep to the right or the left, as in the densest thoroughfares of London. The outer court, which others than Jews might enter, and which was, therefore, known as the Court of the Heathen, was in part, covered with pens for sheep, goats, and cattle, for the feast and the thank-offerings. Sellers shouted the merits of their beasts, sheep bleated, and oxen lowed. It was, in fact, the great yearly fair of Jerusalem, and the crowds added to the din and tumult, till the services in the neighboring courts were sadly disturbed. Sellers of doves, for poor women coming for purification from all parts of the country, and for others, had a space set apart for them. Indeed, the sale of doves was, in great measure, secretly, in the hands of the priests themselves: Hannas, the high priest, especially, gaining great profits from his dove cotes on Mount Olivet. The rents of the sheep and cattle pens, and the profits on the doves, had led the priests to sanction the incongruity of thus turning the Temple itself into a noisy market. Nor was this all. Potters pressed on the pilgrims their clay dishes and ovens for the Passover lamb; hundreds of traders recommended their wares aloud; shops for wine, oil, salt, and all else needed for sacrifices, invited customers; and, in addition, persons going across the city, with all kinds of burdens, shortened their journey by crossing the Temple grounds. The provision for paying the tribute, levied on all, for the support of the Temple, added to the distraction. On both sides of the east Temple gate, stalls had for generations been permitted for changing foreign money. From the fifteenth of the preceding month money-changers had been allowed to set up their tables in the city, and from the twenty-first,—or twenty days before the Passover,—to ply their trade in the Temple itself. Purchasers of materials for offerings paid the amount at special stalls, to an officer of the Temple, and received a leaden cheque for which they got what they had bought, from the seller. Large sums, moreover, were changed, to be cast, as free offerings, into one of the thirteen chests which formed the Temple treasury. Every Jew, no matter how poor, was, in addition, required to pay yearly a half-shekel—about eighteen pence—as atonement money for his soul, and for the support of the Temple. As this would not be received except in a native coin, called the Temple shekel, which

was not generally current, strangers had to change their Roman, Greek, or Eastern money, at the stalls of the money-changers, to get the coin required. The trade gave ready means for fraud, which was only too common. Five per cent. exchange was charged, but this was indefinitely increased by tricks and chicanery, for which the class had everywhere earned so bad a name, that like the publicans, their witness would not be taken before a court."

Touching the matter of the defilement to which the temple courts had been subjected by traffickers acting under priestly license, Farrar, (*Life of Christ*, p. 152), gives us the following: "And this was the entrance-court to the Temple of the Most High! The court which was a witness that that house should be a House of Prayer for all nations had been degraded into a place which, for foulness, was more like shambles, and for bustling commerce more like a densely-crowded bazaar; while the lowing of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the Babel of many languages, the huckstering and wrangling, and the clinking of money and of balances (perhaps not always just), might be heard in the adjoining courts, disturbing the chant of the Levites and the prayers of priests!"

**5. The Servility of the Jews in the Presence of Jesus.**—The record of the achievement of Jesus, in ridding the temple courts of those who had made the House of the Lord a market place, contains nothing to suggest the inference that He exercised superhuman strength or more than manly vigor. He employed a whip of His own making, and drove all before Him. They fled helter-skelter. None are said to have voiced an objection until the expulsion had been made complete. Why did not some among the multitude object? The submission appears to have been abject and servile in the extreme. Farrar, (*Life of Christ*, pp. 151, 152) raises the question and answers it with excellent reasoning and in eloquent lines: "Why did not this multitude of ignorant pilgrims resist? Why did these greedy chafferers content themselves with dark scowls and muttered maledictions, while they suffered their oxen and sheep to be chased into the streets and themselves ejected, and their money flung rolling on the floor, by one who was then young and unknown, and in the garb of despised Galilee? Why, in the same way we might ask, did Saul suffer Samuel to beard him in the very presence of his army? Why did David abjectly obey the orders of Joab? Why did Ahab not dare to arrest Elijah at the door of Naboth's vineyard? Because sin is weakness; because there is in the world nothing so abject as a guilty conscience, nothing so invincible as the sweeping tide of a Godlike indignation against all that is base and wrong. How could these paltry sacrilegious buyers and sellers, conscious of wrongdoing, oppose that scathing rebuke, or face the lightnings of those eyes that were enkindled by an outraged holiness? When Phinehas the priest was zealous for the Lord of Hosts, and drove through the bodies of the prince of Simeon and the Midianitish woman with one glorious thrust of his indignant spear, why did not guilty Israel avenge that splendid murder? Why did not every man of the tribe of Simeon become a Goel to the dauntless assassin? Because Vice cannot stand for one moment before Virtue's uplifted arm. Base and grovelling as they were, these money-mongering Jews felt, in all that remnant of their souls which was not yet eaten away by infidelity and avarice, that the Son of Man was right.

"Nay, even the Priests and Pharisees, and Scribes and Levites, devoured as they were by pride and formalism, could not condemn an act which might have been performed by a Nehemiah or a Judas Maccabaeus, and which agreed with all that was purest and best in their traditions. But when they had heard of this deed, or witnessed it, and had time to recover from the breathless mixture of admiration, disgust, and astonishment which it inspired, they came to Jesus, and though they did not dare to condemn what He had done, yet half indignantly asked Him for some sign that He had a right to act thus."

**6. Jewish Regard for the Temple.**—The Jews professed high regard for the temple. "An utterance of the Savior, construed by the dark-minded as an aspersion upon the temple, was used against Him as one of the chief accusations on which His death was demanded. When the Jews clamored for a sign of His authority He predicted His own death and subsequent resurrection, saying, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,' (John 2:19-22; see also Matt. 26:61;

27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29). They blindly regarded this remark as a disrespectful allusion to their temple, a structure built by human hands, and they refused to forget or forgive. That this veneration continued after the crucifixion of our Lord is evident from accusations brought against Stephen, and still later against Paul. In their murderous rage the people accused Stephen of disrespect for the temple, and brought false witnesses who uttered perjured testimony saying, 'This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place.' (Acts 6:13.) And Stephen was numbered with the martyrs. When it was claimed that Paul had brought with him into the temple precincts, a Gentile, the whole city was aroused, and the infuriated mob dragged Paul from the place and sought to kill him. (Acts 21:26-31.)"—The author; *House of the Lord*, pp. 60, 61.

**7. Some of the "Chief Rulers" Believed.**—Nicodemus was not the only one among the ruling classes who believed in Jesus; but of most of these we learn nothing to indicate that they had sufficient courage to come even by night to make independent and personal inquiry. They feared the result in loss of popularity and standing. We read in John 12:42, 43: "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Note also the instance of the scribe who proffered to become a professed disciple, but, probably because of some degree of insincerity or unfitness, was rather discouraged than approved by Jesus. (Matt. 8:19, 20.)

**8. Nicodemus.**—The course followed by this man evidences at once that he really believed in Jesus as one sent of God, and that his belief failed of development into a condition of true faith, which, had it but been realized, might have led to a life of devoted service in the Master's cause. When at a later stage than that of his interview with Christ the chief priests and Pharisees upbraided the officers whom they had sent to take Jesus into custody and who returned to report their failure, Nicodemus, one of the council, ventured to mildly expostulate against the murderous determination of the rulers, by stating a general proposition in interrogative form: "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth?" He was answered by his colleagues with contempt, and appears to have abandoned his well-intended effort (John 7:50-53; read preceding verses 30-49). We next hear of him bringing a costly contribution of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred-weight, to be used in the burial of Christ's then crucified body; but even in this deed of liberality and devotion, in which his sincerity of purpose cannot well be questioned, he had been preceded by Joseph of Arimathea, a man of rank, who had boldly asked for and secured the body for reverent burial (John 19:38-42). Nevertheless Nicodemus did more than did most of his believing associates among the noble and great ones; and to him let all due credit be given; he will not fail of his reward.

**9. "The Jews" or "A Jew."**—We read that "there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying" (John 3:25). Bearing in mind that the expression "the Jews" is very commonly used by the author of the fourth Gospel to designate the officials or rulers among the people, the passage quoted may be understood to mean that the Baptist's disciples were engaged in disputation with the priestly rulers. It is held, however, by Biblical scholars generally, that "the Jews" in this passage is a mistranslation, and that the true rendering is "a Jew." The disputation concerning purifying appears to have arisen between some of the Baptist's followers and a single opponent; and the passage as it appears in the King James version of the Bible is an instance of scripture not translated correctly.

**10. Friend of the Bridegroom.**—Judean marriage customs in the days of Christ required the appointing of a chief grooms-man, who attended to all the preliminaries and made arrangements for the marriage feast, in behalf of the bridegroom. He was distinctively known as the friend of the bridegroom. When the ceremonial requirements had been complied with, and the bride had been legally and formally given unto her spouse, the joy of the bridegroom's friend was fulfilled inasmuch as his appointed duties had been successfully discharged. (John 3:29.) According to Edersheim, (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 1, p. 148), by the simpler customs prevalent in Galilee a "friend of the bridegroom" was not often chosen; and (pp. 663-4) the expression "children of

the bridechamber" (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34, in all of which citations the expression is used by Jesus), was applied collectively to all the invited guests at a wedding festival. He says: "As the institution of 'friends of the bridegroom' prevailed in Judea, but not in Galilee, this marked distinction of the 'friend of the bridegroom' in the mouth of the Judean John, and 'sons (children) of the bridechamber' in that of the Galilean Jesus, is itself evidential of historic accuracy."

**11. The Atonement Money.**—In the course of the exodus, the Lord required of every male in Israel who was twenty years old or older at the time of a census the payment of a ransom, amounting to half a shekel (Exo. 30:12-16). See pages [383](#) and [396](#) herein. As to the use to which this money was to be put, the Lord thus directed Moses: "And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls" (Exo. 30:16; see also 38:25-31). In time, the tax of half a shekel, equivalent to a bekah (Exo. 38:26), was collected annually, though for this exaction no scriptural authority is of record. This tax must not be confused with the redemption money, amounting to five shekels for every firstborn male, the payment of which exempted the individual from service in the labors of the sanctuary. In place of the firstborn sons in all the tribes, the Lord designated the Levites for this special ministry; nevertheless He continued to hold the firstborn males as peculiarly His own, and required the payment of a ransom as a mark of their redemption from the duties of exclusive service. See Exo. 13:12, 13-15; Numb. 3:13, 40-51; 8:15-18; 18:15, 16; also pages [95](#), [96](#) herein.

## CHAPTER 13. HONORED BY STRANGERS, REJECTED BY HIS OWN

### JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

The direct route from Judea to Galilee lay through Samaria; but many Jews, particularly Galileans, chose to follow an indirect though longer way rather than traverse the country of a people so despised by them as were the Samaritans. The ill-feeling between Jews and Samaritans had been growing for centuries, and at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry had developed into most intense hatred.<sup>379</sup> The inhabitants of Samaria were a mixed people, in whom the blood of Israel was mingled with that of the Assyrians and other nations; and one cause of the animosity existing between them and their neighbors both on the north and the south was the Samaritans' claim for recognition as Israelites; it was their boast that Jacob was their father; but this the Jews denied. The Samaritans had a version of the Pentateuch, which they revered as the law, but they rejected all the prophetic writings of what is now the Old Testament, because they considered themselves treated with insufficient respect therein.

To the orthodox Jew of the time a Samaritan was more unclean than a Gentile of any other nationality. It is interesting to note the extreme and even absurd restrictions then in force in the matter of regulating unavoidable relations between the two peoples. The testimony of a Samaritan could not be heard before a Jewish tribunal. For a Jew to eat food prepared by a Samaritan was at one time regarded by rabbinical authority as an offense as great as that of eating the flesh of swine. While it was admitted that produce from a field in Samaria was not unclean, inasmuch as it sprang directly from the soil, such produce became unclean if subjected to any treatment at Samaritan hands. Thus, grapes and grain might be purchased from Samaritans, but neither wine nor flour manufactured therefrom by Samaritan labor. On one occasion the epithet "Samaritan" was hurled at Christ as an intended insult. "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"<sup>380</sup> The Samaritan conception of the mission of the expected Messiah was somewhat better founded than was that of the Jews, for the Samaritans gave greater prominence to the spiritual kingdom the Messiah would establish, and were less exclusive in their views as to whom the Messianic blessings would be extended.

In His journey to Galilee Jesus took the shorter course, through Samaria; and doubtless His choice was guided by purpose, for we read that "He must needs go" that way.<sup>381</sup> The road led through or by the town called Sychar,<sup>382</sup> "near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph."<sup>383</sup> There was Jacob's well, which was held in high esteem, not only for its intrinsic worth as an un failing source of water, but also because of its association with the great patriarch's life. Jesus, travel-worn and weary, rested at the well, while His disciples went to the town to buy food. A woman came to fill her water-jar, and Jesus said to her: "Give me to drink." By the rules of oriental hospitality then prevailing, a request for water was one that should never be denied if possible to grant; yet the woman hesitated, for she was amazed that a Jew should ask a favor of a Samaritan, however, great the need. She expressed her surprise in the question "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Jesus, seemingly forgetful of thirst in His desire to teach, answered her by saying: "If thou knewest the gift of God,

---

<sup>379</sup> [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>380</sup> John 8:48.

<sup>381</sup> John 4:4; for incidents following see verses 5-43.

<sup>382</sup> [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>383</sup> Gen. 33:19; and Josh. 24:32.

and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." The woman reminded Him that He had no bucket or cord with which to draw from the deep well, and inquired further as to His meaning, adding: "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?"

Jesus found in the woman's words a spirit similar to that with which the scholarly Nicodemus had received His teachings; each failed alike to perceive the spiritual lesson He would impart. He explained to her that water from the well would be of but temporary benefit; to one who drank of it thirst would return. "But," he added, "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The woman's interest was keenly aroused, either from curiosity or as an emotion of deeper concern, for she now became the petitioner, and, addressing Him by a title of respect, said: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." She could see nothing beyond the material advantage attaching to water that would once and for all quench thirst. The result of the draught she had in mind would be to give her immunity from one bodily need, and save her the labor of coming to draw from the well.

The subject of the conversation was abruptly changed by Jesus bidding her to go, call her husband, and return. To her reply that she had no husband Jesus revealed to her His superhuman powers of discernment, by telling her she had spoken truthfully, inasmuch as she had had five husbands, while the man with whom she was then living was not her husband. Surely no ordinary being could have so read the unpleasing story of her life; she impulsively confessed her conviction, saying: "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." She desired to turn the conversation, and, pointing to Mount Gerizim, upon which the sacrilegious priest Manasseh had erected a Samaritan temple, she remarked with little pertinence to what had been said before: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus replied in yet deeper vein, telling her that the time was near when neither that mountain nor Jerusalem would be preeminently a place of worship; and He clearly rebuked her presumption that the traditional belief of the Samaritans was equally good with that of the Jews; for, said He: "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." Changed and corrupted as the Jewish religion had become, it was better than that of her people; for the Jews did accept the prophets, and through Judah the Messiah had come. But, as Jesus expounded the matter to her, the place of worship was of lesser importance than the spirit of the worshiper. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Unable or unwilling to understand Christ's meaning, the woman sought to terminate the lesson by a remark that probably was to her but casual: "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." Then, to her profound amazement, Jesus rejoined with the awe-inspiring declaration: "I that speak unto thee am he." The language was unequivocal, the assertion one that required no elucidation. The woman must regard Him thereafter as either an imposter or the Messiah. She left her pitcher at the well, and hastening to the town told of her experience, saying: "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

Near the conclusion of the interview between Jesus and the woman, the returning disciples arrived with the provisions they had gone to procure. They marveled at finding the Master in conversation with a woman, and a Samaritan woman at that, yet none of them asked of Him an explanation. His manner must have impressed them with the seriousness and solemnity of the occasion. When they urged Him to eat He said: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." To them His words had no significance beyond the literal sense, and they queried among themselves as to whether some one had brought Him food during their absence; but He enlightened them in this way: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

A crowd of Samaritans appeared, coming from the city. Looking upon them and upon the grain fields nearby, Jesus continued: "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?"

behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." The import of the saying seems to be that while months would elapse before the wheat and the barley were ready for the sickle, the harvest of souls, exemplified by the approaching crowd, was even then ready; and that from what He had sown the disciples might reap, to their inestimable advantage, since they would have wages for their hire and would gather the fruits of other labor than their own.

Many of the Samaritans believed on Christ, at first on the strength of the woman's testimony, then because of their own conviction; and they said to the woman at whose behest they had at first gone to meet Him: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Graciously He acceded to their request to remain, and tarried with them two days. It is beyond question that Jesus did not share in the national prejudice of the Jews against the people of Samaria; an honest soul was acceptable to Him come whence he may. Probably the seed sown during this brief stay of our Lord among the despized people of Samaria was that from which so rich a harvest was reaped by the apostles in after years.<sup>384</sup>

---

<sup>384</sup> Acts 8:5; 9:31; 15:3.

## JESUS AGAIN IN GALILEE: AT CANA AND NAZARETH

Following the two days' sojourn among the Samaritans, Jesus, accompanied by the disciples who had traveled with Him from Judea, resumed the journey northward into Galilee, from which province He had been absent several months. Realizing that the people of Nazareth, the town in which He had been brought up, would be probably loath to acknowledge Him as other than the carpenter, or, as He stated, knowing that "a prophet hath no honour in his own country,"<sup>385</sup> He went first to Cana. The people of that section, and indeed the Galileans generally, received Him gladly; for many of them had attended the last Passover and probably had been personal witnesses of the wonders He had wrought in Judea. While at Cana He was visited by a nobleman, most likely a high official of the province, who entreated Him to proceed to Capernaum and heal his son, who was then lying at the point of death. With the probable design of showing the man the true condition of his mind, for we cannot doubt that Jesus could read his thoughts, our Lord said to him: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."<sup>386</sup> As observed in earlier instances, notably in the refusal of Jesus to commit Himself to the professing believers at Jerusalem, whose belief rested solely on their wonder at the things He did,<sup>387</sup> our Lord would not regard miracles, though wrought by Himself, as a sufficient and secure foundation for faith. The entreating nobleman, in anguish over the precarious state of his son, in no way resented the rebuke such as a captious mind may have found in the Lord's reply; but with sincere humility, which showed his belief that Jesus could heal the boy, he renewed and emphasized his plea: "Sir, come down ere my child die."

Probably the man had never paused to reason as to the direct means or process by which death might be averted and healing be insured through the words of any being; but in his heart he believed in Christ's power, and with pathetic earnestness besought our Lord to intervene in behalf of his dying son. He seemed to consider it necessary that the Healer be present, and his great fear was that the boy would not live until Jesus could arrive. "Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." The genuineness of the man's trust is shown by his grateful acceptance of the Lord's assurance, and by the contentment that he forthwith manifested. Capernaum, where his son lay, was about twenty miles away; had he been still solicitous and doubtful he would probably have tried to return home that day, for it was one o'clock in the afternoon when Jesus spoke the words that had given to him such relief; but he journeyed leisurely, for on the following day he was still on the road, and was met by some of his servants who had been sent to cheer him with the glad word of his son's recovery. He inquired when the boy had begun to amend, and was told that at the seventh hour on the yesterday the fever had left him. That was the time at which Christ had said, "Thy son liveth." The man's belief ripened fast, and both he and his household accepted the gospel.<sup>388</sup> This was the second miracle wrought by Jesus when in Cana, though in this instance the subject of the blessing was in Capernaum.

Our Lord's fame spread through all the region round about. During a period not definitely stated, He taught in the synagogues of the towns and was received with favor, being glorified of all.<sup>389</sup> He then returned to Nazareth, His former home, and as was his custom, attended the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Many times as boy and man He had sat in that house of worship, listening to the reading of the law and the prophets and to the commentaries or Targums<sup>390</sup> relating thereto, as delivered by

---

<sup>385</sup> John 4:44; compare Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24.

<sup>386</sup> John 4:48; read verses 46-54.

<sup>387</sup> John 2:23, 24.

<sup>388</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

<sup>389</sup> Luke 4:14, 15; read verses 16-32.

<sup>390</sup> [Note 4](#), end of chapter.

appointed readers; but now, as a recognized teacher of legal age He was eligible to take the reader's place. On this occasion He stood up to read, when the service had reached the stage at which extracts from the prophetic books were to be read to the congregation. The minister in charge handed Him the roll, or book, of Isaiah; He turned to the part known to us as the beginning of the sixty-first chapter, and read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."<sup>391</sup> Handing the book to the minister, He sat down. It was allowable for the reader in the service of the Jewish synagog to make comments in explanation of what had been read; but to do so he must sit. When Jesus took His seat the people knew that He was about to expound the text, and "the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him." The scripture He had quoted was one recognized by all classes as specifically referring to the Messiah, for whose coming the nation waited. The first sentence of our Lord's commentary was startling; it involved no labored analysis, no scholastic interpretation, but a direct and unambiguous application: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." There was such graciousness in His words that all wondered, and they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"<sup>392</sup>

Jesus knew their thoughts even if He heard not their words, and, forestalling their criticism, He said: "Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country." In their hearts the people were eager for a sign, a wonder, a miracle. They knew that Jesus had wrought such in Cana, and a boy in Capernaum had been healed by His word; at Jerusalem too He had astonished the people with mighty works. Were they, His townsmen, to be slighted? Why would He not treat them to some entertaining exhibition of His powers? He continued His address, reminding them that in the days of Elijah, when for three years and a half no rain had fallen, and famine had reigned, the prophet had been sent to but one of the many widows, and she a woman of Sarepta in Sidon, a Gentile, not a daughter of Israel. And again, though there had been many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha, but one leper, and he a Syrian, not an Israelite, had been cleansed through the prophet's ministrations, for Naaman alone had manifested the requisite faith.

Then great was their wrath. Did He dare to class them with Gentiles and lepers? Were they to be likened unto despised unbelievers, and that too by the son of the village carpenter, who had grown from childhood in their community? Victims of diabolical rage, they seized the Lord and took Him to the brow of the hill on the slopes of which the town was built, determined to avenge their wounded feelings by hurling Him from the rocky cliffs. Thus early in His ministry did the forces of opposition attain murderous intensity. But our Lord's time to die had not yet come. The infuriated mob was powerless to go one step farther than their supposed victim would permit. "But he passing through the midst of them went his way." Whether they were overawed by the grace of His presence, silenced by the power of His words, or stayed by some more appalling intervention, we are not informed. He departed from the unbelieving Nazarenes, and thenceforth Nazareth was no longer His home.

---

<sup>391</sup> Luke 4:18, 19; compare Isa. 61:1, 2.

<sup>392</sup> Luke 4:22; compare Matt. 13:55-57; Mark 6:3; John 6:42.

## IN CAPERNAUM

Jesus wended His way to Capernaum,<sup>393</sup> which became to Him as nearly a place of abode as any He had in Galilee. There He taught, particularly on Sabbath days; and the people were astonished at His doctrine, for He spoke with authority and power.<sup>394</sup> In the synagog, on one of these occasions, was a man who was a victim of possession, and subject to the ravages of an evil spirit, or, as the text so forcefully states, one who "had a spirit of an unclean devil." It is significant that this wicked spirit, which had gained such power over the man as to control his actions and utterances, was terrified before our Lord and cried out with a loud voice, though pleadingly: "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God." Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, commanding him to be silent, and to leave the man; the demon obeyed the Master, and after throwing the victim into violent though harmless paroxysm, left him. Such a miracle caused the beholders to wonder the more, and they exclaimed: "What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about."<sup>395</sup>

In the evening of the same day, when the sun had set, and therefore after the Sabbath had passed<sup>396</sup>, the people flocked about Him, bringing their afflicted friends and kindred; and these Jesus healed of their divers maladies whether of body or of mind. Among those so relieved were many who had been possessed of devils, and these cried out, testifying perforce of the Master's divine authority: "Thou art Christ the Son of God."<sup>397</sup>

On these as on other occasions, we find evil spirits voicing through the mouths of their victims their knowledge that Jesus was the Christ; and in all such instances the Lord silenced them with a word; for He wanted no such testimony as theirs to attest the fact of His Godship. Those spirits were of the devil's following, members of the rebellious and defeated hosts that had been cast down through the power of the very Being whose authority and power they now acknowledged in their demoniac frenzy. Together with Satan himself, their vanquished chief, they remained unembodied, for to all of them the privileges of the second or mortal estate had been denied;<sup>398</sup> their remembrance of the scenes that had culminated in their expulsion from heaven was quickened by the presence of the Christ, though He stood in a body of flesh.

Many modern writers have attempted to explain the phenomenon of demoniacal possession; and beside these there are not a few who deny the possibility of actual domination of the victim by spirit personages. Yet the scriptures are explicit in showing the contrary. Our Lord distinguished between this form of affliction and that of simple bodily disease in His instructions to the Twelve: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils."<sup>399</sup> In the account of the incidents under consideration, the evangelist Mark observes the same distinction, thus: "They brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils." In several instances, Christ, in rebuking demons, addressed them as individuals distinct from the human being afflicted,<sup>400</sup> and in one such instance commanded the demon to "come out of him, and enter no more into him."<sup>401</sup>

---

<sup>393</sup> [Note 5](#), end of chapter.

<sup>394</sup> Luke 4:32; compare Matt. 7:28, 29; 13:54; Mark 1:22.

<sup>395</sup> Luke 4:33-37; and Mark 1:23-28. [Note 6](#), end of chapter.

<sup>396</sup> The Jews' Sabbath began at sunset Friday and ended with the setting of the sun on Saturday.

<sup>397</sup> Luke 4:41; compare Mark 1:34; 3:11, 12; 5:1-18; Matt. 8:28-34.

<sup>398</sup> Pages [6](#), [7](#).

<sup>399</sup> Matt. 10:8; see verse 1; compare 4:24; Mark 1:32; 16:17, 18; Luke 9:1

<sup>400</sup> Matt. 8:32; Mark 1:25; Luke 4:35.

<sup>401</sup> Mark 9:25.

In this matter as in others the simplest explanation is the pertinent truth; theory raised on other than scriptural foundation is unstable. Christ unequivocally associated demons with Satan, specifically in His comment on the report of the Seventy whom He authorized and sent forth, and who testified with joy on their return that even the devils had been subject unto them through His name; and to those faithful servants He said: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."<sup>402</sup> The demons that take possession of men, overruling their agency and compelling them to obey Satanic bidding, are the unembodied angels of the devil, whose triumph it is to afflict mortals, and if possible to impel them to sin. To gain for themselves the transitory gratification of tenating a body of flesh, these demons are eager to enter even into the bodies of beasts.<sup>403</sup>

Possibly it was during the interval between the rebuking of the evil spirit in the synagog and the miracles of healing and casting out devils in the evening of that Sabbath, that Jesus went to the house of Simon, whom He had before named Peter, and there found the mother-in-law of His disciple lying ill of fever. Acceding to the request of faith He rebuked the disease; the woman was healed forthwith, rose from her bed, and ministered the hospitality of her home unto Jesus and those who were with Him.<sup>404</sup>

---

<sup>402</sup> Luke 10:17, 18; compare Rev. 12:7-9.

<sup>403</sup> Matt. 8:29-33; Mark 5:11-14; Luke 8:32-34.

<sup>404</sup> Matt. 8:14, 15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38, 39.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 13

**1. Animosity Between Jews and Samaritans.**—In any consideration of the Samaritans, it must be kept in mind that a certain city and the district or province in which it was situated were both known as Samaria. The principal facts pertaining to the origin of the Samaritans and the explanation of the mutual animosity existing between that people and the Jews in the time of Christ, have been admirably summarized by Geikie (*Life and Words of Christ*, vol. i, pp. 495-6). Omitting his citation of authorities, we quote: "After the deportation of the Ten Tribes to Assyria, Samaria had been repopled by heathen colonists from various provinces of the Assyrian empire, by fugitives from the authorities of Judea, and by stragglers of one or other of the Ten Tribes, who found their way home again. The first heathen settlers, terrified at the increase of wild animals, especially lions, and attributing it to their not knowing the proper worship of the God of the country, sent for one of the exiled priests, and, under his instructions, added the worship of Jehovah to that of their idols—an incident in their history from which later Jewish hatred and derision taunted them as 'proselytes of the lions,' as it branded them, from their Assyrian origin, with the name of Cuthites. Ultimately, however, they became even more rigidly attached to the Law of Moses than the Jews themselves. Anxious to be recognized as Israelites, they set their hearts on joining the Two Tribes, on their return from captivity, but the stern Puritanism of Ezra and Nehemiah admitted no alliance between the pure blood of Jerusalem and the tainted race of the north. Resentment at this affront was natural, and excited resentment in return, till, in Christ's day, centuries of strife and mutual injury, intensified by theological hatred on both sides, had made them implacable enemies. The Samaritans had built a temple on Mount Gerizim, to rival that of Jerusalem, but it had been destroyed by John Hyrcanus, who had also levelled Samaria to the ground. They claimed for their mountain a greater holiness than that of Moriah; accused the Jews of adding to the word of God, by receiving the writings of the prophets, and prided themselves on owning only the Pentateuch as inspired; favoured Herod because the Jews hated him, and were loyal to him and the equally hated Romans; had kindled false lights on the hills, to vitiate the Jewish reckoning by the new moons, and thus throw their feasts into confusion, and, in the early youth of Jesus, had even defiled the very Temple itself, by strewing human bones in it, at the Passover.

"Nor had hatred slumbered on the side of the Jews. They knew the Samaritans only as Cuthites, or heathens from Cuth. 'The race that I hate is no race,' says the son of Sirach. It was held that a people who once had worshipped five gods could have no part in Jehovah. The claim of the Samaritans that Moses had buried the Tabernacle and its vessels on the top of Gerizim, was laughed to scorn. It was said that they had dedicated their temple, under Antiochus Epiphanes, to the Greek Jupiter. Their keeping the commands of Moses even more strictly than the Jews, that it might seem they were really of Israel, was not denied; but their heathenism, it was said, had been proved by the discovery of a brazen dove, which they worshipped, on the top of Gerizim. It would have been enough that they boasted of Herod as their good king, who had married a daughter of their people; that he had been free to follow, in their country, his Roman tastes, so hated in Judea; that they had remained quiet, after his death, when Judea and Galilee were in uproar, and that for their peacefulness a fourth of their taxes had been remitted and added to the burdens of Judea. Their friendliness to the Romans was an additional provocation. While the Jews were kept quiet only by the sternest severity, and strove to the utmost against the introduction of anything foreign, the Samaritans rejoiced in the new importance which their loyalty to the empire had given them. Shechem flourished: close by, in Cæsarea, the procurator held his court: a division of cavalry, in barracks at Sebaste—the old Samaria—had been raised in the territory. The Roman strangers were more than welcome to while away the summer in their umbrageous valleys.

"The illimitable hatred, rising from so many sources, found vent in the tradition that a special curse had been uttered against the Samaritans, by Ezra, Zerubbabel, and Joshua. It was said that these great ones assembled the whole congregation of Israel in the Temple, and that three hundred priests, with three hundred trumpets, and three hundred books of the Law, and three hundred scholars of the Law, had been employed to repeat, amidst the most solemn ceremonial, all the curses of the Law against the Samaritans. They had been subjected to every form of excommunication; by the incommunicable name of Jehovah; by the Tables of the Law, and by the heavenly and earthly synagogues. The very name became a reproach. 'We know that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil,' said the Jews, to Jesus, in Jerusalem.... A Samaritan egg, as the hen laid it, could not be unclean, but what of a boiled egg? Yet interest and convenience strove, by subtle casuistry, to invent excuses for what intercourse was unavoidable. The country of the Cuthites was clean, so that a Jew might, without scruple, gather and eat its produce. The waters of Samaria were clean, so that a Jew might drink them or wash in them. Their dwellings were clean, so that he might enter them, and eat or lodge in them. Their roads were clean, so that the dust of them did not defile a Jew's feet. The Rabbis even went so far in their contradictory utterances, as to say that the victuals of the Cuthites were allowed, if none of their wine or vinegar were mixed with them, and even their unleavened bread was to be reckoned fit for use at the Passover. Opinions thus wavered, but, as a rule, harsher feeling prevailed."

That the hostile sentiment has continued unto this day, at least on the part of the Jews, is affirmed by Frankl and others. Thus, as quoted by Farrar (p. 166 note): "'Are you a Jew?' asked Salameh Cohen, the Samaritan high priest, of Dr. Frankl; 'and do you come to us, the Samaritans, who are despised by the Jews?' (*Jews in the East*, ii, 329). He added that they would willingly live in friendship with the Jews, but that the Jews avoided all intercourse with them. Soon after, visiting Sephardish Jews of Nablous, Dr. Frankl asked one of that sect, 'if he had any intercourse with the Samaritans?' The women retreated with a cry of horror, and one of them said, 'Have you been among the worshipers of the pigeons?' I said that I had. The women again fell back with the same expression of repugnance and one of them said, 'Take a purifying bath!'" (idem, p. 334). Canon Farrar adds, "I had the pleasure of spending a day among the Samaritans encamped on Mount Gerizim, for their annual passover, and neither in their habits nor apparent character could I see any cause for all this horror and hatred."

**2. Sychar.**—The town where dwelt the Samaritan woman with whom Jesus conversed at Jacob's well, is named Sychar in John 4:5; the name occurs nowhere else in the Bible. Attempts have been made to identify the place with Shechem, a city dear to the Jewish heart because of its prominence in connection with the lives of the early patriarchs. It is now generally admitted, however, that Sychar was a small village on the site of the present Askar, which is, says Zenos, "a village with a spring and some ancient rock-hewn tombs, about five eighths of a mile north of Jacob's well."

**3. The Nobleman of Capernaum.**—The name of the nobleman whose son was healed by the word of Jesus is not given. Attempts to identify him with Chuza, the steward of Herod Antipas, are based on unreliable tradition. The family of the nobleman accepted the teachings of Christ. "Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward" (Luke 8:3) was among the grateful and honorable women who had been recipients of our Lord's healing ministry, and who contributed of their substance for the furtherance of His work. Unconfirmed tradition should not be confounded with authentic history.

**4. The Targums** are ancient Jewish paraphrases on the scriptures, which were delivered in the synagogues in the languages of the common people. In the time of Christ the language spoken by the Jews was not Hebrew, but an Aramaic dialect. Edersheim states that pure Hebrew was the language of scholars and of the synagogue, and that the public readings from the scriptures had to be rendered by an interpreter. "In earliest times indeed," says he, "it was forbidden to the Methurgeman [interpreter] to read his translation, or to write down a Targum, lest the paraphrase should be regarded as of equal authority with the original." The use of written targums was "authoritatively sanctioned before the end of the second century after Christ. This is the origin of our two oldest extant Targumim—that of

Onkelos (as it is called) on the Pentateuch; and that on the Prophets, attributed to Jonathan the son of Uzziel. These names do not indeed, accurately represent the authorship of the oldest Targumim, which may more correctly be regarded as later and authoritative recensions of what, in some form, had existed before. But although these works had their origin in Palestine, it is noteworthy that in the form in which at present we possess them, they are the outcome of the schools of Babylon." (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. i, pp. 10, 11.)

**5. Capernaum.**—"The name Capernaum signifies, according to some authorities, 'the Village of Nahum,' according to others, 'the Village of Consolation.' As we follow the history of Jesus we shall discover that many of His mighty works were wrought, and many of His most impressive words were spoken in Capernaum. The infidelity of the inhabitants, after all the discourses and wonderful works which He had done among them, brought out the saying of Jesus, 'And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be cast down to hell.' (Matt. 11:23.) So thoroughly has this prediction been fulfilled that no trace of the city remains, and the very site which it occupied is now a matter of conjecture, there being even no ecclesiastical tradition of the locality. At the present day two spots have claims which are urged, each with such arguments of probability as to make the whole question the most difficult in sacred topography.... We shall probably never be able to know the exact fact. Jesus damned it to oblivion, and there it lies. We shall content ourselves with the New Testament notices as bearing on the work of Jesus.

"We learn that it was somewhere on the borders of Zabulun and Nephtali, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, (compare Matt 4:13, with John 6:24). It was near or in 'the land of Gennesaret' (compare Matt 14:34, with John 6:17, 21, 24), a plain about three miles long and one mile wide, which we learn from Josephus was one of the most prosperous and crowded districts of Palestine. It was probably on the great road leading from Damascus to the south, 'by the way of the sea,' (Matt. 4:15.) There was great wisdom in selecting this as a place to open a great public ministry. It was full of a busy population. The exceeding richness of the wonderful plain of Gennesaret supported the mass of inhabitants it attracted. Josephus (B. J., iii, 10:8) gives a glowing description of this land."—Deems *Light of the Nations*, pp. 167, 168.

**6. Knowledge Does Not Insure Salvation.**—James of old chided his brethren for certain empty professions (James 2:19). Said he in effect: You take pride and satisfaction in declaring your belief in God; you boast of being distinguished from the idolaters and the heathen because you accept one God; you do well to so profess, and so believe; but, remember, others do likewise; even the devils believe; and, we may add, so firmly that they tremble at thought of the fate which that belief makes sure. Those confessions of the devils, that Christ was the Son of God, were founded on knowledge; yet their knowledge of the great truth did not change their evil natures. How different was their acknowledgment of the Savior from that of Peter, who, to the Master's question "Whom say ye that I am?" replied in practically the words used by the unclean spirits before cited, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:15-16; see also Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20). Peter's faith had already shown its vital power; it had caused him to forsake much that had been dear, to follow his Lord through persecution and suffering, and to put away worldliness with all its fascinations, for the sacrificing godliness which his faith made so desirable. His knowledge of God as the Father, and of the Son as the Redeemer, was perhaps no greater than that of the unclean spirits; but while to them that knowledge was but an added cause of condemnation, to him it was a means of salvation.—Abridged from *The Articles of Faith*.

## CHAPTER 14. CONTINUATION OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY IN GALILEE

### A LEPER MADE CLEAN

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

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

In this instruction we see that Christ had not come to destroy the law, but, as He affirmed at another time, to fulfil it;<sup>409</sup> and at this stage of His work the fulfilment was incomplete. Moreover, had the legal requirements been disregarded in as serious a matter as that of restoring an outcast leper to the society of the community from which he had been debarred, priestly opposition, already waxing strong and threatening against Jesus, would have been augmented, and further hindrance to the Lord's work might have resulted. There was to be no delay in the man's compliance with the Master's instruction; Jesus "straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away." Furthermore He explicitly directed the man to tell nobody of the manner of his healing. There was perhaps good reason for this injunction of silence, aside from the very general course of our Lord in discountenancing undesirable notoriety; for, had word of the miracle preceded the man's appearing before the priest, obstacles might have been thrown in the way of his Levitical recognition as one who was clean. The man, however, could not keep the good word to himself, but went about "and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter."<sup>410</sup>

---

<sup>405</sup> Luke 4:42-44.

<sup>406</sup> Mark 1:38.

<sup>407</sup> Mark 1:40-45; Matt. 8:2-4; Luke 5:12-15.

<sup>408</sup> Lev. 14:2-10. [Note 1](#), end of chapter.

<sup>409</sup> Matt. 5:17.

<sup>410</sup> Mark 1:45.

## A PALSIED MAN HEALED AND FORGIVEN

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

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

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

Among the people there assembled were scribes, Pharisees, and doctors of the law, not only representatives of the local synagog but some who had come from distant towns in Galilee, and some from Judea, and even from Jerusalem. The official class had opposed our Lord and His works on earlier occasions, and their presence in the house at this time boded further unfriendly criticism and possible obstruction. They heard the words spoken to the paralytic, and were angered thereat. In their hearts they accused Jesus of the awful offense of blasphemy, which consists essentially in claiming for human or demon power the prerogatives of God, or in dishonoring God by ascribing to Him attributes short of perfection.<sup>414</sup> These unbelieving scholars, who incessantly wrote and talked of the coming of the Messiah, yet rejected Him when He was there present, murmured in silence, saying to themselves: "Who can forgive sins but God only?" Jesus knew their inmost thoughts,<sup>415</sup> and made reply thereto, saying: "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" And then to emphasize, and to put beyond question His possession of divine authority, He added: "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." The man

---

<sup>411</sup> Acts 10:38.

<sup>412</sup> Mark 2:1-12; compare Matt. 9:2-8; Luke 5:17-24.

<sup>413</sup> Compare James 2:14-18.

<sup>414</sup> [Note 2](#), end of chapter.

<sup>415</sup> See another instance of our Lord reading unuttered thoughts. Luke 7:39-50.

arose, fully restored; and, taking up the mattress upon which he had been brought, walked out before them. The amazement of the people was mingled with reverence, and many glorified God, of whose power they were witnesses.

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

In many instances, however, disease is the direct result of individual sin. Whatever may have been the measure of past offense on the part of the man suffering from palsy, Christ recognized his repentance together with the faith that accompanied it, and it was the Lord's rightful prerogative to decide upon the man's fitness to receive remission of his sins and relief from his bodily affliction. The interrogative response of Jesus to the muttered criticism of the scribes, Pharisees, and doctors, has been interpreted in many ways. He inquired which was easier, to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or to say, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk." Is it not a rational explanation that, when spoken authoritatively by Him, the two expressions were of allied meaning? The circumstance should have been a sufficient demonstration to all who heard, that He, the Son of Man, claimed and possessed the right and the power to remit both physical and spiritual penalties, to heal the body of visible disease, and to purge the spirit of the no less real malady of sin. In the presence of people of all classes Jesus thus openly asserted His divinity, and affirmed the same by a miraculous manifestation of power.

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

---

<sup>416</sup> Matt. 9:2. [Note 5](#), end of chapter.

<sup>417</sup> John 5:14. Page [208](#).

<sup>418</sup> John 9:1-3.

<sup>419</sup> Compare John 10:33, and 5:18; Matt. 26:65, 66.

## PUBLICANS AND SINNERS

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

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

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

---

<sup>420</sup> [Note 3](#), end of chapter.

<sup>421</sup> Matt. 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32.

## THE OLD AND THE NEW

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

---

<sup>422</sup> Mark 2:18-22; Matt. 9:14-17; Luke 5:33-39.

<sup>423</sup> Page [164](#).

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.