

The Life and Teachings of JESUS CHRIST

by Myer Pearlman

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CHAPTER IV - THE YEAR OF INCREASING OPPOSITION

A diseased eye hates the light, though light is its life. So JESUS "came unto his own, and his own received him not." The Church harried Him, for He rebuked blind pride that chose traditions instead of mercy. Greedy traders opposed Him, for when they invaded the sacred precincts of the Temple, He overturned their money changers' tables; He could not brook their graft and desecration. The nationalists resented His refusal to become their flag of revolt. Even His disciples were baffled by His failure to build a kingdom propped on swords and wealth; and one of them, Judas, fanatic and miserly, plotted His death. Powers of darkness converged in Him. Religious bigotry, unscrupulous trade, sword-power, mob-frenzy, and personal spite -- these slay Him in every age. -- George A. Buttrick.

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JOHN THE BAPTIST'S QUERY.

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:1-15)

"He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?" (John 7:18-23)

Even John the Baptist became discouraged at CHRIST's slowness to set up the kingdom. After languishing in prison for many months he yielded to a spell of despondency, for he was "**a man**

of like passions as we are," and the Scriptures, always truthful, record the depressions, as well as inspirations, of the saints. Not of course to magnify their infirmities, but to exalt the grace of GOD that sustained them.

CHRIST'S ARRAIGNMENT OF HIS GENERATION

"But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matthew 11:16-27)

Following the account of John's embassy, Matthew gives us a group of JESUS' sayings revealing His emotions at this time when the nation as a whole had failed to respond to His message.

THE MASTER'S GRIEF OVER REJECTION OF HIS MESSAGE

CHRIST likened His generation to "**children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.**" They would neither play at "wedding" nor play at "funeral." Having no mind to play (a sign of something wrong with the children), they found fault with whatever was suggested. So it was with CHRIST's generation. Having no mind to accept GOD's message; and the people said that he was demon-possessed. The Lord JESUS mingled in friendly fellowship with the people, and His critics accused Him of vulgar familiarity. They were like sulky, fretful children whom nothing and nobody could please.

Human nature is still the same. Let a preacher be militant, fearless, and plain-spoken, and worldly people will say he is harsh, vulgar, and lacking in the love of CHRIST; if he is gentle and friendly, they will despise him as being too soft or namby-pamby. If a church is aggressive in soul winning, they will resent its interference with people's personal affairs; if it is quiet and conservative, they will complain that the church is dead, lacking in challenge, and so on. They who have no mind to heed the gospel will find fault with those who proclaim it.

"But wisdom is justified of her children," added CHRIST. That is, those who sincerely desire to do GOD's will, will have eyes to see GOD's wisdom in using all types of preachers, and different kinds of methods. They will find something to appreciate in every kind of ministry - as long as it is true to the Word of GOD and the preaching of the blood of JESUS CHRIST!

THE MASTER'S JOY OVER THE ACCEPTANCE OF HIS MESSAGE

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Luke 10:21)

"In that hour." At what hour? From verses 20-24 we read that the Lord had been grieving over the fact that His ministry and that of His disciples had not led the great cities of Galilee to repentance.

"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:17-21)

But in spite of that discouraging circumstance, CHRIST rejoiced and gave thanks. He was so sure of the ultimate triumph of His cause that He could praise the Father even when it seemed that His work was a failure. And in this respect He sets us an example. Over what did He rejoice? Not over the fact that the wise and prudent had been rejected; rather these things made Him weep. But He was glad that there was a group of people who had the wisdom to understand His claims and teaching, and the heart to follow Him.

"Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent." By the word wise CHRIST meant those cultured people and leaders whose minds were too full of preconceived ideas to make room for the teaching of CHRIST. Evidently the evangelistic efforts of CHRIST and His earnest but uncultured disciples were regarded with disfavor by the refined and fastidious classes of Jewish religious society.

Thou **"hast revealed them unto babes."** That is, the secrets of the divine kingdom had been revealed to those who were simple and teachable and humble enough to receive them by faith. The burden left the Master's heart, and He thrilled with joy to realize that simple-hearted folk had been made to share His secrets. **"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."** (Matthew 11:27).

MATTHEW 13

"The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower

went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

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

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

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

kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

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

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

The fierce opposition from the Jewish leaders led JESUS to make a change of method. He began to teach the truths concerning His kingdom exclusively in the form of parables. (A parable may be defined as an earthly story or illustration with a heavenly or spiritual meaning.) This change of method is stated and illustrated in Matthew 13, which chapter contains seven parables

illustrating the spiritual history of the gospel age, describing the beginning, growth, progress, hindrances, and consummation of the kingdom of CHRIST during this age.

Why this change of method? First, because of increasing intensity of oppositions against Him. JESUS desired to conceal certain truths from His enemies. Recognizing Him as a menace to their position and authority, the Jewish leaders were planning to destroy Him by accusing Him of rebelling against the Roman government by plotting to set up another kingdom:

"And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place" (Luke 23:2-5).

"Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" (Matthew 22:15-17)

Therefore our Lord, when teaching about the kingdom, veiled His meaning with parables. He thus avoided being put to death before His appointed time.

Second, the Lord stated that His teaching in parables was in the nature of a judgment upon His rejecters, and in this regard, a fulfillment of prophecy. When Jehovah commissioned Isaiah to preach to Israel, He warned him against being overconfident of results in Isaiah 6. Isaiah's message, instead of leading to the salvation of the people, as was the will of Jehovah, would on the contrary tend to harden their hearts, and ripen them for judgment. This was because of the willful blindness of the Jewish people.

The plain purpose of a parable is to make truth clear to people, but in the time of CHRIST it led to the opposite result. Why? If a person deliberately keeps his eyes shut to natural light, and refuses to see, he will suffer the judgment of nature -- the loss of his sight. So those who refused to see the teachings of CHRIST became spiritually blind.

Third, the parable was a kind of husk to preserve the truth for earnest seekers. When such heard a parable and failed to understand it, they would come personally to the Lord for an explanation: **"And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable" (Mark 4:10).** From this circumstance we may learn why the Lord described these parables as the **"mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."** In Bible language, a **"mystery"** is a truth concerning GOD and His purpose hidden from all people in one age, and revealed in another age to those who have spiritual desire and spiritual discernment: **"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of**

his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:3-6).

It is a truth unknown except by revelation. In using this expression the Lord as much as said, I am going to tell you some truths concerning the development of GOD's kingdom on earth, truths that were not revealed to wise men and prophets in past times. Between My first and second comings there is to intervene a period of time, in which GOD will deal with mankind in a new way. My parables will give you the history of this period. You are privileged to understand these truths, because you are in sympathy with Me and My work. But from the indifferent and persecuting I conceal these matters, for they would simply twist their meaning, and use them to destroy Me before My time.

JOHN 6

"After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because

ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he

said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve."

THE CRISIS IN GALILEE

A GREAT MIRACLE

After the apostles had returned from a brief evangelistic tour, JESUS took them into the wilderness for a time of rest and privacy. But there was no rest for them. Their movements were observed, and the people flocked toward the place whither they apostles had sailed, running all the way, as if fearful that they might escape, and so they arrived at the landing place before them. There were about five thousand men; perhaps 15,000 including women and children. And He who revealed His creative power in turning water into wine exercised that same power in feeding that multitude with a few loaves and fishes.

A GREAT ENTHUSIASM

Up to the point the Lord's popularity had been growing by leaps and bounds. After witnessing this miracle the people's enthusiasm rose to fever height. They came to the conclusion that one who could repeat the miracle of feeding Israel in the wilderness could be none other than the Messiah. They hailed Him as King and prepared to escort Him to Jerusalem and there crown Him. Then He would sweep the Romans out of Palestine and exalt Israel above the nations.

A GREAT STORM

JESUS at once recognized in this incident another Satanic temptation to take an easy short cut to the throne. He quickly dismissed the multitudes, sent His disciples away in a boat, and then went up into a mountain to pray. Meanwhile a storm arose that hindered the progress of the disciples and threatened to overturn their boat. That storm was an emblem of the experience which was about to confront them. Soon a squall of unpopularity would blow against their Master and His band, threatening to overturn their faith. They would have to pull hard against wind and waves, that they might not be carried headlong to ruin by the tornado of apostasy. But the Master had not forgotten; His eye was on the boat and He went to their rescue.

A GREAT SERMON

CHRIST was at the height of favor. He was the "man of the hour." Certainly, the man who could feed many thousand people miraculously was just the one to restore prosperity to the land and give every one the "full dinner pail." Well did Satan know the popular feeling when he suggested that JESUS use His power to turn stones into bread. Then, as on this occasion, JESUS declared that man shall not find his true life in natural food: "**Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat**

of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:26-27).

The Lord did not desire people to follow Him from any mistaken conceptions on their part. They should know clearly what kind of Messiah He was. He therefore preached a very plain sermon in which He made His position clear. He had not come as a political Messiah to revive their political life; He had come as a spiritual Messiah to bring them spiritual life. His feeding them with natural bread was a sign of His desire to feed them with the spiritual bread that produces life everlasting.

John's reason for the people's rejection of JESUS is corroborated by Dr. Klausner, a Jewish scholar, who states that the chief reason why JESUS was rejected by Israel was His failure to show Himself a true nationalist in the struggle against Rome. He writes in his book, JESUS of Nazareth:

What did JESUS do? Had He come and said: Instead of religion alone, I give you here science and art as national possessions independent of religion; instead of Scripture commentaries, I give you learning and poetry, likewise independent of religion; instead of ceremonial laws, grown so oppressive as to crush the warmer religious feelings, I give you a practical and theoretical secular culture, national and humanistic -- had JESUS come with such a gospel, His name would have endured as a blessing among His nation.

There was no lack of culture in CHRIST's day; Greece had excelled in that sphere. But there was a need for the higher life of the soul. JESUS said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

According to George Benedict, former Jewish rabbi, and now a Christian minister, historians have accounted for the efforts, since Roman times, of four hundred leaders who arose in Israel and called themselves Messiah and undertook to wrest Palestine from its Gentile masters and lead Israel back to the land. All made the political issue supreme -- and all failed. Only JESUS, who made the spiritual issue paramount, is recognized as the LIGHT of the world.

A GREAT SIFTING

The message was a deathblow to His popularity. He had deliberately destroyed His influence with a large part of the population. "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." His teaching was beyond them, and His actions did not conform to their idea of the Messiah. "If that is the kind of Messiah he is," reasoned many of the people, "we do not want him." The Lord was not taken by surprise; in fact, He had deliberately planned the crisis. For while He yearned after the salvation of all men, and desired that all should come and find life, He wanted none who were not fully consecrated. He sought those who were God-given, God-taught, and God-drawn, knowing that such alone would continue in His Word.

A GREAT TRIAL OF FAITH

Disappointed followers were abandoning the Master; will the apostasy affect the apostles, too?

JESUS puts the issue before them: "Will ye also go away?" Three anchors held the disciples fast during this storm of apostasy: first, their earnestness and sincerity -- they really wanted GOD's best; second, the consideration of the alternatives -- "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life"; third, their conviction that JESUS was all He claimed to be -- **"And we believe and are sure that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."**

VI. THE REJECTED MESSIAH FORETELLS HIS DEATH

MATTHEW 16:13-28

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom"

MARK 8:27-31

"And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again"

LUKE 9:22-36

"Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen."

Since His great act of consecration in the wilderness, JESUS had been prepared for misunderstand and opposition. But what about His disciples? Would they continue to follow as Messiah one who had failed to win the nation, who had incurred the enmity of the religious leaders, and who had deliberately turned away from those who had asked of Him political leadership? Did they still believe in Him? And would their faith remain steadfast at the prospect of the Cross? For one of them, Judas, the strain had been too great. Embittered by disappointed ambition, his heart was being prepared for the final act of betrayal.

To test and fortify the faith of the apostles, JESUS took them to the Gentile town of Caesarea Philippi for a time of prayer and instruction.

THE DISCIPLES REPORT CURRENT OPINION CONCERNING CHRIST

The Lord asked the question, "**Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?**" Not that He was unaware of popular opinion, or that He desired praise. He was planning to prepare His disciples for the truth concerning His claims. He desired to use popular opinion as a dark background for eternal truth.

From their knowledge of what the people were saying, the disciples informed Him that many thought He was John the Baptist risen from the dead; some, that He was Elijah the prophet; others, that He was one of the old prophets come back to earth. These opinions reveal the fact that the nation as a whole did not connect His spiritual ministry with the thought of the Messiah. That He was an able teacher, a mighty preacher, and even a prophet, they freely admitted; but

certainly not the One to head their economic, military, and political program -- as they thought the Messiah should.

But why blame the people for such an expectation? GOD had indeed promised to set up an earthly kingdom.

"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 14:9-21).

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God" (Amos 9:11-15).

"In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land" (Jeremiah 23:6-8).

True, but preceding that event was to take place a moral cleansing and spiritual regeneration of the nation.

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:25-27). compare with "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, 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. 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" (John 3:1-3).

Both John the Baptist and JESUS made it plain that the nation, in its present condition, was not fit to enter the kingdom. Hence the exhortation, "**Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" But while the words, "**kingdom of heaven,**" profoundly moved the people, the word "**repent**" made but slight impression. Both the leaders: "*Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.*" (Matthew 21:31-32) and the people: "*There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. . . . And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 13:1-3; 19:41-44) refused to meet the conditions of the kingdom and consequently lost the privileges of the kingdom.*

"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE "THE SON OF MAN"

The expression "**Son of man**" is an emphatic designation for man in his characteristic attributes of weakness and helplessness: "**God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?**" (Numbers 23:19) and "**How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?**" (Job 25:6). In this sense the title is applied about eighty times to Ezekiel as a reminder of his weakness and mortality, and as an incentive to humility in the fulfillment of his prophetic calling.

Applied to CHRIST, "**Son of man**" designates Him as sharing human nature and qualities, and subject to human infirmities. Yet, at the same time, this very title implies His Deity, for, if a person were to declare repeatedly and emphatically, "I am a son of man," people would say, "Why, everybody knows that." On the lips of JESUS the expression meant a heavenly One who had definitely identified Himself with humanity as representative and Saviour. Notice also that it is THE -- not A Son of man. The title is connected with His earthly life:

"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)" (Mark 2:10).

"And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20).

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

With His sufferings on behalf of humanity:

"And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31).

And with His exaltation and rule over humanity:

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matthew 24:31).

"The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matthew 26:24).

By referring to Himself as "**Son of man**," JESUS wishes to convey the following message: I, the Son of GOD, am man, in weakness, in suffering, even unto death. Yet I am still in touch with Heaven, whence I came, and hold such relation to the Divine that I can forgive sins: "**But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house"** (Matthew 9:6), and am superior to religious regulations which have but a temporary and national significance: "**For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day"** (Matthew 12:8). This manhood shall not cease when I have passed through those last stages of suffering and death, which I must endure for man's salvation and to finish My work. For I shall arise and take it with Me to Heaven, whence I

shall return to rule over those whose nature I have assumed.

PETER ANNOUNCES ETERNAL TRUTH CONCERNING CHRIST

The Lord turned to those who knew Him best, and said, "**But whom say ye that I am?**" The Lord is about to announce His coming death -- news that would try their faith. He therefore plans to impress upon them the truth that, whatever may happen, He is GOD's Messiah.

The answer to the question came from Peter, the natural leader of the apostles. "**Thou art the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God.**" This conviction was not the result of Peter's reasoning upon the subject, but came through a divine revelation: "**And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven**" (Matthew 16:17). Then followed a remarkable prediction: "**And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven**" (Matthew 16:18, 19), which may be paraphrased as follows: The congregation of Israel have rejected Me as their Messiah, and their leaders will actually excommunicate Me -- the very cornerstone of the nation: "**Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?**" (Matthew 21:42). But GOD's plan will not fail thereby, for I will establish another congregation (the Church), composed of men like you, Peter: "**Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light**" (I Peter 2:4-9), who will believe in My deity and Messiahship. You shall be a leader and minister in the congregation, and yours will be the privilege of opening its doors with the key of gospel truth; and you and your brethren shall administer its affairs.

"**Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.**" (Matthew 16:20) We have seen that JESUS began His ministry among a people who had the right hope of a Messiah but a wrong conception of His Person and work. Knowing this, JESUS did not at first publicly proclaim Himself as Messiah, for He knew this would be a signal for rebellion against Rome. He spoke rather about the kingdom, describing its standards and its spiritual nature, hoping to inspire the people with a hunger for a spiritual kingdom which would in turn lead them to desire a spiritual Messiah. His efforts were not entirely fruitless, for John the apostle tells us (John 1) that from the very first there was a spiritual group who recognized Him as the CHRIST; also, from time to time, He revealed Himself to individuals who were spiritually ready: "**The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am**

he" (John 4:25-26) and "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee" (John 9:35-37).

Writes Marcus Dods:

But first we must ask, In what character or capacity did JESUS present Himself to men? What did He declare Himself to be? What demand did He make on the faith of those to whom He presented Himself? When He required that they should believe in Him, what exactly did He mean? Certainly He did not mean less than that they should believe He was the Messiah, and should accept Him as such. "Messiah" was an elastic title, perhaps not conveying to any two minds in Israel precisely the same idea. It had indeed for all Israelites some contents in common. It meant that here was One upon earth and accessible, who was sent to be the Bearer of GOD's good will to men, a MEDIATOR through Whom GOD meant to make His presence felt and His will known. But some who believed JESUS was the CHRIST had so poor a conception of the CHRIST, that He could not accept theirs as a sound faith. The minimum of acceptable faith must believe in the actual JESUS, and allow the idea of the CHRIST to be formed by what was seen in JESUS. Those who believed must so trust JESUS as to be willing that He should fashion the Messiahship as He saw fit. It was therefore primarily in Himself the true believer trusted. He did not, in the first instance, believe that He was this or that, but he felt, "Here is the greatest and best I know; I give myself to Him." Of course this involved that whatever CHRIST claimed to be, He was believed to be. But it is of importance to observe that the confession, "I believe that JESUS is the CHRIST," was not enough in CHRIST's own day to guarantee the soundness of the faith of the confessor. He had further to answer the question, "What do you mean by 'the CHRIST'?" For if you mean a national Messiah, coming to give you political freedom and social blessings only, this faith cannot be trusted." But if any one could say, "I believe in JESUS," and if by this he meant, "I so believe in Him that whatever He says He is, I believe He is, and whatever be the contents with which He fills the Messianic name, these contents I accept as belonging to the office," this faith was sound and acceptable.

And, according to this gospel, JESUS at once made it plain that His idea of the Messianic office was not the popular idea. It was "eternal life" He constantly proclaimed as the gift of the Father had commissioned Him to bestow; not physical life, not revived political life. So that it very shortly became impossible for any one to make the confession that JESUS was the CHRIST, in ignorance of what He Himself judged the CHRIST to be. It may be said, therefore, that when JESUS required men to believe in Him, He meant that they should trust Him as mediating efficiently between GOD and them, and should accept His view of all that was needful for this mediation. He meant that they should look to Him for life eternal and for perfect fellowship with GOD. What was doctrinally involved in this, what was implied in His claim regarding His eternal nature, might or might not at once be understood. What must be understood and believed was, that JESUS was empowered by GOD to act for Him, to represent Him, to impart to men all that GOD would impart.

JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto

Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matthew 16:21). The message of these words may be stated as follows: Thus far, I have given men My message and pointed them to GOD. I have seen the forces of the kingdom operating in the lives of men. But this represents My work as a prophet and is only preliminary. All that can be accomplished by preaching and teaching has been accomplished; but now I must do something to actually usher in the kingdom of GOD. That act will be My death at the hands of the elders of My people. But I shall rise from the dead and complete My work from the Heaven world. Far from being a tragedy, My death will be the means by which I pass from the earthly to the heavenly sphere of service.

JESUS' FIRST LESSON ON THE CROSS

The shock of this announcement is revealed in Peter's impulsive cry, "**Be it far from thee, Lord** (that is, GOD forbid!): **this shall not be unto thee.**" Loyal-hearted Peter meant well, but like his countrymen he had not grasped the truth that the Messiah must suffer as Priest (Isaiah 53) before reigning as King. Recognizing the Tempter's snare in the unsuspecting disciple's words, JESUS said, "**Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.**" In the wilderness Satan had said, "**If thou be the Son of God, make bread out of these stones.**" Through Peter he had said, "If thou art the Son of GOD, why suffer a shameful death when Thou hast power to save Thyself?"

Then followed the Master's first lesson on the cross -- a theme that He repeated and emphasized in the days that followed. He as much as said: By avoiding the duty that lies before us, we may gain temporary security and ease, but at what cost! What shall it profit a man to gain even the whole world if in so doing he misses the true values of life and so ruins his soul? By trying to save My life, I should lose it; by losing it I shall save it. Self-sacrifice is your Master's path to life and glory, and it must be yours, too. But be of good cheer; at the end of that road is the approval of the glorified Son of man.

VII. THE TRANSFIGURATION

"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (Matthew 17:1-8)

"And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make

three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him" (Mark 9:2-13)

"And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen" (Luke 9:28-36).

PRAYING ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF THE CROSS

The Lord's first announcement of His coming death had filled the disciples with sadness and perplexity. "Can this be GOD's will for the Master?" they asked among themselves. To encourage them JESUS invited the three foremost apostles to a prayer meeting to consider the problem of the Cross. There the Master prayed that the Father would help them to see the Cross in the light of the glory to come.

Very little is said in the Gospels concerning the outward majesty of CHRIST. As He ministered among the lowly, there was a complete absence of external pomp and magnificence. His beauty and power were inner and spiritual. But on this occasion the divine glory shone through the veil of His flesh, and for a few moments the disciples saw Him in the outward beauty of Deity. As the Master prayed His garments became white with heavenly radiance and His face shone as the sun. In the language of one writer:

"The Transfiguration suggests such freedom from the stain of sin, such perfection of duty, such complete obedience to the will of GOD, that it was now evident to the whole universe of watchers that JESUS was now ready to be admitted into the courts of Heaven."

The burst of glory brought JESUS this message: Be of good cheer; the suffering will soon be

past, and Thou shalt enter into Thine eternal joy

HEAVENLY LIGHT ON THE CROSS

When Peter awoke, and saw Moses and Elijah talking with JESUS, he blurted out, "**Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.**" The following thoughts were passing through Peter's mind: How much better to stay up here with the saints than below among Pharisees and unbelieving people! Stay here, Master, and dismiss those dark forebodings of coming sufferings. Stay here on this Heaven-kissed summit, and go no more down into the depressing valley of humiliation.

In the ecstasy of the moment Peter forgot that there was work to be done before entering Heaven's glory.

From the overshadowing cloud came the voice of GOD, "**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.**" These words were, first of all, a declaration that JESUS is superior to the Law and the Prophets, because He is the Son of GOD; hence He is the final authority in religious matters. They also conveyed a special message to the apostles, admonishing them to accept all that their Master taught, even the teaching of His coming death, which had stumbled them. The Father as much as said Hear ye Him, even when He tells you that He must suffer and die.

The frightened disciples, who had fallen to the ground in terror, felt the Master's touch and heard Him say, "**Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.**" The outward glory had gone, Moses and Elijah had departed, and the mountain was dark and still. But the Master was still there! He will abide when all human teachers are gone: "**Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?**" (Zechariah 1:5) and "**Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever**" (Hebrews 13:7-8).

The experiences of the heavenly glory and the Father's voice were like the glimpses of home to an exile and like the foretaste of rest to a weary traveler. Since He was perfectly holy and righteous, He might have stepped from the mountain right into Heaven. But He would have entered the glory world alone. He descends from the mount of glory in order to complete His work of redemption, and so "**bring many sons unto glory.**" (Hebrews 2:10).

"**And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision (literally, "that which is seen") to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.**" He had already forbidden His disciples to preach publicly that He was the Messiah: "**Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ**" (Matthew 16:20), because the people would misunderstand His mission. For the same reason He forbade them to tell of His glorification on the mount lest thereby false hopes be roused. After the resurrection it would be evident that His was not a kingdom of the world, but a heavenly kingdom into which men enter by repentance and faith.

VIII. THE DARKENING SHADOW OF THE CROSS

We have read how the Lord made the first prediction concerning His sufferings and death. He later made two more detailed announcements concerning the same events: "**And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry. . . . And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again**" (Matthew 17:22-23; 20:17-19). His purpose was so to impress this necessary but unwelcome fact upon the minds of the disciples that when the events actually took place they should not be taken by surprise. He repeated the prediction in order that they might realize that He was not going to Jerusalem by constraint, but in deliberate obedience to the Father's will.

Mark says, "**But they understood not this saying, and they were afraid to ask him.**" From their Master's looks they felt that something dreadful was going to happen to Him, but their minds could not grasp clearly the thought that He was to be taken from them by death. Perhaps they thought that His words were to be taken in a figurative sense -- that they carried a hidden meaning. Anyway, they were afraid to ask -- they remembered what had happened to Peter! "**And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men**" (Mark 8:32-33). We have already seen why they could not understand this announcement. Like most of the Jews of that time, they found it most difficult to conceive of a Messiah who should be arrested, condemned, mocked, and put to death. Not until after Pentecost did they understand in the fullest sense the why of a suffering Messiah.

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:23-36) and "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer

to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled" (Acts 3:14-18).

This misconception of the apostles found glaring expression in their conduct. Having in their minds only the picture of a worldly kingdom, they disputed several times over the question as to who should be the greatest in that kingdom: "*At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1-4) and "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:20-28) and "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Luke 22:24-26).*

This gave the Lord the opportunity of teaching them the true nature of the kingdom -- the conditions for entrance, the quality of its service, and its standards of greatness. After it was evident that the nation had misunderstood His mission, the Lord began to concentrate on the training of the apostles, who were to be the future leaders of the work of the kingdom.

Matthew (chapters 18-20) gives us a group of teachings illustrating this phase of the Master's ministry. A question regarding the greatest in the kingdom leads to a series of lessons on Christian brotherhood and church discipline. Chapter 18. Then follows a statement of the standards of the kingdom in relation to marriage, children, and youth. 19:1-26. Finally, Peter's question regarding rewards is followed by an explanation of rewards and greatness in relation to the kingdom. 19:27 to 20:28.

~ End of Book ~