

3 Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

4 And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them day of judgment. Nothing can be concealed from God. Psa. cxxxix. 1-4. This fact is urged as a consideration why the disciples should be open and sincere in their profession and conduct.

Verse 3. *Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, &c.*] "Darkness" means *secrecy*, and "light" *publicity*. Although there seems to be here special reference to the communications of the disciples—"whatsoever ye have spoken"—the phrase is doubtless to be understood in a *general* sense, denoting that "every secret thing" shall be brought to light, and, so far as may be needful for the justification of "the ways of God to man," shall be exposed. *In the ear, in closets*] Meaning, in the strictest confidence and in the most retired places. *Proclaimed upon the house-tops*] The houses in Judea being flat-roofed, with a balustrade round about, were used for purposes of recreation, &c., and occasionally proclamations were made therefrom. So among the Turks, at the present day, a *crier* announces with a loud voice the hour of public worship from the minaret or tower of the mosque. It is evident that these expressions of the Saviour are not to be taken literally; they were, probably, Jewish proverbs, and by this figurative language he "makes known the fact that ultimate concealment of one's character or purposes is impossible, and that therefore his disciples should sedulously guard against hypocrisy. See Ecclesiastes xii. 14; 1 Cor. iv. 5; 2 Cor. v. 10."

Verses 4, 5. *Be not afraid, &c.*] Be not so afraid of

that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

them as, in order to please them, to be induced to do any thing contrary to your duty as my disciples. Christ knew that those whom he addressed would be placed in the most trying circumstances; and that the best defence against an improper fear would be a salutary, reverential fear of, and trust in God. By the phrase here used, "kill the body," is meant the destruction of animal or natural life—the taking away the present life. This man may do, by the divine permission, but it is utterly beyond his power to blot the soul out of existence. It thus appears that not only were the truths above noticed designed to guard Christ's followers, in all ages, from the evils of hypocrisy, but to fill their minds with the comfortable assurance that as He whom they serve is intimately acquainted with all characters and purposes, so, also, he would be with them in all trials, and either deliver them therefrom, or take them to that blissful state where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." *Hath power to cast into hell*] From Matt. x. 28, (on which see Notes, page 249 of the second volume,) it appears that both body and soul are referred to, as in danger of being "cast into hell."

Verses 6, 7. *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?*] Implying that they are. Matt. x. 29. The word rendered "sparrow" meant with the Jews any clean bird; therefore the meaning is, "Are not five [small] birds sold for two farthings?" It is supposed that these birds were



7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:

9 But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.

used in the purification of lepers. See margin of Lev. xiv. 2. The *assarium*, or farthing, was a Roman brass coin valued at about one cent and a half of our currency. *Not one of them is forgotten before God*] The meaning of "forgotten" we understand to be *neglected* or *unnoticed*. Matt. x. 29. The warts, dangers, and true relations of every creature, however small, are always remembered by God, who regulates his government of all things accordingly; nothing is *forgotten*. See further in note on Matt. x. 29-31, pages 250, 251, volume second. *The very hairs, &c.*] Probably a proverbial expression denoting the most minute inspection and protection.

Verses 8, 9. *Whosoever shall confess me, &c.*] To "confess" Christ is openly to profess faith in him as the Saviour—the *only* Saviour of men—acknowledging him to be *our* "propitiation." It supposes union and communion with him, and a strict adherence to his commands and ordinances. *Him shall the Son of man*] Meaning himself—Jesus Christ. *Also confess*] "Confess" here has the sense of *acknowledge* or *approve*; that is, as his disciples. *Before the angels of God*] Namely, "at his second coming. This acknowledgment will, doubtless, be a solemn act in the presence of the assembled angels, that all orders of intelligent holy beings may know the grounds of the divine procedure at that great day."—*Watson*. *He that denieth me, &c.*] To "deny" Christ, is to *reject* his claims—to

10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.

11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:

12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

*refuse* submission to him; and to be "denied" by him is to be *disavowed* as his disciples, and consequently to miss of heaven. The fatal consequences of renouncing Christ ought to be deeply considered by his professed followers, as inducements to perseverance. He only that *continueth to the end* shall be saved.

Verse 10. *Whosoever shall speak against the Son of man*] By the "Son of man" our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is intended, by whom this appellation is claimed. Matt. xvi. 13. By "speaking against" him, all calumnious and injurious speaking of him is meant, which sin, grievous as it is, we are here expressly informed shall be forgiven, that is, of course, on such individual's turning unto God with faith—for we are elsewhere taught that there is no other condition of salvation than that of faith in Christ. John iii. 16; Rom. iii. 25-28. *But unto him that blasphemeth, &c.*] See notes on Matthew xii. 28, 29, page 138, volume second.

Verses 11, 12. *Magistrates and powers*] Rulers of every rank. For further exposition, see notes on Matt. x. 17-19, pages 241-244, volume second.



## LESSON X.

*Christ refuses to act as judge—Cautions the multitude against worldly-mindedness.*

LUKE xii. 13-34.

AND one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you?

## NOTES ON LUKE xii. 13-34.

Verse 13. *One of the company*] One of the multitude.  
 Verse 1. *Master, speak to my brother*] Command or direct him. The application to Christ seems to have been to assume the *judicial* function, and *authoritatively* to settle the difference between this man and his brother. This he promptly declines doing, it being no part of the work assigned him. No circumstance more strikingly shows that his kingdom was not of this world. *That he divide the inheritance with me*] An "inheritance" is the property which descends from one relative to the next nearest heir or heirs, as from a father to his children. Among the Jews the property or estate of the father fell, after his decease, into the possession of his sons, who divided it among themselves equally, with the exception that the eldest son received a double portion. Deut. xxi. 17.—*Jahn*. Daughters could not inherit unless in case of the failure of sons. Num. xxvii. 8.

Verse 14. *Man, who made me a judge, or a divider*] The meaning is, *I am not made, &c.* It was not his proper business. When the division of inheritances could not be satisfactorily settled by the parties concerned, the mat-

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

ter was referred to the council of three judges, who either decided themselves, or appointed an arbitrator and divider; the former being selected from their own body, the latter from among the people. Hence our Lord uses two terms,—"judge" and "divider,"—the one meaning a publicly appointed judge, as one of the council of three, the other the person appointed by them with full powers to make the division.—*Watson*.

Verse 15. *He said unto them*] To the multitude. *Beware of covetousness*] The Great Teacher, ever ready to improve the circumstances transpiring around him to the edification of men, took occasion, from the request which had just been made, to warn those about him of the evil of covetousness, of which crime one of these brothers was in all probability guilty. The word rendered "covetousness" literally means *the desire of having more and more*—an insatiable desire. It is not confined, therefore, to the unlawful desire of the possessions of others; but is a grasping, craving disposition for wealth, to be employed in the gratification of selfish feelings and purposes. It is a violation of the tenth command, and is called, by Saint Paul, idolatry. Col. iii. 5. *A man's life consisteth not &c.*] In various parts of Scripture the term "life" is used to denote the conformity of the soul to God, and its consequent felicity. Thus Prov. viii. 35, "Whoso findeth me, findeth life;" Rom. viii. 6, "To be spiritually-minded is life;" Col. iii. 3, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Again, in John vi. 53, Jesus asserts that unless we "eat his flesh and drink his blood, we have no life." In all these places the signification of "life" is spiritual and



16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully :

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits ?

eternal life, and it is the opinion of some expositors that such is also the import of the term in this passage. It may be, however, that nothing more is meant than that the happiness or duration of life depends not on the amount of a man's possessions, as earthly riches can neither satisfy the soul nor secure their possessor against death : and therefore they ought not to be sought after to the prejudice of spiritual interests. By "the things he possesseth," temporal riches are of course intended.

Verses 16, 17. *He spake a parable*] In illustration of the important truth he had just uttered. *The ground*] *The farm.—Bloomfield.* *A certain rich man*] Although rich, he was not satisfied. Dr. South pertinently remarks, "there are many more whom riches have made covetous, than covetousness made rich." *Brought forth plentifully*] Bore well-yielded—abundant produce. *And he thought within himself*] He reasoned in his own mind, being perplexed to know what he had better do with his large increase. This lets us into his character. He seems not to have thought of Him who "had crowned the year with his goodness;" nor to have manifested any sense of his obligation as the accountable steward of a superior Lord : he recognises not the interests of his spiritual and immortal nature, but limits his conceptions and desires to the sensual gratifications of his animal propensities ; and though he thinks of future life, it is that of the present state, a continuance of which life he regards as certain. Riches had increased, and alas ! alas ! "his heart was set on them." *No room to bestow my fruits*] To "bestow" properly means to *place* or *stow*, as a farmer stows away

18 And he said, This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and build greater ; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

feed for cattle in a barn ; though we frequently use the term to express the *act of giving*. By "fruits," here, we are to understand every kind of produce, suitable to be preserved, which his lands had yielded, and not merely what we commonly designate by the term fruit. By the phrase "no room" is meant, of course, *not room enough* ; as he certainly had *some* room.

Verse 18. *I will pull down my barns, &c.*] We are informed by travellers that the Eastern people generally bestow their produce,—especially their grains,—in store-houses under ground, the entrance to which is carefully concealed. The editor of the Pictorial Bible, however, thinks that "this pulling down, and rebuilding on a larger scale, shows quite clearly that the Jews of this time had granaries of constructed edifices : " though he allows "that it does not follow they had altogether relinquished the older and still common custom of depositing the grain in subterranean" magazines.

Verse 19. *I will say to my soul*] By his "soul," we are doubtless to understand *himself*—the soul being the more important part of man. *Take thine ease, &c.*] This was just the doctrine of the ancient Atheists and Epicureans. What a wretched portion for an immortal being ! A spirit capable of knowing and enjoying God placing its chief delight in the gratification of animal passions ! What folly to think that all a man lives for is to satisfy his sensual appetites, forgetful that he has an intellect to be cultivated, a heart to be purified, a soul to be saved !



20 But God said unto him, *Thou fool*, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?

Verse 20. *God said unto him*] Not in direct words, but, probably, by some sudden and alarming illness. The providence of the Supreme Governor oftentimes speaks as with an audible voice. *Thou fool*] Wherein did this man's folly consist? Perhaps, 1st. In his *undue attachment* to wealth; 2dly. In expending that wealth on his personal gratification, thus failing to enjoy the greatest happiness which riches can possibly impart—affording the possessor the luxury of doing good; 3dly and chiefly. In making provision merely for his bodily comforts, and utterly neglecting his soul. *This night shall thy soul be required of thee*] That is, this night thou shalt die. To “require” is to demand as of right; as a man demands payment of a debt. Thus God (or his messenger, death) is here represented as demanding back that which had been intrusted to this man's care as a loan—his life. This is in the manner of the Jews, and conveys a striking thought. So in the Wisdom of Solomon (xv. 8) we have, “When his life, which was *lent him*, shall be *demand*ed.” So long as the soul remains in the body, life is lent us that we may apply it to the great purposes for which we are created; but at death the loan is demanded back, and the soul is summoned to answer for the use made of it. *Then whose, &c.*] This question places in a strong light the folly of fixing our affections on worldly good. Such possessions are of uncertain duration, for frequently riches “make themselves wings and fly away.” Besides, the term of our present existence is as “a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.” This man had toiled to amass wealth, and had succeeded; but amid all his foresight and management he had been utterly unmindful of making provision

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

for his soul, and now he was about to leave unto others that for which he had toiled, and to enter upon a state of being for which he was unprepared. It matters little to the dying man into whose hands his wealth may fall. One thing, however, is certain: *riches are more frequently a curse than a blessing*:—for many lose their souls in pursuit of them; and they often cause the ruin of those to whom they are bequeathed. Let each of us say, “O Lord, give me neither poverty nor riches!”

Verse 21. *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself*] Such, too, is the folly of all who, like this man, lay up treasure for their own gratification merely, and not for the promotion of God's glory in the benefiting of our race. To “lay up treasure for himself” is the characteristic of a covetous man; all his plans, all his endeavours are devised and put forth in selfishness. *Is not rich toward God*] Some understand this to mean, has not “laid up” or deposited “treasure with God;” namely, by acts of beneficence. The Scriptures sometimes represent acts of charity to man as *loans to God*. So Prov. xix. 17, “He that giveth to the poor, *lendeth* to the Lord:” not that we can, indeed, make God in any sense our debtor, but he has been pleased to regard such acts as done unto himself, and has graciously promised to reward them in a manner far—very far—above their deservings. We understand the expression to denote all those dispositions and acts which flow from a true faith in and love to God, and the practice of piety to man.

“This subject teaches, 1. That the soul is immortal—something distinct from the body, and which shall survive it. 2. That the chief aim of the present life should be preparation for the future. 3. That we are to estimate



22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

23 The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

24 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap:

the value of things by the manner in which they relate to our *whole* being, and not as they promote a temporal and present advantage. 4. That the *true* riches of men are moral, and consist in all which secures the favour of God in time and in eternity. Of these the Holy Scriptures only inform us—(hence their immense value.) 5. That man is accountable for his doings; and death the requirement of his soul in order that he may give account.”—*Watson*.

Verses 22, 23. *Therefore I say, &c.*] Some commentators suppose, and perhaps correctly, that our Lord here resumes the discourse which had been broken off at the thirteenth verse by the incident there recorded. We incline, however, to the opinion that Jesus is still treating on the subject of covetousness, though in a somewhat modified form. The words rendered “therefore” are thought to have reference to what follows rather than to what precedes: as though our Lord had said, Seeing that I am speaking on this subject, I will go still further, and I *now* say, not only beware of covetousness, but *take no* [anxious] *thought* about your temporal existence, for it is from this extreme anxiety that covetousness springs. For more particular import of these verses, see notes on Matt. vi. 25, pages 63, 64, volume second.

Verses 24–26. *Consider the ravens*] “The raven is a species of the *corvus* or crow tribe, of the order pica, known by its large size, its plumage of bluish-black, and tail roundish at the end.”—*Bagster*. “The divine providence (remark Grotius and Bochart) is especially shown

which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls?

25 And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of little faith?

29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.

in the case of the ravens; for though, as we learn from Philo, they often abandon their young, yet, by a wise providence, they instinctively heap up in their nests what ever creates worms, whereby their abandoned young are preserved.”—*Bloomfield*. Other naturalists contend, that the parent birds do not forsake the young brood, but early drive them from the nest, and compel them to seek their own subsistence. See Job xxxvii. 41. In either case, the divine care is equally conspicuous. *They neither sow nor reap*] “This mode of reasoning, or rather of illustration, was familiar to the Jews. Thus, in the Mishna, Rabbi Simeon is reported to have said, Did you ever see a beast or fowl that had a trade?”—*Pict. Bible*. The meaning is, They lay no plans for the future, but are satisfied with the supply of present wants. See further in the notes on Matt. vi. 26, 27, pages 64, 65, volume second.

Verses 27–31. See notes on Matthew vi. 28–33, pages 65–70, volume second. *Doubtful mind*] A “doubtful” mind generally denotes, with us, a *fearful, distrustful*



32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

mind; here, however, the original implies a *dubious, fluctuating* mind—one alternately agitated by hope and fear.

Verse 32. *Fear not, little flock*] Our Lord often, as here, represents his followers under the figure of a flock, and, by consequence, himself as their Shepherd. The figure is beautiful, and the relation imagined being common in Palestine, the image must have furnished the disciples with another motive to reliance, by the assurance thus conveyed to their minds that they should be provided for. Their Master's expression might also recall to the minds of the disciples the language of their own sweet singer—"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Psa. xxiii. 1. They are probably termed a "little" flock, on account of the fewness of their numbers, as compared with the mass of population around them: and although the followers of Christ have much increased since that time, they are still a "little" flock, in comparison with the whole number of the human race. Holden thinks the phrase "little flock" is "an expression of tenderness." *It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*] The "kingdom" here promised, we presume to be "the kingdom of God" which they had just been exhorted to seek, (verse 31,) and which they are here informed should be *given* to them. It embraces both the state of grace here and of glory hereafter. By its being their Father's "good pleasure" to bestow this on them, is meant that it was his *will, purpose, or appointment* that they, in common with all who should be introduced into that "flock," and thus become one fold under the one Good Shepherd, should inherit the kingdom "prepared for them from the foundation of the world," if found meet to possess it. It is not,

33 Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

however, a mere connection with the flock of Christ that will secure an inheritance on high, but the possession of suitability of character, wrought in the heart by the influences of the Holy Ghost, through faith; for "there shall in no wise enter into heaven any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Reader, how is it with *thee*?

Verses 33, 34. *Sell that ye have, and give alms*] We think that this injunction is not to be understood literally, 1st. Because there is no evidence that during the continuance of our Lord's personal ministry it was required, except in one solitary instance, (Mark x. 17-21,) and there evidently for no other reason than because that person's possessions stood in the way of his salvation. 2d. Because when the Jewish Christians, after the Saviour's death, did part with their property and hold all things in common, it was not that they might "give alms," in the proper acceptance of that term, but to establish a common fund, from which all might draw support in a time of danger and persecution. Nor was this custom introduced into any other of the primitive churches; which shows that it rested on some peculiarity, and was not of general obligation, if indeed it was more than a voluntary act of the church at Jerusalem, which its members might perform or not, at their option. 3d. If understood literally, the command must be confined to the Jewish church, and to that age, for in the apostolic writings the distinction between the rich and the poor is everywhere recognised, and duties



## LESSON XI.

*Christ exhorts to Watchfulness and Fidelity.*

LUKE xii. 35-53.

LET your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

corresponding to their stations assigned to each; whereas the directions at this time given by Jesus Christ appear to be of general, not of limited application, and it is therefore more in accordance with the context to assign to this passage such an interpretation as will secure its harmony with the rest. The precept is, then, to be understood as directed against that hoarding up of wealth which interferes with the duty of generous alms-giving. See Matt. vi. 19-21. *Bags which wax not old*] The word rendered "bags" means purses; "wax" signifies to grow—"wax old," grow old. The "bags" or purses are taken, figuratively, for their contents, the opposition being between earthly and heavenly treasures, as is evident from the next clause. *A treasure in the heavens which faileth not*] A treasure which fails not, either by loss or exhaustion; secure from depredation and incapable of waste. The accidents to which such hoards as the Jews were accustomed to accumulate were liable, are suggested by the allusion to the thief and the moth; their treasures usually consisting in the fruits of the earth, garments, and the precious metals. The "moth" stands as the representative of all those small insects which prey on the corn and fruits in the granary, and on garments in the wardrobe. See notes on Matthew vi. 19, 20, pages 60, 61, volume second.

## NOTES ON LUKE xii. 35-53.

Verses 35, 36. *Let your loins be girded about*] This is a continuation of the discourse addressed by our blessed

36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

37 Blessed are those servants whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily, I say unto you, that

Lord to his disciples on the occasion of the man's asking him to order his brother to divide the inheritance with him, recorded Luke xii. 13. The direction to "gird up the loins" is in allusion to the eastern manner of dress, the upper garment being worn very long and loose. As this robe, if left at full length, was a hindrance to the wearer when engaged in any active employment, it was usual either to throw it off, or, more frequently, to tuck or tie it up around the waist by a girdle or sash. When this was done, the wearer was said to be *girded*. Hence, to "gird up the loins" means to be in a state of readiness for the performance of any duty. 2 Kings iv. 29; ix. 1; Jer. i. 17. *And your lights burning*] Here is another figure, to the same effect as the former. The allusion in this instance is to the custom still prevalent in the East, of making entertainments in the night-time. Such servants as were left at home, waiting their master's return, must of course have their lamps burning, and be in readiness to admit him the moment he arrived. "The original rendered 'wedding' is applicable to any entertainment."—*Ripley*. The subject teaches us to live in readiness for death and judgment, and to acquire and cultivate those habits which will prepare us to enter on the higher and nobler services of our blessed Master in another state of being.

Verse 37. *Blessed*] Happy; 1st. In the approval of their own consciences. 2d. In the approbation of their lord, by whom our Saviour is meant. *He shall gird him-*



he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the good man of the house had *self*] Shall himself take the place of the servant. Servants who waited at table were "girded" in the manner before described. *Will come forth and serve them*] "This," says Mr. Watson, "is one of the most extraordinary promises of the New Testament." It was, and still is customary in the East, for the host to do honour to distinguished guests by performing for them some services usually allotted to servants. So in Gen. xviii. 9 we find that Abraham waited on the guests whom he then entertained; and when a feast was made for our Saviour at the house of Simon the leper, we read that "Martha served," doubtless in honour of the guest. The import of the promise, therefore, is, that their Lord would not treat them in that heavenly state even as favoured servants, but as chosen guests, to whom he would show marks of peculiar love and honour. "He will select the most laborious, persevering, and watchful servants for singular honour." How should our bosoms burn with gratitude to him, and devotion to his work!

Verse 38. *Second—third watch*] The term "watch" is here a measure of time during the hours of the night; the "second watch" extended from nine to twelve o'clock, the "third" from twelve to three. The simple meaning is, whether the master come early or late. We are taught by this uncertainty as to the *time* of our Lord's coming, (or the hour of death,) to be constantly vigilant—*waiting* his summons; we know *he will come*.

Verses 39, 40. *If the good man had known, &c.*] The

known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

folly and danger of remissness in duty, and of not being prepared for death and judgment, are strikingly exhibited in this parable. The illustration seems to imply that the "good man of the house," or master of the family, had received information that a thief had formed a plan to attack him, but he knew not at what time the attempt was to be made; and, being unwatchful, his previous information was of no service to him, because he neglected to improve it. The inference is clear—we are to be always diligent in watching over our own and others' souls, that so we may be ready to yield up our account "with joy, and not with grief." *House to be broken through*] The original literally signifies *to be dug through*; because the walls of the eastern houses are generally formed of mud, or bricks hardened in the sun, but not burned; and many of the Jewish dwellings are known to be still of the same material. It was the custom of house robbers to enter such dwellings by perforating the walls. "In the dark," says Job, (xxiv. 16,) "they dig through houses which they had marked in the daytime."

Verses 41—44. *Speakest thou this parable unto us*] That is, to us exclusively! The parable referred to is the illustration contained in the thirty-ninth verse. To this question our Lord does not give a direct answer, but, by proposing another parable, shows that these instructions were specially applicable to his disciples, and more particularly still, to ministers. *Who then is that faithful and wise*



42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, That he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

steward, &c.] Ministers of the gospel are here compared to house stewards, whose duty it was to dispense the allotted portion of food, raiment, &c., to the servants, as well as to take a general oversight of the family effects. They were persons of considerable authority. The phrase "Who then is," &c., is equivalent to the expression, "Whoever is that faithful and wise servant, is happy." *Their portion of meat in due season*] "Meat" here includes food of every kind: "in due season," means at the proper time. We thus see that as a "faithful and wise steward" not only distributes to each his requisite food, but does it at the right time; so the minister of Christ is to dispense, steadily and in due season, the wholesome doctrines of the gospel, which are designed to comfort and strengthen the soul, as natural food does the body, of man. Mr. Watson remarks, "The office and duties of a true minister are by this parable forcibly pointed out. The office is of divine appointment, not of human assumption; it conveys the power to rule in the family, [the church,] but as a servant, responsible to the great common Master; and the object of this rule is to promote the service of the Lord in all the duties which may be assigned to each." As such servant, he should ever be loved and obeyed. 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 17, 18. *He shall make him ruler, &c.*] As a master would confide in, honour, and promote so faithful and wise a servant, so God will honour with increased in-

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants, and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47 And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

fluence and special marks of approbation such as are diligent and prudent in the work he has committed to their care.

Verses 45, 46. *If that servant*] Not, indeed, the "faithful and wise" steward, but another person holding a similar office. *Say in his heart*] Think within himself. *My lord delayeth, &c.*] Supposes he will not return for a long time, and perhaps doubts whether he will come at all. Alas! with how many such infidel pastors has the church been cursed! *Begin to beat, &c.*] Abusing the authority which had been vested in him for good, by abandoning himself to oppression, and indulgence in every unholy passion. *Cut him in sunder*] This punishment has been confounded with being sawn asunder, (Heb. xi. 37.) but means, we apprehend, a severe scourging, such as shall "cut asunder" the flesh, and then the servant, thus scourged, is assigned to a prison.—*Cottage Bible.* The margin reads, "will cut him off," that is, from his station, implying, also, punishment. *Unbelievers*] Rather, the unfaithful.

Verses 47, 48. *Knew his lord's will*] Knew what his master wished him to do. *Prepared not himself, &c.*] Held not himself ready for every kind of service required, but was actually disobedient. *Beaten with many stripes*]



48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

49 I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled?

Shall be severely punished. Among the Jews, the law of scourging restricted the number of stripes to forty for one crime; but if a criminal were convicted of more than one offence, he might be sentenced to receive forty lashes for each crime.—*Lightfoot*. It does not appear, however, that any thing more than ordinary punishment is meant. *He that knew not, &c.*] That is, was comparatively ignorant—was not so well instructed in his master's will as the other servant; for we must suppose some general knowledge, or it would be manifestly unjust to inflict punishment at all. *Voluntary* ignorance—that is, the choosing to remain ignorant when we might have knowledge—will fall under the condemnation denounced in the preceding verse. *Shall be beaten with few stripes*] Dr. A. Clarke, quoting *Lightfoot*, observes that for petty offences the Jews inflicted as few as four, five, or six stripes. The object of this passage was to impress on the minds of the disciples the practical application of the truths they had received, by assuring them that although their Master's government is merciful, it is also just. We thus learn, 1st. That in inflicting many stripes on the unfaithful servant, God does not act arbitrarily, but with deliberative justice, since where the offence is less, the punishment is less also. 2d. That it is an important axiom of God's moral government, which we ought never to forget, *that from him to whom much is given, much shall be required.*

Verse 49. *I am come to send fire on the earth*] Most

50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

commentators understand Jesus to speak here, as in Matt. x. 34, of the dissensions produced by the preaching of the gospel, the foreseen consequences of his mission being represented as the *object* of that mission. But although "fire" is sometimes an emblem of strife, we humbly conceive that such cannot be its import here, 1st. Because a less forced interpretation can be given; and 2d. Because the Saviour declares the kindling of the fire to which he alludes to be the object of his earnest wish; and it is a poor subterfuge to say, (as do those who adopt the former hypothesis,) that since the dispensation of the gospel *must* produce contention and persecution, the sooner it comes the better! Mr. Watson's view of this passage may be regarded as more accordant with truth. He says, "The 'fire' must be understood of the *fire of his word*, [by which we understand the gospel, or, more strictly speaking, the influences of the Spirit in the gospel, to be meant,] a figure of speech not strange to the Jews, because found in the Old Testament, (Jer. xx. 9; xxiii. 29,) and by our Lord most aptly applied to his own gospel in its full and perfect revelations which took place at the day of pentecost, and was accompanied by the descent of the Spirit 'in cloven tongues as of fire,' emblematical of the intense power, the purifying, testing, and [sin] consuming qualities of Christianity. *To send this holy fire abroad upon earth* was the very object of our Lord's mission; and from the fulness of his benevolence he expresses his earnest wish that it were *already kindled*, and all its blessings fully bestowed on men."

Verse 50. *I have a baptism to be baptized with*] "Baptism" is occasionally an image of suffering; and doubtless



51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

our Lord refers here to his sufferings in the garden and on the cross, on both which occasions he was literally *bathed in blood*. And how am I straitened, &c.] The margin, as also Dr. Campbell, reads *pained*; but we prefer the rendering of the text, and understand it to imply *restrained, confined*. The sense seems to be:—"I have a baptism to be baptized with;" I must be baptized with blood before I can "baptize with fire;" "and how am I straitened," confined, restrained, from the giving of the most excellent gifts I came to impart, "until that baptism is accomplished." But it may be asked, in what respect was Jesus "straitened," and why? Let Mr. Watson answer. He says, "Nothing is more natural than that our Lord should feel himself restrained and confined, in giving his instructions, by the necessity arising out of his unaccomplished death, that much of truth should be veiled in parable, and much postponed; and nothing more consistent with his character than that he, 'the Sun of righteousness,' now under a cloud, should long to break forth upon his disciples and the nations 'with healing in his wings,' while yet he was restrained. We are [thus] taught that Christianity, as a revelation, was not perfected until after Christ had sent the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon his apostles; and that we must connect the *apostles' doctrine* [contained in their epistles] with his own, as contained in the evangelists, in order to have *the whole efficient gospel*."

## LESSON XII.

*Christ reproves the Jews for not discerning the nature of his mission—He exhorts them to repent.*

LUKE xii. 54-xiii. 9.

AND he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.

Verses 51-53. *Suppose ye that I am come to give peace, &c.*] That is, that peace only will be the result of my coming? This text is of similar import with Matt. x. 34, on which see notes, page 252, volume second.

## NOTES ON LUKE xii. 54-xiii. 9.

Verses 54, 55. *A cloud rise out of the west, &c.*] Rather, "the cloud," as the word should be rendered, alluding to a well-known phenomenon, "which in our Lord's time seems to have become a certain prognostic of wet weather."—*Hornc.* "We learn both from the Scriptures (1 Kings xviii. 4) and from the [reports of] travellers in the East, that a small cloud like a 'man's hand' is often the forerunner of violent storms of wind and rain."—*Bloomfield*. The rains usually proceed from the west, (Jahn says, north and west,) the watery vapours being attracted from the Mediterranean sea, which forms the western boundary of the Holy Land. *South wind*] To the south, Judea bordered on the desert which separates between Palestine and Egypt; consequently the air which came from that quarter was greatly heated. Thevenot, speaking of the climate of Syria, says, "When the south wind begins to blow, the sky becomes dark and heavy, the air



56 *Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it, that ye do not discern this time!*

57 *Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?*

58 *When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou*

gray and thick, and the whole atmosphere assumes an alarming aspect. The heat produced by these southern winds has been compared to that of a large oven, at the moment of drawing out the bread; and to that of a flame blown upon the face of a person standing near the fire which excites it."

Verse 56. *Ye can discern, &c.*] To "discern," is to obtain a true knowledge of a thing, and supposes much attention or study. The Jews paid great attention to the indications of weather, and in consequence became very skilful judges of its various prognostics; if they had applied themselves with equal assiduity and sincerity to studying the predictions relating to the advent of the Messiah, they would have discerned that this was the time of his appearing, and from the conformity of his character, doctrines, and works to those predictions, they would soon have been led to the conclusion that Jesus was "he of whom Moses and the prophets did write." For not having so done they are rebuked. From their professed interest in, but real neglect of this matter, they are termed hypocrites.

Verse 57. *Why even of yourselves*] That is, independent of his wonderful works. *Judge ye not what is right*] By "judging what is right," we understand attaining a knowledge of his true character.

Verses 58, 59. *When thou goest with thine adversary, &c.*] "Adversary" is here a law term signifying *complain-*

mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

59 I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

Chap. xiii. 1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

*ant. Give diligence*] Use thine utmost effort to satisfy his demands, that he may free thee. *Hale*] Drag. By the Roman law a complainant was justified in dragging the offender immediately before the magistrate, without process of summons. *Thou shalt not depart, &c.*] We are not aware that the Jewish laws allowed imprisonment for debt; but the Roman laws did, and it is supposed that the Roman code had been substituted, in this respect, for the Jewish. This illustration, drawn from the prudence of a debtor's compromising matters with his creditor on the way to the magistrate, as the only means of escaping the harsh punishments inflicted in those days upon debtors against whom judgment was obtained, was designed as an exhortation to the Jews to seek immediate reconciliation with their offended and neglected God and Saviour; it should also have its due effect on us, in leading us at once to secure the remission of sin.

Chap. xiii. 1. *At that season*] Meaning at that time. The remark made by Christ in the fifty-eighth and fifty-ninth verses of the preceding chapter seems to have brought this circumstance to mind, and it was probably mentioned by some bystanders as a supposed confirmation of the doctrine taught in that exhortation to repentance, for "the scope and connection of the passage, as well as Christ's answer, show it to have been the thought of these persons that Providence had permitted these Galileans to



2 And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

be thus massacred for some extraordinary wickedness," which remained unrepented of, and for which no atonement had been made. *Galileans*] People who resided in Galilee. This province was not under the jurisdiction of Pilate, who was governor of Judea, but of that of Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. *Whose blood Pilate had mingled, &c.*] To "mingle" is to *mix*. The meaning is, that while these Galileans were engaged at the temple, on one of the great national festivities, in offering some solemn sacrifice, Pilate suddenly attacked them with a band of soldiers, and slew them, so that their blood became mingled with that of the animals which the priests had slain in sacrifice. This incident is not noticed by Josephus, for he makes no mention of any Galileans being slain in the temple by *Pilate*; but we learn from various parts of his history that tumults often arose at the festivals; and that on one occasion Archelaus put to death three hundred Galileans, in the temple, while in the act of sacrificing. As the Galileans were a turbulent and rebellious people, (which fact is frequently mentioned by Josephus,) ever ready to disturb the Roman authorities, we think it not unlikely that some such tumult had been excited by them on this occasion, and that Pilate had taken summary vengeance in the manner above narrated. This circumstance, together with the parable which follows, are recorded by Saint Luke only.

Verses 2, 3. *Suppose ye, &c.*] This is not really a question, but a declaration of a well-known and admitted fact; for the Jews mostly entertained the opinion that grievous calamities were sent by God as punishments for

3 I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam

sins previously committed by *the sufferers*,—who were consequently regarded as being "sinners above others," or greater sinners than others. It is evident that Job's friends held the same view. Job viii. 3-6; xi. 6. *I tell you, Nay*] That is, they were not. Our Lord does not deny that the suffering party were sinners, or that all calamity is to be considered as a mark of God's displeasure against sin, and as being sent as its punishment; but corrects the uncharitable and dangerous error, that the *immediate sufferers* are thus marked out by divine Providence as being *specially guilty*. The Jewish notion was *uncharitable*, because of its manifest ignorance and malignity—the very best men being frequently the most afflicted; and it was *dangerous*, because the tendency of such an opinion would be to *defeat* the end of chastisement, which is to arouse the community to a sense of guilt and bring them to repentance. *Except ye repent*] "Repentance" implies sorrow for transgression, confession of error, and turning from evil to good. *Ye shall all likewise perish*] The original denotes they should perish in a *similar manner*.—*Benson*. "This threat," says Watson, "has in it the nature of a prediction; for great numbers of impenitent Jews, at the siege of Jerusalem, perished in a similar manner,"—falling under the Roman sword, and their blood mingling with that of their sacrifices. Holden, however, thinks that "nothing more was meant than that without repentance they could not escape the vengeance of God; 'ye shall all perish as well as they.'" We prefer the latter view.

Verses 4, 5. *The tower in Siloam, &c.*] Our Lord



fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem?

5 I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

6 He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

doubtless refers here to some event well known at that time, though no other information concerning it has reached us than what the text furnishes. "Siloam" was the name of a fountain "near the southeast corner of the city, at the foot of mounts Zion and Moriah."—*Fisk and King*. The word rendered "in" should be *at*—the tower at Siloam.—*Ripley*. This "tower" was probably one of the towers of the city walls; Bloomfield suggests that it stood at the southeastern angle. It must have been near the pool, or it would not have been termed "the tower at Siloam." The case thus presented might be considered as more directly countenancing the idea of requital for personal transgression than that brought forward by the Jews; for there was here no human instrumentality—the death of the sufferers seems, therefore, to be more immediately the act of divine Providence. Still, while our Lord does not deny it to have been the act of Deity, he does deny it the character of a retributive act, asserting that these men were not "sinners above others." The *improvement* is the same as in the other case, and goes to show that all such acts of the divine government are to be regarded as so many calls to repentance for sin, and amendment of life, lest our lives should be suddenly cut short, and we "perish" in our sins.

Verse 6. *A certain man had a fig-tree in his vineyard*] A "vineyard" is a parcel of ground in which the vine is cultivated. Vineyards were very numerous among the Jews,

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

8 And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

9 And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

the cultivation of the vine forming a very important part of their agricultural labours. The fig grows to great perfection in Palestine, and is an important article of food and commerce. Probably the vine and fig were occasionally planted in alternate rows:—the text evidently intimates that they were sometimes cultivated together. One of the most beautiful images of rural tranquillity and prosperity is that of men sitting under their vines and fig-trees. Micah iv. 4.

Verse 7. *The dresser*] The man to whose care the culture of the vineyard was committed. *These three years, &c.*] Reckoning, no doubt, from the time the tree had become mature, and ought to have borne fruit. The fig-tree is said not to bring forth eatable fruit until it has been planted three years; but if so, there cannot here be any allusion to this circumstance, since the planter knew well enough that it would be useless to seek fruit on the tree the first or second year, and yet he is represented as having gone three years seeking fruit. The "three years," therefore, mark his care not to have a tree cut down which might become fruitful; for the Easterns are peculiarly careful of their fruit trees, on which they are more dependant for food than we on ours. The phrase also denotes his patience in waiting till the case became hopeless. *Why cumbereth it the ground?*] To "cumber" is to *burden, occupy room uselessly*. This tree was not only *useless*, on account of bringing forth no fruit, but it occupied



## LESSON XIII.

*Christ cures an infirm woman—He reproves a ruler for hypocrisy—Travels toward Jerusalem.*

LUKE xiii. 10-22.

AND he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

the ground of a fruitful tree, at the same time weakening the earth by drawing nourishment therefrom.

Verses 8, 9. *Till I shall dig about it, &c.*] As the fig-tree was frequently found in a wild state, growing without culture, it is evident that by "digging," &c., an unwanted degree of care and attention is to be understood. This parable is connected with the preceding matter, being an illustration of the necessity which existed that the Jewish nation should bring forth the fruits of repentance. The "fig-tree" may represent the Jewish church; the "vineyard," the land of Palestine; the "certain man," Almighty God; the "fruit" which was sought, the obedience and love which the Jews ought to have rendered; the "seeking fruit," the various warnings the nation had received by earlier and later prophets; the "dresser," Jesus Christ; and the "digging," &c., the more extraordinary means which the gospel appointed for the recovery of lost men. The whole subject teaches us, that although God be merciful, strive repeatedly with sinners, and bear long with their "barrenness," or wickedness, yet the day of retribution will come, when those who have long resisted his will shall be destroyed, and that without remedy.

## NOTES ON LUKE xiii. 10-22.

Verse 10. Jesus—*was in one of the synagogues on the sabbath*] By "synagogue" is here meant a place devoted

11 And behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and

to the public worship of Almighty God. The regularity with which Christ attended on the ordinances of religion (Luke iv. 16) proves the fervour of the devotion which glowed within his bosom, and the strength of his desire to "fulfil all righteousness:" for as public worship is a divine institution, and of perpetual obligation, he would not have kept the law had he neglected so important a part of practical religion. How does his example rebuke many who have taken upon themselves his sacred name! His example should teach us not to "forsake the assembling of ourselves together," for purposes of devotion. The "teaching" in which he was engaged we presume to have been in elucidation or enforcement of the portion of the Holy Word appointed for that day's service.

Verse 11. *There*] In the synagogue. *A woman which had a spirit of infirmity*] "Infirmity" is weakness; and by a "spirit of infirmity," commentators generally suppose an infernal spirit—a demon—to be meant, who, having gained possession of her body, afflicted it with a severe disease. A spirit which produced infirmity. The form of expression is similar to that recorded Mark ix. 17, where a boy is said to have had "a dumb spirit"—that is, possessed by a demon who rendered him dumb. That the case was one of demoniacal influence seems all but certain from Christ's own words, recorded in the sixteenth verse. *Bowed together*] The disease was probably of such a nature as to weaken the joints of the back, whereby she was rendered incapable of raising herself up.

Verses 12, 13. *He called her to him*] Apparently with-



## LESSON XIII.

*Christ cures an infirm woman—He reproves a ruler for hypocrisy—Travels toward Jerusalem.*

LUKE VIII.

AND he was teaching in the synagogues, and the people were praising him. And he said, "I have seen you sitting under the fig-tree and saying, 'I am safe, for I have not sinned.'" And he said to her, "Woman, thy faith has made thee whole. Go in peace, and be whole of thy infirmity."

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NOTES ON

Verses 10, 11. *Christ was in one of the synagogues on the sabbath*] By "synagogue" is here meant a place devoted



11 And behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said to her, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity."

No. 1743

No. 2125—Ladies' Seven-Gore Skirt, sizes, 22 to 36 waist.

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No. 2040—Ladies' Yoke Shirtwaist, 6 sizes, 32 to 42 bust.

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No. 2011—Girls' Dress, 4 sizes, 6 to 12 yrs.

No. 1587—Seven-Gore Maternity Skirt, 7 sizes, 22 to 34 waist.

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No. 2027—Misses' Dress, sizes, 10 to 14 yrs.

Verses 12, 13. *He called her to him*] Apparently with-



said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

13 And he laid *his* hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day,

out any intercession on her part. How amply was she rewarded for her faithfulness in serving God! She sought good to her soul, and received good to both soul and body. *Thou art loosed from thine infirmity*] Both Hebrews and Greeks were in the habit of comparing disorders to *chains* and *ropes*, by which men are, as it were, held bound.—*Bloomfield*. The expression implies that she was freed from the tyranny of the wicked spirit, and consequently recovered from her disease. *He laid hands on her*] An act frequently employed in cases of healing, (Matthew ix. 18; Mark viii. 25,) and probably designed to show that the cure was performed by his own power. *Glorified God*] Praised God. Gave him thanks. The reality of the miracle here stated to have been wrought is evident from the following facts of the history:—1st. The disease was of long standing—*eighteen years*. 2d. It was so severe that she “could in no wise *lift up herself*.” 3d. The cure was instantaneous—“*immediately* she was made *straight*.” 4th. She publicly acknowledged it, and praised God.

Verse 14. *The ruler answered with indignation*] The “ruler” of the synagogue was the officer charged with the proper conduct of its exercises. It is generally allowed that there were three in each synagogue—if so, then probably this one was either the chief ruler, or the only one present. By “answered,” is simply understood that he *spoke*. It is a common form of expression, in the Scriptures, to say that a man “answered,” when nothing more is intended than the commencement of a speech. See

and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day.

15 The Lord then answered him, and said, *Thou hypocrite*, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

Matthew xi. 25. “Indignation” means *anger*—he spoke angrily, being vexed. *Because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath*] The word “sabbath” means *rest*; and the seventh day was so called because on it the Creator rested from his labours, after having made the world. If, as is very probable, this ruler really thought Jesus had violated the holy rest, his warmth is not to be condemned: but he may be considered guilty for not making himself acquainted with the true spirit and intent of the command which sanctified the day. That law prohibited all worldly employment on the sabbath, other than was needful: works of necessity, however, had ever been practised, and, by parity of reasoning, works of mercy were equally allowable. The rabbins had, indeed, encumbered the institution with so many whimsical additions, that the law was almost lost sight of amid the mass of rubbish which their traditions had thrown around it; and thus what ought to have been accounted “a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable,” was rendered wearisome or absurd. It was probably with the design of restoring the institution to its original purity, without lessening the veneration really due to it, that our Lord performed so many miracles on that holy day.

Verse 15. *Thou hypocrite*] A “hypocrite” is a *dissembler*. *Loose his ox or ass from the stall*] A “stall” is a place where cattle are kept to be fed, sheltered from the weather. *And lead to watering*] “The Talmud states



16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day?

17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

that beasts might be led forth to watering on the sabbath-day, so that they bore no other burden than their collar and halter. It was held lawful to draw water for them, and pour it into the trough; but it was not lawful to carry water to the beasts, which must be led to the well, pool, or river, and watered there."—*Pict. Bible. A daughter of Abraham*] That is, a descendant of his, and therefore to be regarded with all the kindness with which the Jews were accustomed to regard each other. "Son" or "daughter of Abraham," was a title highly valued by the Jews. But, it may be asked, why was this man charged with being a "hypocrite?" Probably, because he condemned in Christ that which he justified in others—the performance of works of benevolence. He held that beasts might be led forth to water, as an act of kindness to them, lest they should suffer from thirst, and certainly thus far his views were right; but he condemned Christ for performing an act of mercy to a human being,—nay, even to a daughter of Abraham,—though his own conscience must have told him that the comfort and health of his fellow creature were of greater consequence than those of his beast.

Verse 17. *His adversaries*] The ruler of the synagogue and those who thought as he did. *Were ashamed*] Ashamed of what? Of being confounded, or put to shame, or exposed, before the multitude. "Lest we be shamed," says Henry, "goes farther with some than, *lest we be damned.*"

18 Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?

19 It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden, and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?

21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

22 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

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#### LESSON XIV.

*Christ gives sight to a man born blind, who is expelled the synagogue for a supposed violation of the sabbath.*

JOHN ix. 1-34.

**A**ND as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

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Verse 22. *He went through the cities and villages*] Probably the cities and villages of Judea, travelling toward Jerusalem. For an exposition of the parables of the grain of mustard-seed and of the leaven, see notes on Matthew xiii. 31-33, pages 172, 173, volume second.

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#### NOTES ON JOHN ix. 1-34.

Verse 1. *As Jesus passed by*] Or, along the streets. He was at this time at Jerusalem, as is evident from the seventh verse. It is supposed by some harmonists that the incidents here narrated occurred at the feast of tabernacles, and that there is a close connection between the eighth and ninth chapters of John's gospel; others, however, (whose arrangement Townsend follows,) are of opi-



2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

nion that these events should be referred to the feast of dedication, mentioned in the following chapter, for notice of which see notes in that place. *A man blind from birth*] How pitiable his condition! He might well exclaim, as did England's sublimest bard,—

“With the year

Seasons return, but not to *me* returns  
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,  
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,  
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;  
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark  
Surrounds me; from the cheerful ways of men  
Cut off; and for the book of knowledge fair  
Presented with a universal blank  
Of nature's works, to me expunged and 'rased,  
And wisdom at *one* entrance quite shut out.”

Verse 2. *Who did sin, &c.*] We have before remarked (on Luke xiii. 1-5) that the Jews had very generally embraced the doctrine that affliction was a mark of the divine displeasure; and, in accordance with this sentiment, the disciples supposed the blindness in the present instance to be a judicial visitation for sin. But as the man was *born blind*, (a fact with which the twelve were evidently acquainted,) they at once necessarily concluded that he must either have sinned *prior to his birth*, or he was suffering the consequence of his *parents' transgression*. Not being able to determine which was the real state of the case, they ask an explanation of our Lord. We say they *necessarily* concluded one of these two opinions to be true, for we see not how the doctrine of a transmigration of

3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his

souls can be supposed in this instance, the Jewish notion of that dogma being, according to the showing of Josephus, that the souls of the “good only enter into another body, but those of the bad are tormented with everlasting punishment.” Now the disciples regarded this suffering to be the legitimate result of sin; and if the offence bore any proportion to the severity of the punishment, he must have been a grievous sinner, for blindness is one of the most dreadful calamities to which the human frame is subject: but it appears from Josephus that the soul of a wicked man did not animate another body, but passed at once (after death) into a state of condemnation—therefore metempsychosis cannot be predicated of the present case. As to his having sinned prior to his birth, Lightfoot asserts that many Jews entertained the opinion that infants were capable of sinning before they saw the light of this world. This notion receives no countenance from the Bible, and is merely introduced to illustrate the probable opinion of the disciples. The question whether the man were suffering for his parents' sins, proves the opinion to have been entertained, that when an individual was not punished for his guilt in his own person, he was in the persons of his descendants. This idea probably grew out of a misapplication of the text (Exodus xx. 5) that God would “visit the iniquities of the parents upon the children.” The true import of the passage doubtless is, that the misconduct of the parent would injuriously affect the temporal interest of the child: for instance, the profligacy of the father would have a natural tendency to involve his children in poverty, and the like. The Jews, however, seem to have gone even much farther than this. See Ezekiel xviii. 2.



parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Verse 3. *Neither hath this man sinned, &c.*] Jesus does not mean that either the man or his parents were free from sin, but merely that the blindness was not the consequence of any such sin. *The works of God should be made manifest in him*] That is, that the power and goodness of God should be exhibited in his cure. By the "works of God," we presume the operations of divine providence and grace to be intended; for it was by the influence of the former that the man was brought in contact with Jesus, and sight miraculously given him, and by the assistance of the latter that he was enabled to believe on Christ. This man was certainly not born blind *by chance*,—the whole volume of inspiration forbids the adoption of such an opinion. Our Lord repels the insinuation of the disciples, that the blindness was a retributive visitation for sin, declaring that neither the man nor his parents had so sinned as to bring this affliction on themselves. How, then, are we to account for or justify the sore calamity which had befallen the man? Doubtless by referring the whole matter to the action of that perfect, though sometimes inscrutable wisdom which cannot err, and to that full and impartial benevolence which afflicts not willingly. We doubt not that He, whose "thoughts are not as our thoughts," consulted the man's true benefit, his own glory, and the welfare of others, by forming him as he did; the temporary closing of the bodily sight being designed to lead both to the giving of natural light to one who had literally "sat in darkness," and to the impartation of a far more glorious intellectual and moral vision than would otherwise, probably, have ever dawned on him. These purposes were fully accomplished through the combined operations of God's

4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

providence and grace, and the decision of the man's own mind. To "manifest" is to *cause to appear, to make plain*. "God's works," or power and goodness, were made illustriously to appear in the cure of this person, and in his being thus led to believe on Christ.

Verse 4. *I must work the works, &c.*] To "work" a work is to perform it. The "works" referred to are those acts of miraculous power and divine teaching which were essential to the establishment of our Lord's claims to be the Messiah, and to the proper instruction of the people in the nature of his kingdom. *We say essential to the allowance of his claims, for the Jews had ever been accustomed to such evidence*. Moses and the prophets were accredited by miraculous works: and without them, we believe Jesus of Nazareth would have been universally rejected by the Jewish nation as an impostor. *While it is day*] The term "day" denotes the time Jesus had to pass on the earth—the continuance of his then present life. *The night cometh*] By "night," death is meant. Life is very fitly compared to day, and death to night, because as the daytime is the suitable period for action or labour, and night for rest, so the present term of existence is the period allotted for the performance of those duties—the attainment of that character—which is to determine our everlasting destiny. "There is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the grave." Eccles. ix. 10. Our Lord conveyed the idea that he must diligently employ his lifetime in works appropriate to his mission; for soon he should die, and the opportunity for performing



6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

such works would then cease. Surely men should imitate his diligence in working out their salvation, nor

—“to the mercy of a moment leave  
The vast concerns of an eternal scene.”

This conversation took place probably somewhat less than six months before Christ's crucifixion.

Verse 5. *I am the light of the world*] Jesus had before made a similar declaration, (John viii. 12,) though, perhaps, in a somewhat different sense. In that passage he may be understood both to assert his divinity, by appropriating to himself a title of Deity, and to define his character as a teacher; in the present, he seems to call attention to that distinguishing mark of the Messiah, the giving sight to the blind. We are driven to this conclusion by the limitation expressed in the text—viz., *as long as he should be in the world*: for as the instructor of his people, he is still “the light of the world.” The expression was probably suggested by the case of the blind man.

Verse 6. *He spat on the ground, and made clay*] This act, being performed on the sabbath, (verse 14,) would be regarded by most of the Jews as a violation of the sacred rest, inasmuch as they strictly forbade the preparation and use of all medicines on that day. It is by no means improbable that it was partly with the design to correct this superstitious notion that our Lord performed the deed. Spittle, especially fasting spittle, was thought by the Jews to be possessed of considerable medicinal virtue for diseases of the eye—although certainly not for natural and total blindness. The application of saliva might, therefore, seem to the spectators a perfectly natural and

7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

proper remedy, and thus they might be led to undervalue the miracle by attributing the cure to the simple virtue of the spittle, had not Jesus, probably with the intention of preventing such a misconception, mixed the saliva with earth; thus, perhaps, neutralizing or destroying the medicinal properties of the spittle. *Anointed the eyes of the man with the clay*] Spread or rubbed it over his eyes; or rather, on his eyelids: “like a tender physician, he did it himself—with his own hands—though the patient were a beggar.” But why did Christ do this? Probably, 1st. To raise within the man's mind an expectation of cure; and 2d. To convince him and others that the cure proceeded from himself, and that he could accomplish his purposes by any instrumentality he saw proper to employ, however fit or unfit it might appear.

Verse 7. *And said unto him*] Blind people can recognise other persons only by the sense of hearing or of feeling; but it is well known that they possess both these faculties in a high degree. Now as Jesus doubtless wished that this person should know to whom he was indebted for eyesight, he *spake* to him, thus enabling the man to identify him, by the sound of his voice, when they again met. See verses 35–38. *Go, wash in the pool of Siloam*] Meaning, wash thine eyes. Siloam, or Shiloah, (Isaiah viii. 6,) is the name of a fountain and stream of water issuing from it, situated near the south-east corner of the city of Jerusalem. The fountain is described by Messrs. Fisk and King, (American missionaries to Palestine, 1823,) as issuing from a rock, twenty or thirty feet below the level of the ground, to which they descended by two flights



8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

of steps. There were formerly two pools or reservoirs near by, called the upper and lower pool, into which the waters were conducted. Mr. G. Robinson, however, says "the lower pool is now (1831) dry." Rev. J. D. Paxton, who visited Jerusalem in 1836, speaks of but one pool, and describes it as being about "three hundred yards south of the fountain, not more than twenty or twenty-five feet long, and ten or twelve wide. It may be eight feet deep, with only eighteen or twenty inches of water in it." These waters have obtained a distinguished reputation among the Turks, for their supposed virtue in cases of diseased sight; and multitudes of Christian pilgrims flock to them in commemoration of the miracle here noticed. *Which is, by interpretation, Sent*] So called, probably, from its waters being *sent forth* by means of pipes, or a covered water course. This fountain has been thought by some to be a type of Christ, from its being called by the same name as is applied to him in Gen. xlix. 10; but the supposition does not appear to be well founded. It may be asked, Why did not Jesus complete the cure at once, as in the case of the blind man at Bethsaida? We do not know; but deem it not improbable that he wished, 1st. To prove the obedience and faith of the man; and 2d. To make the miracle more extensively known than it otherwise would have been, that thus a deeper interest might be excited, and the people have a fuller exhibition of his character, and an additional reason afforded why they should believe on him. *He washed, and came seeing*] Thus furnishing incontestable evidence of the reality of the miracle; for even if sight had been imparted by the operation of natural causes,

9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.

10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?

11 He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus, made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

—which was clearly not the fact,—great caution would have been required to prevent a relapse, the eye in such cases not being able to endure a sudden display of light; but this man came "seeing"—that is, in the full, sound possession of sight, without guard or shade.

Verses 8, 9. *Is not this he that sat and begged*] It is inferred from this phraseology that the man was well known, and therefore deception was absolutely out of the question. *Some said, This is he: others, he is like him*] The changed aspect of his eyes would doubtless make a great alteration in his appearance; so that those who were not *intimately* acquainted with him may well have been uncertain as to his identity with the blind beggar. There is great simplicity and propriety in this dialogue.

Verse 10. *How were thine eyes opened?*] Indifference to the wonderful and gracious works of God betokens a stupid, besotted mind; we should, therefore, be ever ready to inquire into them. Especially ought we to be interested in having the blindness of sin removed.

Verse 11. *A man called Jesus, &c.*] Although this reply seems to indicate that the man had not much knowledge of his benefactor, it implies that he was not entirely ignorant of him. Probably some one informed him, at the



13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

14 And it was the sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day.

tune of his conference with our Lord, that it was Jesus who had interested himself in his case; for it is hardly reasonable to suppose that he would have submitted to the prescribed process without having received some such intimation.

Verse 13. *They brought to the Pharisees, &c.]* That is, to the sanhedrim, or chief ecclesiastical court of the Jews, the greater part of which were of the sect of the Pharisees; for that the *rulers* are meant is plain from the twenty-second and thirty-fourth verses. It is probable that search had been made for Jesus, but as he could not be found, these people brought this man before the court as witness against him for having violated the sabbath.

Verse 14. *It was the sabbath, &c.]* We believe the sanhedrim held its sessions daily, not excepting even the sabbath; (see Matt. xxvii. 62, 63, 65 :) if so, it is probable this examination took place on the same day on which the cure had been effected.

Verse 16. *This man is not of God]* That is, is not sent by him—he is an impostor. *Because he keepeth not the sabbath]* These Pharisees assumed their views of the proper observance of the sabbath to be correct, and judged Jesus by them; they therefore readily pronounced him guilty. We might, as charity would dictate that we should, regard their sentence as the honest conviction of their

Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles! And there was a division among them.

17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

minds, were it not that these same Jews, probably some two months before, had maliciously sought to put Jesus to death, and seem to be still influenced by emotions of the most settled hostility and hatred. See John vii. 19, 25, 32; ix. 22, 24. *Others said, How can a man that is a sinner, &c.]* “Sinner,” here, means *impostor, deceiver*. Although this argument is put in the form of a question, it has the force of an assertion, the import being—*A sinner cannot do such miracles*, because God would not indue him with the power, and no one else could; but as Jesus was evidently indued with miraculous gifts, he must be commissioned from on high. So argued the unprejudiced. *There was a division among them]* That is, a *schism, a rent*; the members of the court were separated into two parties by their conflicting sentiments. We should learn, from the conduct of the unhappy men who opposed Christ on this occasion, to preserve our minds free from prejudice, and especially from rancorous enmity, as it is impossible, in such case, to judge righteous judgment.

Verse 17. *What sayest thou of him, &c.]* “The English translation does not convey the meaning so clearly as could be wished. The sense is well expressed by Hammond, in his paraphrase: ‘What opinion of him hath this work of power and mercy to thee, wrought in thee?’”—*Campbell*. It seems, that as the court could not agree in their opinion of Christ’s character, they mutually resolved to appeal to the man on whom the alleged miracle had been wrought, to ascertain what were his views—



18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

not that the opponents of our Lord were willing to admit the miraculous nature of the cure, but putting the case hypothetically—What sayest thou of him, seeing that he has, *as thou sayest*, opened thine eyes. *He said, He is a prophet*] By “prophet,” here, is meant a person sent from God, indued with power to perform miraculous works, as the ancient prophets were; for it was the evidence furnished by the impartation of his sight which induced this man to form so exalted an opinion of his unknown benefactor.

Verse 18. *The Jews did not believe that he had been blind*] The “Jews” here spoken of are plainly those members of the council who declared Jesus to be a sinner. Being confuted, probably, by the arguments of their opponents and the fearless declaration of the witness before them, they were driven to the necessity of either calling in question the fact of his former blindness, or of admitting the truth of the cure. Not being willing to do the latter, they boldly and rashly ventured on the former course, perhaps secretly trusting that a dread of their displeasure would overawe the parents, and prevent their giving candid testimony. Besides, they *may* have urged (as men among us would be likely to do) that beggars were frequently deceivers—imposing on the public by some artful, though unfounded, tale of woe. They therefore “called,” or *summoned* the parents before them, as witnesses in the case. It will be seen how much this opposition strengthened the evidence of the miracle, by bringing to light circumstances which had otherwise remained concealed. Thus God made “the wrath of man to praise him.”

19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see?

20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

21 But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or

Verse 19. *Who ye say was born blind*] The parents had not yet testified to this fact before the sanhedrim; the question is therefore supposed to be founded on the report which had been brought by others. Some commentators think that there are three questions in this verse, instead of two, as our translation reads: viz., 1. Is this your son? 2. Was he born blind? 3. How then doth he see? Now although this would be the more regular manner of examination, before an impartial tribunal, the present arrangement seems more natural and characteristic; for the majority of the court were certainly opposed to regarding the cure as a miraculous act, and desirous of fixing the imputation of fraud on the man. They seem to wish to frighten the parents—*How say ye he was born blind?*

Verse 20. *We know, &c.*] In their answer the parents pass over the imputation of deception, and make their depositions in regular order. Their fear of offending the judges would, probably, prevent any thing like a confession of the whole truth, on their part; they therefore confine themselves to the bare assertions that they knew the arraigned to be their son, and, that he was born blind.

Verse 21. *By what means he now seeth, we know not*] Is this true? It is thought by some that as these parents were not present at the performance of the cure, they were not qualified to be legal witnesses as to the manner in which their son had received his sight, or the person by whom the benefit had been conferred. But this does not



who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

seem to be the true state of the case; for if it were, then they ought not to have been questioned on this point. Besides, although they had not *witnessed* the actual performance of the cure, they had doubtless heard their son confess both the person by whom and the means by which he had been healed; and so far their testimony would, no doubt, be legal and to the point. The truth is, they feared to say any thing in favour of Christ, lest they should enrage the judges. See following verse. *He is of age; ask him*] "The sense is, He is of age sufficient to enable him to give testimony."—*Bloomfield*. Mr. Allen, in his "Modern Judaism," fixes the age of majority at thirteen years and a day, from which period a Jewish youth is accounted his own master, and all his contracts are deemed valid. Dr. Clarke, however, says, "Mature age was fixed among the Jews at thirty years." We know not which is the better authority, but incline to Mr. Allen's view. The person here spoken of must have been a full grown man, as his answers show.

Verse 22. *The Jews had agreed already, &c.*] By "Jews," the rulers are still understood to be intended. They had not come to this resolve in view of the present incident; for if so, these "parents" could hardly have had knowledge of it: it is, therefore, likely that the determination had been made in consequence of the interest excited in Christ's favour, when last at Jerusalem, at the feast of tabernacles, probably about two months before this time. See John vii. 31, 32. To "confess Christ" is to

23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

profess faith in him. *Put out of the synagogue*] That is, separated from some religious privileges—equivalent to what we term *excommunication*. "There were three kinds of excommunication among the Jews, of which this was doubtless the first or lowest. It was a sort of preliminary excision; so that if a person repented of the error or wickedness for which he was subjected to this sentence within thirty days, he was readmitted to the congregation; but if he persisted, he was, at the end of that time, liable to a more solemn and penal excommunication. A man under this first form of separation was not allowed to approach his friends within the distance of four cubits; he might not eat or drink with any; nor was he allowed to shave or wash his person. He remained at liberty, however, to be present at public worship; he might receive instruction and impart it to others; nor was he prevented hiring servants, or from being himself hired."—*Pictorial Bible*. It seems to have been through fear of suffering this punishment, which was deemed exceedingly scandalous, that the parents of the man acted as they did.

Verse 24. *Then again called they the man*] Finding that nothing to the prejudice of Jesus could be drawn from the testimony of the parents, the sanhedrim again summoned the son before them. *And said unto him, Give God the praise, &c.*] "This does not signify, as it might seem to import, Give the praise of thy cure to God, [and not to this man.] The words are a form of expression often employed in the Old Testament as a serious admonition to whomsoever they are addressed to speak the



25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

truth. See Josh. vii. 19; 1 Samuel vi. 5; Jer. xiii. 16." The sense meant to be expressed then is, "Confess the truth; dissemble nothing: but admit the imposture you have practised, and thus give praise and honour to God, who abhors deception." To induce him the more readily to do this they add, "We know"—are fully satisfied of the fact—"that this man is a sinner"—or impostor.

Verse 25. *Whether he be a sinner, I know not*] This cannot mean that the man had formed no opinion of the character of Christ, for he goes on to show that he was not a sinner. Is he not to be understood as declaring the charge (that Christ was a sinner) to be irrelevant—to have nothing to do with the matter? Some commentators understand the language to be ironical;—but this is by no means clear. *Whereas I was blind, now I see*] Of this he had the fullest evidence—his own consciousness—and therefore utterly disregarded their cavils. Thus the man really gave glory to God, since he remained constant in bearing testimony to the truth; and would by no threats be induced to deny the benefit which he had received. From this example, believers in Christ should learn never to be ashamed or afraid to confess what God has done for them. It may be that they may be unable to answer all the cavils of infidelity, and to quiet all the evil suggestions of their spiritual enemies: still they may and should say, so long as they retain the peace of God in their hearts,—“One thing I know, that whereas I was [spiritually] blind, now I see.” The decided confession of Christ will ever lead to increased enjoyment in him.

Verse 26. *What did he, &c.*] The reason why they

26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

asked this question so often, was doubtless in the hope of detecting some discrepancy in his testimony which they might torture into falsehood. But God gave the man grace and strength to make a bold confession of the truth, and completely to confound his crafty examiners.

Verse 27. *Ye did not hear*] That is, did not believe. Campbell reads the clause, *Did ye not hear? Wherefore would ye hear it again, &c.*] The man did not suppose they wished to become Christ's disciples: the language conveys a keen irony, which roused those to whom it was addressed to a high pitch of anger.

Verse 28. *Then they reviled him*] To “revile” is to reproach. Dr. Clarke says that the original implies “they spoke cutting, piercing words.” This they did by calling him Christ's disciple, which they seem to have considered the very height of infamy. His favourable opinion of Christ (verse 17) led to their branding him with this opprobrious epithet. *We are Moses' disciples*] That is, they admitted the authority of the law of Moses, which they charged Jesus with having violated. By this expression they seem to intimate that there was such an opposition between Moses and Christ that no one could be the disciple of both.—*Doddridge*. Dr. Clarke says, “By this they meant that they were genuine Pharisees; for they did not allow the Sadducees to be disciples of Moses.”

Verse 29. *We know that God spake unto Moses*] By the phrase, “spake unto Moses,” is meant, *commissioned*  
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29 We know that God spake unto Moses; *as for this fellow*, we know not from whence he is.

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

or sent him. How did they "know" this? 1st. By the consent of all their progenitors from the time of Moses; 2d. By the evidence which his writings and miracles furnished to the truth of his mission. 3d. By the fulfilment of his predictions. See Deut. xxviii. 36-45. *This fellow*] The word "fellow" is not in the original, being supplied by our translators. We doubt not, however, that they have given the spirit of the text, as the rulers were drawing a comparison between our Lord and their own legislator, invidious to the former. *We know not from whence he is*] Meaning, that they had no evidence of his being commissioned from God, and therefore that he was a man of no repute. But was the divine mission of Christ less authenticated than that of Moses! So far from this, it was more strongly attested. In the first place, He was the subject of prophecy; 2d. Those predictions were most remarkably accomplished in him; 3d. His miracles were more astonishing than were those performed by the Jewish legislator, to say nothing of the fact that the one ever acknowledged that his ability to perform the surprising works he accomplished was a limited and delegated power, while the other claimed *his* to be the result of the inherent and independent energy of his own will.

Verse 30. *Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not, &c.*] To understand this fully, it is necessary to bear in mind that the sanhedrim, according to the Talmud, was intrusted with the examination of persons who professed to be called to the prophetic office—so that they, and

31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

they alone, could decide whether a person were a false prophet or not. See *Jahn*, art. Sanhedrim. This fact illustrates Luke xiii. 33. The sense of the passage then is, "This truly is *strange*, that you, who pretend to distinguish true from false prophets, should not be able to discern with whose power *he* comes who gives sight to those born blind."—*Bloomfield*.

Verse 31. *Now we know*] That is, it is well known to be an admitted belief; no one calls it in question. *God heareth not sinners*] "Heareth not" means *regards not, answers not*. The man's meaning plainly is, that God will not enable wicked men to perform miracles, and therefore he who had opened his eyes must be of God. It has been already remarked, (note on Matt. vii. 23, page 84, volume second, which see,) that miraculous endowments are not an infallible sign of grace, as they may be possessed by unrenewed men. This does not, however, make against the cogency of the man's argument, for it was a conceded principle among the Jews, that God *heareth not sinners*. This passage does not assert that the Lord refuses to listen to or grant the prayers of penitent sinners for salvation. *Such petitions*, when offered up in faith, are *ever acceptable*. *A worshipper of God*] "Worship" implies homage; hence a "worshipper of God" is one who entertains proper feelings of reverence and love toward him, and manifests those emotions by both public and private acts of adoration and honour; for there can be no real homage where the heart accompanies not the outward sign of fealty. We presume the phrase "any man" means, any *such* man as is here spoken of—that is, any one indued with miraculous power.



32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

Verse 32. *Since the world began, &c.*] Neither Moses nor any of the prophets had ever performed such a work: and it is highly probable that sight had never before been imparted to any one born blind; either by miracle or the employment of surgical aid. The records of scientific art, so far as we can learn, furnish no intelligence of the kind earlier than about A. D. 1728, when the celebrated Dr. Cheselden, of England, succeeded, by a skilful operation, in imparting sight to a lad fourteen years of age, who had been blind from birth. But even if such cures had been performed, they would not, of course, detract from the miraculous character of that noted by the evangelist; for its claim to be considered a miracle consists in the cure being performed without the employment of *adequate natural means*.

Verse 33. *Could do nothing*] Could do no such work as this—could perform nothing of a miraculous nature. So the Jews believed.

Verse 34. *Thou wast altogether born in sins*] Referring to the Jewish notion of the cause of his blindness. Ver. 2. As though they had said, "Thou wast cursed by God with blindness for crime, and dost thou set thyself up to instruct us? What impudence!" When men are worsted in argument, they frequently lose their temper and resort to abuse. So it was in this case. *And they cast him out*] Probably forcibly expelling him from the council chamber, and cutting him off from connection with the Jewish church. For fuller notice of this "casting out," see note on verse 22, page 143.

## LESSON XV.

*Conversion of the man born blind—Christ the true Shepherd.*

JOHN ix. 35-x. 21.

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?

36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

## NOTES ON JOHN ix. 35-x. 21.

Verses 35, 36. *When he had found him*] This implies that Jesus had sought the man. We are not informed where this interview took place, but presume it to have been in some public spot, probably in one of the courts of the temple: for although the man was excoriated, if that excision were, as is supposed verse 22, (p. 143,) the milder form of discipline, he was not thereby prevented attending on the worship of God. *Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*] The Jews sometimes applied the title "Son of God" to the Messiah, as indicative of his divine nature; (see Matt. xvi. 16; xxvi. 63;) and it is probable our Lord expected his question would be understood as referring to that long looked-for deliverer. It may be that he also wished to draw from the man a confession whether or not he believed the Messiah to be a divine personage. *Who is he, Lord*] The word rendered "Lord" has two meanings; it signifies *Lord*, or sovereign ruler, and *sir*, a mere title of civil respect. It should have been here translated *sir*, as it is Matt. xxvii. 63; John iv. 11; xii. 21, and elsewhere; for it is evident that the man did not yet know Christ to be more than human. The word rendered "who" might be translated *which*—*which is*



37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

*he?*—and such, probably, is its meaning in this place. The man seems to have understood Jesus as intimating that the “Son of God,” or Messiah, had already come; and his inquiry, “who” or “which is he?” conveys a sort of expectation that the person whom he was addressing could tell him who and where the Messiah was; or perhaps, that he might himself be that personage. *That I might believe*] Meaning, that he might give evidence of his faith, by declaring himself his disciple. It is not unlikely that he recognised Jesus, by the tones of his voice, to be the individual who had given him sight; and as he had already confessed his faith in him as a prophet, he was now prepared to go further, and to receive him as the “Son of God—the King of Israel.” The man’s answer will thus be seen to imply two things: 1st. That he had the faith inquired after; 2d. That he only needed to be directed to the Messiah to make an open and full declaration of faith in him by ranking himself among his followers.

Verses 37, 38. *Thou hast seen him, &c.*] Or, thou dost now see him. The gospels furnish no account of Christ’s revealing himself so explicitly to any one as to this poor beggar and to the Samaritan woman. John iv. 26. The circumstances of each case will doubtless account for this difference in their favour: the woman was a mere heathen, in fact, although professedly a worshipper of God; (John iv. 22;) the man was suffering for his attachment to his unknown benefactor, and perhaps needed a clear manifestation of the true character of Jesus, to enable him to sustain his position. *Lord, I believe*] This was the overflow-

39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see, and that they which see, might be made blind.

ing expression of gratitude and faith. But what did he believe? Certainly, the truth with which Jesus had just made him acquainted. *And he worshipped him*] This worship was the result of the man’s belief that Jesus was the Son of God, and consequently was a religious worship, which Jesus did not refuse. But if he had not been really and truly God, and therefore the proper object of religious adoration, would he not have refused the homage thus offered? See Acts xiv. 11–15; Rev. xix. 10. Certainly he would: for he could not receive it, if he were merely a man, without being guilty of blasphemy; (Mark xiv. 61–64;) and if the man had offered such worship to a finite being, he would have been guilty of the same crime. See Ezek. xx. 27, 28. Jesus Christ must, therefore, either be verily God, or a most wicked man, for a good man could not receive divine homage. That he was not a wicked man, the whole history of his sayings and doings abundantly proves: he must, then, be God.

Verse 39. *Jesus said, For judgment I am come, &c.*] One sense of the word “judgment” is, to distinguish, to separate, as a man distinguishes between a good thing and a bad one, and separates the worthless from the valuable and such, probably, is its import here. *That they which see not, &c.*] The blindness here spoken of is evidently spiritual, though the illustration was probably suggested by the case of the man to whom natural as well as spiritual sight had been imparted. By “they which see not,” we are probably to understand those who are blind through mere ignorance; and by “they which see,” those who arrogate to themselves more of divine knowledge and like-



40 And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also!

41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

ness than they really possess, and whose prejudices hinder them from perceiving or acknowledging their real condition. By the one class being "made to see," and the other "made blind," is probably meant, that the effect of Christ's coming would be, 1st. The manifestation of the disposition and character of men; 2d. The impartation of the means of instruction to those who had hitherto been kept in ignorance, and the removal of spiritual knowledge from those who had abused it. When truth is presented to the understanding and affections of men, and is rejected, errors become more confirmed, and the obduracy of the heart increased.

Verse 40. *Some—Pharisees*] Whose attention might have been attracted by the conversation between Jesus and his convert, or by the homage which the man had paid him. The remarks contained in the preceding verse were probably made for their benefit. *Are we blind also?*] This question does not bear the aspect of sincere inquiry, but of scorn. It seems to have been put in a sneering manner.

Verse 41. *If ye were blind*] That is, unavoidably ignorant of divine things. *Ye should have no sin*] No "sin" in this respect. Our Lord does not mean that they would, even then, have been absolutely free from sin, but that they would have been free from the sin here specially contemplated—that of not improving their light. *Ye say, We see*] They professed to be fully instructed in divine knowledge; and they certainly had every advantage for coming to the truth, and recognising Jesus as the

Chap. x. 1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Messiah; but they resisted conviction, and were wilfully blind. *Therefore your sin remaineth*] It was customary to speak of sin as *being removed, or taken away*, when it was pardoned; (see Psa. ciii. 12; Jeremiah l. 20; John i. 29;) hence, to say that sin remaineth, is equivalent to declaring it to be unpardoned—unforgiven. Their sin of unbelief could not, in their circumstances, but rest upon them unexpiated, and sink them in perdition.

Chap. x. 1. Verses 1–22 of the present chapter seem so intimately connected with the subject treated of in the preceding, that there is but little doubt of their forming a part of the same narrative. In proof of this, several judicious commentators remark that the expression "verily, verily," with which the chapter commences, is never used at the beginning of a discourse, but is always employed to introduce some additional observation or admonition. See John v. 24, 25; vi. 26, 32; viii. 34, &c. It will be recollected that in the twenty-fourth verse of the preceding chapter the rulers declared Jesus to be a sinner, meaning an impostor or deceiver. The knowledge of such a declaration having been made had, probably, reached Christ, and he seems to have availed himself of the opportunity furnished by the presence of these Pharisees (chap. ix. 40) and other rulers (x. 19) to declare himself to be, not only a true teacher, but the source of all authority; and to warn the people against the delusions of that sect. This he does in the following beautiful parable. *Verily*] Amen—truly, certainly. *He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold*] The eastern sheepfold is an enclosure open at the top, surrounded sometimes by a low stone



2 But he that entereth in by the door, is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

wall, sometimes by a fence of wicker work, and furnished with a gate. The *fold* denotes the church of God, and the *sheep* the members of that church. To "enter into the fold by the door," is probably a proverbial expression denoting the *right* to enter; and hence may be indicative of authority. See verse 2. One, then, who enters in another way must be considered an intruder. *A thief and a robber*] A "thief" is one who steals *secretly*—a pilferer; a "robber" is one who takes more *publicly* and *violently*—a highwayman. "Here, however, the terms have little or no difference, but, being *united*, have a force greater than either would bear separately."—*Bloomfield*.

Verses 2, 3. *He that entereth by the door is the shepherd*] Or, a shepherd; for in the original the article is omitted. *To him the porter openeth*] The "porter," or *door-keeper*, is an under-shepherd, keeping watch at the door of the fold. *The sheep hear his voice*] That is, they recognise his voice or call, and obey his directions. *He calleth his sheep by name*] From this it would seem that the Jews gave names to their sheep, as we do to horses, dogs, &c. This practice is still usual among the Icelanders and modern Greeks, as well as among the Arabians. It follows that the shepherd could distinguish the several sheep of his flock; and however strange this may seem to us, it is well known that these shepherds can and do thus distinguish the individuals even in very large flocks.—*Pictorial Bible and Horne. And leadeth them out*] Namely, to pasture. For a touching and beautiful de-

4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

scription of the care of the divine Being, under a pastoral image, see Psa. xxiii. and Isa. xl. 11.

Verse 4. *When he putteth forth, &c.*] That is, when he *leads them forth*. *He goeth before them*] Contrary to the custom which prevails among us, of *driving* a flock, the eastern shepherds *go before* theirs. This is also the case in Spain (no doubt introduced by the Moors—*Bloomfield*) and some other countries of Europe. *The sheep follow him, for they know his voice*] The word translated "voice" is applicable to any kind of sound; and when applied to a shepherd leading his flock may mean not only a call by the natural voice, but any call—such as by a pipe or whistle. "In the villages of Russia we have often, of a morning, seen a peasant marching through the street playing on a pipe, on hearing which the animals came forth from their various cottage homesteads, and followed him to the pastures."—*Pict. Bible*.

Verse 6. *This parable*] So called on account of its being a figurative speech. *They understood not, &c.*] Understood not what he intended the parable to represent or teach.

Verse 7. *I am the door of the sheep*] That is, of the fold or enclosure in which the sheep were. What follows, from this to verse 21, is partly an explanation of the preceding parable, and partly an addition to it. Although our Lord



8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

terms *himself* "the door," the expression is probably to be understood as referring to his *doctrines*; for it is by the promulgation of these that an "open door" has been set before men, and a free invitation given them to enter into the fold of Christ. Now as in the first verse Christ had pronounced such as "enter not by the door into the fold" thieves and robbers, and here declares *himself* (by the promulgation of his doctrines) the "door" or *entrance* into the fold, that is, into the church,—it follows that one sense of this passage is, that no one can obtain salvation but by Christ. This agrees with the statement in ver. 9, which see. Again: If, as is supposed, the "entering in at the door" be a sign of authority—a mark of a true shepherd—it follows that none are true shepherds or pastors of the flock but such as enter "by him,"—that is, by his appointment. This is probably another sense included in this verse. Now as the rulers here addressed had not exhibited the spirit of Christ, and therefore "were none of his," it is evident that they were not true shepherds, but thieves and robbers: and if this interpretation be correct, so are all those ministers who have taken upon themselves the sacred office without being "moved thereto by the Holy Ghost."

Verse 8. *All that ever came before me, &c.*] There is much doubt as to the import of these words. It would seem that they must of necessity be understood in a restricted or modified sense, for it is certain that not *all* who "came before," or *preceded* Christ, could be "thieves and robbers," as Moses, and the prophets sent from God, were not of this character. (It is suggested, however, that

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Jesus spoke in a popular sense, and that "all" simply denotes a *majority*.) Again, the word translated "before" also means *instead of, in place of*; hence some commentators understand the sense to be, all that ever came *professing to be the Messiah*. But it is not certainly known that any one had, up to this time, assumed to be the Christ, (excepting Jesus himself,) and therefore this exposition is unsatisfactory. A learned friend has furnished the compiler with a third interpretation, as follows: The word rendered "came" will bear translating *come*, as it implies *any time*; that rendered "before" has also the sense of *above*, as in James v. 12; 1 Peter iv. 8; which see. According to this exposition the meaning is, "All who come above me [that is, independent of my authority] are thieves and robbers." Does not this exhibit a clear and consistent sense? False teachers may be termed "thieves and robbers," 1st. Because they deprive God of his just honour by seeking to promote their own glory instead of his; or, 2d. By being influenced by mere mercenary motives; and, 3d. Because of the pernicious effect of their instructions. For evidence that these epithets forcibly depicted the character of the scribes and Pharisees, see Matthew xxiii. 14, 25. *The sheep did not hear them*] The term "sheep" here has special reference to the truly pious members of the Jewish church, who were not led astray by the false doctrines, &c., which characterized the instruction of most of the religious teachers of the day. By "not hearing them" is meant, that they refused to listen to "the instruction that causeth to err."

Verse 9. *He shall be saved*] Or, he shall be *safe*; that is, from all danger. *Shall go in and out, and find pasture*]



10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Meaning, his wants shall be supplied. The words form a pastoral image expressive of undisturbed enjoyment. The figure denotes the abundant security and blessedness of the true spiritual children of God, especially in a future state.

Verse 10. *The thief cometh—to steal, &c.*] The “thief” still represents the false teacher, or rather teachers, since the phrase is taken for a class. Such persons usually regard merely their own emolument or aggrandizement. 2 Peter ii. 1, 3. This was not Christ’s object—he had no personal advantage to gain; he came, not for his own sake, but for ours; not for his own emolument, but for our welfare. *That they*] The sheep. *Might have life*] That is, spiritual and everlasting life. *More abundantly*] Rather, *might have abundance*; that is, may enjoy the highest privileges and blessings, and to the greatest possible extent.

Verse 11. *I am the good shepherd*] The figure is here changed from the “door of the fold,” to the shepherd of the flock. Our Lord was often predicted, in the Old Testament writings, under this character. See Isaiah xl. 10, 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Zech. xiii. 7. There is here an assumption of the Messiahship, and consequently a declaration that so far from being an impostor, he is the rightful governor of his people. *The good shepherd*] The faithful and true shepherd, whoever he may be. *These* words do not refer to Christ. *Giveth his life, &c.*] That is, he *hazards* his life; rather than leave his flock to the

12 But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

power of the wolf, a good shepherd will risk his own life. The meaning of the verse is, “As the good or faithful shepherd hazards his life to protect his flock from danger, so will I, the Messiah, predicted by the prophets under the character of a shepherd, lay down my life for my spiritual flock, the human race.”—*Bloomfield*.

Verse 12. *But the hireling*] A “hireling,” in the general acceptance of the word, is *one who works for wages*; in the sense here spoken of, however, it means an unprincipled man, who has no other end in view than to promote his own interest. Mr. Wesley well remarks, “It is not the bare receiving hire [or wages] which marks a man a hireling; for ‘the labourer is worthy of his hire,’ (Jesus Christ himself being judge, Luke x. 7,) but the loving hire—the working for the sake of the hire.” *Whose own the sheep are not*] The faithful shepherd will regard his flock as his own, and do all that in him lies for their welfare; the hireling feels no such interest, *because he is a hireling*—that is, he loves the wages, not the flock. Such a man would be very likely, when he saw the wolf coming, to leave the sheep and flee. Under the image of this faithless shepherd all such ministers are represented as seek the holy office for a support; or who sacrifice duty to their love of ease. The “hireling” and the “good shepherd” are contrasted to show more clearly the difference between the character and conduct of our Lord, and all faithful ministers, and those of his accusers—the avaricious, self-seeking Pharisees, and such as resemble them.



14 I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father : and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Verses 14, 15. *I know my sheep, &c.*] The word rendered "know" has in this and the following verse the additional sense of *love* ; as though Jesus had said, "I both *know* and *love* my sheep, and am *known* and *loved* of them." *As the Father knoweth, &c.*] These words are closely connected with the preceding verse, from which they ought not to have been separated. They contain an illustration of the nature of the love Christ bears his people :—"even as the Father knoweth," or loveth, "me," &c. *I lay down my life for the sheep*] To "lay down one's life" is voluntarily to give it up, as in sacrifice. Our Lord here *applies* what he had already said of a good shepherd to *himself*, and openly declares that he shall offer up his life for men. See also 1 John ii. 2.

Verse 16. *Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold*] "Which are not of this fold" means, not of this nation—not Jews. By the "other sheep," therefore, the Gentiles are doubtless intended. Isaiah xlix. 6. These Christ here calls *his*, as though they were already members of his flock, because he foresaw that many of them would embrace his religion. For a parallel expression, see Acts xviii. 10, 11, "I have much people in this city," (Corinth.) This is a distinct intimation that the blessings of salvation should be offered to the heathen—a doctrine at that time extremely offensive to the whole Israelitish people. *Them also I must bring, &c.*] Bring into the church and kingdom of heaven. This was to be done, not

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of my-

by his personal ministry, but by the labours of his apostles and other ministers. The work, however, is rightly claimed by Christ as his, because the instrumentality by which it must be accomplished is of his appointment, and dependant on him for its efficiency. *There shall be one fold*] Mr. Wesley reads, "one flock ;" and remarks that *one fold* "is plainly a false print." For a striking illustration, see 1 Cor. xii. 12-14. *One shepherd*] *One only, one and the same*, that is, in having (whatever may be their diversities) the same common Saviour. "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek ; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Rom. x. 12, 13.

Verse 17. *Therefore doth my Father love me, &c.*] "Therefore" means *on account of, for this reason, &c.* It must not be supposed that the Father had not *always* loved the Son, for this would be contrary to fact. Comp. John xv. 9 with Matt. iii. 17. The meaning is, that this work which Jesus had undertaken was specially acceptable to God. What a view is thus presented to us of the immense love of Deity to our fallen race, and of the value of the human soul! *That I might take it again*] The word translated "that" does not mean Jesus laid down his life *for the purpose of* "taking it again," but "that such would be the *result* ; as though he had said, 'I lay down my life, yet so that I shall take it again.'" Christ's subjection to death was but a temporary one, as had been predicted by himself.

Verse 18. *No man taketh it from me, &c.*] The word  
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self. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.

20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

"man" would have been better rendered *one*—no one, &c. "Taking it from me," means, *taking it by force*—this no being had power to do. Christ's death was to be his own voluntary act—his choice. *I have power to lay it down*] The word "power" often means *authority*, and so Clarke renders here. "Though we could find instruments wherewith to make an end of our own lives, we are not at liberty to do it; but Christ had a sovereign authority to dispose of his own life as he pleased."—*Henry*. *Power to take it again*] "Power" here means *ability*. None but God can quicken the dead into life again; and as Jesus had this power over his own dead body, (as his resurrection proves,) he must be God. *This commandment, &c.*] The "commandment," or *commission*, as many render the word, has reference to his death, as mediator between God and man.

Verses 20, 21. *He hath a devil, and is mad*] Meaning, he was possessed by an evil spirit, who had deranged his faculties. *These are not the words, &c.*] Importing that his language was too rational and consistent for a madman. *Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?*] Alluding to the cure of the blind man, narrated in the previous chapter.

## LESSON XVI.

*Christ publicly asserts his Divinity—He retires beyond the Jordan.*

JOHN x. 22-42.

AND it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

## NOTES ON JOHN x. 22-42.

Verse 22. *It was—the feast of the dedication*] This feast was instituted about one hundred and sixty-four years before the coming of Christ, and was held in commemoration of the purification of the temple, and the dedication of the new altar of burnt-offerings, by Judas Maccabeus, from the defilement of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria. About the year 167 B. C. that monarch had ravaged Jerusalem, killing forty thousand persons, and selling as many more into slavery. 2 Macc. v. 14. It is said that he also commanded a sow to be sacrificed on the altar of burnt-offerings, and broth made of part of the flesh to be sprinkled all over the temple. Three years afterward, Judas Maccabeus recovered possession of the holy city, and publicly and solemnly cleansed the temple from these defilements. 1 Macc. iv. 42-59. The feast annually observed in remembrance of this event lasted eight days, and was a season of great rejoicing. The celebration was not confined to Jerusalem, but held all over the land. This festival was also called the "feast of lights," because the Jews illuminated their houses in testimony of their gladness; which illumination progressively increased with the number of days. On the first day, each family was expected to light at least one lamp, on the second, two, &c.; some families, however, lighted a lamp for each member



23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.

24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

of the family: hence if there were ten persons in such family, the last day would witness the light of eighty lamps in that dwelling.—*Pict. Bible.* Allen, in his *Modern Judaism*, seems to represent the modern Jews as limiting the illumination to their synagogues. *And it was winter*] The feast began on the twenty-fifth day of Chisleu, answering that year to the nineteenth of our December.—*Greswell.* The Jewish winter commenced about the middle of this month.

Verse 23. *Solomon's porch*] This "porch," or piazza, as the phrase would be better rendered, was on the eastern end of the temple. It was erected on a vast terrace which Solomon built up from the valley beneath, (the Kedron,) four hundred cubits high,\* in order sufficiently to enlarge the area on the top of mount Moriah, to adapt it to the plan of his intended building. It was on account of standing on this terrace that the porch or piazza was termed Solomon's.

Verse 24. *How long dost thou make us to doubt?*] That is, *keep us in suspense.* The question implies a state of mind wavering between doubt and conviction; an expectation of some kind of a Messiah, and a faint belief, mixed up with considerable uncertainty, that Jesus was he. This uncertainty these inquirers sought to charge upon our Lord, by intimating that he had at times given them reason to think he was the Christ, and directly after,

\* About 727 English feet, rating the cubit at 21.888 inches; or 600 feet, supposing the cubit to contain but 18 inches.

25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

the reverse. *If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly*] Meaning, without disguise—without figure. From this it appears that the Jews did not fully comprehend our Lord's teachings concerning himself. Plain as are most of his instructions in this particular to us, they were not so to them. They understood not the import of the allegory contained in John vi., where Christ represents himself as "the bread sent down from heaven;" the evangelist asserts that they were ignorant of the meaning of the parable of the fold; and it is far from certain that they comprehended even that of the good shepherd. But why were they thus in darkness? Because they had formed a wrong conception of the character of the Messiah. It is incontestable that the Jews expected a Messiah who should deliver their country from a foreign yoke—be a triumphant conqueror and a mighty potentate: and the event proves that they were determined to receive none else. The personal demeanour of our Lord had given them little encouragement to hope he would ever declare himself such; had he but done this, however indirectly, the nation would have become believers to a man.—*Greswell.*

Verse 25. *I told you, &c.*] We have no account that Jesus had expressly told them that he was the Christ; but he had certainly used terms designed to convey the same truth, and which they would have understood, had it not been for the prejudiced state of their minds. Comp. Isa. vii. 14 with John v. 17, 18, 43; Deut. xvii. 15 with John v. 45, 46; Isa. xl. 10, 11, Ezek. xxxiv. 23, Zech. xiii. 7 with John x. 11. *The works I do, they bear witness of me*] By "works" are meant the miracles he performed.



26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me :

28 And I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.

To "bear witness" is to *testify*, to *give evidence*, as a witness does in court. This these miracles are figuratively said to do, in the same sense as it is said, Psalm xix. 1, "The heavens declare the glory of God," &c. Christ's miracles were so many plain and irrefragable proofs of his divine power. "In my Father's name" means by his *authority*. This authority, however, our Lord had as partaker of the divine attributes, and not as mere legate.

Verse 26. *Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep*] Meaning, they had not the *qualities*, and did not perform the *acts* of his sheep. See next verse. We are thus taught that the capability to believe on Christ, and so to obtain salvation, is intimately connected with the state of the heart ; and that if wrong dispositions are indulged by men, they cannot embrace Christ. *As I said unto you*] It is the opinion of many commentators that these words should commence the next verse, which would then read, "As I said unto you, My sheep hear my voice," &c. Jesus had made a declaration equivalent to this, (verses 3, 16,) but we have no account of his having told them they were not his sheep.

Verse 28. *They shall never perish*] To "perish" is to *die* ; and as the life with which this death is contrasted is "eternal life," the meaning of "never perish" must be, *shall not die eternally*. The expression, therefore, evidently alludes to exemption from future punishment. *Neither shall any*] Meaning, *any one*—man nor devil. *Pluck them out of my hand*] To "pluck" is to *seize*, to

29 My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all ; and none is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

30 I and *my* Father are one.

*wrest from* ; the passage represents the perfect safety of those around whom the divine protection is thrown. "But who are they to whom Christ will give 'eternal life,' and who 'shall never perish ?' His sheep, ver. 27. And who are his sheep ? Those who hear his voice and follow him, (ver. 27,) that is, those who embrace his doctrines and obediently submit to his guidance. But none can answer this description unless they continue in faith and obedience to their lives' end ; and if *they do so*, no enemy shall be able to wrest them out of the Saviour's hand, and he will give them eternal life. Hence the promise is conditional, extending to those only who are really Christ's sheep—who follow him as their shepherd to the end of life."—*Holden*.

Verses 29, 30. *My Father, which gave them me*] Who gave me these sheep. *Is greater than all, &c.*] Greater than any or all other beings ; consequently, greater than all their enemies. This is assigned as the ground of their safety. The declaration imports, that the most intimate union subsists between the Father and the Son, for those who are defended by Christ are really protected by the Father. The whole passage bears strong attestation to the divinity of Christ. *I and my Father are one*] The pronoun "my" is not in the original, but has been supplied by our translators. Some think the article *the* should be used—"I and *the* Father are one." But in what respect are they here declared to be "one ?" The context would lead to the conclusion that Jesus meant *one in power*. In verse 28, he declares his ability to keep his people from all enemies ; he then asserts the same of his Father, and



- 31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.  
 32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?  
 33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

grounds this ability on his being *All-mighty*; he then adds a reason why nothing can be taken from him any more than from the Father—"they are one," namely, *in power*. If, however, Jesus was possessed of any *one* attribute of Deity, he must have been possessed of *all* his attributes, and therefore be God; for it cannot be that any attribute of the Godhead can belong to a creature; and if the attributes of Deity inhered in him, so also must the divine nature. He was, therefore, "one with the Father," both in nature and power. The Jews evidently understood him as claiming to be really and truly God. See the thirtieth and thirty-third verses.

Verse 31. *Took up stones again*] They had done this, once before at least, for the same supposed offence. See John viii. 59.

Verse 32. *Many good works have I showed you*] To "show" a thing, is a phrase frequently used in Scripture for the *doing* or *giving* it. See Psalm iv. 6; lxxi. 20. Such is its import here. The "good works" spoken of, are doubtless the benevolent miracles he had performed, and the gracious instruction he had imparted; all which might be emphatically termed "good," as they tended to promote the happiness of men, and were proofs of his love.

Verse 33. *For blasphemy*] "Blasphemy" is not merely the using of slanderous and abusive language respecting God, but the attributing of the imperfections of the creature to him, or the assuming of the perfections of Deity

- 34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?  
 35 If ye called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken;  
 36 Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God!

by the creature. It seems to have been in this latter sense that the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy. The punishment prescribed for this crime was death by stoning. Lev. xxiv. 14-16. *Makest thyself God*] Claimest to be such.

Verses 34-36. *Jesus answered, Is it not written in your law*] The word "law" here is used to denote the Jewish sacred writings—the Old Testament Scriptures. The passage quoted is Psa. lxxxii. 6, where the psalmist terms judges "gods," (meaning, they are *like* or *instead of* God—his representatives to dispense justice among his people,) "and children of the Most High." For a somewhat similar use of language, see Exod. vii. 1 and xxi. 6. *Unto whom the word of God came*] The "word of God" here probably means the *command* or *authority* of God, which is said to have "come" to them, because it was, in a certain sense, *committed to*, or *vested in* them. *And the Scripture cannot be broken*] Importing, probably, that its language is unexceptionable—could not be thought wrong. Or, reading the passage in a parenthesis, thus: "If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, (and the Scripture cannot be broken,—meaning, *cannot be violated*,) Say ye," &c.? *Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, &c.*] The import of the word "sanctified" sometimes is, *made holy*; here, however, it means *consecrated* or *set apart*: namely, to the work of redeeming the world. The substance of Christ's argument is as follows: Ye accuse me of blasphemy because I claimed to be the



- 37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.  
 38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.  
 39 Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand,  
 40 And went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.  
 41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this man were true.  
 42 And many believed on him there.

Son of God; but are not magistrates so termed in your scriptures, and is not the language of those writings unexceptionable! Now if magistrates, who possess but an imperfect image of divine power and authority, may be termed gods, how much more may I, who am really and truly his Son?

Verses 37, 38. *The works of my Father, &c.*] The works which God alone can do. As Jesus did them, it shows that the name "Son of God," implying equality with God, was properly applied to him. *Though ye believe not me*] Meaning, though ye believe not my assertions. The Jews did not believe him when he said he was the Son of God. *That ye may believe, &c.*] Intimating that as his works were indisputable and convincing evidences of his divinity, his declarations to the same effect ought to obtain their belief.

Verse 40. *Into the place where John at first baptized*] Probably, Bethabara, or Bethany. John i. 28.

Verses 41, 42. *John did no miracle, &c.*] The people reasoned thus: John worked no miracle, yet we believed in his divine mission. And now we see it amply proved by the miracles worked by Him to whom John professed to be but a forerunner.—*Bloomfield. Many believed on him there*] These were probably some of John's disciples.

## LESSON XVII. [Date, A. D. 29.]

*Christ's reply to the question, Are there few that be saved?—He laments for Jerusalem.*

LUKE xiii. 23-35.

THEN said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,  
 24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Verse 23. *Then said one, &c.*] It is not improbable that Jesus was at this time in Perea; for the thirty-first verse it would seem almost certain that he was in some part of the dominions of Herod Antipas, who ruled over Perea as well as Galilee. *Are there few that be saved?*] That is, who will obtain salvation. The word "saved" means delivered. The kind of salvation here intended is, deliverance from the fatal consequences of sin, and admission into the kingdom of glory. As it was a generally received opinion among the Jews that all Israel should have a [blissful] part in the world to come, the question seems to have been one of mere curiosity.

Verse 24. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate*] These words, although spoken in reply to the question which had just been put, were not addressed particularly to the inquirer, but to all present. Verse 23. It will be perceived that they do not contain an answer to the query, but embody an exhortation to the earnest pursuit of personal salvation. Possibly our Lord, knowing that the inquiry was one of mere curiosity, deemed it unworthy of further notice. Be this as it may, the question seems to have suggested to his mind (and that very naturally, security from danger being the leading idea of salvation) the image of a place of perfect safety, admittance into which was



through a narrow gate. Instead, therefore, of saying whether or not there be "few saved," he sought to impress on the minds of those present the necessity of themselves entering in at this portal. This "gate," then, denotes the entrance to the kingdom of heaven; and is called "strait," or *narrow*, because of the self-denial and mortification of sinful propensities which the religion of Christ enjoins. The word rendered "strive" is a very significant allusion to the agonistic games. "The sense is, strain every nerve," as those do who are contending for the mastery. The absolute necessity of "*striving*" or contending to obtain salvation may be inferred from the fact, that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood [merely,] but also against wicked spirits." (Eph. vi. 12, *margin*.) The importance of persevering effort in walking in "the way of righteousness," so as to obtain a claim to "enter in through the gate into the city," is thus clearly exhibited. *Many will seek to enter, and shall not be able*] The failure of many of those who "seek to enter in," ought to be a warning to all others to "give the more earnest heed" lest they should also come short, and thus becomes a powerful argument why they should "*strive*." The words, "shall not be able," are not to be understood as implying that those who failed had not ability and opportunity afforded them "to enter in;" (John vi. 17; Acts x. 34; Rev. xxii. 17;) but that they either did not perseveringly exert themselves to obtain admittance, or sought in a wrong manner, or did not apply in season. The time and manner in which men ought to seek are clearly described in Holy Scripture; among other passages, see Matt. vi. 33; Acts xvi. 31; Rom. ii. 7.

25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

Verse 25. *When the master hath shut the door*] The "master" represents Christ. The "shutting the door" may be supposed to denote that awful state when, the day of grace having passed away, the human soul is left to the awful consequences of impenitence and unforgiven transgressions, mercy being no longer obtainable. It may be, that in some cases this takes place prior to death; *certainly* there is no redemption *beyond* the bounds of the present life. Solemn thought! And yet how many are there who

—"to the mercy of a moment leave  
The vast concerns of an eternal scene!"

and that notwithstanding the most earnest and affectionate pleadings, solemn warnings, and fearful threatenings! Ezek. xxxiii. 11; Heb. ii. 1-4; Prov. i. 24-31. Some eminent commentators are of opinion that this verse should be connected with the preceding instead of the following one, by changing the full point, at the close of the twenty-fourth verse, to a comma.

Verse 26. *In thy presence*] That is, in his company. By their having "eaten," &c., in his presence, is meant, that they had been in habits of familiar intercourse with him; perhaps were his professed disciples. They urge this as a reason why they should be admitted. Judas, however, had also "eaten and drunk in his presence,"



27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not, whence ye are; depart from me, all *ye* workers of iniquity.

28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out.

29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

yet he betrayed his Master. Deceived souls, they seem to have supposed their master had forgotten them, as the mode of address is one often used in endeavouring to assist a treacherous memory. The parable seems to have *special* reference to the Jews, although not without its point to all.

Verse 27. *I know you not, &c.*] Meaning, he knew them not as *his disciples*—did not recognise them to be such. *Workers of iniquity*] Persons in the habit of committing wickedness, and devoted to it as their business—evil doers, consequently odious to God. Psalm v. 5. "This," says Henry, "is their ruin, that under a pretence of piety they did the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery."

Verse 28. *Weeping and gnashing of teeth*] Figures importing the deepest anguish and severest suffering. *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob*] The three most distinguished patriarchs of the Jewish nation. *The kingdom of God*] The place of future blessedness, to which reference has already been made. *You thrust out*] Rather, rejected—denied admittance; for they evidently did not enter.

Verses 29, 30. *They shall come from the east, &c.*] That is, people from all parts of the earth shall be found there; so that among the glorious company of heaven

31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

will be redeemed spirits from all nations. Rev. vii. 9. *There are first which shall be last, &c.*] This is a proverbial saying which our Lord frequently quotes, and by which he is generally supposed to convey an intimation that the Jews, who were the people *first* called of God to the possession of peculiar spiritual privileges, would be rejected for non-improvement of them; and the Gentiles, though called later, would press into the kingdom of God before them.

Verse 31. *Get thee out, &c.*] That is, from the dominions of Herod Antipas, in which Jesus seems then to have been. See on verse 23. *For Herod will kill thee*] Or, designs "to kill thee." It is the opinion of most commentators, however, that Herod did not entertain the slightest intention of taking the life of Jesus, but, knowing his popularity with many of the Galileans, and the turbulent dispositions of that people, he feared an insurrection among them in favour of Christ, and therefore wished to get quietly rid of him; and that he employed these Pharisees as his agents to bring about the desired object.

Verse 32. *Go ye and tell that fox*] The fox is an emblem of slyness and cunning. This appellation is here given by our Lord to Herod, not by way of contumely, but to show his intimate knowledge of that prince's subtle character and secret policy. It is not, therefore, applied in scorn. Indeed, in all our Saviour's intercourse with



public men, or references to them, his conduct is in strict conformity with the precept of his own law, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." The direction to "go and tell" Herod the reply, certainly favours the assumption that the message of the Pharisees was a mere *pretence*; for if the tetrarch had really intended to destroy Jesus, it is by no means probable that these Pharisees would have known it; or, knowing it, and communicating the design to Christ, would have been enjoined to convey such a message as this to Herod, which in that case would have assumed the appearance of a bold and unjustifiable defiance, and probably would have been attended with serious consequences to the messengers. The artifice here supposed to be adopted by Antipas, for the purpose of removing Jesus from his territory, is strictly in keeping with the crafty, intriguing character of the tetrarch of Galilee. *I do cures to-day, to-morrow, &c.*] The phrase, "to-day, to-morrow," &c., is a proverbial form, denoting any short interval of time—a *little while*. For a similar use of language, see Hosea vi. 1, 2. To "do cures," &c., means to pursue his customary ministerial work, and includes both instructing the people and healing their diseases; for although comparatively but slight mention is made of Christ's publicly instructing the population in those truths which it was necessary they should believe for "their souls' health," it must not be forgotten that his principal reason for tarrying so long on earth as he did was that he might "preach the gospel of the kingdom," and that the miracles of healing he performed were but a secondary consideration, being designed, chiefly, to serve as confirmations to the truth of his doctrines. By this reference to the peculiar objects of his ministry, Jesus seems to intimate that Herod had no

33 Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the *day* following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not!

reason to fear any political or insurrectionary movement on his account, as his business was one of a purely benevolent character. He "went about doing good." Acts x. 38. *Perfected*] Or, *finished*; meaning that in a short time he should complete the work which he came into the world to accomplish, by yielding up his life a sacrifice for sinners. The same original word is thus used John xix. 30.

Verse 33. *Nevertheless, I must walk to-day, &c.*] The sense of this passage seems to be, "However, I must for this short time (see verse 32) go on in my usual course or ministry," for the word rendered "walk" denotes habitual action or regular business. *It cannot be that a prophet perish, &c.*] Meaning, probably, it can scarcely be—it is not usual. "These words," says Bloomfield, "contain one of the most cutting reproaches imaginable." Some commentators think that Jesus here alludes to the power vested in the sanhedrim (which held its sittings at Jerusalem) of trying prophets, as such, and, if convicted of being false prophets, of condemning them to death—a prerogative which no other court possessed. The words contain a prediction of his own violent death.

Verse 34. *O Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, &c.*] By "Jerusalem" are meant the inhabitants, not only of that city, but of the whole nation; the metropolis being put as the representative of the whole. In 2 Chron.



xxxvi. 15, the Lord God is represented as "rising up betimes," moved thereto by deep compassion for the folly and wretchedness of the Jewish nation, and sending his messengers to arouse them to a sense of their guilt, and to woo them again to paths of pleasantness and peace: "but," says the sacred historian, "they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets." *Oftentimes would I have gathered thy children*] Namely, to myself. *As a hen doth gather her brood under her wings*] The Scripture import of the word "wing" is protection; hence the psalmist prays, "*Hide me under the shadow of thy wings*;" Psa. xvii. 8; and again, Psa. xxxvii. 7, it is declared, "The children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." "In the East," remarks Mr. Roberts, "hawks, kites, and other birds of prey are continually flying about; hence it is difficult to rear chickens, because at every moment they are in danger of being pounced on and carried off. The eye of the mother is therefore continually looking up to watch the foes, and no sooner does she see them skimming along than she gives a scream, and the brood, for protection, run under her wings." The figure is emblematic of the earnest desire of the Saviour to shield the Jewish nation from the evils which he saw would otherwise come on them. *And ye would not*] Therefore were they given up to the ravages of the Roman eagle, which, to pursue the beautiful figure of the Saviour, like a fierce bird of prey, glutted her ravenous appetite with their blood. "Jesus here anticipates what he afterward repeated with tears—chap. xix. 42-44—the sad destruction which the Jews were hastily bringing upon themselves by their infidelity; an event which in no point of view could he contemplate without anxiety and pain. He

35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

was a *man*, and could not be indifferent to human suffering. He was a *Jew*, and loved his country; nor could he, as a prophet, look forward to its unexampled miseries without agony and distress. He was a *Saviour*, and saw not only the temporal miseries of which we know, but he looked into the invisible world, and saw thousands of immortal souls, enwrapped in the blackest guilt, rushing headlong into the eternal world."—*Williams*. And yet all—*all* this misery might have been avoided, if the unhappy people had embraced the salvation which was proffered them—but they rejected it.

Verse 35. *Your house is left desolate*] Meaning, *is about to be left desolate—to be laid waste*. This prediction was strikingly fulfilled when, about forty-three years afterward, the city and holy house were utterly destroyed by the Romans. The word "house" probably refers to the temple, which he no longer acknowledged as *his*, because he was about to abandon it: hence he says, *your house, not mine*. "A similar form of speech," says Dr. A. Clarke, "is found Exod. xxxii. 7, where the Lord is represented as saying to Moses, 'Go, get thee down; for thy people,' &c., to intimate that he acknowledged them no longer for *his* followers." As the Jews prided themselves much in the temple, in no more forcible way could a general desolation be expressed, than by declaring that the temple should be laid waste. *Ye shall not see me until, &c.*] As Christ repeated these words *after* his triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, (Matt. xxiii. 39,) that triumph cannot be the event which he has here in mind;



## LESSON XVIII. [Date, A. D. 29.]

*Christ, dining on a sabbath with a Pharisee, heals a man of the dropsy—Teaches humility—Parable of the great supper—The necessity of supreme love to Christ.*

LUKE xiv. 1-35.

AND it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him.

neither can they be referred to the destruction of the Jewish nation, for at that time they did neither acknowledge him, nor see him in his judgments. It is therefore urged that the coming and acknowledgment now spoken of should be interpreted spiritually, and understood to predict the conversion of the Jews, at some future period, to the faith of Christ.

## NOTES ON LUKE xiv. 1-35.

Verse 1. *One of the chief Pharisees*] Probably, one of the rulers of a synagogue in the place where our Lord at this time was, who was a Pharisee. Jesus seems to have been still in Herod's dominions. *To eat bread, &c.*] Meaning, *to take food*. It is suggested by some that this was not an ordinary domestic meal, but a feast, to which many guests were invited, and among others our blessed Lord. Verse 12. The citations made by various commentators from the writings of Jewish teachers show that it was usual with that people to provide better cheer on the sabbath than on other days, by way of honouring it; and that they used to give entertainments specially on that day. It may be presumed that Jesus and his present entertainer had met at the synagogue, and that the

2 And behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

3 And Jesus answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?

4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;

invitation to "eat bread" was given at the close of divine service. *They watched him*] Namely, the "lawyers and Pharisees," mentioned in the third verse, "watched him." The original denotes that this was done with malicious intentions; they were desirous he should say or do something which would furnish matter of accusation against him. Whether or not his host took part in their designs does not appear; though from the sacredness with which the rites of hospitality were generally observed in the East, the hope may be indulged that he had no insidious intent in proffering to our Lord the courtesies of social life.

Verse 2. *There was a man which had the dropsy*] The dropsy is a disease produced by the accumulation of water in certain parts of the body. The complaint is a very distressing one, and is in most cases incurable. It would appear that this person was not one of the company, for, when healed, Jesus "let him go,"—that is, *dismissed him*. Verse 4. The man had probably learned where our Lord was to dine, and had placed himself near the entrance, (for the first verse intimates that it was *as Jesus went into the house* that his eye fell on the dropsical man,) in the hope that the benevolent Saviour would compassionate his case and heal him, he not daring to make application for a cure at that time, because "it was the sabbath-day."

Verses 3, 4. *Jesus answering, &c.*] The word "answer" does not always, in Scripture, imply that any thing



5 And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day?

6 And they could not answer him again to these things

7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

had been said before, to which it was a reply. It sometimes means to resolve a question existing in the mind, but not uttered; (compare Luke v. 22 with Matthew ix. 3, 4;) and sometimes to address persons, as here. *Lawyers*] Probably the same as scribes. *Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?*] Most of the Jewish teachers maintained that it was not, unless the invalid was supposed to be in imminent hazard of speedy death. Luke xiii. 14. From the silence of the "lawyers and Pharisees," to whom the question was addressed, (verse 4,) it would appear that Christ at length made them ashamed to advocate the doctrine.

Verse 5. *Which of you shall have an ass, &c.*] Appealing to their own acts of mercy and kindness to their domestic animals in justification of his conduct in healing the man, for if it were lawful to lessen or prevent suffering in the case of an ox or an ass, how much stronger was the obligation to do so in the case of a human being! See the principle more fully developed in Matt. xii. 10-13, and Luke xiii. 15-17.

Verse 7. *He put forth a parable*] The word "parable" here denotes a moral precept. Observing how fond the Pharisees were of distinction, our Lord embraced the opportunity thus presented of recommending humility, and of exposing the folly and evil of pride. *When he marked*] When he observed. *Chief rooms*] Rather, the

8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;

9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

chief seats, or places, at table. The company were doubtless all in one room. The tables commonly used by the Jews in the time of the Saviour are represented as forming three sides of an oblong square. On each side raised mats or cushions were placed, on which the company reclined, each person resting on his left arm, and feeding himself with the right hand. Jahn states that it was usual for three persons to occupy one cushion, which was large enough to hold that number only. The centre of the middle cushion is represented as being the place of greatest distinction, and the same location on the other cushions was deemed more honourable than the ends. If so, then the middle seats were those which the Pharisees "chose out."

Verses 8-10. *To a wedding*] To a marriage feast, or any other entertainment; probably instancing one of the most punctilious as a specimen of all. *Sit not in the highest room*] Meaning, as before, the principal seat. *A more honourable man*] One of higher rank, or greater consideration from some other cause. *When bidden*] When invited to an entertainment. *Sit down in the lowest room*] The Jewish teachers frequently inculcated the same lesson. So Rabbi Akiba said, "Go two or



three seats lower than the place that belongs to thee, and sit there till they say unto thee, Go up higher," &c; but they *said*, and *did not*. Travellers in the East have often remarked on the punctilio attendant on the arrangement of guests; and an illustration and confirmation of the custom here dilated on is contained in the following extract from Morier's Travels in Persia:—"When a Persian enters an assembly he makes the usual salutation of 'Peace be unto you,' which is addressed to the whole assembly, as it were saluting the house; (Matt. x. 12;) and then, measuring with his eye the degree of rank to which he holds himself entitled, he straightway wedges himself into the line of guests, without offering any apology for the general disturbance which he produces. It may be conceived that, among a vain people, the disputes which arise on matters of precedence are numerous; and it was easy to observe, by the countenances of those present, when any one had taken a higher seat than that to which he was entitled. Mollahs, the Persian scribes, are remarkable for their arrogance in this respect; and will bring to mind the caution that our Saviour gave to the Jews against their scribes, whom, among other things, he characterizes as loving the uppermost places at feasts. Mark xii. 39. The master of the entertainment has, however, the privilege of placing any one as high in the rank of guests as he may choose, and we saw an instance of it on this occasion; for when the assembly was nearly full, the governor of Hashan, a man of humble mien, although of considerable rank, came in, and had seated himself at the lowest place, when the Ameen-ud-Dowlah, (second vizier, who gave the feast,) after having testified his particular attentions to him by numerous expressions of welcome, pointed with his hand to an upper

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou

seat in the assembly, to which he desired him to move, and which he did accordingly." *Then shalt thou have worship*] "Worship" here means *respect—honour*. A man who was thus promoted to a more eligible situation would be regarded with increased reverence by the entire company. When our translation of the Scriptures was made, the word "worship" was used in reference to homage paid to men, as well as to that rendered to God. Hence the title "worshipful," as applied in England and elsewhere to church dignitaries. It is thus apparent that the religion of Christ inculcates not only the purest morality, but the truest politeness;—humility, kindness, proper respect, and uniform effort to promote the happiness and comfort of all; see Rom. xii. 10; xiii. 7; 1 Peter ii. 17; iii. 8.

Verse 11. *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted*] To "humble" one's self is to lay aside all feelings of self-importance, and to manifest a lowly disposition. To "exalt" is to *elevate* or *promote*,—that is, to higher consideration. "Humility," says Rev. Robert Hall, "is the first-fruit of religion. The devout man loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is there he attains the most lively perceptions of the divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence in the divine favour: and when from this elevation he descends to mix in society, the conviction of superiority, which must in many instances be felt, is a calm inference of the understanding, and no longer a busy, importunate passion of the heart."

Verse 12. *Him that bade him*] The "chief Pharisee"



makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind :

mentioned verse 1. "Bade" means *invited*. *Call not thy friends, &c.*] This prohibition is to be taken with limitation, for Jesus does not mean\* that persons may not entertain their "friends, brethren, and rich neighbours," but that this is not to be done to the neglect of charity, because that is a more important duty than mere hospitality, and in much more danger of being overlooked by the wealthy. "One feast for the rich," says Mr. Henry, "will make a great many meals for the poor." *And a recompense be made thee*] "A recompense" means a *return*, namely, of a similar kindness. The doctrine taught seems to be, that it is not true benevolence to exercise hospitality in the hope and expectation of a similar requital. As the foregoing precept is not to be construed into a prohibition of entertaining the classes of persons there spoken of, neither is this to be understood as forbidding a return of such expressions of good-will, or of a participation in them.

Verse 13. *Call the poor*] The destitute. *The maimed*] Those who are deprived of any member of the body, as an arm or leg, and thereby rendered incapable of earning a support. *Thou shalt be blessed*] "Blessed" in the act of doing good, the consciousness of administering to the relief of human wo, and of having fulfilled a positive and vital duty of religion, yielding more happiness, and that of a vastly superior character, than the gratification of any selfish passion possibly can; and "blessed" in the

14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many :

day of final reckoning with the approval of the great Judge, and a blissful inheritance on high, if such acts, and a life conformable to their spirit, be persevered in. The injunction of our Lord ought not to be understood of the "making of feasts," literally; but of all those acts of benevolence by which the destitute may be relieved. "Blessed is the man that remembereth the poor." *For they cannot recompense, &c.*] The meaning is, "though they can make no return, a return will be made thee." *At the resurrection of the just*] When the "just" or righteous shall be raised from the dead. This passage does not mean that the just *only* will be raised; for all mankind will stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive the award due unto their actions, whether they have been good or bad.

Verse 15. *Eat bread in the kingdom of God*] By "kingdom of God," here, is generally understood that temporal kingdom which the Jews of the Saviour's time expected the Messiah would establish—the *reign* of the Christ. To "eat bread" in that kingdom, means *to live at that time*. This they imagined would be a distinguished favour, on account of the dignity and prosperity to which the nation would then be raised.

Verses 16, 17. *A certain man made a great supper*<sup>1</sup> Perhaps there is an allusion here to Isa. xxv. 6. Among



17 And sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife; and therefore I cannot come.

the Orientals feasts are usually given in the evening. *Bade many*] Invited a great number. This is probably the reason why the supper is said to have been a "great" one. *Sent at supper-time to invite them that were bidden*] "It is still customary in the East not only to give an invitation some time beforehand, but to send round persons at the proper time to inform the invited guests that 'all things are ready.' The custom was the same among the Greeks and Romans."—*Pict. Bible*.

Verses 18–20. *With one consent*] Meaning, they unanimously "made excuse." *I have bought, &c.*] Bloomfield suggests the sense to be, "I have been in treaty for," &c.; which well accounts for the going and seeing the land. *I have bought oxen*] "I am in treaty for," &c., as before. "The Orientals," remarks Mr. Roberts, "employ oxen for all agricultural labour, and the purchase of them is a serious matter." *I go to prove them*] To try them, to judge whether they will answer. *Have married a wife*] The marriage is to be supposed to have very recently taken place; in consequence of which the bridegroom pleads the prevailing custom of giving up a specified time to entertaining his friends, &c., as an insuperable objection to his being present at the supper.

Verse 21. *Showed his lord*] Informed his master of the

21 So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

excuses made by the persons to whom he had been sent. *The master, being angry*] Angry at the men who had slighted his invitation. Nor was his displeasure unreasonable, for such conduct would be regarded by an Oriental as a marked indignity. By having accepted the invitation first sent out, (which invitation must be understood to have specified the time when the entertainment would be given,) those persons had pledged themselves to attend the supper whenever summoned, and they had, therefore, no right to make the engagements which they offer as apologies for absence. This point of Eastern etiquette should be kept in mind, or the parable loses much of its beauty and point. *The streets and lanes*] The public thoroughfares and more private ways, especially those where the destitute and afflicted would be likely to be found. Such a procedure as this would, no doubt, be an unusual measure; "yet it certainly involved much less departure from common Eastern usage than any analogy derived from our own customs would seem to intimate. Those who were now invited to the feast, and became the *principal* guests, were probably of the same class as those who would have been the *secondary* guests, had those who were first invited arrived; or, in other words, those who would have received the surplus provision which is usually made on such grand occasions. It is then always customary to provide far more meats and drinks than are required for the invited guests, or than they and the servants can consume. Yet it is not



customary at such times to reserve any part of that which has been provided. The poor who pass by, or whom the rumour of the feast brings to the neighbourhood, are called in to consume what remains. This they often do in an outer room, to which the dishes are removed from the apartment in which the invited guests have feasted; or, otherwise, every invited guest, when he has done, withdraws from the table, when his place is taken by another person of inferior rank, and so on, till the poorest come and consume what remains. The former of these modes is, however, the more common. We may also observe, that in the East persons in the humbler walks of life are admitted to greater familiarity with the great, and less rigidly excluded from their tables, than in most countries of Europe," or, probably, even in the United States. "Indeed, any poor man who happens to be present when a meal is going on, (and meals are very public affairs in the East,) is usually invited to partake. An instance of this which Sir John Malcolm relates of Hajeer Mohammed Hoosein, one of the chief ministers of the late king of Persia, may be cited. 'A friend of mine, one day breakfasting with him, was surprised to hear him say to a poor man, who brought a pair of slippers to sell, "Sit down, my honest friend, and take your breakfast; we will bargain about the slippers afterward."' To this Sir John adds, 'The admission of inferiors to their society at meals is not, however, uncommon with men of rank in Persia. It arises out of a sense of the sacred duties of hospitality.' (Sketches of Persia, vol. ii. p. 185.) This explanation illustrates several passages of Scripture besides the present."—*Pict. Bible.*

Verses 22, 23. *The highways and hedges*] Since enough had not been found in the "streets and lanes," the master

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.

commands the servant to go out into the public ways leading out of the city, and even to the enclosures which surrounded and divided the vineyards. Here he would be likely to find travellers—strangers—as well as residents. *Compel them*] That is, *earnestly entreat them*; a mode of speech frequently used to express urgent solicitation. See 1 Sam. xxviii. 23.

Verse 24. *None of these men, &c.*] That is, none of those who had been invited, but neglected to come. This parable seems to have been spoken in reply to the remark contained in the fifteenth verse. In the note on that passage it was observed that the Jews anticipated the possession of much enjoyment under the rule of the Messiah. Jesus, however, insinuates, that notwithstanding these high expectations, no sooner would the Messiah reveal unto them his true character, and proffer them spiritual delights in place of the temporal dignities which they had looked for, than they would either neglect or positively reject his salvation. This idea is still more clearly exhibited in the parable of the "marriage supper;" (Matt. xxii. 2-14,) which was spoken at a later period. Still, though the present discourse specially refers to the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, it is also applicable to the majority of mankind among whom that gospel is preached; for it may be said of the bulk of society, "they make excuse," and under various specious pleas refuse to



25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

accept the invitations of mercy. The "master of the house" doubtless represents God. The "great supper" probably typifies the gospel dispensation, to a participation in the blessings of which the Jews were first invited. They, consequently, are meant by the invited guests. The "servant" may denote the various instrumentalities which the divine Being makes use of in soliciting men's attention to his gracious offers, especially the ministers of his word. The "poor, maimed," &c., are supposed to represent the heathen world, to whom the gospel privileges were transferred after being rejected by the Jewish nation. The command to the servant to go "quickly" exhibits the earnestness with which the Lord seeks to press upon the attention of men the offers of salvation, and intimates the great importance of the offer, and the necessity of its being urged (and, by inference, embraced) speedily. The declaration, "None shall taste," &c., does not mean that all the Jews would deprive themselves of a share in the blessings figured by the "supper," but that all those who perseveringly refused to comply with the invitation would inevitably cut themselves off from the gospel, and ultimately from heaven.

Verse 25. *There went great multitudes with him*] Whether or not this was immediately on leaving the Pharisee's house where he had "eaten bread," we are not informed. From the strictness with which the Jews kept the sabbath, however, it is probable that it was not on that day, but on the day following, as he went up to Jerusalem. *Hate not his father, &c.*] The word "hate" means here an inferior degree of love—that is, to love

26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

these friends *less* than Christ. We are not at liberty to literally *hate* any person, much less our parents, for this would be a direct violation of the fifth commandment, as well as of that precept of universal charity which enjoins us to "love our neighbour as ourself." *His own life*] That is, *himself*. Now as it is impossible that a man should "hate himself," (Eph. v. 29,) it is very clear that our Lord is to be understood comparatively. The sense therefore is, He who does not prefer me to father and mother, &c.,—who will not part with his dearest connections rather than renounce my religion,—"cannot be my disciple;" not having that principle of supreme affection and entire devotedness which God requires of all them that serve him. For instances of this comparative use of the word "hate," see Gen. xxix. 30, 31, where Leah's being "hated" is explained by Rachel's *being loved more than Leah*. Also, Matt. vi. 24.

Verse 27. *Bear his cross*] The leading idea of this expression is, submission to suffering for the truth's sake. The allusion is to the Roman custom of compelling persons condemned to crucifixion to bear to the place of execution the transverse part of the cross on which they were to suffer; in the doing which, much of the ignominy of the punishment consisted. It is not improbable that Jesus here intimates the cruel death which he would undergo. See further in note on Matt. x. 38, p. 253. vol. ii. *And come after me*] To "go after Christ" is not merely to profess to be his follower, but perseveringly to



28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand!

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

yield obedience to his commands, to imitate his moral qualities, and to strive after a conformity to his will. From the fact that these sentiments were addressed by our Lord to "the multitudes who went with him," it may be inferred that many of them were influenced by mistaken views in attaching themselves to his person, and that he thus acquaints them with the terms of discipleship, that they might know what would be required of them.

Verses 28-30. *A tower*] Probably a dwelling-house with turrets. "I find from Arundel's Travels in Asia Minor," observes Bloomfield, "that *purgos* [the word here rendered 'tower'] even yet designates a country house, usually surrounded by gardens and groves." *Counteth the cost*] Carefully estimates the probable expense. It can scarcely be admitted that the kind of "tower" usually erected in vineyards (Matt. xxi. 33) can be referred to, "as the *costliness* implied in calculating its expense indicates a *permanent mansion* of the higher class." *Mock*] Deride, ridicule.

Verses 31-32. *With ten thousand*] Meaning, with the force he has. *To meet*] To overcome. *An ambassage*]

33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Persons whom he has appointed to go to the enemy, and in his name to solicit proposals of peace. By these comparisons Christ counsels men seriously to weigh, before entering on a religious life, the extent and nature of the sacrifices to be made; the trials to be endured; and the duties to be engaged in: so that they may not afterward be discouraged and turned aside, when temptations or afflictions befall them in consequence of their profession. The probable consequences of "following Christ" should be as much a matter of prudent forethought as any other duty or business in which they may engage; and having once determined in favour of a religious course, they should set about it with a fixed purpose to persevere therein to their life's end. Neither should they overlook, when considering the difficulties of the way, that grace—*sufficient grace*—is promised to all who faithfully strive to serve God.

Verses 33-35. *Forsaketh not all*] Is not willing to abandon every thing which makes against becoming the true follower of Christ. *Salt is good*] Is useful, on account of its preserving and seasoning qualities. *Lost his savour*] That is, its *saltiness*, and in consequence become insipid. This it has been known to do. *Neither fit for the land nor the dunghill*] Possibly meaning, that it is neither now fit to enrich the land, nor can be rendered serviceable. *Cast it out*] Throw it away, as utterly worthless.



## LESSON XIX. [Date, A. D. 29.]

*Parables of the lost sheep, lost piece of silver, and prodigal son.*

LUKE XV. 1-32.

THEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

It must not be supposed that in parables every expression or turn of thought is fraught with hidden meaning. Some parts necessarily serve merely as links to connect the leading ideas, and render the illustration consistent and intelligible. Thus, although "salt" which has lost its savour cannot be restored to its former virtue, it must not therefore be inferred that the unfaithful professor, of whom it is emblematic, cannot be reinstated in the possession of God's favour and image; for such a supposition would be contrary to some plain declarations of Scripture. Jer. iii. 12; Hosea xiv. 1-7. The design of the Saviour in using this comparison seems to have been to show, from the possibility of salt losing its saltiness, the necessity of his disciples giving all diligence to secure not only the form, but the power of godliness. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

## NOTES ON LUKE XV. 1-32.

Verse 1. *Publicans and sinners*] "Publicans" means the collectors of taxes; they were a class of persons much despised and abhorred. See note on Luke iii. 12, vol. i. p. 172. Those termed "sinners" were probably the common people, who were frequently so denominated by the Pharisees, because they were not attentive in observing the minute and unprofitable ceremonies to which that sect

2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

were so strongly attached. It is possible, too, that some of them were persons who had been, or still were, notorious for viciousness of life. Be this as it may, they seem to have been deeply interested in the instructions of Christ.

Verse 2. *Murmured*] Were displeased, and made known their dissatisfaction to each other. *Receiveth sinners, and eateth with them*] Admits them to his society and intimacy; regards them with kindness and affection. The Pharisees deemed it objectionable to hold any intercourse with such persons as now surrounded our Lord, and much more so to be familiar with them. Their observation conveys a reflection on Christ, as though his own morality might be justly called in question. They however overlooked the fact, that he mingled with them as the physician does with the diseased, not from choice, but to impart health.

Verses 3, 4. *Unto them*] To those who "murmured." The discourse was doubtless delivered in the hearing of all, though Jesus particularly addressed himself to the objectors. *What man, having a hundred sheep, &c.*] In this and the following parable our Lord vindicates his conduct in associating with those whom the Pharisees deemed vile and disreputable; here by instancing what would be the course of a shepherd from whom a sheep had strayed, and there by referring to the care which people usually evince in searching for a lost piece of property. So He who had come into the world to "seek



5 And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, That likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

and to save that which was lost," was engaged in the proper duties of his office when endeavouring to restore to happiness and safety the wanderer from God. *The wilderness*] The pasture in which they were feeding. *Goeth after*] Goeth in search of.

Verses 5, 6. *He layeth it on his shoulder*] The sheep may be regarded as having suffered injury, and as requiring great tenderness of treatment. "It may have been, as some say it was, a custom with the Jewish shepherds to carry their sheep on their shoulders." *Rejoice with me, &c.*] It is a well-known fact that the recovery of any thing of value and importance which had been supposed lost, affords much greater joy than does the quiet possession of things of equal or even of much greater value. For instance, parents usually rejoice much more on account of the deliverance of a child who has been rescued from imminent peril, than they do in the continued safety of the remainder of the family, though each member may be equally dear to their hearts with the one so unexpectedly recovered.

Verse 7. *Likewise joy shall be in heaven, &c.*] "Likewise" means in like manner; though we cannot suppose the character of the "joy" to be similar. The dispositions and perceptions of the heavenly company must be so far superior to our own, that their "rejoicing" is doubtless of a more refined and holy nature. *One sinner that*

8 Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*?

9 And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10 Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

*repenteth*] Probably meaning, that the angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, as well as at the glorification of a saint. *Ninety-nine just persons, &c.*] The term "just beings," or "just ones," would exhibit the Saviour's thought more clearly than the word "persons," and agree equally well with the original. He did not mean to represent any persons on earth as "not needing repentance;" but that one redeemed sinner is an object of more absorbing interest in heaven, than are multitudes of holy beings who have never been exposed to eternal death.

Verses 8-10. *Ten pieces of silver*] The word rendered "pieces" is drachma, a Grecian silver coin of the same value as the Roman denarius, or "penny;"—that is, about fifteen cents. *Light a candle*] Rather, a lamp or torch, "candles" being unknown to the Jews. The phraseology employed denotes careful, diligent search. *Joy in the presence, &c.*] "In the presence" means among "the angels." The evangelical repentance of the sinner is the occasion of joy to them. What an exhibition is here given of the benevolence of those holy beings; and how immense must be the value of the human soul, if the salvation of *one sinner* can produce such a sensation in heaven! O that men, entertained as just views of these subjects as do the hosts above!

Verse 11. *A certain man had two sons*] The scope



12 And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them *his* living.

and moral of this most affecting parable (which St. Luke alone records) are the same as those of the two former; namely, to justify himself from the calumny of the "Pharisees and scribes," and to illustrate the propriety of his receiving penitent sinners. Dr. Macknight terms this "the most beautiful of all Christ's parables."

Verse 12. *Give me the portion of goods, &c.*] It is questionable whether, among the Jews, sons had a right to demand their portion of inheritance during the father's lifetime, as seems to have been the custom in some parts of the East; but even if they had, it would not affect the present case, as nothing more is here implied than a request, on the part of the younger son, to be put in possession, at once, of such share of the patrimony as he might reasonably expect to receive at a future time. This the father had, of course, a right to grant, if he saw fit so to do, so long as he gave him no more than his share. By the Jewish law, the first-born was entitled to a double portion. *He divided unto them his living*] Rather, "his substance," that is, his property; though doubtless reserving sufficient for his own necessities. Although the text seems to say that the father gave both his sons their portions, it is quite clear from what follows that the elder son did not receive his in the same manner as his younger brother. It is therefore probable that there was a formal division, but that it had no further object than to ascertain the proportions to which each was entitled, so that after the claim of the younger had been discharged, the remainder should become the portion—not subject to any further

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

deduction—which would form the future inheritance of the elder son, on the death of his father.

Verse 13. *Gathered all together*] Collected his property; and by disposing of such as he could not take with him, converted the whole of it into money. *A far country*] Far from home. *Wasted his substance*] Dissipated his property, as the wind scatters chaff. *Riotous living*] Living without saving any thing. He expended all that his father had given him, and that, too, among the most dissolute companions. These expressions are designed to represent the great moral distance at which the sinner lives from God, and the evils into which he falls in consequence thereof.

Verses 14, 15. *A mighty famine*] A great scarcity of the means of subsistence. In the East it would seem that famines were of frequent occurrence, notwithstanding the general fertility of the soil. See Gen. xii. 10; xxvi. 1; Ruth i. 1; 2 Sam. xxi. 1, and elsewhere. This was partly the result of imperfect cultivation, but more generally of the failure of due supplies of rain. In most of the countries mentioned in the Bible the rains were periodical—denominated the former and the latter rains, not, as with us, frequent and irregular showers; the earlier rains fell about seed-time, the other a little while previous to harvest. *Went and joined himself, &c.*] Hired himself as a servant, driven so to do by his pressing necessities. *Sent him to feed swine*] An employment considered by



16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him.

all the ancient nations as among the vilest and most ignoble. This circumstance could not fail to impress the auditors with a deep sense of the extreme degradation into which the prodigal had fallen.

Verse 16. *He would fain, &c.*] "Fain" means *gladly*; he would have been glad to appease his hunger with the swine's food. He desired to do it. *The husks, &c.*] The learned are now generally agreed that by "husks" here is meant the fruit of the carob-tree. This tree is quite common in Syria, in southern Europe, and in northern Africa. It is of a middle size, with large pinnate leaves; (that is, the leaves grow on each side of the stalk, opposite to each other, as in the rose;) the fruit is said to be both pleasant and nutritious. The tree belongs to the leguminous family, (same as the pea and bean,) and produces flat brown pods, about six or eight inches in length, slightly curved, whence, probably, its Greek name, (*keratia*), which signifies *a horn*. The pod contains (besides the seed, which somewhat resembles a small bean, and seems to be worthless, save as seed) a soft, juicy substance, which, on being pressed, yields a considerable quantity of sweet liquid, which is much used for preserving fruit. The Mussulmans mix it with liquorice root, dry grapes, and other fruit, and thus make a pleasant, cooling drink, called sherbet. A specimen of this fruit was lately received from the Mediterranean by Rev. Dr. Cox of Brooklyn, N. Y., (see Biblical Repository for June, 1840,) in describing which he says: "The taste of the pod is poor, but not entirely disagreeable; being sweetish, somewhat nutritious, even in its dry state, and probably much more palatable and proper for food in its earlier

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

state." *No man gave unto him*] That is, no man gave him *ought to eat*—meaning, ought additional to the portion allotted him by his master. It is not clear whether our Lord is to be understood as saying that "no man gave him husks,"—that is, gave him permission so to eat of them as to satisfy his hunger, or, that "no man gave him" a sufficiency of other and more suitable food. The former opinion seems most likely, for as this was a time of scarcity, it is probable that no more "husks" were allowed to the swine than were absolutely necessary, leaving them to pick the residue of their food in "the field," and consequently he was not at liberty to use their food. No language can more strikingly show the evil of his condition, or exhibit more clearly the deep degradation, pollution, and wretchedness induced by a course of sin.

Verse 17. *When he came to himself*] This is a very emphatic expression. It is commonly used of those who revive from a fainting fit, or who recover the right use of their mind after a season of insanity. Now as neither one who has fainted nor a person who is deranged can be sensible of the miseries of his situation, however afflictive and desperate it may be, so this prodigal is represented as being hitherto insensible of the condition to which his extravagance and folly had brought him. Thus it is with men living in neglect of religion; they "think themselves to have need of nothing," until convinced by the Holy Ghost that they are spiritually "poor, and blind, and naked, and have need of all things." He now began to *reflect* on his sad estate: how many have been led, "in the day of adversity," to "consider their ways!"



18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

Verses 18, 19. *I will arise*] This, among the Jews, was a frequent mode of expressing a determination to engage heartily and at once in any business. 1 Chron. xxii. 16; Acts xxii. 16. He was resolved to return at once. *And go to my father*] That father whose kindness he had so greatly abused. So with the penitent sinner; no sooner does he truly sorrow over the evil of his doings, than he desires to return to God; and though, when he contemplates the peculiar enormity of *his* sins, his heart almost sinks within him, yet, as the circumstances of his case admit no other relief, he resolves to venture, perhaps inwardly saying,

“I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try;  
For if I stay away, I know  
I must for ever die.”

*And will say, &c.*] He designed an open and honest confession, fully sensible how faulty his conduct had been. *Against heaven*] The word “heaven” is here put for *God*—a common habit with the Jews, to avoid the too frequent repetition of the sacred Name. *And before thee*] “Before” thee means *against* thee. The import of the sentence is, “I have sinned alike against God and thee.” *Make me as thy servants*] Regard and treat me as a servant, “for I am not *worthy*”—that is, not *deserving*—of being admitted into the family and treated as a son, on account of my misconduct. This evidenced deep humility, a never-failing accompaniment of true penitence.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

Verse 20. *He arose, &c.*] He was no sooner resolved than he began to execute. “Delays are dangerous.” *A real way off*] While he was yet at a considerable distance from the house, though advancing, perhaps slowly, toward it, with mingled emotions of shame, hope, and fear. *His father saw him, &c.*] This whole description is exceedingly tender and pathetic. The prodigal’s return to the home of his youth, clad in tatters, and enfeebled by want—the father, first, perhaps, casting a casual glance at the miserable object approaching him, and then taking a more earnest and searching look, as memory recalled the image of his absent son, and suggested some real or fancied resemblance—the full conviction that *this* was indeed his beloved and long mourned-for child, together with the gush of deep paternal feeling, obliterating all remembrance of ingratitude and disobedience, and filling his whole soul with the one idea *that his boy was restored to his embrace*—it is beautiful! *Ran*] This is strikingly opposed to the hesitation with which the prodigal may be supposed to have approached, and greatly heightens the effect of the picture. *Fell on his neck*] Probably threw his arms around him, and rested his head on, or rather over, his son’s shoulder. *Kissed him*] It is said that the original implies he kissed him *again and again*, thus manifesting both his tender affection, and the welcome with which he received him. The passage touchingly exhibits the willingness of God to forgive and receive into favour the penitent, believing transgressor. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” Psa. ciii. 13.



21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

Verse 21. *I have sinned, &c.*] The prodigal commences the confession he had meditated, notwithstanding he had received the embrace of forgiveness; yet he does not finish his intended speech; being, we may suppose, interrupted by his father, whose tenderness of heart prompts him to cut short the tale of contrition and self-reproach. It is probable, however, that the father perceived what he was about to say.

Verse 22. *The best robe*] Probably denoting some particular garment which was used only on birth-day or other high festal occasions, the wearing of which was a mark of honour. It was, perhaps, the outside garment, and in appearance somewhat resembled a cloak. *A ring on his hand*] Presenting with a "ring" has in all ages been considered a mark of special favour, and is significant, in some instances, of appointment to office. Gen. xli. 42; Esther viii. 2. Rings seem, too, to have been worn by the wealthy as an evidence of worldly respectability. James ii. 2. *And shoes*] Or sandals. It is supposed that servants were not permitted to wear "shoes," or sandals. Compare Isa. xx. 3, with 2 Chron. xxviii. 15. If so, then the command to "put shoes on his feet" would be equivalent to a declaration that he was not to be treated as a menial, but as a son. "The articles called for," observes Bloomfield, "are such whose use denoted freedom and dignity." "The meaning of all these images

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let it eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

is the same, that God will treat with kindness and affection those who return to him."—*Barnes*.

Verses 23, 24. *The fatted calf*] "Such as we may suppose most opulent rustic families would be usually provided with, for any extraordinary call on their hospitality. Veal was by the ancients reckoned a delicacy." *Merry*] The word *joyful* better expresses the import of the original: "indeed, this," observes Mr. Wesley, "was the ordinary meaning of the word [merry] when our translation was made." *This my son was dead*] This expression must be taken in a metaphorical sense, of moral death, and coming to life again by repentance; a sense often occurring in Scripture.

Verses 25–28. *Music and dancing*] These were usual accompaniments on festive occasions among the Jews as well as with the Easterns generally, as appears from Jer. xxxi. 4, and the proverbial saying recorded Matthew xi. 17. "It would appear that a party of musicians and dancers had been hired to enliven the entertainment. This is still the custom of the East. The guests and members of the family are spectators and auditors merely, and do



29 And he answering, said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

not themselves dance or play on the instruments. In oriental towns there are large numbers of musicians and dancers who derive their subsistence from their performances on such occasions. The musicians are men, and the dancers females."—*Pict. Bible. What these things meant*] What was meant by the sounds of rejoicing and gladness he heard.

Verses 29, 30. *Would not go in*] This conduct was certainly very wrong. *These many years, &c.*] The meaning is, *I have been and am still serving thee. Neither transgressed I, &c.*] A severe reflection both on the undutiful conduct of his brother, and on that of his father in receiving him with so much kindness. *Never gavest me a kid*] A "kid" is a young goat, and is a much less valuable animal than a calf. The elder son here complains that the father manifests more attachment to the younger son than to him; for that notwithstanding his dutiful behaviour and faithful service, the father had never made an entertainment on *his* account: but no sooner does the spendthrift return, even though in a beggared condition, than he orders a great feast, and kills the "fatted calf" in token of his gladness. *This thy son*] His anger will not permit him to call him brother. The original is very strong—*This son of thine!* how contemptuous and reproachful!

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Verses 31, 32. *Son, thou art ever with me, &c.*] In this reply the father seems to remind his offended son that there was a great difference between his case and that of his brother. *He* had always been at home, and there had occurred no occasion for any such manifestation of special joy; and, besides, he was heir to, and now enjoying, jointly with himself, the whole estate. He had not, then, been neglected, but had been continually honoured, and had no cause for complaint. And furthermore, that in view of the sad circumstances from which his brother had been rescued, there was strict propriety in the demonstrations of joy which had been made to greet his return. Thus, in applying the parable, even if the Pharisees (who are presumed to be represented by the older son) had been the obedient and righteous persons they professed to be, (but which they were not,) they could not be justified for indulging the spirit they had exhibited toward the "publicans and sinners," who may be symbolized by the prodigal.



## LESSON XX. [Date, A. D. 29.]

*Parable of the unjust steward—Christ reproves the Pharisees.*

LUKE xvi. 1-17.

AND he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

## NOTES ON LUKE xvi. 1-17.

Verse 1. *His disciples*] It would seem that this parable was delivered on the same occasion as the three immediately preceding, and that as *they* were addressed particularly to the "Pharisees and scribes," so this was directed more especially to the "publicans and sinners" who had so eagerly crowded around Jesus "for to hear him." Chap. xv. 1. It is not improbable that it was in consequence of their thus thronging to hear Christ's instructions that they are termed "disciples," that word denoting a *scholar* as well as *follower*. As before remarked, it is presumable that the discourse was delivered in the hearing of all assembled, though addressed to but a portion of the company. Now as the publicans had much to do with money, and many of them were wealthy persons, it is probable that our blessed Lord narrated this story to encourage them to an upright discharge of their monetary affairs, and to a proper use of their riches. Still the parable is capable of a far more general interpretation, and may not be unjustly regarded as instructing all men to make a right use of the temporal blessings with which they are favoured, that thus their present happiness and future felicity may be alike promoted. *A steward*] The word rendered "steward" comes from two Greek words

2 And he called him, and said unto him, *How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward.*

3 Then the steward said within himself, *What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.*

which signify to minister to the house or family—that is, one who superintends the domestic concerns. The office was a very important one in wealthy families of the East, as the steward had authority over the other servants, and the general management of affairs; (see the case of Joseph, recorded Gen. xxxix. 4-6, and Luke xii. 42;) and might, therefore, waste and embezzle property to a considerable amount. The situation was sometimes held by a slave of approved fidelity, but more generally, it is said, by a freedman—that is, one who had been a slave, but who had had freedom given him as a reward for his good conduct. *Accused*] Complained of—a charge preferred against him.

Verse 2. *How is it, &c.*] A phrase importing expostulation and displeasure. *Account of thy stewardship*] A statement of what he had received, what he had paid out, and of his general conduct as steward. *Mayest be no longer steward*] That is, unless he could give a satisfactory explanation of his doings.

Verse 3. *Said within himself*] Reasoned or thought. *What shall I do*] That is, to procure the means of living. *For my lord, &c.*] "For," here, has the sense of *because* or *since*; and conveys an intimation that the steward was conscious he could not give such an account of his doings as would be satisfactory to his lord. "Lord" means master or employer. *I cannot dig*] Meaning, probably, that he could not stoop to so *low* a business. Bloomfield



4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

and some others, however, suggest the sense to be, "I have not strength to work as a day labourer," of which occupation "digging," as being the most laborious and servile, is put, a part for the whole. *To beg I am ashamed!* "But not," says Mr. Wesley, "ashamed to cheat! This was likewise a sense of honour!

"By men call'd honour, but by angels, pride!"\*

Verse 4. *I am resolved, &c.*] After having considered many plans which occurred to him of providing subsistence for the future, he at length resolved what to do—

\* A rather ludicrous misquotation of the above text was once made by a worthy but destitute young Frenchman. In his distress it occurred to him to address a note to the late Bishop Hobart, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, informing him of his situation, and imploring relief. "One Sunday morning, about the hour of service," says the bishop's biographer, "a note was handed him in the vestry room, from a penniless young Frenchman, soliciting aid, in phrase whose meaning was clearer than its language. 'I shall not dig,' said the applicant, 'I must not beg, I am not able to starve.' But it was language which the heart understood." The request was promptly complied with, and the event proved that the favour was worthily conferred, for in about a year afterward the amount "was returned to Mr. Hobart, with a letter of thanks, stating that the loan had saved the writer from despair; had given him heart and means to offer himself as a teacher of drawing, the profits of which now enabled him to return the sum lent, (ten dollars,) with a thousand thanks and a hearty blessing."—M'VICKAR'S *Professional Years of Bishop Hobart*. Was not this act of the bishop a compliance with the direction contained in the ninth verse?

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

namely, to lay his lord's debtors under obligation to him. *That they may receive me, &c.*] The word "they" refers to those persons whose good offices he designed to secure by befriending them in the way above hinted at; and by his being "received into their houses" is meant, supported by them. See a similar phrase John xix. 27.

Verse 5. *He called every one of his lord's debtors, &c.*] "Debtors" are persons who owe something to others. It is supposed that the persons here spoken of were *tenants*, and that they paid their rents, as is usual in the East, in *produce* instead of money. Some Jewish writers state that one-fourth, one-third, and in some cases even one-half the produce raised was paid as rent. As a steward frequently had the entire management of his master's affairs, he not only provided food for the family, but attended to the sale or lease of property, collection of dues, &c. It was on this well-known principle that the steward "called his lord's debtors together," the time for making their usual payments having probably arrived.

Verse 6. *A hundred measures of oil*] The "oil" meant is olive, or, as we commonly call it, sweet oil, of which great quantities were made in Palestine, not only for home consumption, but for exportation. 1 Kings v. 11; Ezek. xxvii. 17; Hosea xii. 1. It was obtained by pressing the berry in a machine which seems to have been worked by treading, (Mic. vi. 15,) or otherwise bruising it: and sometimes a thousand pounds of oil were obtained from



7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou! And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

one tree. The olive oil was used with food, for burning in lamps, and for anointing. The word rendered "measures" is in the original *bath*, which is said to have contained about seven and a half gallons. It was equal to the ephah. The whole quantity was therefore about seven hundred and fifty gallons. *Take thy bill, &c.*] The word translated "bill" probably means the bond or agreement specifying the conditions on which the tenant should hold the oliveyard. It is suggested that this document was in the hand-writing of the tenant, and was signed by the steward as the representative of the landlord. The direction to the first debtor to "take his bill, sit down, and write fifty," can scarcely be understood as a proposal to alter the original bill or contract, but as an order to draw up a new one. It would thus appear that the steward sought the good-will of the tenants not only by lowering the existing claim for the current year, but by granting to each a new contract, under which they were thenceforward to pay much less than they had previously done. Now this alteration of the contract was doubtless designed to be of continuous advantage to the tenants, and would entitle the steward, in his own estimation, to a proportionate degree of gratitude and service: while, by its being newly written, he perchance hoped to escape detection. Be that as it may, it is presumable both parties knew that the agreement, being signed by a duly authorized person, would be binding on the proprietor until the period to which it extended, if any particular term were designated, should expire.

Verse 7 *A hundred measures of wheat*] Dr. A. Clarke

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

says the word here rendered "measures" is derived from the Hebrew *cor*, a measure equivalent to the *homer*, and containing, according to Dr. Arbuthnot, about seventy gallons five pints English. It was, therefore, ten times as large as the "measure" referred to in the preceding verse. This man's rent, then, would amount to about seven thousand five hundred and sixty-two gallons of wheat. *Fourscore*] Eighty. He therefore reduced the rent a quarter. These two cases are cited as examples of what was said to all the debtors.

Verse 8. *The lord commended the unjust steward*] The "lord" here referred to is *not* our blessed Saviour, but the master of the steward. He "commended," or *praised*, the *shrewdness* of his servant, not his dishonest act, as is clear from the fact that the text explicitly refers the commendation to this point—"he had acted wisely," meaning, "wisely" for his own present interest, the plan he had adopted being well calculated to secure the end for which it was devised and executed. So people sometimes admire the skill and cunning which are occasionally displayed in the thefts and other dishonest practices of men, though they never laud the project which called this manifestation of sagacity into being. It is very clear that Jesus did not commend the steward, as he brands him with the epithet of "unjust," or dishonest. *For the children of this world, &c.*] This is the reflection of our Lord, not the language of the steward's master. By "the children of this world" are meant the unregenerate generally, and especially those of them whose minds and hearts—whose thoughts and affections—are fixed on



9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

the pursuit of earthly good: persons who live for this world only. The "children of light" are those whose minds are illuminated from above, and whose hearts are under the influence of the divine Spirit. They are called "children of light" because they have attained a knowledge of spiritual things. The word "generation," which frequently means *persons of that age*, or the people then living, and persons of a particular *race*, is supposed by Doddridge, Holden, and others, to refer here to the manner in which the two classes spoken of conduct their respective affairs. For a similar use of the word see Gen. vi. 9; xxxvii. 2; Isa. liii. 8. Jesus is not, therefore, to be understood to say that the choice of "the children of this world" is really a wiser one than that of "the children of light," which it certainly is not; but that they very generally display greater prudence and forethought, and act with more efficiency, in securing the accomplishment of their worldly projects, than the pious do in securing "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Our Lord thus takes occasion, from the conduct of the unjust steward, to hold up the prudent management of worldly-minded men as an example worthy the attention of his followers in their spiritual affairs.

Verse 9. *Make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*] "Mammon" means *wealth*, "it being the Syriac word for riches." "Unrighteousness," in this place, probably signifies *deceitful*, a sense in which the word is sometimes used. See John vii. 18. It certainly does not mean riches obtained by injustice. Worldly riches

may well be termed deceitful, inasmuch as, though they promise much happiness to their possessor, they rarely fulfil his expectations: perhaps *never*, if his heart be *set* on them. To "make friends of" riches is to employ them in acts of beneficence and love. To do this, however, they must not be permitted to entangle us in unnecessary cares and perplexities, dangerous to the soul, by stealing the affections from God; but be used in aiding the poor, spreading the gospel, and benefiting our race in every possible way: and all this, too, to please God. 1 Tim. vi. 17-19. *That when ye fail*] Meaning, when you die: or, to speak more in accordance with the language of the parable, when discharged from the "stewardship" with which God has intrusted you, and called on to give up your account. *They may receive you*] The word "they" seems to refer to the various benevolent acts by which the "deceitful riches" had been converted into so many "friends." By a beautiful and striking figure, the various acts of charity and love which had been performed are represented as so many "friends" pleading for the admission of the donor into the regions of bliss. And doubtless the great Being will have in remembrance and reward the good deeds of men, if performed from proper motives. Some commentators, however, understand the phrase, "that they may receive you," to be an idiom of the language, implying, "that ye may be received." Others understand by it the "friend." *Into everlasting habitations*] The whole of this is spoken in allusion to the conduct of the "unjust steward." *He*, to secure "friends" who should provide for him during his natural life merely, made a prudent, though dishonest use of the power with which he was intrusted: but those who as prudently and efficiently use the means with which



10 He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

they are favoured of securing an inheritance on high, shall be received, not into temporary habitations, but into the eternal mansion of unending felicity in the world of spirits. 2 Cor. v. 1.

Verses 10-12. *Faithful in that which is least, &c.*]

This is a proverbial saying, and must therefore be understood of what generally, though perhaps not always, happens. To be "faithful," in the sense here spoken of, is to make the best use of that which is intrusted to our care. By "that which is least," is meant in *small matters*; and in *much* denotes in more important concerns. *He that is unjust, &c.*] "Unjust" is the opposite of "faithful," and therefore means *not trustworthy*—the not making a good use of the things committed to us. *If not faithful in the unrighteous mammon*] As the phrase, "unrighteous mammon," is here opposed to "the true riches," it must mean *false, deceitful*, as stated in note on verse 9: and not being "faithful" in its use as clearly imports, not using it properly, or according to the will of its real owner. *Who will commit*] That is, *no one will*. God will not. *The true riches*] The favour of God, and admission to the mansions of eternal bliss. Spiritual enjoyments never betray the expectations of their possessor. *Another man's*] Rather, *another's*: the word "man's" is not in the original, and is manifestly

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

improper, as the riches spoken of belong to the Most High, not to man. Worldly riches are said to be "another's," because, in strict language, "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" and when he intrusts more or less of it to any person, it is as his steward; hence the individual is under obligation to use it as he has directed. *That which is your own*] Meaning the riches of an eternal inheritance in heaven, which is called "our own," because, 1st. The possession of it is secured to us on certain conditions; 2d. It will be wholly our own, and not to be shared with others. The import of verses 9-12 thus appears to be, that as, among men, servants who are faithful in smaller things are usually so in matters of greater moment, and therefore may safely be intrusted with them; while those who are careless or fraudulent in lesser things are apt to be so if intrusted with more important affairs, and therefore they ought not to be confided to them; so, unless an individual be faithful and conscientious in properly using the temporal blessings with which he is favoured, he has no right to expect to be enriched with heavenly blessings.

Verse 13. *No servant can serve two masters*] That is, cannot serve them with equal devotion or acceptance, if, as is implied, (see close of verse,) the "two masters" are of such opposite views and characters that the requirements of the one would be contrary to and destroy those of the other, and what is pleasing to the one would be offensive to the other. *Hate the one*] Not absolutely, but, comparatively: he will love one *less* than the other



14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things; and they derided him.

*Hold to—despise*] Bloomfield remarks that the word rendered "hold to" is a stronger term than the one translated "love," as denoting close connection and strict attachment. "Despise" means *lightly esteem*, that is, as compared with his "strict attachment" to the other master. *Ye cannot serve, &c.*] To "serve" mammon is to yield up the thoughts and affections to the love of riches, so that it shall become a master passion of the soul. This is incompatible with the service which is due to God, because he requires the heart to be fixed supremely on him; but the love of God and love of the world cannot dwell together, because they are contrary one to the other. This whole parable is designed to show, 1st. That men ought to act with as much prudence and foresight in securing the salvation of their souls as they usually do in promoting their temporal happiness; 2d. The advantage of using worldly goods in conformity to the will of God, and consequently to his glory; 3d. That unless men do so, they have no reason to calculate on being admitted to the paradise of God.

Verse 14. *The Pharisees*] These were the Pharisees mentioned Luke xv. 2, to whom Christ had addressed the parable of the lost sheep, &c. *Who were covetous*] To be "covetous" is unduly to desire any thing. Thus the man who eagerly desires fame, is said to be covetous of fame. The word is more generally applied, however, to the undue love of money. That this was really the character of many of the Pharisees clearly appears from Matt. xxiii. 14, 25, where they are said to "devour widows' houses," or substance, and to be "full of extortion." *They derided him*] "They sneered at him."

15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Critics say the original means, *to turn up the nose*; a metaphor strongly expressive of contempt or derision. This they did to show how lightly they esteemed his doctrine that men should be beneficent with their property, and that, unless they were so, God's blessing would not rest on them.

Verse 15. *Ye—justify yourselves before men*] Probably meaning that they assumed a character for virtue and goodness not really belonging to them; they were careful to *appear* just or righteous before men, by paying strict attention to the ceremonials of religion, though without at all regarding the state of the heart. Their piety was all outside. God, however, "knew their hearts;" therefore their hypocritical pretensions could avail them nothing in the day of final reckoning. *That which is highly esteemed, &c.*] Meaning, possibly, that for which they were "highly esteemed among" or by "men"—zeal for and attention to the observances of the Jewish religion. *Is abomination in the sight of God*] Is perfectly detestable to him. A sincere, consistent attachment to the forms of devotion is doubtless pleasing to the Most High, when accompanied by holy desires and affections; but when attention to forms is assumed as a cloak for impure desires and corrupt practices, it is very repugnant to his nature. The word rendered "abomination" is frequently used to express the Almighty's hatred of idol worship. The wicked conduct of these Pharisees must have been very offensive to God,



16 The law and the prophets *were* until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

since the strongest language is used to express the abhorrence with which he regarded it.

Verse 16. *The law and the prophets were until John, &c.*] The Jews popularly designated the Old Testament Scriptures by the appellation, "the law and the prophets;" (Matt. xxii. 40; Rom. iii. 21; ) the first five books being included in "the law," and the residue classed as "the prophets." By the declaration that these "were until John," is probably meant, that all their precepts were obligatory on the nation until the ministry of John, at which time the Mosaic dispensation was virtually abolished. "The old dispensation," says Mr. Wesley, "expired in John." That the ceremonial law is, however, all that can be conceived to be superseded by the "preaching of the kingdom of God," or the gospel, is evident, not only from the expression in the seventeenth verse, but also from the fact that the moral law is necessarily of perpetual obligation, being founded on the immutable principles of the divine nature. *Every man presseth into it*] These words seem to denote the eagerness with which many of the common people flocked to receive Christ's instructions. If so, it follows that notwithstanding the impediments thrown in the way of his success by the Pharisees and scribes, and the formidable objections which must have arisen in the minds of his converts from the power of national prejudices, many of the people were bent on overcoming the difficulties which opposed them, and on pressing their way into the kingdom of grace.

Verse 17. *It is easier, &c.*] This is, apparently, spo

## LESSON XXI. [Date, A. D. 29.]

*Christ answers a question respecting divorce—He blesses little children.*—MATT. xix. 3-15; MARK x. 2-16; LUKE xvi. 18; xviii. 15-17.

MATT. xix. 3-15.

THE Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

of the stability and perpetuity of the moral law as opposed to the ceremonial. See note on Matt. v. 18, pp. 22, 23, vol. ii.

## NOTES ON MATT. xix. 3-15.

Verse 3. *The Pharisees came—tempting him*] It is supposed by some expositors that the question these "Pharisees" came to propound to Christ grew out of the declaration made by him as recorded Luke xvi. 16, 17, (noticed at the close of the last lesson,) that in certain particulars the gospel had superseded the "law and the prophets," though in some other particulars it were "easier that heaven and earth should pass away, than one jot or tittle of the law fail." On hearing this statement, the Pharisees put the question in the text, *apparently* under cover of a desire to know how the law of marriage was now to be construed, though in fact from an insidious motive—probably concluding that his answer would be in opposition to the Mosaic law, as interpreted by the more popular teachers, and so bring him into disrepute with the people, to most of whom the almost unrestrained liberty of divorce which, according to those teachers, this law allowed, was very acceptable. "Temp



ing him" here means, presenting to him an insnaring question, so as to draw him into difficulty. *Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?!* To "put away" one's wife is to separate from her—no longer to live with her. It is usual to call such an act a *divorce*. Is "it lawful" means, is it according to law to do this! "For every cause" means, for *any cause*, however trifling. The pith of the question lies in the words, "for every cause." The greater part of the Jewish teachers, adopting the opinions of a distinguished rabbi named Hillel, contended that it was lawful for a husband to divorce his wife for the most trifling matters: such as, the not pleasing him in dressing or cooking his food; or, which was still worse, "if he saw any woman he liked better." Josephus states that he put away his wife, although the mother of three children, because he was not pleased with her behaviour.—(*Life of Josephus*, p. 22, Balt. edit.) Other teachers, on the contrary, embraced the stricter views of another eminent man named Shammai, that nothing could justify divorce but unfaithfulness. Without then deciding the question, our Lord inquired, as shown by Mark, (x. 3,) "what Moses had commanded;" to which they replied that he "suffered," or permitted, "to write a bill of divorcement and to put her away." From this reply it is plain that the questioners had embraced the looser theory, since they give, not the law, but their interpretation of it. The passage referred to is Deut. xxiv. 1, where permission to divorce a wife, under certain circumstances, is granted to the husband on his giving her a certificate, stating that he no longer acknowledges the woman to be his wife. From the comment which Jesus made on Moses' law, (Mark x. 5,) "For the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this precept," it is

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning, made them male and female;

inferred that the permission to divorce was granted as a *matter of expediency*, not of moral right, and that because the people were not in a state to receive a stricter and more righteous regulation at that time. Hence it follows that the requirements of God are more or less strict according to the state and opportunities of those for whom they are designed. This thought should lead us to act very circumspectly, because we have a much clearer knowledge of the divine will than have many. See further in note on Matt. v. 31, 32, pp. 32, 33, vol. ii., and below, on verse seven.

Verse 4. *Have ye not read*] Namely, in the book of Genesis: thus referring the question to the acknowledged sacred writers for decision. By so doing our Lord not only frustrated the cunning malice of the Pharisees who sought to embroil him with one or other of the conflicting parties, but also brought out that *older law* which had been promulgated at the creation: and it was, probably, for these reasons that he did it. *At the beginning*] That is, at the first creation of the human species. Mark x. 6. *Made them male and female*] Meaning, one of each sex, thus plainly intimating the intention of God, that people should marry in pairs. This view is further strongly corroborated by the fact that the numbers of male and female births in the world are very nearly equal, (there being a small surplusage of male children born, possibly to balance the greater number of violent deaths among the male sex) an evident token of providential care and arrangement, and of the will of God in the matter. *And said, For this cause, &c.*] Namely, that



5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh

the woman had been "taken out of the man:" a circumstance which strikingly symbolized the *oneness* of the marriage relation. See the original law, Gen. ii. 23, 24. *Leave father and mother*] That is, rather than forsake his wife. The relationship contracted by marriage is of a closer and more endearing nature than that of parent and child, and therefore the duties it imposes are to be faithfully discharged, though by so doing a man may be obliged to neglect his parents. *Shall cleave to his wife*] The original word, rendered "cleave," denotes a union of the closest and most intimate kind, being a metaphor denoting the *firmest adhesion*—an inseparable connection. *They twain shall be one flesh*] "Twain" is an obsolete word meaning *two*. It does not occur in Gen. ii. 24, though it is understood. The number "two" is also specified in Eph. v. 30, in the same connection as here. By their being "one flesh," or *body*, as some say the word would be better rendered, is meant, united as one—one in law, feeling, interest, and affection. They shall no longer have separate interests, but shall act in all things *as if* they were one—animated by one soul and one wish. The words here attributed by Christ to the Almighty Creator were, in truth, spoken by Adam. He, however, as certainly uttered them by the spirit of prophecy, thus announcing a law for his descendants, as is clear from the fact that he had himself no "father and mother" to leave. They are, therefore, correctly ascribed to God, inasmuch as he inspired them.

Verse 6. *What God hath joined*] Or *yoked*, as the

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

original signifies; the phrase being metaphorically adopted from the yoking of oxen. "It was adopted, probably, from the important moral which it suggests: first, that in forming marriages there should be mutual fitness between the parties; 'be not unequally yoked:' second, as to their future conduct, that they should both pull one way, and take their common share in the cares of life, as 'helps meet for each other.' In illustration of this, it was a part of the marriage ceremony in some ancient nations to put a yoke upon the necks of the newly married couple." —*Watson*. "God hath joined" means, what he hath willed should so be joined—namely, one husband to one wife. *Let not man put asunder*] To "put asunder" is to *separate*. This law of marriage no man is at liberty to break, and no legislative, or other body, has the rightful power to modify or alter. Marriage is a sacred, not a mere civil institution; and whatever civil regulations are enacted concerning it, they ought not to—they cannot, consistently with validity—do away the obligations or restrictions with which the Most High has sanctioned it.

Verse 7. *Why did Moses then command, &c.*] Moses did not "command" them to divorce their wives; he only *permitted* this, and commanded that when it was done "a writing of divorcement" should be given them. These Pharisees object to our Lord's argument, that Moses had sanctioned divorces, and that consequently they could not be wrong. To this Jesus replies *by* repeating the declaration already made, that though Moses had



8 He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

permitted this to be done, it was not because the thing was *right*, but to avoid the occurrence of greater evils; at the same time referring them to the original law as evidence of the true will of God in the case. This reply furnishes a complete refutation of the notion that the law did really justify such trivial grounds of divorce—it merely tolerated them. It will be observed, however, that Jesus does not *deny* that Moses' law did allow the unloosing of the marriage ties for "every cause;" he only *accounts* for its enactment. How long this lax state of morals had existed among the Israelites prior to the exodus from Egypt, we have no means of positively ascertaining; though it is presumable that it had been introduced during their residence in that country. Certainly the people were strongly wedded to freedom of divorce at the time the law was given, or the Almighty would not have inspired Moses to enact a rule merely *regulating* the practice; he would have abolished it. By the "hardness of heart" here spoken of is probably meant the tyrannical, unyielding, unforgiving spirit of the men, which might have prompted them to acts of great severity toward those wives who fell under their displeasure, had they not been permitted to put them away and take others in their stead. It is evident from this that the Mosaic law was not a perfect and perpetual one, but only temporary, in some respects accommodated to the times and circumstances of the Israelites, and to be enlarged and perfected by the Christian dispensation. The word "your" refers to the people of Moses' time, not to those of the Saviour's.

Verse 9. *I say unto you, &c.*] Emphasis should be

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be for* fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

laid on the pronoun I—"I say." Jesus here, in the character of supreme legislator of his church, restores the law of marriage to its original purity and force. He authoritatively decides that nothing short of adultery warranted divorce; and that if a wife were put away for other cause, and married again during the lifetime of her former husband, (which by the Mosaic law she was permitted to do, Deut. xxiv. 2,) she committed adultery, as also did he who married her and (Mark x. 11) he who had put her away, if he married again during her lifetime. Mark represents our Lord as adding, that "if a woman should put away her husband," &c., she would be equally criminal with the man who should separate from his wife. (Mark x. 12.) This was contrary to the national custom: for with the Jews no woman was allowed to have the right of withdrawing from her husband. The Roman ladies, however, claimed this privilege, and very frequently availed themselves of it: and it appears from history that after the Jews became subject to the Roman power, some females of the higher ranks imitated this custom of their conquerors. Salome, sister of Herod the Great, seems to have furnished the first instance of departure from the ancient submissiveness of her countrywomen in this particular, by divorcing her husband Castobarus: the noted Herodias is another example, in the same family. It was, probably, in view of these public and well-known cases that our Lord spake thus. St. Mark (x. 10) states that the declaration in this verse was made in the house to the disciples; which may be reconciled to



10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.

St. Matthew's account, by supposing that it was first made to the Pharisees, as St. Matthew relates, and afterward to the disciples when Jesus and themselves were sitting in the house together; and this is implied by St. Mark, who says, "his disciples asked him again of the same matter." It is not known whose "house" this was. Our Lord seems to have been still in Perea, journeying toward Jerusalem.

Verse 10. *His disciples say*] Namely, after they had gone "into the house." *It is not good to marry*] "Not good," here, means *not expedient*; it is better to live unmarried than be thus bound. It is not surprising that the disciples should thus express themselves on hearing their Master's exposition of the law, for they were educated amid all the prejudices of their nation in this particular, and had probably been more or less conversant with these changes from their earliest years. And the thought that they must remain bound to a wife, whatever might be her disposition or habits, (criminality alone excepted,) appeared to them a most galling and unreasonable requirement. They were, however, greatly mistaken in supposing that facility of divorce was the surest remedy for the evils sometimes—perhaps, with them, frequently—accompanying the connubial estate. "It is," says Mr. Watson, "the very permanence of the relation which usually calls forth prudence in forming the connection; and the idea of indissolubility has a powerful effect in bringing the parties to make the best of their lot, even when they are not the most fitly married, and often effects a salutary accommodation. Besides, our Lord must be considered as having respect to the spirit and influence

11 But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given.

12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

of his own religion, in bringing in again the original law of marriage in all its force. That 'hardness of heart' which the early Jews appear to have been remarkable for could have no place where a religion of perfect benevolence was received, and where women were to have great honour and consideration, as they have had from its very commencement. For such a religion, which softens the character of man and exalts that of woman; which places them in equal relations to God, as 'heirs together of the grace of life;' which sanctifies marriage by mutual prayer;—the original law had an admirable adaptation."

Verse 11. *All men cannot receive this saying*] Meaning, that all are not prepared to practise the opinion of the disciples, that it is better "not to marry" than to be indissolubly joined to one woman. With the great mass of mankind the marriage relation grows out of the principles and propensities implanted in their nature by the Creator; and if this inclination be *prudently* followed, it will usually conduce to the happiness of all concerned.

Verse 12. *Some eunuchs*] The word "eunuchs" strictly means a class of servants who have charge of the apartments of the women in the palaces of princes and other great men of the East. The sense is, that some men *ought not* to marry, and that others do of choice lead a single life, either because they believe such a state most conducive to their own spiritual welfare, or that they may



13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

the more readily and effectually promote the cause of Christ in the earth. *He that is able to receive it, let him*] There is here no command not to marry. Every one is left to act as he shall conceive to be most for the divine glory and his personal comfort. "Receive" has the sense of adopt and practise.

Verse 13. *Then were there brought unto him little children*] These children were "brought to" Jesus by their parents or other friends, who may have been, and probably were, his followers: at least they were persons who believed him to be a holy man and a prophet. The children were apparently young, for Luke speaks of them as "infants:" the original is said to denote that they were under four years of age. As much may also be inferred by our Lord's taking them "up in his arms" when he "blessed" them. *Might put his hands on them, &c.*] The Jews, and the ancients generally, had a high opinion of the efficacy of the prayers and benedictions of good men, especially of prophets; hence they were generally desired, both for themselves and their posterity. Gen. xxvii. 34; Exod. xii. 32; Num. xxii. 6. It was usual, in pronouncing or praying for a blessing on any individual present, to "lay the hands" on the head of that person: see Gen. xlviii. 14. *The disciples rebuked them*] "Rebuked" means *reproved*; they found fault with those persons for bringing their children. Various reasons are assigned for this conduct in the disciples, but after all they are mere conjectures. Whatever might have been their motive, their rebuking of the parents gave occasion for a more illustrious display of our Lord's condescension

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

and humility than they had yet witnessed; and for an opportunity of teaching them and his ministers throughout all ages to encourage, not forbid, the bringing of even "young" children to him in acts of piety.

Verse 14. *Jesus said, Suffer little children, &c.*] "Suffer" here means *permit*. The bringing of these children to Jesus was a circumstance highly gratifying to our Lord; hence Mark tells us (x. 14) that "he was much displeased" at his disciples for laying any obstacles in the way of the parents. The admonition to the disciples seems, however, to have been somewhat private, for Luke (xviii. 16) says that Jesus "*called them unto him, and said, Suffer,*" &c. *Of such is the kingdom of heaven*] By "kingdom of heaven" here is probably meant both the church of Christ on earth and the company of the saved in heaven, which together form the kingdom of God; and by "such" children being admitted into this kingdom seems to be intended that infants are, by the grace of God, really members of his church, and as such are entitled to all the blessings of that relationship; which privilege they continue to enjoy until they forfeit it by the commission of wilful sin, on arriving at years of rational accountability. This interpretation furnishes a clear reason *why* the disciples ought not to have "rebuked" those who brought the children; whereas the notion adopted by many, that the words, "of such," refer merely to persons *resembling children in disposition*, assigns no just reason either for our Lord being displeased at the conduct of his followers, or for his directing the children to be brought unto him. Some have thought



15 And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence

because Mark says the children were brought to Jesus "that he might *touch* them," that they were labouring under bodily disease, and were simply introduced to Christ's notice that he might heal them. If this, however, had been the case, it is by no means probable that the disciples would have "rebuked" the anxious and afflicted parents, or that the evangelists would have stated the matter as they do. Mark and Luke concur in representing Jesus as saying, in addition to the conversation reported by Matthew, that "whosoever should not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he should not enter therein." To "receive as a little child" probably means with a disposition of humility, teachableness, and faith, similar to that with which "little children" usually receive the instructions of their parents and other friends.

Verse 15. *He laid his hands on them*] Meaning, he blessed them; imposition of hands being an act emblematic of blessing. See also Mark x. 15. A tradition prevailed in the early ages of the Christian church, that Ignatius, a bishop of Antioch and a martyr, was one of the children thus "blessed" by Christ. *Departed thence*] To prosecute his journey toward Jerusalem.

This incident presents us with a touching exhibition of the love of Jesus to "little children," and furnishes strong encouragement to parents to consecrate their beloved offspring to God.

"It was to save such souls as these  
The Lord of angels came."

## LESSON XXII. [Date, A. D. 29.]

*Parable of the rich man and Lazarus.*

LUKE xvi. 19-31.

**T**HERE was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

NOTES ON LUKE xvi. 19-xvii. 10.

Verse 19. *There was a certain rich man, &c.*] The Latin of the English word "rich" is *dives*; which has occasioned this "rich man" to be frequently called Dives. It has been a subject of some controversy whether this narrative be a true history or a parable. Certainly some of the circumstances detailed are of such a nature as strongly to stamp the account with a parabolic character. If a parable, it is a representation, in its leading features, of what *may be*, and probably of what *has been and will be*. For all practical purposes, therefore, the narrative is clothed with the solemnity of truth. The design of the story appears to be to show, 1st. That those who, being blessed with temporal riches, use them for their own gratification merely, instead of expending them in works of benevolence and mercy, will assuredly be punished, even though in other respects their life may be blameless; and, 2d. That a state of the most abject poverty is not inconsistent with the enjoyment of God's favour. We may learn from this, that outward circumstances are not to be regarded as infallible tokens of his love or displeasure. His enemies may "flourish like the green bay tree," while his beloved children may, for wise reasons, be "destitute, afflicted, tormented." The narrative is



20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

given by Luke only. *Clothed in purple*] In garments of a purple die. Mr. Harmer styles purple "the most sublime of all earthly colours; having the gaudiness of the red, of which it retains a shade, softened with the gravity of the blue." Jahn says, "It was coloured by the blood taken from a vein in the throat of a certain shell-fish." It is supposed by some that the colour here termed "purple" bordered on crimson. "The use of purple vestments was originally confined to kings, but had gradually extended itself to the noble and rich."—*Bloomfield. Fine linen*] These words probably denote a kind of cloth of about the quality of our sheeting.—*Robinson*. It would seem to have been costly, as none but the wealthy could procure it. *Fared sumptuously*] Lived in a very splendid manner, subsisting on rich food.

Verse 20. *A certain beggar—full of sores*] The original, it is said, simply means a poor man, not a beggar. Still, as he evidently solicited and received alms, the English translation gives the true sense. But he was not only abjectly poor, he was also much diseased, being "full of sores," or ulcers. Whether this disease was the consequence or the cause of his poverty does not appear. *Laid at his gate*] To ask charity. This would seem to have been the place where Lazarus was usually laid. "The portal of a rich man was a frequent resort of the needy. This still continues to be the case in Italy and elsewhere."—*Bloomfield*. "It is still," says Major Skinner, "a common custom throughout the East, and I observed it this morning in the streets of Jerusalem, to lay a cripple or a leper at the door of some wealthy man, or to place him in a public thoroughfare, stretched upon

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.

his mat or wooden litter."—*Pict. Bible*. The monks at Jerusalem still point out to visitors a couple of houses pretended to be the respective residences of the "rich man" and of "Lazarus!" The traveller above quoted states that the house of the former is pointed out "at the end of a street in the Turkish quarter of the town. We stood," he observes, "for a while to gaze at it, many of the pilgrims shaking their heads and uttering expressions of scorn; when, turning round, some one in a more softened tone proclaimed, 'And this is the house of Lazarus himself.' The people rushed toward it, (for it is within sight of the spot where 'the dogs came and licked his sores,') and stood in nearly as much astonishment at it as I did. It is an exceedingly clean and neat building, of a middling size." The building shown as "the house of the rich man" is described as "one of the best in Jerusalem."

Verse 21. *Desiring to be fed with the crumbs, &c.*] By "the crumbs which fell," &c., it is presumed that the scraps of provisions which were left at the close of the meals are meant. These Lazarus "desired," and it is presumed they were given him, for it is neither declared nor hinted that they were withheld. *The dogs came and licked his sores*] This incident seems to be narrated rather as pointing out the uncharitable neglect of the "rich man" in permitting Lazarus to remain in so helpless and pitiable a condition, (his sores being neither "bound up nor mollified with ointment,") than as denoting any alleviation of his sufferings; though the tongue of a dog is known to be healing. It may appear strange to some that this afflicted man was not better cared for; but



22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

it should be remembered that those excellent institutions for the succour of the destitute and afflicted,—almshouses and hospitals,—were then almost or quite unknown, being the offspring of the benevolent spirit of the gospel; and the uncertain relief afforded by occasional private munificence could at best reach but few cases.

Verse 22. *The beggar died*] Death is the separation of the soul from the body. No sooner does this change take place than life ceases, and the body becomes a piece of inanimate matter. The soul, however, continues to exist in a separate state. *And was carried*] That is, his soul was carried. *By the angels into Abraham's bosom*] The Jews held the opinion that the spirits of the righteous, on quitting the body, were conveyed by angels to paradise. Our Lord speaks in accordance with this opinion, and seems to affirm that such was the fact. Angels are declared in Scripture to be "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation;" (Heb. i. 14;) and there is no greater improbability in the supposition that they attend the spirits of good men to the unseen world, than there is in allowing that they watch over them while on earth. "Abraham" was the progenitor of the Jewish nation. He is celebrated in Scripture for the general uprightness of his character, and especially for his great confidence in God, and implicit obedience to the divine will. These qualities have gained for him the honourable titles of "father of the faithful," and, "friend of God." The phrase, "Abraham's bosom," was a term used by the Jews to denote the abode of the blessed; and was probably suggested by the then prevalent mode

of sitting, or rather reclining at meals, in which position the head of one person was brought near the bosom of the one who occupied the place next him on the left. The saying proves the confidence the nation entertained that the spirit of their venerated ancestor was in paradise, and their belief that the souls of his spiritual children would there be admitted to the closest intimacy and affection with him, which in their estimation was the highest possible honour. To "lie in the bosom" is also a phrase expressive, with the Easterns, of endearment and intimacy, as appears from the following quotations from Mr. Roberts' Oriental Illustrations. "A beloved son, though at a distance, is still said to be *in the bosom* of his parents. 'The king is indeed very fond of that man, he keeps him *in his bosom*.' 'Yes, the servant is a great favourite with the master; he has a place *in his bosom*.'" Our Saviour's representing Lazarus to be "in Abraham's bosom," must be therefore understood as equivalent to pronouncing him possessed of the highest happiness. *The rich man was buried*] So, doubtless, was Lazarus, although no mention is made of the fact. But he had, probably, the burial of a pauper, while the remains of the "rich man" were consigned to the tomb with great pomp and parade. The reader is here furnished with a striking instance of the disparity between the honour which cometh from man and that which cometh from God:—"The rich man died and was buried;" while the poor beggar, it is said, was, because of his love to God, conveyed by angels to inconceivable happiness. Surely God seeth not as man seeth; "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Well may the wise man say, (Prov. xi. 4.) "riches profit not in the day of wrath; but righteousness delivereth from death."



23 And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy

Verse 23. *In hell he lifted up his eyes*] By "hell" here, we need not understand the place of final punishment, but that part of the invisible world where the spirits of wicked men, and probably of wicked angels, are congregated until the day of judgment. 2 Pet. ii. 4. From this, and a few other passages of the sacred writings, it is plausibly argued that the souls of the departed do not enter at once upon their final state, but dwell in an intermediate one, until after the general judgment. It will appear, however, that their situation, even in this middle state, is one of unspeakable happiness or indescribable misery, though not equal in either respect to what it will be after the awards of the great day. "Lifted up his eyes" simply means, *he looked*, as though for help. *Being in torments*] The word "torments" means extreme pain—deep anguish. *Seeth Abraham, &c.*] Who is represented as being also in *hades*, or the unseen world, though not in the same part with this unhappy spirit, nor exposed, as he, to suffering.

Verse 24. *He said, &c.*] Our Lord need not be understood as intimating that the righteous and the wicked hold any intercourse with each other in the unseen world: the conversation is probably introduced to make the narration the more impressive, just as the invisible God and Job are represented as discoursing together. *Father Abraham*] The Jews gave this appellation to Abraham, as being the head of their race. May not our Lord have introduced this colloquy, in part, to show them the fallacy of trusting for salvation in having "Abraham to their father," (Matt. iii. 9,) since one of his descendants, by no means notorious for immorality, is here described as being "in torments!"

on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus

*Have mercy on me, &c.*] Meaning, pity me, and send relief. *Cool my tongue*] The natural effect of excessive pain is to create fever; fever causes thirst; and thirst, if extreme and long continued, ranks among the more intolerable sufferings to which man, in the present life, is called. It is, perhaps, for this reason that this lost spirit is described as calling for water to alleviate his thirst. *I am tormented in this flame*] The damned are often represented as suffering "in flames," because burning is an image of acute pain. It is not certain, however, that the wicked will be doomed to suffer in *material* fire.

Verse 25. *Remember that thou, in thy lifetime, receivest thy good things*] These "good things" were the wealth, honour, &c., he had possessed; which are here called "good things," not because they are always really such, for in some cases they are not, but because he had accounted them the most desirable possessions of life. They had been *his* good things. He is called on to "remember" this, 1st. To show him the error of his choice; 2d. To remind him of the ill use he had made of those things which, if rightly received and employed, might have conduced not only to his temporal comfort, but also to his eternal happiness. It may hence be inferred that this man was not condemned because he was rich, &c., but because he had placed his affections on wrong objects, and sought his chief gratification in sensual delights. See 1 John ii. 14, 15. *Lazarus evil things*] Pain, poverty, and neglect. "Not his evil things; for he did not choose



evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

them; they were chosen for him by the wise providence of God." *Now he is comforted, &c.*] He was not "comforted," however, *because* he had in lifetime been afflicted, but because he had *exercised the virtues proper for his condition*. This, indeed, is not said; but we learn from Scripture that men are neither punished nor rewarded for outward circumstances, but for their use or abuse of them.—Holden.

Verse 26. *Between us—there is a great gulf, &c.*] This seems to be spoken in conformity to the notion entertained both by Jews and Greeks, that although the righteous and the wicked would be alike admitted into hades, the two classes would be separated by an impassable chasm. Our Lord may, however, merely intend to express the utter impossibility of granting the unhappy spirit's request, for "undoubtedly," as Mr. Wesley remarks, "a disembodied spirit could pass through any space whatever. But the will of God determining that none shall go across that gulf, is a bound which no creature can pass."

Verses 27, 28. *Send him to my father's house, &c.*] From this request it may be inferred that his "brethren" were strangers to God—probably men who lived, as the "rich man" had done, each one for himself, utterly regardless of the obligations of religion. He was now desirous of saving them from the evils to which their wicked courses exposed them; either because he retained for them

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

a feeling of sincere, ardent affection, or because he thought their presence would heighten his own misery. Possibly his influence over them had been pernicious. *Testify unto them*] Rather, "that he may admonish them," by bearing witness to the sufferings of the impenitent and unbelieving in the future world.—Holden.

Verse 29. *Moses and the prophets*] Meaning, the sacred Scriptures, written by these persons, all bearing testimony, more or less explicit, to a future existence, and admonishing men to live religiously. "Moses" denotes the first five books of the Old Testament, and "the prophets" the remainder. *Let them hear them*] That is, attend to their instructions: implying that if they did this, all would be well. Reader, you are blessed with a more perfect revelation of the will of God, and his manner of saving men, than is contained in "Moses and the prophets;" do you "hear" it?

Verse 30. *Nay, &c.*] Some distinguished commentators think there is something wanting here. Bloomfield supposes the sentence means, "Nay, father Abraham, *they will not attend to them; they will slight them, as I did:*" but "if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent."

Verse 31. *If they hear not Moses, &c.*] From this answer of Abraham we learn, that the sacred writings



## LESSON XXIII. [Date, A. D. 29.]

*On the danger of giving offence—On forgiveness of injuries.*

LUKE xvii. 1-10.

THEN said he unto his disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but wo unto him through whom they come!

contain such proofs of a divine origin, that though the dead were to rise, the proofs could not be more evident; and that to escape eternal perdition, and obtain eternal glory, men are to receive the testimonies of God, and to walk according to their dictates: for where a strong, inveterate love of sin has made any doctrine or proposition wholly repugnant to the heart, no argument or demonstration—no, nor miracle—will be able to bring the heart cordially to close with or receive it. Let us then guard against an “evil heart of unbelief,” and be fearful of disobeying the revelation which God has given; for greater assurance perhaps cannot, certainly will not, be afforded.—*Williams, South, Holden.*

## NOTES ON LUKE xvii. 1-10.

Verse 1. *It is impossible but that offences will come*] The word “offences” means *causes of stumbling*; any thing whereby an individual may be hindered from persevering in the path of rectitude. Hence the word is applied to a trap or snare, and to a stone or block laid in a path, over which a person stumbles or falls. By its being “impossible but that they will come,” or occur, is simply meant, that “offences” would certainly arise, because of the moral condition of man. One of the fundamental doc-

2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

3 Take heed to yourselves! If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

trines of Christianity is here set forth—the depravity of man. *Wo unto him through whom they come*] The certainty of the occurrence of offences furnishes no excuse for their committal, or a “wo” would not be pronounced on those who caused the offence. The expression, “wo unto him,” &c., is not to be understood as an invocation, or calling down of evil upon the guilty, much as they may in some instances deserve it: but as a pathetic declaration that “wo”—the extreme of suffering—would fall upon those who should presume to put stumbling blocks in the way of such as were sincerely endeavouring to serve God, unless timely repented of and forgiven. What a solemn warning to persecutors, seducers, and calumnious persons, and all who turn any out of the way!

Verse 2. *It were better that a millstone, &c.*] See note on Mark ix. 42, vol. ii., pp. 374, 375.

Verses 3, 4. *Take heed to yourselves!*] To “take heed,” is to give strict attention—to be wary, watchful, &c.; the caution supposes danger to be at hand. This admonition probably refers to the preceding announcement, and if so, is to be understood as a warning to the disciples to avoid giving offence. Some commentators, however, (though perhaps with less reason,) refer the words to the matter following. *If thy brother trespass, &c.*] See notes on Matt. xviii. 15, &c., vol. ii., pp. 381, &c. *Seven times in a day*] See vol. ii., p. 387. *Thou shalt forgive him*]



5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

"That is," says Mr. Wesley, "if he give sufficient proof that he does really repent, after having sinned ever so often, receive him just as if he had never sinned against thee. But this forgiveness is due only to real penitence." We are, however, to cultivate a disposition of forgiveness toward all, penitent or impenitent; "so as to bear them the sincerest good will, and to do them all the good we can."—*Wesley*. "Next to the principle of not taking offence easily, that of forgiving real injuries should be instilled into the infant mind."—*Crabb*.

Verse 5. *Increase our faith*] It would seem, from the context, that this petition had its rise in the difficulty which the apostles apprehended they should have in complying with the direction to forgive trespasses, however numerous or aggravating, whenever repented of. It is said that the Jews had a maxim that an offended individual should, on evidence of repentance being adduced, forgive an offending brother three times, but no more. If there be truth in this statement, it may reasonably be supposed that the disciples would have strong prejudices to overcome before they could heartily receive or practise the command to "forgive" as often as occasion offered; and, feeling this, might very naturally cry out, "Increase our faith." In this view, the "faith" required would be, faith to apprehend and practise Christ's injunction. Be this, however, as it may, their request evidently shows that they believed Jesus capable of exerting a divine influence upon their minds. It also follows from this, 1st. That as faith is one of the fruits of the Spirit, (Gal. v. 22,) and consequently the gift of God, so Christ, as the bestower of this grace, must be God: 2d. That as the apostles be-

6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

sought him to increase their faith, so we may look to him for the augmentation of ours.

Verse 6. *Faith as a grain of mustard-seed*] This comparison is usually understood to denote the least amount of faith. So Mr. Wesley. Dr. Clarke, however, explains it of a *growing* faith, as the mustard-seed is represented to thrive in the parable. Matt. xiii. 32. The former opinion seems preferable. See further in note on Matt. xiii. 31, 32, vol. ii., p. 172. *Say unto this sycamine-tree, &c.*] Dr. Bloomfield, and some other expositors of Scripture, say the "sycamine-tree" is the same as the "sycamore" mentioned Amos vii. 14, Luke xix. 4. Harris, Shaw, and others, deny this, and contend that the sycamine is a timber or forest tree, while the sycamore is a fruit tree, whose leaves resemble the mulberry, but its fruit that of the fig-tree: and hence denominated the "sycamore fig." Dr. Shaw says the sycamine is one of the most common timber trees of the Holy Land; and that "from having a larger and more extensive root than other trees, it is here alluded to as being one of the most difficult to be rooted up." It is not improbable that our Lord was near to one of these trees when he addressed this language to the disciples. The whole passage may have been a proverbial expression, denoting the accomplishment of any very difficult thing: and may, therefore, be understood as an assurance to the disciples that by the exercise of faith they should be enabled to perform the duties he had just enjoined, however arduous they might appear. See a similar form of speech, Matt. xvii. 20.



7 But which of you, having a servant ploughing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready where-with I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

Verses 7, 8. *Which of you having a servant, &c.*]

There appears to be no connection between verses 7-10 and the matter preceding. The doctrine stated is, however, an important one, and ought not to be slightly regarded. It is this: that the rewards held out to Christian obedience are not of merit, but purely of grace. The word rendered "*by and by*," is said to have the sense of *immediately*. The master would not, as the first thing, direct the servant to eat and drink, but to wait on him. *Gird thyself, &c.*] The outer garment used by the Easterns was a long loose robe, which, when engaged in active service, they either laid aside, or folded tightly about them, fastening the folds around the waist with a girdle, into which they also tucked the lower part of the dress, so as not to impede the freedom of their movements. Whether servants were usually thus habited, or whether they dispensed with the upper garment when occupied as waiters, the compiler cannot learn: though he is of opinion that the servant did not, generally, wear the outer robe, but appeared in the tunic, or under garment, with a sash or girdle wound round the waist, to which, when waiting at meals, a towel was ordinarily appended, for the wiping of the hands of the company. See John xiii. 4, 5.

Verse 9. *Doth he thank that servant?*] Meaning, is he aid under obligation to him? Most assuredly not; for

10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

the servant is supposed to receive an equivalent for all the service he can possibly render: and justice requires that he should render faithful service to the utmost of his ability. *I trow not*] "Trow" is an old word for *think*; —trow not, think not.

Verse 10. *Unprofitable servants*] For man cannot lay the Almighty under obligation to him—he cannot confer a benefit on Deity. By the phrase, "We have done that which was our duty to do," is simply meant *no more than was our duty*. This text strongly refutes the Romish doctrine of works of supererogation; for if, when we have done all things required of us, we are still "unprofitable servants," no man can have any superabounding merit to supply the deficiencies of others.—*Holden*.



## LESSON XXIV. [Date, A. D. 29.]

*Christ journeys toward Jerusalem—Rebukes the rashness of James and John—Declares his poverty—Heals ten lepers.—LUKE ix. 51-62; xvii. 12-19.*

## LUKE ix. 51-62.\*

AND it came to pass when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

## NOTES ON LUKE ix. 51-62.

Verse 51. *When the time was come that he should be received up*] The words "received up," here, most probably refer to our Lord's being "received up" into heaven; his ascension being several times thus expressed. See Mark xvi. 19; Acts i. 1, 2, 11, 22; 1 Tim. iii. 16, &c. Some commentators, to be sure, consider the expression to mean that the time had come when he should remove from the country parts to Jerusalem; and others understand it simply of his elevation on the cross, or in other words, of his death. But both these expositions seem to fall short of the truth, especially as they do not call out any of those powerful motives which appear to have strengthened our Lord for his approaching sufferings, and to which the apostle attributes so much influence. See Heb. ii. 9, 10; xii. 2. Besides, his personal ministry on earth was not finished until the time of his ascension.

\* The portion of Scripture embraced between Luke ix. 51, and xvii. 19, should, in the judgment of the compiler, be read in consecutive order, and arranged in the Harmony immediately after John xi. 54, and before Matt. xix. 1, Mark x. 1. This is the arrangement adopted by Greswell, and appears much more natural than that of Townsend.

The phrase "when the time was come," &c., does not always mean the completion of a period within which any specified event was to take place, or time *fully come*; but sometimes, as here, that the time of fulfilment was *near at hand*. The season fixed for Christ's removal from earth and return to the mansions of celestial glory was drawing nigh. That this period was a definite period, appears from John xiii. 1, and other passages which might be quoted. *He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*] Where, as a sacrificial victim, he intended to "offer himself without spot to God." The expression he "*steadfastly set his face,*" &c., denotes the firm, resolved purpose with which Jesus went up to the holy city; although certain that by going he would meet with a fearful amount of suffering, and a shameful death. "Such expressions," says Mr. Watson, commenting on this passage, "open to us large and interesting views. They show that our Lord was not free from the most painful anticipations respecting his approaching sufferings. It was this which called forth his earnest prayers, and rendered it necessary for him, as his hour approached, *steadfastly to set his face*—to compose himself into a firm and settled resolve—to go up to Jerusalem, and to meet that malignity of all his enemies to which he knew he would fall a victim. Such was the strength of his love to lost man, and the intensity of his desire for their salvation, that he hastened to meet a torturing death as the price of their redemption." He thus opened the way for their deliverance from the fearful penalties of a violated law, the thralldom of sin, and the iron yoke of Satan; and made it possible for them to be raised to the joys and immortality of heaven. It is perhaps worthy of remark, that the language in which Luke expresses the Saviour's fixed resolu-



52 And sent messengers before his face : and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

tion, is very similar to that in which the prophet Isaiah makes the Messiah allude to his approaching sufferings, and express his determination to bear them all : "Therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Isa. l. 7.

Verse 52. *He sent messengers—to make ready*] The word rendered "messengers" is, in the original, *angels*; a proof that the word *angels* does not always mean heavenly beings. We are not informed which of the disciples were intrusted with this business, but, judging from the emotion manifested by James and John, (verse 54,) it is highly probable they were the ones. The "making ready," probably refers to the providing lodgings and food for Jesus and his company. This incident shows that a proper care for the comfort of the body is not contrary to the most devoted piety, or beneath the notice of a religious man. Mr. Townsend, in his Chronological Arrangement, introduces between this verse and the preceding, Luke xvii. 11, "And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee." If Mr. Townsend be correct in his arrangement of this section, our Lord must at this time have passed from Perea to the country on the western side of the Jordan. On this hypothesis, too, Luke should have written Galilee and Samaria, instead of Samaria and Galilee.\*

\* We learn from John xi. 53, 54, that our Lord, in consequence of the resolution of the Jewish council to put him to death, retired from the neighbourhood of the capital to the city of Ephraim, "and there continued with his disciples." After remaining here some time, Greswell supposes that

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

Verse 53. *They did not receive him*] Meaning, probably, that they did not allow the messengers to "make ready" for their Master's reception. *Because his face was as though, &c.*] By Christ's face being "as though he would go to Jerusalem," is possibly meant that his journey was in that direction :—they saw he was travelling toward that city. If, however, the view taken by Mr. Greswell, as exhibited in the foregoing note, be correct, then the expression, "because his face was," &c., must relate to Christ's *settled purpose* of ending his tour at Jerusalem, which intention the Samaritans might have learned from the messengers, if, indeed, it was not matter of public notoriety. It may be stated, in support of Mr. G.'s theory, that in the original the same word as is here translated "was as though," is in the preceding verse rendered, "he *steadfastly* set his face," which is generally interpreted of Christ's purpose. It was not, however, merely because Jesus was *going* to Jerusalem, that these Samaritans refused him accommodations, but *chiefly* because he was going there *to worship*; thus tacitly condemning their notion that it was at Gerizim, and not at Jerusalem, that

Jesus set out for Galilee, with the avowed intention of commencing his last general tour; which was to be begun in Galilee, (probably at Capernaum,) and after passing throughout that province and Perea, to be terminated at Jerusalem—shortly before the passover: and that Luke is literally correct in the statement made here and at chap. xvii. 11: the writer referring not so much to the present direction of the journey, (which was at this time leading *from*, instead of *to*, the holy city,) as to the purpose of Christ that it should ultimately end at Jerusalem.



54 And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come

Jehovah should be worshipped. (See note on John iv. 20, vol. i., p. 274.) Had Jesus decided that Gerizim was the place "which the Lord had chosen to record his name there," they would, doubtless, not only have furnished him with every accommodation, but gladly have received him as the Messiah. The conduct of men is very much influenced by their partialities: yet it is wise not to suffer prejudices to blind the judgment or to warp the affections; but, after sincerely inquiring the way of truth, diligently to walk in the same when found. The refusal of these Samaritans to entertain our Lord, furnishes a striking instance of the power of religious prejudice, for among the Easterns generally the rites of hospitality were considered of universal obligation.

Verse 54. *When James and John saw this, &c.*] Meaning, when they *perceived* or were *satisfied* in their minds that the people here would not receive Jesus. From the warmth with which James and John resented the inhospitality of these Samaritans, it may be inferred that they were, naturally, of an earnest, zealous disposition: and, as is usual with persons of such a temperament, that their manner of address partook strongly of the vehemence of their character; whence, probably, the appellation by which our Lord distinguished these brothers—"sons of thunder." *Wilt thou that we command fire, &c.*] Denoting, probably, lightning. "Wilt thou," &c., seems to mean, not *art thou willing*, but, *wilt thou impart to us authority or power* to call down fire. *As Elias did*] "Elias" is the Greek of the Hebrew word Elijah. From 2 Kings i. 9-12, we learn that on a certain occasion Ahaziah, king of Israel, sent a company of fifty men to the prophet

down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did!

Elijah, with the intention of arresting him. Elijah, however, (doubtless, by divine direction,) called down "fire from heaven" to destroy them; and they, and fifty others who were afterward sent on the same errand, were destroyed. That event occurred in Samaria—probably not far from the spot where the disciples now were; the recollection of which may have prompted James and John to make their rash request, for they seem to have referred to the case of Elijah as furnishing a precedent for their own action, as though the circumstances were parallel. They were not so, however. In the case referred to, an open and gross affront was offered the divine Majesty by the Israelitish king, 1st. in his sending messengers to the priests of a heathen idol to know whether he should recover from his illness, instead of inquiring of Him to whom alone "belong the issues from death;" thus virtually asserting that "there was no God in Israel:" and, 2dly., in attempting to arrest the prophet and representative of Jehovah, while engaged in the legitimate duties of his office; thus adding insult to dishonour. To punish this daring wickedness, and vindicate the outraged honour of God, the prophet, under a divine impulse, called for the signal display of judgment which followed; unaccompanied, however, by feelings of personal resentment on his part. The disciples, on the contrary, seem to have been moved to make their request as much by feelings of national antipathy as of zeal for Christ—perhaps more so. Besides, they were instructed in a more elevated morality than had formerly prevailed, and ought to have exhibited more of that love "which beareth all things."



55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

Verses 55, 56. *He rebuked them*] Reproved James and John:—being exceedingly displeased at their request. *Ye know not what, &c.*] Meaning, probably, that they had both mistaken the motives by which they supposed themselves actuated, and misapprehended the spirit they ought to have manifested. We may learn from this, 1st. That men are liable to be influenced by prejudices and feelings of personal dislike, even when they think themselves prompted by a holy zeal for the Lord; and 2d. That they ought very carefully to guard against such a disposition, inasmuch as the “wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” The lesson also teaches that a spirit of persecution, especially in religious matters, is contrary to the precepts and example of Christ, which everywhere inculcate forbearance, patience, and love toward opponents. The violent exhibitions of rash zeal which, under the name of Religion, have sometimes disgraced the Christian church, are not chargeable to her whose name they have assumed, but to the mistaken judgments and evil dispositions of erring men. An intolerant and persecuting spirit in religion is subversive of the design of Christ in coming into the world; for he came, *not to destroy men's lives, but to save them*. The disposition which James and John manifested on this occasion may kindle the fire and fagot, but it will never kindle the flame of “pure and undefiled religion” in the world. *They went to another village*] Probably some other Samaritan village, where, in all likelihood, they were “received.”

57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but *go* thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are home at my house.

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Verses 57, 58. *A certain man, &c.*] This may be a different occurrence from that related Matt. viii. 19, 20, though similar to it. For the import of our Lord's answer, see notes on the above passage, vol. ii., pp. 186, 187.

Verses 59, 60. *He, Jesus, said to another, Follow me*] By “follow me,” here, we are to understand not merely a call to the discipleship, but to the work of preaching the gospel, as is, in the next verse, expressly declared. *Suffer me to go and bury, &c.*] For the meaning of this reply, and of our Lord's rejoinder, see notes on Matt. viii. 21, 22, vol. ii., pp. 188, 189.

Verses 61, 62. *Let me first bid farewell, &c.*] Meaning, probably, “bid farewell to my family:” or, as some render, “set in order my affairs at home.” *Jesus said, No man having put his hand to the plough, &c.*] “To put the hand to the plough,” was a proverbial expression for engaging in any undertaking: and to “look back,” implied the not prosecuting the business with diligence. Our Lord may, therefore, be understood, in quoting this proverb, as admonishing the man not to suffer thoughts of his



worldly interests or comforts to draw off his mind from the great work in which he had expressed his readiness to engage. There is, in this view, "a peculiar force and propriety in the allusion: for the plougher must keep his eyes intent on the furrow, and not permit them to deviate to the right or left."—*Bloomfield*. "The ancient plough," says another authority, "was so small and light that it required the constant care of the ploughman to keep it in



the ground, or to make a straight furrow. Hence *Hesiod*, a Greek poet, speaking of the ploughman, says,

'Let him attend his charge, and careful trace  
The right-lined furrow; gaze no more about.  
But have his mind intent upon the work.'

## LUKE xvii. 12-19.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

From all this it appears that the Saviour would have the man to give himself fully and at once to the ministry,

"Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind."

The better to illustrate this subject, the preceding cut is introduced: it is taken from the Pictorial Bible, the editor of which remarks, "The plough represented in our cut is copied from an ancient Egyptian sculpture, and may be supposed to have had a general resemblance to that in use among the Hebrews. Notwithstanding its simplicity, there are other sculptures and paintings which exhibit ploughs much more rude, and apparently without an iron coulter, being merely adapted to scratch the ground." *Is not fit for the kingdom of heaven*] Meaning, perhaps, is not in a fit state of mind either to receive the gospel or to spread it: because his affections are too much engrossed by other objects.

## LUKE xvii. 12-19.

Verses 12, 13. *As he entered a certain village*] "Rather," says *Holden*, "as he was entering, or, about to enter, for lepers were excluded from cities and towns." (*Lev. xiii. 46*; *Num. v. 2, 3*.) So, also, *Horne*, and most commentators. The editor of the Pictorial Bible, however, asserts that lepers were not excluded from all towns. His language is, "Lepers were not excluded from villages. We are indebted to *Lightfoot* for the information that neither was the law for their exclusion understood to exclude them from any towns but such as were already walled in



13 And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

the time of Joshua. To all which were afterward built they had access. But under all circumstances they were expected to keep their distance from persons who were clean, as well as from those who were unclean from any other cause than leprosy. A leper who transgressed the rules, or intruded into towns or places forbidden to him, was punished with forty stripes save one." It is highly probable that if lepers were not *excluded* from villages, they were at least obliged to reside in the outskirts, and probably, where they were at all numerous, in a distinct community. *Ten lepers*] For a notice of the leprosy, see on Luke v. 12, vol. i., pp. 335, 336. In addition to what is there stated, the compiler begs leave to offer the following description of the disease from Maundrell: \* "It defiles the whole surface of the body with a foul scurf, deforms the joints, particularly at the wrists and ancles, which swell with a gouty scrofulous substance, very loathsome to look on. The legs of those that are affected with this distemper look like an old battered horse's; in short, it may pass for the utmost corruption of the human body on this side the grave." *Stood afar off*] Being prohibited, by law, from approaching any who were not also leprous, either from fear of spreading the disease, or because their touch caused ceremonial defilement, or both. Lev. xiii. 45, 46. *Lifted up their voices, &c.*] This expression may mean, either that the lepers called aloud, so as to make Jesus hear; or, that they cried out with great earnestness, and may be understood to express their intense desire.

\* See his second letter to Mr. Osborn, at the end of his *Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem*. Oxford ed., 1749.

14 And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

It would appear, from their calling the Saviour by name, either that some one or more of the wretched company had a knowledge of his person, or that they judged it to be him from the throng which was passing along. It is also apparent that they knew something of his ability and readiness to cure the most inveterate diseases, for they unhesitatingly beseech him to "have mercy" upon them; —that is, to heal them.

Verse 14. *Go show yourselves unto the priests*] Namely, at Jerusalem; that they might by them be pronounced "clean." They would then be again permitted to mingle in society and be restored to their privileges in the church. (For fuller information, see note on Luke v. 14, vol. i., pp. 338, 339.) The injunction to "show themselves to the priests," was given in obedience to the requirements of the law; see Lev. xiv. 2, &c. In this command, Jesus gave the lepers an *implied* (not express) assurance that they would be healed, if they obeyed his direction, and they doubtless so understood him, and therefore undertook the journey. It should not be forgotten, however, as Mr. Barnes well observes, that obedience required no small measure of *faith* on their part, for Jesus did not *first* heal them, and then tell them to go; he did not even *expressly* assure them they would be healed at all, but required them to go to the priests, without, *as yet*, any evidence of cure to adduce. They nevertheless *believed*, and "as they went they were cleansed," which was doubtless to them occasion of great rejoicing. "Had they stood still, they had remained lepers: now they went, they are whole. What haste the blessing makes to over-



15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

16 And fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine?

take their obedience! It is the bounty of that God whom we serve to reward our worthless endeavours with infinite requitals: he would not have any proportion between our acts and his remunerations."—*Bp. Hall*. Thus, also, sinners, trusting in the promise of God, that they who believe in Christ shall be saved, and casting themselves on his mercy, may be delivered from a more dire disease than afflicted these men—even the leprosy of sin—and become filled with the consolations of the grace of God.

Verses 15, 16. *One of them turned back*] To give thanks for his restoration, being impelled to this by a spirit of fervent gratitude: designing, probably, to go afterward and show himself to the priest. The "nine" went, probably, to the priests at once, and thence to their several homes. *Glorified God*] Praised him for his mercy. *Fell down on his face, &c.*] Prostrated himself to the earth, in the Eastern manner of rendering the most respectful obeisance. "O noble pattern of thankfulness! no sooner doth he see his cure than he hastes to acknowledge it; the benefit shall not die nor sleep in his hand. Late professions of our obligations savour of dulness and ingratitude." *He was a Samaritan*] *Perhaps* a Samaritan by birth, but a proselyte to the Jewish religion. Why, else, should he have been about to repair, in company with the other lepers, (the whole of whom *seem* to have been Jews,) to the "priests?" meaning, it is presumed, to Jewish priests.

Verses 17, 18. *Were there not ten cleansed?*] "Rather,"

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.

says Holden, "were not *the ten* cleansed!"—a form of speech implying that they *were*, with which fact Jesus was doubtless well acquainted, as he was omniscient. *Where are the nine?*] This language implies disappointment; as though our Lord had expected that they would all have returned, and gratefully acknowledged their obligations for the cure. Not that we need suppose he did really expect their return; he probably spoke thus to show his regret at their want of gratitude, and to censure it: they might, and seemingly *ought*, to have made their acknowledgments to him, and then have gone to the priests. *There are not found, &c.*] Meaning *none* have returned. *Save this stranger*] Or alien, that is, foreigner. The Samaritans were considered by the Jews as aliens, and are yet called by them "Cuthites," by way of reproach. Jesus then addressed himself to the "stranger," bidding him "go his way"—namely, to the priest, for his "faith had made him whole."



## LESSON XXV. [Date, A. D. 29.]

*Certain Pharisees question Christ concerning his kingdom—He predicts the calamities which should befall Jerusalem.*

## LUKE xvii. 20-37.

AND when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

## NOTES ON LUKE xvii. 20-37.

Verses 20, 21. *When he was demanded, &c.*] Meaning, when he was inquired of, by the Pharisees. *Kingdom of God, &c.*] By "kingdom of God," here, we are doubtless to understand the reign of the Messiah, which the Jews in general, and the Pharisees in particular, imagined would be a glorious temporal dominion. *Cometh not with observation*] Meaning, probably, cometh not in such a manner as to attract observation; and consequently without parade or ostentation. See marginal reading. *Neither shall they say*] That is, it shall not be said, of this kingdom, by any person. *Lo, here, &c.*] Behold the Messiah is in this or in that place. This declaration may receive illustration from the opinion, somewhat extensively entertained among the Jews, that the appearance of the Messiah would be sudden, and that it was very uncertain where he would first manifest himself. This created a state of extreme restlessness among the people, who seem to have been at this very time eagerly looking for his coming, and ready to join any pretender, provided he only avowed himself the enemy of the Romans and promised deliverance from their yoke. *The kingdom of God is*

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

*within you*] Or, as the marginal reading has it, "among you." Commentators are divided in opinion as to the import of this passage. Some understand our Saviour as declaring that the "kingdom of God" to which he alludes, is the internal and spiritual principle, spoken of Rom. xiv. 7; "which yields," says Bloomfield, "a good sense, but is forbidden by the context." Clarke, and others, are to the same effect. The explanation which many give, that Jesus is to be understood as speaking of the dominion set up in the hearts of all true believers, "is liable," says Holden, "to this objection, that our Lord's discourse is addressed to the Pharisees, and he could not say that the 'kingdom of God,' in any sense, was within them." The weight of authority seems to be in favour of understanding Christ's answer to be, "the kingdom of the Messiah has even commenced among you—that is, in your own country and among your own people—though ye do not see it."

Verse 22. *The days will come, &c.*] "The discourse in verses 22-37, most probably refers to the persecutions which the disciples were to endure, and to the calamities which were to fall on the Jewish nation." *Ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man*] By "the Son of man" is meant our Lord himself, and the apostles doubtless so understood the term, as Christ had often spoken of himself, in their hearing, by this title; and by their "desiring to see" one of his "days," Jesus probably meant to intimate that the time would come when, through severe trials and persecutions, they would ardently long for as open communion with him as they now enjoyed; but which desire would be fruitless, for he would no longer



23 And they shall say to you, See here! or, see there! go not after *them*, nor follow *them*.

24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

be with them as he now was. The period in Jewish history particularly referred to here, is probably embraced between the ascension of Christ and A. D. 70.

Verses 23, 24. *They shall say, &c.*] Meaning, perhaps, *when or if they shall say, &c.* *Lo, here, &c.*] As before, Behold here or there is Christ. *Go not after them*] Knowing that the Messiah has already come. Many false Christs did appear, and "deceived many." See Josephus. *For as the lightning shineth—so shall the Son of man be, &c.*] "So shall the Son of man be," must mean, "so shall the manifestation of the Son of man be." Christ is probably to be understood to speak, here, of the judgments he would bring upon the Jews by the Romans: and the comparison between the "shining" or glare of lightning and his acts, seems to point out their suddenness and publicity. "As it cannot be said of the lightning, 'It is here,' or, 'It is there,' so will it be in respect to the Son of man: he will break forth, at length, suddenly, and at once make a wide destruction, before there shall be time scarcely to think of what is taking place." "In his day," means the time when he shall execute this judgment on the nation.

Verse 25. *But first must he suffer*] That is, before Christ shall come in the manner and for the purpose above stated, he must "suffer many things." So, indeed, he did. Abuse and contumely were heaped upon him:—*mocked, buffeted, spit upon, scourged, CRUCIFIED.* These were

26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

some of the "many things" he endured in effecting man's redemption. But, though we may faintly conceive somewhat of his bodily sufferings, who can adequately estimate, much less describe, his acute mental and spiritual agony. Realizing, as he did, but as no mere mortal can, the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," the punishment due to which he was appointed to bear, and the fearful extent of that "wrath which had been revealed against all ungodliness of men," no wonder that his agony caused him to sweat, as it were, "great drops of blood," or that even He cried out, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." *And be rejected*] Disowned as the Messiah, and punished as an impostor. The word *must*, in the sentence "must suffer," &c., has the sense of *should*; meaning it was *proper*, or *necessary* to the accomplishment of his work, that Christ should suffer. The Jews were not, however, under any *necessity* of putting him to death: this was their own voluntary act, through their own free choice: they are therefore guilty. And surely all persons who now perversely reject Christ, and count his blood "an unholy thing," are equally blameworthy, and are likewise exposed to that "fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." O that "they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."

Verses 26-30. The general sense of these verses is, that the heaviest calamities hung over the Jews, and would overwhelm them when they least expected it. This our Lord illustrates by the example of the antediluvians in the days of Noah, and of the Sodomites in the time of Lot. See Gen. vi., and xviii. 20-xix. 25. *As in the days of Noe*] Or Noah: "Noe" being the Greek



27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise, also, as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take

manner of spelling the name. *They did eat, they drank, &c.*] Meaning, that as the inhabitants of the old world, notwithstanding the threatened judgments of God, delivered by Noah, continued to pursue the ordinary occupations and pleasures of life, unmindful of the solemn warnings they received; so the impenitent and unbelieving among the Jews would continue in their career of wickedness, until, the cup of the nation's iniquity being full, "the Son of man" would suddenly break forth upon them in judgment, just as in the case of the antediluvians, the long-threatened chastisement of God unexpectedly came upon them, and swept the "evil doers" from the earth. The twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses are to the same effect as the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh, only changing the illustration from the circumstances of Noah to those of Lot. The words "fire and brimstone," in verse twenty-nine, denote "a sulphurous fire, probably lightning, which has a sulphurous smell."—*Bloomfield*. From "heaven," here, means from *God*, by whom the punishment was inflicted.

Verse 31. *In that day, &c.*] Namely, at the time "the Son of man" shall be "revealed," or made known by his

it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

32 Remember Lot's wife.

judgments, as above stated. There seems to be here special allusion to the encompassing of Jerusalem by the Romans. *Upon the house-top, &c.*] The roofs of houses in Syria and the neighbouring countries are usually flat, with a wall around them, and are often resorted to by the inhabitants for the purpose of taking the air. Sometimes the people spread their mats upon the roofs, and sleep there. The "house-tops" are also commonly used as places from which to descry whatever may be passing in the vicinity, the dwellings being generally without front windows. They would, therefore, be much used as places from which to look out on the approach of an invading army. *Stuff in the house*] His provision, clothing, &c. *Not come down, &c.*] That is, not to take away his household effects, lest his safety should be endangered through his flight being thus delayed. This appears to be the object of the injunction. The interpretation sometimes given, that he who should be "on the house-top" on the approach of the Romans, must not come down *into the house*, but instantly flee by the outer stair which usually led from the roof to the street, seems to be altogether gratuitous and inadmissible. The text plainly says, "let him not come down to *take away his stuff*;" but surely he might—nay, ought—to attend to the safety of those within, as well as to the preservation of his own life. The verse shows the imminent peril in which the inhabitants of the country would be placed, and the necessity of escaping *at once*, if they would avoid the hazard of being taken by the enemy.

Verse 32. *Remember Lot's wife*] Who, by disregarding



33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it.

34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

the divine injunction, lost her life. See Gen. xix. 26. She (with Lot) had been commanded to use all possible expedition in her flight from Sodom, and by no means to "look back" upon the devoted city. This direction she disobeyed; *perhaps* she desired to return, or *perhaps* she disbelieved the divine threatening. Be this as it may, her case furnishes a solemn warning to all who are unmindful of God's commandments, and is so used by our Saviour. Reader, REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE, and endanger not thy own safety by wilful disobedience. The destruction of the Sodomites is declared by St. Jude (verse 7) to be set forth as an example of the punishment which will be inflicted on the finally impenitent. How awful!—"vengeance of eternal fire!"

Verse 33. *Whosoever shall seek to save his life, &c.*] Meaning, probably, that whosoever, disregarding Christ's admonition, shall be so anxious to secure his "stuff," (that is, those things which are deemed necessary to sustain life,) as to "turn back" for it, will probably lose life itself; while those who, in obedience to the divine command, immediately flee from the scene of danger, though apparently "losing life" by neglecting to secure the things necessary to its maintenance, should really be preserved, and their wants supplied. So it was with Lot, though his wife perished.

Verses 34-36. *In that night*] We are not to suppose, from this passage, that the threatened destruction would really come in the "night," for the word is probably merely used to denote a gloomy and calamitous time;

35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

seasons of great trouble being often figuratively spoken of as times of darkness. See Isa. viii. 22; Joel ii. 1, 2. Or the term may be a mere ornament, thrown in the better to suit the words which follow. *There shall be two in one bed*' Ratner, on one couch. *One shall be taken, &c.*] The word "taken" may mean, either taken away from the danger—that is, rescued, as Lot was—or taken away by death. Probably the latter is the meaning.—*Barnes*. *Two women shall be grinding, &c.*] There is nothing in the original answering to the word "women," for which reason our translators have put it in Italic. Its insertion is doubtless correct; as the labour of grinding the meal for bread almost uniformly devolves, in Palestine and the neighbouring countries, on the females of the family. Exod. xi. 5; Job xxxi. 10; Isa. xlvi. 1, 2. As the text intimates, the operation is generally performed by "two women," who sit opposite each other, the mill being placed between them. The mill in general use consists of two circular stones, the upper surface of the lower one being convex, and the under surface of the upper stone concave. Each stone is about two feet across, and half a foot thick. The lower one remains stationary; but the upper one is turned round by means of a handle which is let into the stone. The grain is put into a hole made through the middle of the upper stone, and is crushed, or ground, in the process of turning, the flour escaping from the sides. Dr. E. D. Clarke gives the following account of this method of grinding, as witnessed by him at Nazareth. "Scarcely," says he, "had we reached the apartment prepared for our reception, when, looking into the courtyard belonging to the house, we beheld two women grind-



ing at the mill, in a manner most forcibly illustrating the saying of our Saviour. The two women, seated on the ground opposite to each other, had between them the two round flat stones. In the centre of the upper stone was a cavity for pouring in the corn, and by the side of this an upright wooden handle for moving the stone. As the



operation began, one of the women with her right hand pushed this handle to the woman opposite, who again sent it to her companion; thus communicating a rotatory and very rapid motion to the upper stone; their left hands being all the while employed in supplying fresh corn, as fast as the bran and flour escaped from the sides of the machine." A larger mill than that above described is, according to the Pictorial Bible, sometimes used in large establishments. It differs, however, but little from the portable mill, except in its larger size, and is also worked by women. "The necessity of making bread every day in

36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

the warm climate of the East makes it necessary to grind daily at the mills; hence it was forbidden by the law to take the millstone as a pledge. Deut. xxiv. 6."—Covel. *Two men in the field, &c.*] The design of our Lord in noticing these several separations seems to have been to impress the minds of his hearers with these facts: 1st. That no rank or condition in life should escape the threatened calamity; but that the privacy of domestic retirement and the public walks of life should be equally visited by the wrath of the avenger; and 2dly. That there should be a marked providential distinction in the deliverance of some persons of both sexes, who should be rescued from their perilous situation, while others, in no greater hazard, should fall victims.

Verse 37. *They answered*] Meaning, that the disciples then spoke. A frequent mode, in the Scriptures, of stating the beginning or continuance of a remark. *Where, Lord?*] That is, where shall these things come to pass? *Wheresoever the body is, the eagles will be gathered*] The "body," literally understood, denotes a carcass or prey; and "the eagle" referred to is usually taken to be a kind of vulture, exceedingly common in some of the countries bordering on Palestine, and perhaps frequently met with in the Holy Land itself; which vulture was popularly termed "eagle." The scent and sight of these birds are astonishingly acute: Mr. Ward says of them, "It is remarkable how suddenly they appear after the death of an animal in the open field, though a single one may not have been seen on the spot."



## LUKE xviii. 1-14.

1 And he spake a parable unto them to *this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

for a long period before." See, also, Job xxxix. 29, 30. The objection to supposing the eagle, *properly so called*, to be intended, is, 1st. That naturalists assert the eagle *refuses to feed* on dead carcasses, but kills for itself; 2d. That it is a solitary bird, more than one pair being rarely met with in the same neighbourhood, whereas Christ's language conveys the idea of there being many, which agrees well with the habits of the vulture. *Figuratively*, "the eagles" denote the Roman soldiery, whose ensign was an eagle; and "the body" represents the Jewish nation. The true import of our Lord's answer therefore is, that as surely as the ravenous bird eagerly seeks out and finds its prey, so surely would the Romans "gather themselves together" against the Jewish nation and destroy it. It is highly probable that our Lord was not, at this time, clearly understood, even by the disciples, and that he did not wish to be, but purposely hid his meaning in somewhat obscure language: when, however, the event here darkly shadowed forth began to be realized, the interpretation became easy. For fuller information on some of the topics comprised in this lesson, see on Matthew xxiv.

## LUKE xviii. 1-14.

Verse 1. *He spake a parable, &c.*] "The commencement of this chapter," says Bloomfield, "is plainly connected, in subject, with the close of the preceding; for attention to prayer, &c., would be the disciples' best support under the evils which would precede the destruction

of Jerusalem." "There is in this parable," observes Campbell, "a particular reference to the distress and trouble the disciples were soon to meet with from their persecutors, which would render the duties of prayer, patience, and perseverance, peculiarly seasonable." A "parable" has been defined "a comparison, a figurative speech, a riddle." According to Bishop Lowth, it is a kind of allegory, "consisting in the narration of a fictitious or accommodated event, applied to the illustration of some important truth." For a few brief remarks on the nature and use of this mode of teaching, see note on Mark iv. 2, vol. ii., p. 154. *Men ought always to pray*] This does not mean that people are to be always praying, but that they are to pray habitually and perseveringly. Bloomfield says the word rendered "always" has the sense of *constantly, perseveringly*; and is used in opposition to that intermission of regular duty which arises from weariness or despondency. We must not, therefore, get tired of, or discouraged in, prayer. *Not to faint*] A man is said to faint in an undertaking, when, through weariness or cowardice, he gives over striving to accomplish it. This is not to be allowed in prayer. See 2 Cor. iv. 16, where the apostle declares, that notwithstanding the many afflictions and trials to which he is continually exposed through preaching the gospel, he *faints not*, but perseveres in his duty at all hazards. So with other Christians; there are, sometimes, difficulties in the way; faith may be weak, desire faint, temptation powerful, &c.; hence one has said,

"What various hindrances we meet  
In coming to the mercy seat!  
Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,  
But wishes to be often there."



2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man :

3 And there was a widow in that city ; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

We are, however, to let none of these things move us from our duty, for Christ's injunction imports that the duty of prayer is not to be intermitted or sluggishly performed, but to be resolutely and importunately persisted in. This direction is of universal application : "men"—*all men*—"ought to pray." But why ? 1st. Because God has commanded them to do so : (2 Chron. vii. 15 ; Jer. xxix. 12, 13 ; xxxiii. 3 ; 1 Tim. ii. 8 :) 2d. Because prayer is, in itself, a becoming acknowledgment of the all-sufficiency of God, and of our dependance upon him, and as such, is pleasing to him : (Prov. xv. 8 ; Psa. lxii. 8 ; xci. 14, 15 ; Isa. lvi. 7 ; Zech. xiii. 9 :) 3d. Because it is our interest, he having promised peculiar blessings to them that "call upon his name." (2 Kings xx. 5 ; Psalm cxlv. 19 ; Isaiah lxv. 24 ; James xv. 16.)

Verses 2, 3. *There was a judge*] A "judge" is an officer appointed to administer justice, by hearing and deciding, according to law, matters of complaint between two or more persons. Deut. xxv. 1. *Feared not God, neither regarded man*] "Feared not God" means, had no respect for his authority or law ; and "regarded not man," implies that he cared not for redressing their wrongs. This description of his character is generally supposed to be a proverbial saying, implying him to be a man of the most daring and unblushing wickedness. He must have been a very unsuitable person for his office, for an essential requisite to the character of a good judge is, that he shall fear God ; (see Deut. i. 16, 17 ;) as otherwise one of the strongest motives to "judging righteous judgment"

is wanting. *A widow*] A "widow" is a woman who has lost her husband by death. This is a feature which gives increased interest to the parable, both because, from the generally peculiarly trying and helpless situation of such persons, they are especially the care of the good magistrate, and because God has threatened to visit severe punishment on them that "oppress the widow ;" Isa. lxxviii. 5 ; Mal. iii. 5. Thus while the Jewish Scriptures enjoined that justice shall be done to all persons, the "stranger," the "fatherless," and the "widow," are repeatedly singled out and commended as objects of particular attention ; apparently, because they are less able to defend their rights than are others : Deut. xxvii. 19 ; Jer. xxii. 3. In this the Scriptures furnish a beautiful exemplification of the divine benevolence. *Avenge me of mine adversary*] The word rendered "adversary," literally signifies an *opponent*, or *accuser*. In this sense it is applied to Satan, who is represented as the *accuser* of good men. 1 Pet. v. 8. Hence it came to signify any *enemy*. "Avenge me" means, *do me justice*. There is no reason to suppose that the "widow" was influenced by any feelings of revenge ; her simple desire was, to obtain justice. From this we may infer that her "adversary" had done, or was seeking to do her wrong ; and the "judge" was bound, by every consideration of honour and of equity, to maintain her right. There is not, in the East, as much of form in litigation as with us : the parties are arraigned before the magistrate, who hears what each has to say, and decides, usually immediately, on the merits of the case. Contrary to this, the usual course, this judge, in the present instance, delayed to pronounce sentence ; or, perhaps, refused to entertain the case at all, until driven to it by the importunity of the woman.



4 And he would not for a while : but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man ;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

Verses 4, 5. *He would not for a while*] Because of his disregard of justice. *This widow troubleth me, &c.*] Namely, by her frequent and earnest expostulations for redress. We may infer from this, that the obtaining of justice anciently depended much on the caprice of the judge. Such is still the case in the East generally. How far inferior to our own privileges! *Weary me*] The import of the original is said to be well expressed by the English phrase "beat out," frequently used to express excessive weariness, through importunate solicitation. The original employs a pugilistic term, signifying to bruise or blacken, as by a blow on the face. If such a person as this judge—one neither fearing God nor regarding man—could be wearied out with the importunate cry of a poor widow, with what certainty may we depend on the success of our earnest supplications for the blessing and aid of Him

Whose "heart is made of tenderness,"

Whose "bowels melt with love!"

Verse 6. *Hear what, &c.*] It is not to be supposed that our Lord, in thus calling attention to the reasoning of the "unjust judge," designs to approve his conduct, or recommend his behaviour to the imitation of the disciples, for if he had, he would not have applied to him the epithet "unjust." The moral is, as Christ teaches in the opening, that "men ought always to pray," inasmuch as God is faithful and just, and will assuredly afford the required

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Never-

aid. "Call upon me in the day of trouble," says he, "and I will answer thee."

Verse 7. *Shall not God avenge his own elect*] Meaning, shall he not vindicate their cause, and punish their "adversaries?" The word "elect," here, means God's *chosen* and *approved* servants; that is, all who, having with the heart "believed unto righteousness," continue to manifest the genuineness of their faith by their obedience and love, and thus secure the witness of the Holy Spirit that they "are born of God." Compare 2 Thess. ii. 13, and Eph. i. 4-6, with Gal. iii. 26; 1 John iv. 7, v. 1, and Rom. viii. 29, 30, with verse 9 of the same chapter. These are termed God's "own," both because they have voluntarily given themselves to him, and because they are "created anew in Christ Jesus." The appellation denotes, also, the peculiar regard and affection which God bears to his people as his spiritual children. 2 Cor. vi. 18. *Cry day and night, &c.*] The word "cry" is to be understood of earnest entreaty; and by its being continued "day and night," is meant that it is not a *fitful*, but a *continual* calling upon God. *Though he bear long with them*] That is, *though he be slow* in vindicating their cause. The Almighty seems sometimes to be regardless of the prayers of his people: perhaps to teach them patience, or to increase the fervour of their desires. It is, however, in appearance only; for "his eyes are" ever "over the righteous," and "his ears open to their cry."

Verse 8. *He will avenge speedily*] "Speedily," here means *suddenly, unexpectedly*. It is very clear, as Doddridge observes, that the Lord might long delay to vindicate



theless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which . . .

cate the cause of his elect, and yet be truly said to "avenge them speedily" by executing sudden and unlooked-for judgment on their enemies. For a similar mode of speech, see Hab. ii. 3. There seems to be a close connection between the times of trial spoken of in the preceding chapter and the declaration here made: if so, the promise should, perhaps, be understood as having special reference to the case of the early Jewish Christians. It need not, however, be restricted to them; for God will ever "avenge his own elect." *Nevertheless, when the Son cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* "Nevertheless" has the sense of *but—notwithstanding*. The Saviour had just declared that God would "avenge his elect;"—"nevertheless," or notwithstanding this declaration, "shall he, when he cometh, find faith:" intimating that he would *not*. It thus appears that the "faith" referred to means belief in the threatening of Jesus that God would punish the Jews for their wickedness. This faith they, as a nation, possessed not; for if they had they would have repented, and the threatened judgment have been averted: the denunciations, as well as promises of God, being always conditional. By "the earth," the land of Judea merely is to be understood, the threatening being only against the inhabitants of that country. The term is commonly allowed to be used in a similarly restricted sense in a few other passages of the sacred writings.

Verse 9. *He spake this parable, &c.*] The object of the preceding parable was, to show the benefit of fervent and persevering prayer: the design of the present is, to guard

ed in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

the worshipper against self-confidence and presumption, and to exhibit the advantage of humility and self-abasement in our approaches to the divine Being. *Unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous*] The word rendered "unto," should, according to several critics, have been translated *concerning*: "he spake a parable concerning certain," &c. The persons referred to were, as appears from the drift of the discourse, members of the sect of the Pharisees; and this inference agrees well with the prevailing characteristic of this sect—*self-righteousness*. We are not, however, to suppose that *all* the Pharisees were of this description:—some honourable exceptions are known, as Simeon, Nicodemus, &c.; and the parable is directed not against the whole denomination, but against "certain" of the party. "Trusted in themselves," &c., means both that they *thought themselves* "righteous," and that they built their hopes upon this righteousness. They were, therefore, *sincere* persons; but the sequel shows that sincerity is not always a passport to the divine favour. They expected to be saved, not only because they had "Abraham their father," but especially because they believed themselves to be the "righteous" children of Abraham. The word "righteous," in this passage, has the sense of *upright*, and implies that these Pharisees walked,—or rather, fancied they walked,—in strict accordance with the will of God, and therefore must necessarily be accepted of him. Doubtless, they carefully observed the outward ceremonies of religion; but they knew not that the law of God reacheth unto the thoughts and intents of the heart. *Despised others*] Who were less punctilious of



10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself:

outward observances than themselves. They "despised," or *looked down on*, such persons, as not being so good as they were, and therefore treated them with contempt. This disposition was the natural result of their own self-righteousness. It betokened spiritual pride, which is an emotion very offensive to God, (see Psa. ci. 5; Prov. xvi. 5; Isa. lvii. 15; Jas. iv. 6,) and shows how far these Pharisees were from being really good people; for if truly pious they would have been humble, and while they gratefully acknowledged their own obligations to the grace of God, they would have been so far from "despising others," that they would have pitied the condition of the erring, and sought to reclaim them.

Verse 10. *Two men went into the temple, &c.*] Not into the temple itself, but into one of the courts which surrounded it:—no one being permitted to enter the sacred edifice but the priests and Levites. These courts were so arranged as to furnish suitable places in which to worship. See vol. i., pp. 53–55. *One a Pharisee*] For a notice of the Pharisees see on Matt. iii. 7, vol. i., pp. 165, 166. *The other a publican*] See vol. i., pp. 172, 173.

Verse 11. *The Pharisee stood, &c.*] Standing was the prevalent posture in prayer among the Jews, though not the only one; (for our Saviour and Stephen kne t Luke xxii. 41; Acts vii. 60;) and we are informed that it was customary with them, in times of deep penitence and of mourning, both to kneel and to prostrate themselves on the ground. Some commentators think that the phrase, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself," ought to read, "The Pharisee, *standing by himself*, prayed thus."

God, I think thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

giving as a reason for the proposed rendering, that this sanctimonious sect greatly feared to be touched by others, lest they should become defiled. It *may be* that this opinion is correct; but to us it does not seem so, for no Gentile was allowed to enter the "court of Israel," and no Jew, knowing himself to be defiled, *would* enter: so that there would be little or no ground to fear the contraction of ceremonial uncleanness from this cause. Besides, it is very doubtful whether the original will bear this construction. It is more likely that the meaning is, he said over to himself what evils he had avoided, what good things he had done, and what was the ground of his thanksgiving: for it is not *mental* but *secret* prayer that is spoken of—that is, prayer in which words are uttered, though in a low tone of voice; whereas, in *mental* prayer, the language is conceived, but not spoken. *I think thee that I am not as other men*] The Jews correctly reckoned thanksgiving an important part of prayer, and therefore offered it. Psa. l. 14; Dan. vi. 10. By not being "as other men," the Pharisee meant *better* than "other men." This expression shows him to have been an arrogant, proud, and boastful man. Arrogant, in claiming for himself moral superiority; proud, in valuing himself on this supposed excellence; and boastful, in making mention of it before God; for his ascription of thanks to the divine Being evidently savours more of self-complacency than of devout gratitude. *Extortioners, unjust, adulterers*] "Extortioners" are persons who extort, or compel payment of, more money for an article than it is worth. The term is frequently applied to those who take advantage of the necessities of others to oppress them. "Unjust," means



12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

persons who *overreach*, and so obtain, by *fraud*, more than they ought to receive. The difference between the "extortioner" and the "unjust" person is, that the former obtains by threatened or actual violence what the other acquires by  *cunning*. The "unjust" man may also profess, and seem, to be fair and honest in his dealings; the extortioner makes no such profession. An "adulterer" is one who, being himself married, violates the chastity of his neighbour's wife, and is a most despicable character: he is one of the greatest pests of society. As the Saviour describes the pharisee as making mention of these good traits in his character before God, it cannot be but that he designed to exhibit one who really thought himself, and probably was, thus outwardly moral; and therefore an exception to the sect at large as described by Christ in Matt. xxiii. 14; Luke xvi. 14.

Verse 12. *I fast twice in the week*] To "fast" is to abstain, wholly or in part, from food, during a specified time—usually from sunrise to sunset. It is frequently, as here, practised as a religious rite. The strict Pharisees observed two fast days in a week—the second and the fifth—answering to our Monday and Thursday; one of which was commemorated, from tradition, as the day on which Moses ascended the mount, and the other as that on which he returned with the ten commandments.—*Clarke*. *I give tithes of all that I possess*] The Pharisees were so exact in the payment of tithes, that, as we learn from Matt. xxiii. 23, they voluntarily tithed their garden herbs, which the law did not require them to do. A "tithe" is the *tenth part* of any thing. Lev. xxvii. 32. By the Mosaic law the Jews were required to consecrate

a tenth of their produce to the Lord; partly as an acknowledgment of his sovereignty,\* and partly as a provision for the Levites, who were left, when the Hebrews took possession of the Promised Land, without any other inheritance among their brethren than this tithe, and the possession of forty-eight cities and their suburbs—thirteen for the priests, and thirty-five for the remaining members of the Levitical family. Numbers xxxv. 1-8; Joshua xxi. Besides this tithe, it would seem, from Deuteronomy xiv. 22-29, that another tenth, or perhaps a tenth of the remaining property, was to be appropriated yearly, as an expression of gratitude, to making a feast, to be eaten in the sacred place, by the giver, his friends, and as many Levites as the provision would entertain: (Deut. xiv. 22-27 :) and that every *third* year an additional tithe was to be given as a feast of charity to the poor, and eaten at the donor's residence. (Verses 28, 29.) It would thus appear that three-tenths of the income of each family was absorbed. Besides this, occasional costly sacrifices were to be provided, which amounted, perhaps, to nearly another tenth of their yearly income. It must, then, have required full one-third of

\* For Palestine was "the Lord's land;" Hos. ix. 3; Lev. xxv. 23. "When William the Conqueror parcelled out the lands of England, he reserved a certain small rent to be annually paid out of every estate to the king, as an acknowledgment that it was received from, and held under, him. This rent is paid to this day from all freehold estates, under the name of chief rent. Or if there be any estates that pay it not, it is because they have been purchased out of others, of which purchase it was made a condition that they should be clear of this incumbrance, those other estates paying it for them."—*Jennings*.



13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his eyes* unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

the yearly income of each family to support the religious institutions of Judaism! The reader will readily perceive that the nation must have been prospered in a remarkable manner, or it could not have borne so expensive an establishment. It ought to be stated that some commentators think the tithe referred to Deut. xiv. 28, 29, to be the same as that spoken of in the preceding verses, only that every third year it was allowed to be eaten at home instead of being partaken of at Jerusalem. No such regulations are made for the support of the "ministry of reconciliation" under the new dispensation; for while it is expressly stated that they which "preach the gospel should live of the gospel," (1 Cor. ix. 14,) there is no specific direction as to the amount to be given; that matter being left to the consciences and ability of the people, with the single injunction, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things" Gal. vi. 6.

Verse 13. *The publican, standing afar off*] Meaning, either at some distance from the sacred house, or from the Pharisee, whom he may have regarded as a very holy man. Most likely the former. It is probable that the pride of the Pharisee would lead *him* to place himself as close to the temple as possible, as being the more holy and honourable place; while the humility of the publican might induce *him* to stand in the lower end of the court, as conscious of his unworthiness to approach the sacred place which was regarded as God's habitation. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes, &c.*] Because of his keen sense of his own guilt. This is a beautiful and striking

picture of real contrition, and absence of all self-conceit; for as *raising the eyes* to the countenance of another is an act expressive of confidence and joy, so is *casting them downward* indicative of confusion, sorrow, or humility. Every one knows that it is very common for persons who are sensible of having done wrong, and who are not hardened in crime, to cast their eyes to the ground when brought into the presence of the offended party, or of those who are empowered to punish the guilty. *Smote upon his breast*] That is, *beat himself on the breast*. This action is common among all nations, and is symbolical of deep anguish. The cause of the publican's grief, as appears from his prayer, was his deep sense of his own sinfulness. *God be merciful, &c.*] The prayer of this poor man was widely different from that of the Pharisee. Here is no invidious comparison between himself and men worse than he, for the purpose of extenuating his faults, or of placing, in as strong and favourable a light as possible, his own comparatively good deeds. He saw and felt himself to be a sinner, and ingenuously confessed himself to be such: seeking no refuge but in the mercy of God, and expecting comfort only from the exercise of the divine benevolence. And surely he had much to encourage him in his approach to God. The Lord had declared himself to be "merciful and gracious;" the pardoner of "iniquity, transgression, and sin;" (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7:) and his inspired servant had called upon "the wicked man" to "forsake his ways," and on "the unrighteous man" to turn from "his thoughts," promising that God would "abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. So at the present time the penitent sinner not only *may* come, but is expressly *invited to approach* God, and through faith in Christ to receive the remission of his sins. Rom. iii. 21-27.



14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Verse 14. *I tell you, &c.*] Here is an authoritative decision as to which of the two men were approved of God. *Went down—justified*] Probably the words “went down” are spoken in allusion to the situation of the temple, which stood on an eminence—Mount Moriah. “Justified” means *accepted, approved, accounted as just*. It is a law term, properly importing “acquitted from condemnation:” and its use here implies that God had, according to the publican’s prayer, been “merciful” unto him, and had forgiven all his past sins; for God cannot account any one just unless the guilt under which he had laboured be removed. *Rather than, &c.*] “That is,” says Mr. Wesley, “and not the other.” Bloomfield’s rendering is to the same effect *Exalteth himself, &c.*] As to “exalt” is to *lift up, to dignify*; so to “abase” is to *cast down, to humble*. The Pharisee showed himself, by his prayer, to be a man of a haughty disposition: overvaluing himself, but undervaluing others, and was therefore “abased:” the publican proved himself, by his actions and confession, to be a man of an humble, lowly spirit, and was therefore “exalted” to the approval and favour of the Most High.

## LESSON XXVI. [Date, A. D. 29.]

*Christ instructs a young ruler—Cautions his disciples on the danger of wealth.*—Matt. xix. 16–29; Mark x. 17–30; Luke xviii. 18–30.

## MATT. xix. 16–29.

AND behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

## NOTES ON MATT. xix. 16–29.

Verse 16. *One came and said, &c.*] The evangelists have here presented us with a touching, though sad picture. A young man of high rank, great promise, and much moral worth, is incited by the Spirit of all grace to seek the salvation of his soul; this work he commences, but, notwithstanding his evident sincerity, the strong hold which the world had obtained upon his affections prevents his compliance with the self-denying requirements of Christ, and there is much reason to fear his soul was ultimately “drowned in perdition.” From Luke xviii. 18, it appears that this person was a “ruler;” that is, probably, a member of the sanhedrim, or a ruler of a synagogue. He seems to have been very eager to obtain direction, and exceedingly respectful in his deportment; for Mark says he “came running and kneeled” to Jesus,—meaning, perhaps, paid him a reverential salutation,—“and said, Good Master,” &c. The interview was, apparently, in the public road, for the evangelist last quoted says our Lord had “gone forth into the way;” being, it is presumed, about to resume his journey toward Jerusalem (Mark x. 17.) *Good Master*] Rather, “good teacher:” a style of address frequently employed by Jewish scholars

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17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me *good*? toward their instructors. *What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*] Mark and Luke have, "that I may *inherit* eternal life;" but the original is sometimes used to express the mere acquirement of a thing, and is assuredly to be understood in those passages in the sense of *obtain*. From this inquiry it may be inferred, 1st. that he was not a Sadducee—a disbeliever in a future state; 2d. that he did not rest satisfied with the Pharisaic notion that "eternal life" would certainly be conferred on him as a son of Abraham. It thus appears that his mind was, to a considerable extent, divinely illuminated: though he had not a clear understanding of the extent and spirituality of God's law, as will hereafter more fully appear. From his inquiry, "What good thing shall I do?" &c., it is supposed that he imagined some particular act or acts of obedience to be so pre-eminently pleasing to God that the performance of it or them would assuredly secure his favour. If this supposition be correct, he must have imbibed the notion, then commonly taught by the Pharisaic rabbis, that some of the divine commandments were *light*, (or of slight obligation,) and might be dispensed with, while others were *weighty*, (or absolutely binding,) and the observance of them peculiarly acceptable unto God.

Verse 17. *Why callest thou me good? there is none good, &c.*] Our Lord probably meant this reply as a reproof both to the ruler, for using the flattering title by which he had just addressed him; and to the Pharisaic teachers, for their pride in desiring and valuing such ostentatious and indecorous compliments. Not that the word "good," even in its widest sense, would be really improperly applied to Jesus, (for according to his own argument, as it belonged truly to God, it might be appropriated

*there is none good but one, that is God*: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

with equal truth to himself, he being God,) but because the young man had applied it to him, though he regarded him in no other light than that of an excellent teacher. For, as Mr. Watson cogently observes, "This title was not rejected by our Lord because inapplicable to him, but because it was improperly applied by one who regarded him only as a mere man, not as the divine Messiah. The argument, therefore, which has been sometimes built upon this text, to prove that Christ himself disclaimed divinity, is wholly unsound; for our Lord did not in this case restrain one from calling him 'good' who came professing his persuasion that he was a divine person, or one who entreated him to do an act which supposed divine power, and so might be considered as implying such a persuasion, but one who addressed him only as a teacher." By there being "none good but God," is meant none absolutely good, but he. Having thus censured the adulation of the employers, and the arrogance of the receivers, of such inappropriate titles, our Lord proceeded to answer the question of the young man. *If thou wilt enter into life*] Namely, that life inquired about—"eternal life." *Keep the commandments*] Meaning *all* the commandments of God comprehended in the decalogue. The Saviour does not, here, intimate that any man can, unaided by divine grace, "keep the commandments;" neither does he advance any tenet contrary to, or inconsistent with, the doctrine that "man is justified, not by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ." His language is a simple and direct reply to the question which had been put to him, and is (we think) the only complete answer which the case admitted: for the young man's inquiry was not