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CAPERNAUM EXALTED TO HEAVEN.

– MARK 1:21-34. – FEBRUARY 18. –

Golden Text: – "He healed many of their sick."

OUR Lord declared of Capernaum that having been exalted to heaven it should be brought down to hell. (Matt. 11:23.) Our lesson tells us how it was exalted to heaven – that great mercies and blessings and privileges were accorded to its people early in our Lord's ministry of healing. Nevertheless few there accepted him as Messiah, and, as he predicted, the city was brought down to hell – not to a place of burning or torture, but to hades, a grave condition, a death condition. The city so completely disappeared that its location is not definitely known now. A certain pile of stones is credited with being its former site.

Capernaum was on the Lake of Galilee, near the scene of the miraculous draught of fishes noted in our previous lesson. On the next Sabbath day, Jesus, accompanied by the four fishermen who had left all to become his disciples, entered into the synagogue at Capernaum. Jewish synagogues were very liberally governed, and afforded an opportunity for nearly any one of reverent manner to present his views respecting the Law and the prophets. Our Lord availed himself of the opportunity and taught the people, who were astonished at his doctrine, his teachings. They were accustomed to hearing the scribes and Pharisees haggle over the Scriptures, guessing and confusing their meaning and generally mystifying them, but Jesus taught as a master who thoroughly understood his subject – "as one having authority."

True, our Lord had come down from heaven and had knowledge of things of which others were ignorant; but it was not respecting these that he taught, we may be sure from his remark to Nicodemus, "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe

not, how could you believe if I told you of heavenly things?" On the contrary, our Lord's discourses were along the lines of divine revelation – the Law and the Prophets, and the fulfilment of these. This is clearly indicated by his declaration, "I speak not from myself; but the Father which sent me he hath given me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak." (John 12:49.) Again he said, "My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me." – John 7:16.

We pause here to remark that the teachings of all the Lord's representatives should be along this same line – not human speculations and philosophies, but the Word of God – **[R3726 : page 58]** "He that hath a dream let him tell a dream, but he that hath my Word let him speak my Word." (Jer. 23:28.) "To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word it is because they have no light in them." (Isa. 8:20.) "Teach the Word, be instant in season," and even when inconvenient to yourself. (2 Tim. 4:2.) "The Word of God is powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword." (Heb. 4:12.) "Sanctify them through thy Truth, thy Word is Truth." (John 17:17.) They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus," and learned of him. (Acts 4:13.) Thus it is that those who are faithful and loyal to the Lord and the word of his testimony speak not vaguely and indefinitely to the world, but declare the message of God, the "good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people," "in due time."

"I KNOW THEE WHO THOU ART"

Whilst Jesus was speaking, or probably at the conclusion of his discourse, the congregation in the synagogue was startled by the words, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." The speaker was a demoniac; today he would be called a crazy man, and would be confined in an asylum. We would **[R3727 : page 58]** not say that all insanity is demonism

– that all insane persons are possessed of evil spirits, as in the case under review. Quite evidently there are cases in which the brain is diseased, but we believe that fully one-half or more of all those who are dealt with as insane are cases of demoniacal possession – "obsession."

As we have shown in other writings, the evil spirits or demons who thus obsess humanity were once angels – "those angels which kept not their first estate" (Jude 1:6), but who in the days of Noah fell from divine favor through sin, and have since been under chains of darkness pending the judgment of the great day, the Millennial day, when the Christ – Jesus and the Church in glory – shall not only grant a trial or judgment to man but also to those fallen angels. (1 Cor. 6:3.) Meantime their endeavors to communicate with humanity, and to obtain control over them through the submission of their wills, seems to be incessant. Throughout the Scriptures, both in the Old and New Testaments, all who reverence God are warned against having anything whatever to do with mediums, seances and every form of spirit communications as being of these demons – Satanic. It is our duty to reiterate this, because these influences are more active today than ever before, and because the Scriptures show that they will be increasingly active and powerful in the near future as a part of the great trial coming upon all Christendom in this our day. We learn that in Australia Spiritism is much more advanced and more powerful than in either Europe or America, but it is making rapid strides everywhere.

The demon of our lesson seems to have had the thought that at the coming of Messiah all evil was to be abolished and destroyed. One account says, "Art thou come to destroy us before the time?" as though the demons had some information or premonition that the time for the manifestation of power through Messiah was still future. Another Scripture represents an evil spirit as crying out, "Art thou come to torment us?" The word for

torment in that case signifies hasten, punish. We may be sure the inspired writers up to that time had not indicated the nature of the punishment that would be inflicted upon the fallen angels, and that the latter merely surmised that it would be their destruction.

The Apostle Peter seems to imply that when the fallen spirits witnessed our Lord's death as the sin offering, and his resurrection with divine power, they realized a love of God and a power of God on behalf of humanity that they had not previously appreciated, and the thought of God's mercy to come in due time to men gave ground to some of them for hoping also that in due time the repentant ones of their number might be the recipients of a share in divine mercy through Christ. And this indeed we know is a part of the divine program – for not only fallen men but also fallen angels are to be judged or tried at his appearing and kingdom. – 1 Cor. 6:3.

Our Lord commanded the demon to leave the man – to give up his hold upon his mind and body. The demon was powerless to resist the authority vested in Jesus, but was not hindered from causing the man considerable torture in going from him. Luke says (4:35) the demon threw the man down in the midst of the crowd – thus and in every way the malignity of these evil spirits is manifested. There are no such obsessions or possessions by holy spirits. God recognizes the individuality of each member of the race and does not intrude upon it, nor do the holiest angels thus intrude. God through his holy Spirit operates not as do the demons, to the overthrow of reason and the subjugation of the will, but on the contrary operates only in accord with reason and the will. The fully consecrated believer in Jesus may receive of the holy Spirit, and this more and more abundantly as he comes into glorious touch and relationship to the Lord in thought and word and conduct. But any neglect of the divine teachings or principles in the exercise of self-will in opposition to the recognized will of God, is sure to that extent to quench the spirit

of holiness, the spirit of a sound mind, the Spirit of God, which is in no wise forced upon us, but must be entertained, must be held on to, must be desired if it would be retained and increased.

AMAZED AT THE TEACHING

No doubt in our Lord's teachings he had explained the cause of sin and sorrow and pain and death – that these were the results of original disobedience, the curse, and that in God's due time and way this curse would be lifted from the world, evil spirits would no longer have power and authority to deceive and infest, and sickness and pain and death would all be wiped out in the glorious morning of blessing which God has promised through the Messiah. These astounding teachings, so much more clear and distinct than anything they had ever heard from their scribes, and so full of inspiration and hope, when backed by the demonstrations of the Lord's power over the evil spirits, caused all the people astonishment. They sufficiently realized that the one who had been teaching upon their seashore was a great teacher, a great prophet, if not the Messiah himself.

Although more than a year had elapsed since Jesus began his ministry, although the miracle of Cana of Galilee was in the past, and although he had taught to a considerable extent in that region, "The Kingdom of heaven is at **[R3727 : page 59]** hand," yet this seems to have been the first illustration of our Lord's miraculous power over disease and evil spirits. Otherwise the people of that city who had heard Jesus' teaching would not have been so astonished. We may be sure that the four fishermen who had left all to be his disciples were less surprised than the others, because of their knowledge of the increase of the wine at Cana, and their knowledge also of the miraculous draught of fishes a few days previous to this casting out of the demon.

Leaving the synagogue, Jesus and the four disciples went to Peter's home, where his mother-in-law lay sick of a fever. They

entreated Jesus on her behalf (Luke 4:38), and he healed her. Evidently the casting out of the demon suggested to the minds of the disciples the power of our Lord to heal diseases, otherwise they would have entreated the Lord to heal the woman before going into the synagogue. Our Lord took the woman by the hand and raised her up, and immediately the fever left her. Other than this she was not weak and enervated, as fever patients usually are when the fever is stopped. On the contrary, she had her wonted strength, and was able at once to minister to the guests of the home, to serve them with dinner, etc.

"HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES"

At even, at sunset, not only because it was the close of the day, but because according to the Jewish custom the Sabbath ending at sunset made it in the eyes of the people the more proper time, they brought to Jesus the sick and those possessed with devils that he might relieve them. He did this, expending in the service his own vitality, we may be sure. This much is not only intimated by the Apostle's declaration that himself bore our infirmities and carried our sorrows, but it is directly stated in connection with one of his healings that "Virtue [vitality, power, strength] went out of him and healed them all." (Matt. 8:17; Luke 6:19.) Thus our Lord fulfilled his covenant of consecration and began to lay down his life for others. The using of strength for the assisting of others continued to the end of his ministry, when through non-resistance, submission to the Father's will, he permitted himself to be crucified for sinners, the just for the unjust, that he might redeem us with his blood, his sacrificed life.

The account says, "He suffered not the devils to speak because they knew him." How evident it is, not only from this statement but also from the case in which Paul rebuked the damsel who cried, "These are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of eternal life" – how evident it is that the

Lord does not desire the testimony of devils respecting himself or his plan. The same is true of all the unregenerate. The Word of the Lord is to such, "What hast thou to do to take my word into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and casteth my words behind thee." (Psa. 50:17.) It is the special privilege of those who are the Lord's consecrated ones to be his ambassadors, his mouthpieces – it is a special honor conferred upon such; hence the declaration again, "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." – Dan. 12:10.

Only those wise toward God and seeking to live in harmony with his will may be expected to have clear discernment of the true plan of God; all others will be confused and in more or less of darkness. It is in harmony with this that the prophet declares respecting the entire body of Christ, the Anointed, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the good tidings." None are to be considered teachers of God's message except they have the anointing, and all who have the anointing, to the extent that they possess it, are privileged to be representatives and mouthpieces of the Lord according to their opportunities and willingness under the reasonable limitations of the Word. **[R3728 : page 59]**

The next morning the multitudes, enthused with the thought that they had a great teacher and healer in their midst, sought Jesus again, but he had departed early into a wilderness place, saying that he must preach the gospel in other cities also – he must be about his Father's business, he must attend to the necessities and interests of the entire flock. Evidently our Lord's intention was to merely give such evidences of divine favor as would convince all who were Israelites indeed respecting his true character and work as the Father's representative, as the Messiah. Hence he would leave after giving these miraculous tokens – leave, that those who were not in a proper condition of heart might forget, might lose their interest, might cool their ardor, while only the Israelites

indeed, waiting for the consolation of God promised through the Law and the prophets, would continue to watch and hope and wait and pray for the Kingdom he had announced.

So it is in every case: the Lord is seeking only the elect class, those who worship him in spirit and in truth; he seeks not the multitude, their time is not yet. In due time all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped, and the knowledge of the Lord shall be granted to every member of the race, but now it is only for the special class whom the Lord is seeking to be members of the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

HE HEALED MANY

While our Lord undoubtedly healed many diseased ones during the two years and a quarter following this lesson, we have no thought that he healed all the sick of Palestine. His mission was not to heal the sick but to preach the gospel. The healing of the sick was merely incidental, to attract the attention, to assist the faith, to point him out as the finger of God. For instance, we remember the cure of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, where there were many sick folk, and he alone of them all was healed (John 5:1-9.) The account would seem to imply that many if not all the sick at Capernaum were healed, but it was a little city, and, besides, it was granted, we are told, wonderful blessings and privileges and opportunities and favors above other cities – it was exalted up to heaven in point of privileges, blessings and opportunities, and this largely through so general a healing of its sick and devil-possessed ones.

"THESE SIGNS SHALL FOLLOW"

Many in studying this lesson will doubtless call to mind the arguments of some who claim that all of the Lord's people who truly trust him should heal each other through prayer and should never be sick. Many who thus argue quote these words, "These

signs shall follow them that believe: [R3728 : page 60] in my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." – Mark 16:17,18.

These dear friends should note two things: (1) That these words, and indeed all of the sixteenth chapter of Mark from the ninth verse to its close, are not found in the old manuscripts of the Bible, and are recognized as being additions to what Mark wrote, and hence wholly without inspired authority. All scholars know this, and many who quote these words we would suppose are intelligent enough to have this knowledge. Why then do they quote them as Scripture when they know they are not Scripture?

(2) These words are not true of the Lord's followers, and those who quote them as applicable show that they do not believe them. They will not take up serpents, they fear to drink deadly things, they cannot cast out devils, nor can they all heal the sick by laying on their hands.

Our Lord's miracles not only served as an instruction to the people but also typified or illustrated the power which he ultimately will use on a higher and grander scale in the blessing of all the families of the earth. He did not use his power, so far as the record shows, upon any of his followers, his disciples. Their call implied that they would follow in his steps, and instead of seeking restitution and recovery of physical health they would seek to lay down their lives for their brethren in the service of the Truth. Whoever has got the idea that the Lord's followers are called to get physical health and freedom from trials and difficulties, aches, pains and sorrows, has gotten the wrong thought. True, godly living and a heart at peace with the Lord are very conducive to physical health, but it is also true that to be instant in season and out of season in the service of the King will

mean a considerable amount of wear and tear, physically, and imply a measure of physical discomfort at times, and this injury in one way or another should be considered as a part of our sacrifice, a part of the "all things" of our experience which God is able to overrule to our profit.

Very many indeed of the Lord's people have received most wonderful blessings at his hands under the chastening rod of affliction, sickness. Thus an evil thing, an element of the curse, has in many instances been overruled for good to those who loved the Lord and were properly exercised by their experiences. True, there is no sickness in heaven, and there will be no sickness on earth after the Millennial Age shall have fully rolled away the curse and brought in restitution and perfection to those who will accept them on God's terms of obedience and shall have destroyed all other members of the human race. But that time has not yet come; we are still walking not by sight but by faith; we still have the weaknesses, mental, moral and physical, which came to us as our share of the general fall. The Lord may grant us special immunities or special refreshment according to his wisdom, according to his knowledge of the necessity of the work he would have us do, but it is not for us to attempt to withdraw our sacrifice by asking for earthly favors and immunities. Rather we are to ask for the spiritual blessings, realizing that the Father is more willing to give the holy Spirit to his children than are earthly parents to give earthly good things to theirs.

The giving to us of the holy Spirit will generally imply lessons in patience, meekness and in love development through sufferings and trials, moral or physical. The obedient child of God, developed through the knowledge of the Word and the possession of its spirit, will delight to acknowledge the Lord's wisdom and to trust him for such blessings of a temporal kind as may seem to him best. Our special advantages are of a spiritual kind, which did not begin at Capernaum or at all during our Lord's ministry, but

on the contrary began at Pentecost after he had ascended on high and received of the Father his reward and the authority to endue his followers with the spirit of begetting to the new nature.

Let us not seek for the loaves and fishes and physical healing, for after all these things do the Gentiles seek; but let us seek the spiritual health, strength and vigor, and all temporal things shall be added unto us according to divine wisdom and love.
