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## LABORERS IN THE HARVEST

– MARCH 3. – MARK 1:14-28. –

**Text. – "The Harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the Harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His Harvest." – Matthew 9:37, 38.**

EVERYWHERE the New Testament teaches that the work done by Jesus and His Apostles amongst the Jews eighteen centuries ago was a harvesting work. Thus Jesus said, "I send you forth to reap that upon which you have bestowed no labor. Other men labored and ye have entered into their labors" – ye are reapers of the fruits of their labors – gatherers of the "harvest" of the fruitage of the Jewish Age.

The ripe characters of that Dispensation were ready to receive Messiah and His Message upon terms of full devotion of their time, talents, influence and lives as servants of the New Institution – the New Covenant – which God purposes to inaugurate with Israel in due time, and under which all the families of the earth will be blessed. The service of the present time is sacrificial – the preparation of the Royal Priesthood, after the order of Melchizedec, to stand as Mediator between God and men – the world.

The labors of Jesus and the Apostles found about five hundred brethren worthy of the garnering during His ministry. Subsequently, at Pentecost and after, several thousand more Jews were harvested – brought into the Spirit Dispensation – begotten of the Holy Spirit as New Creatures, Members of the Body of the Anointed, members of the Royal Priesthood. But of these there were not a [R4969 : page 52] sufficient number to complete the Divine foreordination; hence, after all the "Israelites indeed" had been harvested, the Jewish people were thrust aside from Divine favor for a time, and God's Message of Grace was sent to the Gentiles, "to take out of them a people for His name" – to be associated with the Jews as members of the great

Mediator of the New Covenant, under the Headship of the glorified Christ.

## **GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM**

Today's lesson relates to our Lord's inauguration of the "harvest" work amongst the Jews. John the Baptist and his disciples had preached and baptized many under the announcement that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and that all desirous of participating in its great blessings should come into full harmony with the Mosaic Law, and thus be prepared to be transferred from typical Israel to antitypical Israel – from membership in Moses, the type, to membership in Christ, the Antitype. In due time the preaching of John the Baptist was brought to a close – when Herod cast him into prison. From that time onward Jesus and His disciples became more prominent, but their Message was the same as John's; as we read, "Jesus came to Galilee preaching the Kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Whoever believed this Message recognized Jesus as the "Sent of God," the Messiah, who, in God's due time, will be the King of Israel, and the Monarch of the earth. "The time is fulfilled" meant that the foreordained time when the offer of the Kingdom would be made unto the Jewish nation had arrived.

But God foreknew that Israel would not be ready – that only a few would be prepared to become the Bride of the Messiah, His associate in the Kingdom work, and that it would require eighteen centuries to select the remainder from amongst the Gentiles.

Hence St. Paul points out in Romans 9, 10 and 11 that the Prophets foretold the stumbling of Israel, their temporary rejection as a nation, the fact that a *remnant* of them would be the nucleus of the Bride class, and that the remainder would be made up of Gentiles. St. Paul declares, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh, but the election obtained it and the rest were blinded" – "until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in" and the "elect" class is completed.

However, God proceeded with His portion of the proposition just as though He had not known in advance the course the Israelites would take. The Gospel was preached to them first and all the saintly ones were found in advance of any move being made to open the door of this special favor to the Gentiles.

### **"TO BECOME FISHERS OF MEN"**

The Wisdom of God is foolishness with men, and the wisdom of men is foolishness with God – say the Scriptures. This is exemplified in our Lord's choice of the twelve Apostles, the calling of four of whom is noted in this study: Simon, Andrew, James and John. However able they were as men, they lacked the polish or education which people were accustomed to expect in religious teachers. The Bible record of them is, "People perceived that they were ignorant and unlearned men."

This reminds us that the Apostle declared that this "high calling" of God to joint-heirship with Jesus reached and influenced merely the poor of this world, rich in faith; that amongst the "elect" will be found "not many great, not many rich, not many wise, not many learned, not many noble." (I Cor. 1:26,27.) Success in life leads to more or less of self-confidence, self-esteem, self-will, whereas the Gospel Message appeals to those who feel their own weakness and imperfection and unworthiness, and who correspondingly with great earnestness lay hold upon the Divine promise – the Divine aid, giving God the glory.

The words of Jesus, "Woe unto you rich" (in wisdom, property, fame, in learning, in nobility of character) must not be understood to mean that the great, noble, wise and rich are all or nearly all condemned to eternal torment, or to any punishment, on account of their riches of education, character, etc.

Rather, we must remember the standpoint of the Great Teacher's Message – "Woe unto you" as respects the Kingdom **[R4969 : page 53]** – you are less likely to gain this wonderful "high calling" of God

than if you were in humbler circumstances. You have your consolation now, and correspondingly have less interest in the glorious things of God's Message. You are so well satisfied with the things of this present life that it will be the more difficult for you to sacrifice all these for the prospect of a share in Messiah's Kingdom. But, said the Master, "Blessed are you who are poor in spirit," humble-minded, and therefore the more teachable, for the more you will look out for the great Gift of God – the "pearl of great price," a share in the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

### **TAUGHT AS ONE HAVING AUTHORITY**

The first five verses of our study tell how the fishermen forsook their earthly *all* for the prospect of sharing with Messiah in His Kingdom. Verse 21 shows that the Redeemer was recognized in Capernaum as a great Teacher and a man of learning, to whom others gave place in the synagogue; and the people marveled, saying, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned at school?"

Moreover, they were astonished at His teaching, "for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." The Jewish scribes and rabbis then, as today, were evidently quite perfunctory and quite unable to give the people any understanding of the teachings of the Law and the prophecies. Jesus had a thorough grasp of the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and His applications and interpretations therefore were convincing to His hearers.

Had the Scribes and Pharisees and Priests accepted Him, the whole nation would have done so. But this would not have outworked the Divine Program. Hence the Master's works and teachings were largely parabolical and in dark sayings, because it was the Divine intention that only the saintly Jews should fully appreciate the Teacher and become His followers. The same principle, under God's providence, has applied to the Message and the messengers of the Kingdom throughout the entire Gospel Age. Hence at no time has the real Message been attractive to any except the saintly – others were

content with forms of godliness devoid of power and out of accord with the Word.

### **EVEN DEMONS OBEY HIM**

While Jesus was teaching in the Capernaum synagogue a young man, obsessed by a demon, "an unclean spirit," cried out. The demon recognized Jesus and His teaching and used the young man as his mouthpiece, his medium, saying, "Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

The demons cast out of human beings by our Lord and the Apostles, the Bible tells us, were once holy angels. They fell from Divine favor through their sinful relationship to humanity in the days of Noah. (Gen. 6:1-5.) These fallen spirit beings still desire human relationship, and are styled "unclean spirits," because, however they may begin by presenting themselves as angels of light, they later reveal their true characters by unchaste, impure suggestions.

As St. Paul refused to allow a young woman medium to proclaim him and Silas servants of God (Acts 16:16-18), so Jesus refused to allow this demon to give testimony respecting Himself – even though it was complimentary. He commanded the demon to come out of the man. In leaving the man the demon caused him great pain so that he cried aloud. The effect upon the congregation at the synagogue was amazement. Not only the teachings of Jesus captivated them, but also His power to deal with the evil spirits, corroborating His authority as a Teacher sent from God. His fame began to spread throughout all the region of Galilee.

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### **"A SAVIOR AND A GREAT ONE"**

"A ghastly sight shows in the shivering air

On Calvary's brow;  
The Savior of mankind, in love, hangs there,  
While followers bow  
The head low on the breast and sadly sigh,  
'How can He be Messiah – if He die?'

"A jeering mob surrounds the cursed knoll  
And mocks the Lord;  
Yet to His lips and from His stricken soul  
Cometh no word  
Of vengeance or reproach – ah, no; and when  
In anguish came the final moment, then

"'Tis finished!' rings in triumph through the sky;  
He bows His head;  
And, while the querying soldiers mark the cry,  
The Lord is dead.  
All anguish past, His triumph doth begin,  
The world is saved, a death blow dealt to sin.

"Jerusalem, amazed, hears fishers tell,  
With courage bold,  
How Christ has vanquished Satan, death and hell,  
As He foretold.  
Humble disciples forcefully proclaim,  
'There is Salvation in no other name.'

"A Sabbath's journey from the city gate,  
With sorrow shod,  
Two sad disciples bear their sorry weight  
To their abode.  
The Christ appears, while holden are their eyes,  
And doth expound wherefore Messiah dies.

"Emmaus reached, the Lord would further go;

They gently chide –  
'Thou hast beguiled our grief and tears, and so  
With us abide.'  
He brake their bread – then vanished from their sight –  
Their hearts did burn with holy joy that night.

"Still thus He comes; and though the faulty sight  
Of clouded eyes  
Perceives Him not, He makes the burden light,  
And stills our cries;  
For, like weaned babes, we mourn, the while He would  
Our hearts sustain with stronger, richer food.

"The tale is old, but ever sweetly new,  
Why Jesus died.  
The nail prints, doubting one, He shows to you,  
And in His side  
A spear thrust gapes – a passage rent apart,  
For easy access to your Savior's heart.

"It was for you, my brother, that He shed  
His life so free;  
For you, for me, He bowed His godlike head  
On Calvary's tree,  
That, trusting in the merit of His name,  
We might be saved from sorrow, sin and shame.

"The past sufficeth, surely, to have spent  
In sinful deeds.  
Come, join our band; and be our footsteps bent  
Where Jesus leads.  
So, in His righteousness serenely dressed,  
We'll meet Him face to face among the blest."

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