

The Mission of the Apostles and Disciples

At the close of the Sabbath, Jesus spoke again in the synagogue, inveighing in severe terms against the wickedness of the Pharisees in saying that He drove out devils through the power of the devil. He challenged them to say whether His actions and His teachings were not in perfect harmony, whether He did not practice what He preached. But they could allege nothing against Him.

In Peter's house outside the city gate, Jesus taught on the Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," and made the application against the Pharisees. After that He prepared the disciples for their approaching mission.



Jesus would not longer remain in Capharnaum—the crowd was too great and too excited. Many Gergeseans also had come hither, and they wanted to follow Jesus. They were poor, were habituated to a wandering life, and thought it would be a good thing to be supported by Him. Besides this they were under the impression that Jesus would, like Saul or David, cause Himself to be anointed king and then establish His throne in Jerusalem. But Jesus told them to go back to their homes, to do penance, to keep the Commandments, and to practice the lessons they had heard from Him. His Kingdom, He said, was far different from what they imagined, and no sinner should have part therein.

Jesus afterward left Capharnaum, accompanied by The Twelve and by thirty disciples. They directed their steps northward. Crowds of people were journeying along the same way. Jesus frequently paused to instruct sometimes this, sometimes that crowd, who then turned off in the direction of their homes. In this way He arrived at about three in the afternoon at a beautiful mountain, three hours from Capharnaum and not quite so far from the Jordan. Five roads branched out from it, and about as many little towns lay around it. The people who had followed Jesus thus far now took their leave, while He with His own party, having first taken some refreshment at the foot of the mountain, began to ascend the height. There was a teacher's chair upon it, from which He again instructed the Apostles and disciples upon

their vocation. He said that now they should show forth what they had learned. They should proclaim the advent of the Kingdom, that the last chance for doing penance had arrived, that the end of John's life was very near. They should baptize, impose hands, and expel demons. He taught them how they should conduct themselves in discussions, how to recognize true from false friends, and how to confound the latter. He told them that now none should be greater than the others. In the various places to which their mission called them, they should go among the pious, should live poorly and humbly, and be burdensome to none. He told them also how to separate and how again to unite. Two Apostles and some disciples should journey together, while some other disciples should go on ahead to gather together the people and announce the coming of the former. The Apostles, He said, should carry with them little flasks of oil, which He taught them how to consecrate and how to use in effecting cures.¹ Then He gave them all the other instructions recorded in the Gospels on the occasion of their mission.

He made allusion to no special danger in store for them, but said only: "Today ye will everywhere be welcomed, but a time will come wherein they will persecute you!" After that the Apostles knelt down in a circle around Jesus as He prayed and laid His hands upon the head of each; the disciples He only blessed. Then they embraced and separated.

Among the directions given to the Apostles, Jesus had indicated to them the place and time at which they should again join Him, in order to bring Him news and exchange places with the disciples that remained with Him. Six of the Apostles continued with Him: Peter, James the Less, John, Philip, Thomas and Judas, besides twelve of the disciples. Among the latter were the three brothers James, Sadoch, and Heliachim (Mary Heli's son), Manahem, Nathanael (also called Little Cleophas), and several others. The other six Apostles had with them eighteen disciples, among whom were Joses Barsabas, Judas Barsabas, Saturnin and Nathanael Chased. Nathanael, the bridegroom of Cana, did not travel around. He attended to other affairs for the Community, and like Lazarus rendered service in his own immediate circle. All shed tears on separating. The Apostles who were going forth on their mission descended the mountain by the eastern route leading to the Jordan, where I saw a place situated, Lecum by name, about a quarter of an hour from the river. When Jesus came down the mountain, He was again surrounded by a crowd returning home from Capharnaum.

From the foot of the mountain Jesus started with the disciples southward from Saphet, which was situated on another high mountain, to a place called Hucuca. Before reaching this place, He was met by many people who received Him and the disciples with expressions of great joy.

At a fountain a blind man and several cripples were awaiting Jesus' coming, and they now implored Him for help. The blind man's eyes were infected with disease. Jesus ordered him to wash his face at the fountain. When he had done so, He anointed his eyes with oil, broke off a little twig from a bush nearby, held it before his eyes, and asked whether he saw it or not. The man answered: "Yes, I see a very tall tree." Jesus anointed his eyes once more and repeated His question, whereupon the man cast himself on his knees before Him, crying out joyfully: "Lord, I see mountains, trees, people! I see everything!" There was great jubilation among the people as they escorted the man back into the city.

Jesus went on curing the lame and the palsied who were standing around on crutches made of light but very firm wood. Each had three feet, so that it could stand alone; and when the two were crossed together, the sick could rest the breast against them.

When the blind man and his escorts went shouting with joy into the city, many of the inhabitants, the Elders of the synagogue, and the school teachers with their scholars came flocking out to meet Jesus. They were full of joy. Jesus returned with them, went into the school and gave them some instructions in parables on the Eight Beatitudes. He exhorted all to penance, for the Kingdom was near. He explained the parables at great length. The disciples were present. Before beginning, Jesus had recommended to them strict attention, in order that they might repeat what they heard when they scattered around among the houses and villages in the environs. It was thus that they acquired in Jesus' public discourses what they, in their turn, had to teach in the country around; for the Apostles along with several of the disciples scattered as usual among the environs to cure and to teach.

They met again in the evening at the place indicated by Jesus and to which He Himself had gone. Here they stopped with the Elder of the synagogue, who placed before them fish, honey, little rolls and fruit, of which they ate. Hucuca was situated about five hours to the northwest of Capharnaum, five hours southwest of the mountain upon which Jesus had given the Apostles

their mission, and about three hours south of Saphet. There were none but Jews in the place, and they were tolerably good people, for most of them had received John's baptism. They manufactured stuffs of fine texture, narrow scarves of wool, tassels and fringes of silk; they knit sandals also, under which they placed two supports like heels. These sandals were flexible in the middle, and very comfortable, for they allowed the dust to fall through holes made for that purpose.

The Apostles and several of the disciples with them scattered, two by two, throughout the city and its environs. Hucuca must have once been a strong fortress, for it was surrounded by moats now dry, and its approach was over a bridge. One could look through the gate far into the city and see its beautiful synagogue. Hucuca was surrounded by verdant walks planted with trees so thick and high that, even at a short distance, its houses could not be seen. Its synagogue was extraordinarily beautiful. It was surrounded by a colonnade into which the main building could be opened for the accommodation of a more considerable crowd; opposite the entrance the wall was solid and formed a semicircle. It stood upon an open square at the end of the street upon which was the entrance. The whole city was well built and very clean. The people gathered into the synagogue. Jesus went first into two separate halls, in one healing many sick men, in the other women sick of all kinds of maladies. Many sick children were brought to Him, some young enough to be carried in the arms, and He healed them. The healthy children, He blessed.

In the synagogue Jesus taught of prayer and of the Messiah. He said that the Messiah had already come upon earth, that they (His hearers) were living in His time, that they were listening to His teachings. He spoke of the adoration of God in spirit and in truth, and I felt that it meant the adoration of the Father in the Holy Ghost and in Jesus Christ, for Jesus is the Truth. He is the true, the living, the incarnate God, the Son conceived of the Holy Spirit. At these words, the Doctors of the synagogue humbly begged Him to say who He really was, whence He came, whether they whom they looked upon as His parents were not His parents, His relatives not His relatives, whether He was really the Messiah, the Son of God. It would be well, they said, for the Doctors of the Law to know positively what to think. Being placed over others, they before all others ought to know Him. But Jesus answered them evasively, If He said, "I am He!" they would not believe Him, but would say that He was the Son of those people of whom they had spoken. They should

not inquire into His origin, but should hear His doctrine and observe His actions. Whoever does the will of the Father is the Son of the Father, for the Son is in the Father and Father is in the Son, and whoever fulfills the will of the Son fulfills the will of the Father. Jesus spoke so beautifully on this subject and on that of prayer that many cried out, "Lord, Thou art the Christ! Thou art the Truth!" and falling down they wished to adore Him. But He repeated to them: "Adore the Father in spirit and in truth!" and He left the city with His disciples and the Elder of the synagogue, at whose house they passed the night. In this suburb there was a school very well attended, but no synagogue. The Feast of Lights was still being celebrated.

Next day Jesus taught again in Hucuca on the parable of the sower and the different ways in which the seed is received. Then He spoke of the Good Shepherd come to seek the lost sheep, and who would be happy to carry back even one on His shoulder. He said thus would the Good Shepherd do until His enemies put Him to death; and thus also should His servants and His servants' servant do until the end of time. If at the end wily one sheep was saved, yet would His love rest satisfied. Jesus spoke most tenderly on this point.