

Jesus Rejects Three Rich Youths. He Confounds Many Learned Men In the Synagogue of Nazareth

To the five followers of Jesus, four others were now added, relatives and friends of the Holy Family. I think there was a son of one of the three widows among them, and one from Bethlehem, who had found out that He was a descendant of Ruth who had married Booz in that city. Jesus formally received them to the number of His disciples. There were in Nazareth a couple of rich families who had three sons. In childhood these latter had associated with



Jesus. They were now quite cultured and well educated. The parents, who had heard much of Jesus' wisdom and teaching, agreed together that their sons should today hear a specimen of it. They would then offer Him money to let the young men travel with Him that they might profit by His knowledge. The good people had so high an opinion of their sons that they thought Jesus would gladly become their tutor. So the young men went to the synagogue whither, by the connivance of their wealthy parents and the Pharisees, all the learned men of the city had flocked. They were determined to put Jesus to the test in every way. Among these men were a lawyer and a physician, the latter a tall, portly man with a long beard. He wore a girdle and had some kind of a badge upon one shoulder of his mantle. I saw Jesus, on entering the school, again blessing many children whom their mothers brought to Him, among them some afflicted with leprosy whom He healed. During His discourse, He was interrupted in various ways by the literati who proposed to Him all kinds of subtle questions. But His wisdom silenced them. To the lawyer's speech, Jesus answered most wonderfully from the Law of Moses, and when divorce was spoken of, He rejected it entirely. Divorced, husband and wife could never be; but if the former could not in any way live with the latter, he might leave her. Still were they one body, and could not again marry. These words of the Lord greatly displeased the Jews.

The physician asked whether He could tell whether a man was of a dry, matter-of-fact nature or of a phlegmatic disposition, under what planets such a one was born, what simples were good for this or that temperament, and

how the human body is formed. Jesus answered him with great wisdom. He spoke of the complexion of some of those present, their diseases and the remedies, and of the human body, with a depth of knowledge quite unknown to the physician. He spoke of life, of the spirit, and how it influences the body, of sicknesses that could be cured only by prayer and amendment, of such as needed medicine for their cure—and that in language so profound, and yet so beautiful, that the physician in astonishment declared himself vanquished and that he had never before heard such things. I think he afterward became one of Jesus' disciples. Jesus described to him the human body with all its members, muscles, veins, nerves, and intestines, their special functions and their various relations one with another, in general terms and yet with such accuracy that His questioner was humbled and silenced.

There was an astrologer present who spoke of the course of the stars. He explained how one constellation ruled another, how different stars possess different influences, and he discoursed upon comets and the signs of the Zodiac. Jesus in most appropriate language treated with another upon architecture; with others of trade and commerce with foreign nations, taking occasion at the same time to censure severely the various fashions and frivolities lately introduced from Athens. He condemned likewise the games and juggling now in use among them, and which were also spreading throughout Nazareth and other places. These games were likewise a product of their intercourse with Athens. Jesus stigmatized them as unpardonable since they that indulge in them look upon them as no sin; consequently, they do no penance for them, and therefore they cannot be pardoned.

His hearers were ravished at His wisdom. They begged Him to take up His residence among them, offering to give Him a house and all that He needed, questioning Him also as to why He and His Mother had removed to Capharnaum. Jesus replied that He could not remain with them, and He spoke of His mission and the duties it imposed. In answer to their question as to why He had gone from among them, He said that it was because of His desire to dwell in a more central locality, etc. But they did not understand His reasons, and they were offended at His rejection of their offer, which they thought a very fine one. They looked upon His words, and as the offspring of pride. And so they left the school that evening.

The three youths, who were about the age of twenty, greatly desired to speak with Jesus. But He would not allow them to do so until His nine

disciples were present. That annoyed them. Jesus told them that He insisted upon having witnesses to what He might say to them. When at last they were admitted to an audience, they very modestly and humbly laid before Him their own and their parent's wishes that He would receive them as His pupils. Their parents, they said, would remunerate Him, and as for themselves, they would bear Him company in all His labors, they would serve and help Him. I saw that Jesus was troubled at having to refuse their request, partly for their own sake, and partly on account of His disciples, for He was obliged to assign reasons for His refusal which they could not as yet comprehend. He replied to the youths that he who gave money to obtain something, aimed at gaining some temporal advantage; but that whoever would follow Him, must abandon all earthly possessions, must leave parents and friends, and that His disciples must neither woo nor marry. He laid down many other hard conditions, so that the young men became very much discouraged.

They argued that many of the Essenians were married. Jesus replied that they, the Essenians, acted rightly and in accordance with their laws, but that His doctrine was to accomplish fully that for which theirs only paved the way, etc. With this remark and bidding them take time to reflect, He left them. The disciples were intimidated by His words. His teaching was so severe that they could not understand it, and they grew fainthearted. But on the way from Nazareth to Eliud's, He bade them not despond, that He had good reasons for talking as He had done, that those youths would only at some distant day, and perhaps never, come to Him; but as for themselves, the disciples, they should follow Him calmly and be without anxiety, etc. And so they arrived at Eliud's. I do not think He will again go to Eliud's, for great talk and excitement had arisen in Nazareth on His account. The inhabitants were vexed at His not remaining among them. They thought that He had acquired all His knowledge during His travels. "True," they said, "He is a very clever and extraordinary man; but, for a carpenter's son, He is rather conceited." I saw the three young men returning to their homes. Their parents were very much displeased at the objections Jesus made to receiving them. The sons chimed in with the parents, and all talked at random in their indignation against Him.

On the following day, the three youths went again to Jesus and begged once more to be accepted. They promised Him perfect obedience and faithful service. But Jesus again dismissed them, and I saw that their inability to seize the meaning of His refusal troubled Him. He spoke then with His nine disciples who, by His directions, were to go first to a certain place and

afterward to John. On the subject of those whom He had dismissed, Jesus said that they desired to follow Him for the sake of what they might gain, that they were not willing to give all for love. But that they, the disciples, sought for nothing, consequently they had been received. He spoke again in significant and beautiful terms of the baptism, telling them to go over to Capharnaum and say to His Mother that He was going to the baptism. He charged them likewise to speak to the disciples, John, Peter, and Andrew about John (the Baptist) and say to the last named that He (Jesus) was coming.