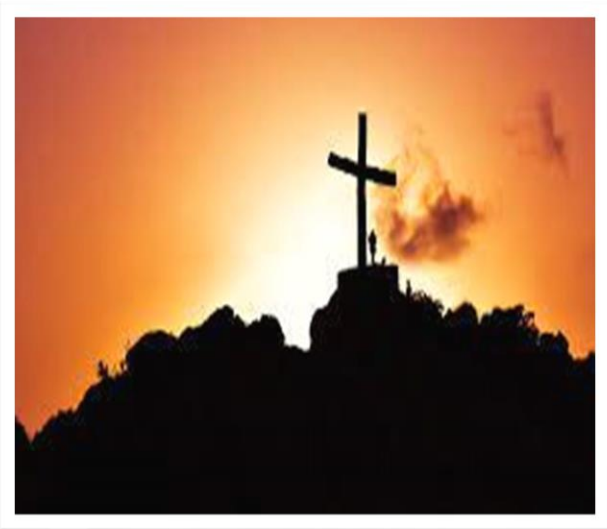


Jesus in Gilgal, Dibon, Socoth, Aruma, and Bethania

The region known as Gilgal comprised the whole of the elevated country above the low valley of the Jordan, and which was embraced by the inflowing streams of the Jordan for a circumference of five hours. But the city Gilgal, to which Jesus drew near before evening, lay scattered and interspersed by numerous gardens for the distance of about one hour, in the direction of the place to which John had retired to preach and baptize.

Jesus first entered the precincts of a sacred spot open to Prophets and Doctors of the Law. It was the place where Joshua had communicated something to the Children of Israel, namely, the six maledictions and six benedictions that had been revealed to Eliezer and himself by Moses before his death. The circumcision hill of the Israelites was nearby, and it, too, was enclosed by a wall.

I saw on this occasion the death of Moses. He died upon a low, but steep peak of Mount Nebo, which rises between Arabia and Moab. The camp of the Israelites flanked the mount, the outposts extending far into the valley around. A growth like ivy covered the whole mount. It was short and crisp, and grew in tufts like the juniper. Moses was obliged to support himself by it when climbing to the top of the peak. Joshua and Eliezer were with him. Moses had a vision from God that his companions saw not. He delivered to Joshua a roll of writing containing six maledictions and six benedictions, which the latter had to publish to the people when in the Promised Land. Then having embraced them, he commanded them to depart and not to look back. When they had gone, Moses cast himself upon his knees with outstretched arms, and gently sank upon his side dead. I saw the earth open under him and enclose him as in a beautiful grave. When Moses appeared at the Transfiguration of Jesus on Thabor, I saw that he came from that place. Joshua read the six blessings and six maledictions before the people. Many of Jesus' friends awaited Him in Gilgal: Lazarus, Joseph of Arimathea, Obed, a son of the widow of Nazareth, and others. There was an inn here, in



which they set refreshments before the Lord and His companions after washing their feet.

Before the crowds here assembled, many of whom were on their way to John's baptism, Jesus gave an instruction. The spot chosen for the purpose was near the baths and place of purification built high up on the sloping, terraced shore of an arm of the Jordan. It was shaded by an awning, and all around were pleasure gardens ornamented with trees, shrubs, and green plots. Saturnin and two other disciples who had left John to follow Jesus baptized after Jesus had given an instruction on the Holy Ghost. He taught of the several attributes of the Holy Spirit, and pointed out the marks that distinguish one that has received Him.

John's baptism was preceded by only a summary confession of sins accompanied by proofs of contrition and a promise of amendment. But at the baptism of Jesus the acknowledgment of sin was not made in this general way. Everyone accused himself individually and mentioned his chief transgressions. Jesus exhorted to sincerity. He frequently proclaimed the sins of those that, through pride or false shame, concealed them thus to lead them to repentance.

Here also Jesus alluded to the passage over the Jordan and the ceremony of circumcision that had here been performed. It was in memory of this latter circumstance that baptism was now administered here and, through its efficacy, He said, they should henceforth be circumcised in their heart. He spoke likewise of the fulfillment of the Law.

The baptized on this occasion were not immersed in the water, they only inclined their head over it; nor did they put on an entire baptismal garment, a white cloth only was placed on their shoulders. The disciples did not make use of a three-channeled shell like John's; but from the basin over which the neophyte inclined, they dipped up the water three times with the hand. Jesus had previously blessed it and poured into it some from His own baptismal well. About thirty were baptized at this time. They appeared radiant with joy after the ceremony, and declared that they truly felt that they had now received the Holy Ghost.

Jesus then proceeded with His followers amid the acclamations of the multitude to Gilgal, to celebrate the Sabbath in the synagogue, a very large, old building on the east side of the city. It was a four-cornered edifice, longer than broad, the angles filled in in such a way as to give it something of the appearance of an octagon. It contained three stories, in each of which was a

school. A spiral, exterior flight of steps joined to the wall led up to each, and around each landing ran a little portico.

High up in the rounded corners of the building were niches, in which one could stand and view the country far and near. The synagogue stood by itself with gardens cut off on both sides. In front of the entrance was a porch and a teacher's desk similar to that of the Temple in Jerusalem, and there was also an open court containing an altar upon which sacrifice had once been offered. There were likewise covered porches for women and children. One could easily detect the similarity of all these arrangements with those of the Temple, also that the Ark of the Covenant had once rested here and sacrifices had been offered.

The school on the lowest story was the most beautiful in its arrangements. At one end, in the spot corresponding to that occupied by the Holy of Holies in the Temple, stood an octagonal pillar around which were compartments containing rolls of writings. A table encircled the base of the pillar, and below that was a vault. Here it was that the Ark of the Covenant had once stood. The pillar was very beautiful, of polished white marble.

In the school on the first story, Jesus taught before the priests, the people, and the Doctors of the Law. Among other things He alluded to the fact that here the promised kingdom had been first established, but that idolatry so abominable had been practiced at a later period that scarcely could seven just souls be found among the inhabitants. Ninive, though five times greater, had been able to produce five just. Gilgal had been spared by God, therefore they should not now repulse Him who came to fulfill the Promise: they should do penance and through Baptism be born anew. Then taking the rolls from their places around the pillar, Jesus read and explained them.

After that He taught the young men in the school on the second story, and lastly the boys on the third. Coming down, He delivered another instruction to the women in an open space under a porch, and still another to the young maidens. To these last He spoke of modesty and chastity, of repressing curiosity, of modesty in dress, of veiling the hair, and of covering the head in the Temple and in the synagogue. He reminded them of the presence of God and the angels in holy places, and that the latter themselves veil their face before the Lord. He told them that in the Temple and synagogue there were myriads of angels hovering around the worshippers, and He explained why females should veil the head and hair. The children ran familiarly to Jesus. He blessed them and took them up in His arms. They were very much attached

to Him. The joy and jubilation over Jesus were general in this place. As He left the school, the people ran from all sides to meet Him, crying out, and exclaiming: "The Promise is fulfilled! May it remain with us. May it never forsake us!"

When Jesus had finished His instructions, the people were anxious to bring their sick to Him. But He dismissed them, saying that it was neither the time nor the place for that, He must now leave them, for He was called elsewhere. Lazarus and the friends from Jerusalem returned to their homes and Jesus took leave of the Blessed Virgin, telling her that He would see her again before He retired into the desert.

The Sanhedrin in Jerusalem again held a long consultation on the subject of Jesus. Everywhere they had spies bribed to give them information of His words and actions. The Sanhedrin consisted of seventy-one priests and doctors, of whom twenty were again divided into fives, thus forming so many subcommittees for deliberating and disputing together. They examined the genealogical register, and could in no way deny that Joseph and Mary were of the House of David and Mary's mother of the race of Aaron. But as they said, these families had fallen into obscurity, and Jesus strolled around with vagrants. He also defiled Himself with publicans and heathens, and sought the favor of slaves. They had heard, they said, of the familiar way in which He had spoken lately to the Sichemites, who were returning home from their work in the region of Bethlehem, and they thought that He must have designs to raise an insurrection with the aid of such hangers-on. Some gave it as their opinion that He was very likely an illegitimate child, because He had once proclaimed Himself the son of a king. Others declared that He must in some way receive secret training from the devil, for He often retired apart and spent the night alone in the wilderness or on the mountains. They knew what they were saying, for they had already inquired into all this.

Among these twenty deliberators were some who knew Jesus and His family very well, who were most favorably inclined toward Him, who were indeed His friends in secret. Nevertheless, they did not contradict what was said against Him. They kept silence in order to be the better able to serve Him and His disciples and to give them information of whatever might come to their knowledge. The majority of the committee concluded at last that Jesus was in communication with the devil from whom He received instruction, and this was the opinion they publicly proclaimed and which was spread throughout Jerusalem.

John's disciples announced to him the baptism that had lately taken place in Gilgal, representing the same as a usurpation of his rights. But in deepest humility John again repeated what he had often told them before; viz., that

he would soon give place to his Lord, whose herald and precursor he had been. The disciples could not rightly understand his words.

With about twenty followers, Jesus left Gilgal and moved on to the Jordan which He crossed on a raft. All around on the beams of the raft were seats, and in the center two concave spaces in which they were accustomed to stand the camels that they might not slip between the beams into the water.

Three camels could be so accommodated; but now there were none on board, the Lord and His disciples being the only passengers. It was night, and lighted torches stood in the hollow spaces. Jesus related the parable of the sower which, on the following day, He explained. The passage over the river occupied fifteen minutes at least, for the current at this point was very strong. They had to row some distance up the river, and then drift down to the spot at which they intended to land, and which was not directly opposite their starting point. The Jordan is a singular river; it cannot be crossed at all in many places, and its steep shores are pathless. It makes frequent and sudden bends, and often appears to flow straight past a place around which it is, in reality, running. Its bed in many places is rocky and its course consequently arrested. Its waters encircle numerous islands as they flow sometimes troubled, sometimes clear, according to the nature of its bed, here and there forming falls. The water of the Jordan is soft and tepid.

They landed near the settlement of the publicans. A highroad from the region of Kedar passed nearby and there, too, a lovely valley took its rise. The publicans, who had already received John's baptism, entertained Jesus; but several of His followers, surprised at their Master's intimacy with these despised people, stood shyly aloof. Jesus and His disciples spent the night here, accepting hospitality from the publicans, who were most deferential to them. Their houses stood on the side of the road that ran through the valley and not far from the Jordan; somewhat further on was the inn for the accommodation of merchants and their camels. There were many tarrying here at the time, on account of the next day's feast, that of Tabernacles; for although most of them were pagans, yet they were obliged to observe the festivals as days of rest. The publicans questioned Jesus as to how they should restore their unjustly acquired goods. He told them that they should be taken to the Temple, which however He meant only spiritually, for in reality He designated thereby His own community, the Church. There should, He said, be purchased with it a field near Jerusalem for the support of poor widows, and He explained to them why a field, illustrating by the parable of the sower.

Next day Jesus walked with them on the shore and in the country around, teaching again of the sower and the future harvest. He took His text from the feast of Tabernacles, which was then beginning, and which commemorated the vintage as well as the ingathering of the fruits of the field. From the publican village, Jesus pressed on further through the valley. On either side of the mountain slope, for the distance of half an hour perhaps, were rows of houses in which the Feast of Tabernacles was being celebrated. These houses extended as far as Dibon in the environs of which indeed they appeared to be. By their side were erected the booths formed of green branches of trees and adorned with bushes, festoons, and clusters of grapes. On one side of the road were the tabernacles and the little tents of the women; on the other, the huts in which the animals were slaughtered. All the food was carried across the road. The children, adorned with garlands, went in bands from one tabernacle to another, singing and playing upon musical instruments. These last consisted of triangles furnished with rings which they tinkled, triangles spanned by cords, and a wind instrument from which arose spiral tubes.

Jesus paused here and there to teach. Refreshments were offered to Him and His disciples, grapes on sticks, two clusters on each. At the further end of this row of houses stood an inn which Jesus entered. Not far from the inn, between it and Dibon, was a broad, open space in the middle of the road. Here, surrounded by trees, arose the large and beautiful synagogue of Dibon. On the next day Jesus taught in the synagogue, taking again the parable of the sower, alluding to the baptism and the nearness of the Kingdom of God. He spoke also of the feast of Tabernacles and of its celebration here, taking occasion to reprove the people for mixing up heathenish customs in their services, for some of the Moabites still dwelt in this place, and with them the Jewish people had intimate relations. When Jesus left the synagogue, He found in the open court numbers of sick who had been borne thither on litters. They cried out as soon as they saw Him: "Lord, Thou hast been sent from God! Thou canst help us! Help us, Lord!" He cured many. That evening a banquet was prepared in the inn for Jesus and His followers. There were many of the heathen merchants near Jesus when He spoke of the call of the Gentiles, of the star that had appeared in the Land of the Kings, and of their going to visit the Child. Jesus left the place that night alone and went to pray on the mountain. He had engaged to meet His disciples the following morning on the road at the other side of Dibon. Dibon was six hours distant from Gilgal. It was rich in fountains and meadows, gardens and terraces, for it lay in the valley and up both sides of the mountain.

Jesus next went to Socoth where He arrived toward evening. An innumerable multitude gathered around Him, among them many sick. He taught in the synagogue, and allowed Saturnin and four other disciples to administer baptism. It took place at a spring in a rocky grotto facing westward toward the Jordan which, however, could not be seen from it as a hill intervened. But the spring was fed from the deep waters of the river. The light fell into the grotto from apertures in the roof. In front of it was an extensive pleasure garden beautifully laid out with small trees, aromatic shrubs, and well-kept lawns. In it was an ancient memorial stone commemorative of an apparition of Melchisedech to Abraham.

Jesus taught here of John's baptism, which He called a baptism of penance, and which would soon be discontinued. In its stead would be received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and the remission of sin. He received from them a kind of general confession of their sins, and then some separately disclosed their predominant passions and transgressions. Many trembled at hearing Jesus accusing them of sins that they thought secret. After the confession Jesus laid His hands upon them as if giving absolution. They were not immersed when receiving baptism. A large basin of water was placed on Abraham's memorial stone, and over it the neophytes bowed with bared shoulders. The baptizers poured the water thrice from the hollow of their hand over the heads of the baptized, who were very numerous at this place. Abraham had once dwelt at Socoth with his nurse Maraha, and had owned fields in three different localities. Even here he had begun to share with Lot.

It was here that Melchisedech first appeared to Abraham in the same way as did the angels. Melchisedech commanded him a threefold sacrifice of doves, long beaked birds, and other animals, promising to come again and offer bread and wine in sacrifice. He told him what was going to happen to Sodom and to Lot, and pointed out to him several graces for which he should pray. Melchisedech at that time had no longer an earthly abode at Salem. Jacob also dwelt at Socoth.

From Socoth Jesus proceeded to Great Chorazin where, at an inn near the city, He had appointed to meet His Mother and the holy women. On the way thither He passed through Gersas where He kept the Sabbath, after which He went to an inn in the desert some hours from the Sea of Galilee. The proprietors dwelt nearby. The inn was still adorned as for the feast of Tabernacles, for the holy women had rented it some days previously and put all things in order. The necessary provisions were brought at their expense from Gerasa. Peter's wife was with them, also Susanna of Jerusalem, and all the others excepting Veronica. Jesus had an interview with His Mother alone. He told her that He was now on His way to Bethania, whence He would retire

to the desert. Mary was grave and anxious. She begged Him not to go to Jerusalem for awhile, for she had heard of the council convened on His account.

Later on Jesus gave an instruction. The place chosen for it was a hill upon which was a stone seat formerly used for the same purpose. There were rows of people from the surrounding country and about thirty women present. They stood apart from the men. After the instruction Jesus told His followers that He must now leave them for a time and that they, as well as the women, should disband until His return. He spoke of John's baptism soon to cease, and of the bitter persecution awaiting Him and His.

Jesus left the inn with about twenty disciples and followers, and journeyed some twelve hours southwest toward the city of Aruma near which an inn for Him and His friends was always in readiness. Martha, for whom the journey to Gerasa was her first expedition with the holy women, had prepared this inn for Jesus, and His friends in Jerusalem bore the cost. The steward and servants lived in the neighborhood. The holy women told Jesus of the inn before His departure. The city was about nine hours from Jerusalem and between six and seven from Jericho.

Some Essenians dwelt near the inn. They went to see Jesus, conversed and ate with Him. Jesus went to the synagogue and taught of John's baptism, which was a baptism of penance, a preliminary purification, a preparatory action such as was prescribed in the Law. It was different from the Baptism of Him whom John heralded. They that were baptized by John I did not see again baptized, until after the death of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Ghost when, for the most part, the ceremony was performed at the pool of Bethsaida. The Pharisees of this place asked Jesus by what signs they should know the Messiah, and He told them. He gave an instruction on the subject of mixed marriages with the heathens and Samaritans.

Judas Iscariot, subsequently the Apostle, here heard Jesus preaching. He had come alone and not with the other disciples. After listening to His instructions for two days, and passing remarks on the same with the disaffected Pharisees, he departed for a neighboring village which did not bear a very good name. There he gave an account of what he had heard, talking with an air of importance to a pious man of the place. The latter in consequence invited Jesus to visit him. Judas carried on some kind of traffic.

He was much occupied with writing, and held himself in readiness for general services of any kind.

When Jesus and His disciples arrived at the aforementioned place, which had been lately built and which on account of its mixed population was not in very good repute, Judas had departed. Herod owned a castle in the neighborhood. Something connected with the Benjaminites must have happened in this place, for there was a tree close at hand surrounded by a wall, and no one went near it. Abraham and Jacob had each offered sacrifice here, and hither had Esau withdrawn when at variance with Jacob on the subject of the Blessing. Isaac at that time was living near Sichar.

The man that had invited Jesus to these parts was called Jairus; he belonged to the married Essenians. He had a wife and several children, among the latter two sons named Ammon and Caleb. He had also a daughter whom Jesus at a later period cured of some disease, but he was not the Jairus of the Gospel. He was a descendant of Chariot the Essenian, who had founded the convents near Bethlehem and Maspha, and he was familiar with many circumstances of Jesus' youth and family. He and his sons went forth to meet Jesus, whom they received with marks of deference. Jairus was, on account of his charity, the chief man of this despised place. He helped the poor and, on certain days, gave instructions to the children and the ignorant, for they had here neither schools nor priests. He likewise cared for the sick. As usual, Jesus taught of the baptism of John, setting it forth as a preparatory baptism of penance, also of the near coming of the Kingdom of God. With Jairus He visited the sick, and consoled them, but He would not cure any. He promised to return in four months and cure them. In His instructions He alluded to the events that had taken place here, namely, the estrangement of Esau in anger from his brother, and the consequences following upon his rage. It was this that had brought the place into ill-repute. Jesus told of the mercy of the Heavenly Father, who would realize all His promises in favor of those that would believe in the One sent by Him, would do penance, and be baptized and He showed how penance wards off the consequences of sin. Toward evening, accompanied about halfway by Jairus and his sons, Jesus went with His disciples to Bethania.

They stopped at an inn in the vicinity, and there Jesus gave His disciples a long instruction in which He alluded to the trials in store for Him and all His followers. He told them that they should now leave Him, and weigh well whether they would be able to stand by Him in His future sufferings.

Lazarus came out to meet Him. The disciples departed for their homes, Aram and Themi alone accompanying Him to Bethania where many friends from Jerusalem were awaiting Him, among them the holy women and Veronica. Aram and Themi were the nephews of Joseph of Arimathea on the mother's side. They had been John's disciples, but had followed Jesus when on His way to Gilgal He had passed John's place of baptism. Jesus gave an instruction at Lazarus' on the baptism of John, on the Messiah, on the Law and its fulfillment, and on the various sects among the Jews. His friends had brought with them from Jerusalem some rolls of writings from which Jesus explained to them the words of the Prophets relative to the Messiah. But only a few were present at this instruction, only Lazarus and some intimate friends.

Jesus advised with them on the subject of His future abode. They counseled Him not to remain in Jerusalem, telling Him all that was said of Him there. They proposed to Him Salem as proper for His residence, since but few Pharisees were in it. Jesus spoke of various places and of Melchisedech, whose figurative priesthood was soon to be realized. Melchisedech had laid out all the roads, founded all the places that in the designs of God the Son of Man was afterward to travel over and evangelize. Jesus concluded by telling them that He would be found mostly around the Lake of Genesareth. This conference was held in a retired apartment that opened upon a garden attached to the baths.

Jesus had an interview with the women in a chamber fronting on the road that led to Jerusalem, and which had formerly been occupied by Magdalen. In obedience to Jesus' direction, Lazarus brought his silent sister Mary and left her alone with the Lord, the other women retiring in the meantime to the antechamber.

Silent Mary's bearing toward Jesus was somewhat different from that of the last interview, for she cast herself down before Him and kissed His feet. Jesus made no attempt to prevent her, and raised her up by the hand. With her eyes turned heavenward, she, as once before, uttered the most sublime and wonderful things, though in the most simple and natural manner. She spoke of God, of His Son, and of His Kingdom just as a peasant girl might talk of the father of the village lord and his inheritance. Her words were a prophecy, and the things of which she spoke she saw before her. She recounted the grave faults and bad management of the wicked servants of the household. The

Father had sent His Son to arrange affairs and payoff all debts, but they would receive Him badly. He would have to die in great suffering, redeem His Kingdom with His own Blood, and efface the crimes of the servants, that they might again become the children of His Father. She carried out the allegory in most beautiful language, and yet in as natural a manner as if she were recounting a scene enacted in her presence. At times she was gay, at others sorrowful, calling herself a useless servant and grieving over the painful labors of the Son of the merciful Lord and Father. Another cause of sorrow to her was that the servants would not rightly understand the parable, although so simple and so true. She spoke of the Resurrection. The Son, she said, would go to the servants in the subterranean prisons also. He would console them and set them free, because He had purchased their Redemption.

He would return with them to His Father. But at His second advent, when He would come again to judge, all those that had abused the satisfaction He had made and who would not turn from their evil ways, should be cast into the fire. She then spoke of Lazarus' death and resurrection: "He goes forth from this world," she said, "and gazes upon the things of the other life. His friends weep around him as if he were never to return. But the Son calls him back to earth, and he labors in the vineyard." Of Magdalen too she spoke: "The maiden is in the frightful desert where once were the children of Israel. She wanders in accursed places where all is dark, where never human foot has trod. But she will come forth, and in another desert make amends for the past."

Mary the Silent spoke of herself as of a captive, for her body appeared to her a prison, and she longed to go home. She was so straitened on all sides; not one around her understood her and they were, as it seemed to her, all blind. But, she said, she was willing to wait, she would bear her captivity submissively, for she deserved nothing better. Jesus spoke to her lovingly, consoling her and saying: "After the Pasch, when I again come here, thou shalt indeed go home." Then as she knelt before Him, He raised His hands over her and blessed her. It seemed to me that at the same time He poured over her something from a flask, but I cannot say whether it was oil or water. Mary the Silent was a very holy person, but none knew or understood her. Her whole life was one uninterrupted vision of the work of Redemption, of which she spoke like an innocent child. No one guessed her interior life, and she was regarded as a simpleton. When Jesus signified to her the time of her death, viz., that she should, freed from captivity, at last go home, He anointed her for death.

From this we may conclude that anointing is more necessary for the body than some people generally think. Jesus pitied Silent Mary who, as a reputed simpleton, would have received no embalming. Her holiness was hidden. Jesus dismissed her, and she returned to her abode.

After this Jesus again instructed the men on the baptism of John and that of the Holy Ghost. I do not remember any very great difference between the first named and that bestowed by the disciples of Jesus. The latter, however, was a little more like that which at a later period was to take away sin. Nor did I ever see any of those that had been baptized by John rebaptized before the descent of the Holy Ghost.

The friends from Jerusalem returned to the city before the Sabbath, Aram and Themi going in company with Joseph of Arimathea. Jesus had told them that He would retire awhile in order to prepare for the painful mission before Him, that of teaching, but He did not tell them that He was going to fast.