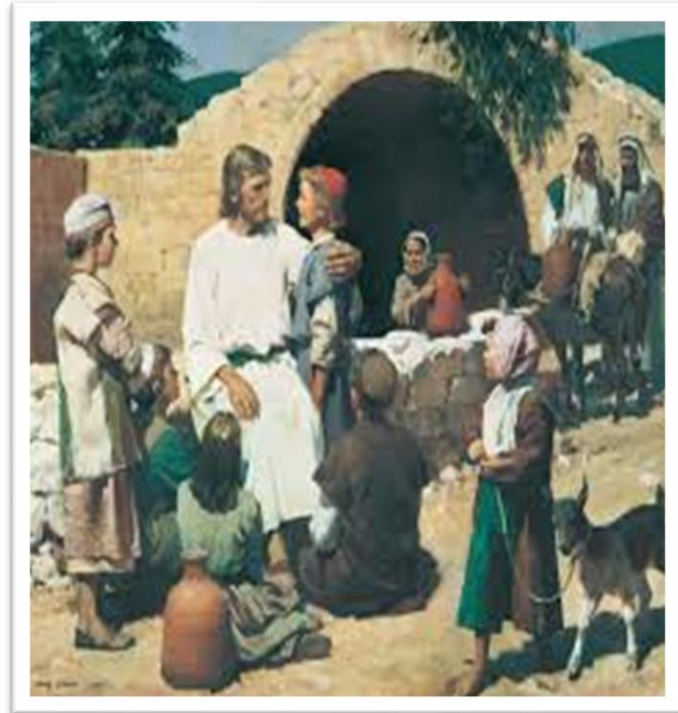


Jesus in a Shepherd Village Near Nazareth

On the following morning I saw crowds of people on the road waiting for Jesus. They had not been with Him in that last place, but had gone on ahead of Him. I saw Him turning aside from the road with them and, about three o'clock in the afternoon, coming up to another shepherd field. In it were only some light huts occupied by the shepherds in grazing time. There were no women here. The shepherds went forward to meet Jesus; they must have been informed of His coming by those that had gone on before. While some of their number went to meet Him, the others busied themselves killing birds and lighting a fire in order to prepare a meal. This took place in an open hall, something like an inn, the fireplace being separated from the guest room by a wall. All around the hall ran a mossy bank with a platted support for the back overgrown by green foliage. The hosts led the Lord and His followers in, about twenty in number, equal to that of the shepherds themselves. All washed their feet, a separate basin being assigned to Jesus.

He asked for more water and, after using it, commanded it not to be thrown out. When all were ready for table, Jesus questioned the shepherds, who appeared anxious about something, as to the cause of their trouble, and asked if there were not some of their number absent. In answer to His questions, they acknowledged that they were sad on account of two of their companions who were lying sick of leprosy. Fearing that it might be the unclean leprosy, and dreading lest Jesus might not come to them on that account, they had taken care to conceal them. Then Jesus ordered them to be brought before Him, and He sent some of His disciples after them. At last, they appeared so closely enveloped from head to foot in sheets that it was with great difficulty they could walk, though each was supported on either side. Jesus addressed them, telling them that their leprosy had come not from within, but from an outward infection. While He spoke, I was spiritually enlightened that, not through malice, but through temptation they had sinned. Jesus commanded them to wash in the water which He had used for



His feet. They obeyed, and I saw the crusts falling from them leaving the scars behind. The water was then poured into a hole in the ground and covered with earth. Jesus strictly commanded the good people to say not a word of their cure until He should have returned from the baptism.

He afterward gave an instruction upon John, the baptism, and the coming of the Messiah. His hearers questioned Him very simply as to which they should follow, Himself or John, and they desired to know which was the greater. Jesus answered: "The greatest is he who serves as the least and last of all. He who for the love of God humbles himself as the least—he is the greatest." He exhorted them also to go to the baptism, spoke of the difficulties to be encountered in following Him, and sent away all that had done so excepting the five disciples. He appointed a meeting place in the desert, not far from Jericho, I think in the region of Ophra. Joachim had owned a pasture ground in those parts. Some of Jesus' hearers left Him entirely, some went straight to John, while others returned home to prepare for their journey to the baptism.

Jesus and the five disciples afterward went on to Nazareth, which at most was only about a short hour's distance. They approached by the side whose gate opens to the east on the road leading to the Sea of Galilee, but they went not into the city.

Nazareth had five gates. A little less than a quarter of an hour's distance from the city, rose the mountain from whose steep summit they often hurled people, and whence, at a later period, they wanted to cast Jesus. At the foot of this mountain lay some huts. Jesus directed the five disciples to seek lodgings in them, as He did Himself. They were supplied with water to wash their feet, a piece of bread, and a place in which to sleep. Anne's property lay to the east of Nazareth. The shepherds had bread baked in the ashes, also a well dug in the earth, but without masonry.