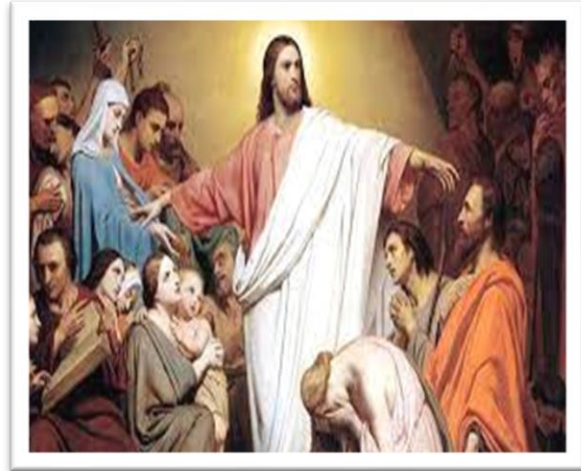


Jesus in Nazareth

Next morning Jesus resumed His instructions. Two of the Pharisees from Nazareth came to Him and, in a friendly manner, invited Him to go back with them to the school. They had, as they said, heard so much of His teaching in the country around that they were eager to hear Him explain the Prophets. Jesus went with them. They conducted Him to the house of a Pharisee, in which many others were assembled. The five disciples were with their Master. The Pharisees listened very politely to Jesus while He spoke to them in beautiful parables. His teaching appeared to please them greatly, and they led Him to the synagogue, where a numerous audience awaited Him. Jesus spoke of Moses and explained the Prophecies concerning the Messiah. But whenever He dropped any words from which they might infer that He alluded to Himself, they showed displeasure. One of the Pharisees spread for Him a repast, and He spent the night with His five disciples at an inn near the school.



Next day Jesus addressed a crowd of publicans who were journeying just then to receive the bap-tism. He afterward taught in the synagogue, making use of the similitude of the grain of wheat which must die in the earth before producing its fruit. His words displeased the Pharisees, and they repeated their remarks about the son of the carpenter Joseph. They reproached Him also for His communications with publicans and sinners, to which Jesus replied with great firmness. Then they took up the Essenians whom they denominated hypocrites who lived not according to the Law. But Jesus showed them clearly that the Essenians were stricter followers of the Law than the Pharisees, and so the reproach of hypocrisy fell back upon themselves. It was the question of benedictions that had led to the Essenians. Blessings were in common use among them, and the Pharisees were annoyed at seeing Jesus blessing little children. When, for instance, He was entering or leaving the synagogue, He was stopped by many mothers with their children, and His blessing craved for the little ones.

While Jesus dwelt at Nazareth, He had always much to do with the children, who became still and quiet near Him. No matter how passionately they cried, His blessing had power to calm them. The mothers, remembering this, now brought their little ones to Him to see whether He had become too proud to notice them. There were some among them who kicked violently, rolling over and over on the floor, as if they had cramps, screaming loudly all the while. But Jesus' blessing stilled them instantly. I saw something like a dark vapor going out from some of them. Jesus laid His hand on the heads of the boys and gave them the Patriarchs' blessing in three lines, one from the head and one from either shoulder down to the heart where all three united. He blessed the girls in the same way, but without laying His hand on them, though He made a sign on their lips. I thought as I saw Him do it that it meant that they should not prattle so much; still, however, it was significant of something else. Jesus passed the night with His disciples in the house of a Pharisee.