

Jesus in Ennon and Socoth. Mary of Suphan. Conversion of an Adulteress

From Jogbeha, Jesus went through Socoth to Ennon, a distance of about an hour along a pleasant road, enlivened by the camps of the caravans and the pilgrims going to Baptism. It was already lined with long rows of tents covered with foliage, and the people were still busied with preparations, because with the close of the coming Sabbath, the Feast of Tabernacles began. Jesus taught at intervals on the way. Just outside Ennon they had erected a beautiful tent, and a solemn reception was prepared for Jesus by Mary the Suphanite. The most



distinguished personages of the city were present, also the priests, and Mary with her children. The men washed the feet of Jesus and His disciples, and costly refreshments were offered them, according to custom. Mary's children and others of their age presented the viands. The women, closely veiled, prostrated before Jesus, their faces on the ground. He saluted and blessed them graciously. Mary, with tears of joy and gratitude, invited Jesus to repair to her house. When He entered the city, Mary's children, two girls and a boy, and others of their age with long garlands of flowers and scarves of woolen stuff walked before Him and at His side.

Jesus, accompanied by His disciples, entered the courtyard of Mary's house, passing under a flowery arch erected for the occasion. Mary again cast herself at His feet, weeping and thanking, her children following her example. Jesus caressed the little ones. Mary told Him that Dina the Samaritan had been there, and that the man with whom she had been living up to that time had received Baptism. Mary knew Dina, since her own husband and three legitimate children lived in Damascus. She and the Samaritan had together sounded Jesus' praises. She was radiant with joy, and showed Jesus many costly robes for the use of the priests, and a high miter which she herself had made for the Temple, for she was incredibly skillful at such work, and rich in money and property. Jesus was very gracious toward her. He spoke to her of her husband, advising her to go back to him, to be reconciled with him, for her presence near him would prove of use, and

her illegitimate children could be provided for elsewhere. He directed her also to send a messenger to her husband to request him to come to her. On leaving her house Jesus went to the place of Baptism, where He mounted the pulpit and taught the people.

Lazarus, Joseph of Arimathea, Veronica, Simeon's sons, and some disciples from Jerusalem had come hither for the Sabbath. Andrew, John, and some of the Baptist's disciples were still here, but James the Less had gone back. The Baptist had again sent messengers to Jesus urging Him to go to Jerusalem and to say openly before the whole world who He was. John was now so impatient, so anxious, because though so powerfully impelled to announce Jesus, he was unable to do so.

When the Sabbath began, Jesus taught in the synagogue, taking for His subjects the creation of the world, the waters, and the Fall of man. He alluded very significantly to the Messiah, commenting in the most striking manner upon 42:5-43, and applying the same to Himself and the Jewish people. After the Sabbath, there was an entertainment given to Jesus at the public banqueting hall. It had been prepared by Mary of Suphan. The tables, as well as the hall, were beautifully decorated with foliage and flowers and lamps. The guests were numerous and among them were many whom Jesus had cured. The women sat on one side behind a screen. During the meal Mary went forward with her children and placed costly perfumes on the table. She then poured a flask of odoriferous balm over Jesus' head, and cast herself down before Him. Jesus received these attentions graciously, and related parables. No one found fault with Mary, for all loved her on account of her munificence.

Next morning Jesus cured several sick persons, and taught in the synagogue. He also taught in a place to which those pagans that had received Baptism and those still in expectation of the same were admitted. In His latter instruction He spoke so feelingly, so naturally, of the lost son, that one would have thought Him the father who had found his son. He stretched out His arms, exclaiming: "See! See! He returns! Let us make ready a feast for him!" It was so natural that the people looked around, as if all that Jesus was saying were a reality. When He mentioned the calf that the father had slaughtered for the newly found son, His words were full of mysterious significance. It was as if He said: "But what would not be that love which would lead the Heavenly Father to give His own Son as a sacrifice, to save His lost children." The instruction was addressed principally to penitents, to the baptized, and to the pagans present, who were depicted as the lost son returning to his home. All were excited to joy and mutual charity. The fruit of Jesus' teaching was soon apparent at the celebration of the Feast of

Tabernacles, in the good will and hospitality shown by the Jews to their pagan brethren. In the afternoon Jesus with His disciples and a crowd of the inhabitants took a walk outside the city and along by the Jordan, through the beautiful meadows and flowery fields in which the tents of the heathens stood. The parable they had just heard, that of the Prodigal Son, formed the subject of conversation, and all were cheerful and happy, full of love toward one another.

The exercises of the Sabbath were today brought to a close at an earlier hour than usual. Jesus again taught and cured some sick before its close. Then all went out of the city, or rather to a quarter somewhat remote, for it was built very irregularly, the streets broken up by open squares and gardens. And now was celebrated a great feast. The tabernacles were arranged in three rows and adorned with flowers, green branches, all kinds of devices formed of fruit, streamers, and innumerable lamps. The middle row was occupied by Jesus, the disciples, the priests, and the chief men of the city disposed in numerous groups. In one of the side rows were the women, and in the other the school children, the youths, and the maidens forming three distinct bands. The teachers sat with their pupils, and every class had its own chanters. Soon the children, crowned with flowers, surrounded the tables with flutes and chimes and harps, playing and singing. I saw also that the men held in one hand palm branches on which were little tinkling balls, and branches of willow with fine, narrow leaves, also the branches of a kind of bush such as we cultivate in pots. It was myrtle. In the other they held the beautiful yellow Esrog apple. They waved their branches as they sang. This was done three times: at the commencement, in the middle, and at the end of the feast. That kind of apple is not indigenous to Palestine; it comes from a warmer clime. It may indeed be found here and there in the sunny regions, but it is not so vigorous nor does it ripen to maturity. It was transported hither by caravans from warm countries. The fruit is yellow and like a small melon; it has a little crown on top, is ribbed and somewhat flat. The pulp in the center of the fruit is streaked with red, and in it closely packed together are five little kernels, but no seed vessel. The stalk is rather curved, and the blossoms form a large, white cluster like our elderberry. The branches below the large leaves strike root again in the earth, whence new ones spring up and thus an arbor is formed. The fruit rises from the axel of the leaves. The pagans also took part in this feast. They, too, had their tabernacles of green branches, and those that had received Baptism took their places next to the Jews, by whom they were cordially and hospitably entertained. All were still influenced by the impressions received at the instruction upon the Prodigal Son. The meal lasted until late into the night. Jesus went up and

down along the tables instructing the guests, and wherever anything was needed supplying the want through one of the disciples. Joyous sounds of conversation and merriment arose from all sides, occasionally interrupted by prayer and canticles. The whole place was ablaze with lights. The roofs of Ennon were covered with tents and tabernacles, and there the occupants of the houses slept at night. In the tabernacles outside the city many poor people and servants, after the feast was over and all had gone to rest, passed the night as guards.

Jesus, accompanied by the disciples and many others, returned from Ennon to Socoth, which was at no great distance. The greater part of the way was covered with tabernacles and tents, for many from the surrounding districts celebrated the feast here, and the caravans, which were constantly coming and going, were now resting for the feast. The whole length of the road was like one triumphal march. Behind the tabernacles were stands covered with awnings at which provisions could be purchased. It took Jesus several hours to traverse this road, for He was every-where saluted and from time to time He stood still to instruct. He did not reach the synagogue of Socoth till toward evening. Socoth on the north bank of the Jabok was a beautiful city, and had a very magnificent synagogue. Besides the Feast of Tabernacles, there was another celebrated today in Socoth, that of the reconciliation of Jacob and Esau. The whole day was devoted to it, and there were visitors from all the country around. Among the school children at Ennon were some of the orphans from the school of Abelmahula, who were now in Socoth, having come for the feast of today. It was the real anniversary of Jacob and Esau's reconciliation, which, according to the Jewish tradition, had taken place on this day.

The synagogue, one of the most beautiful that I have ever seen, was rendered still more gorgeous today by its festal decorations of countless crowns, flowery garlands, and lovely, sparkling lamps. It was lofty and supported by eight columns. On both sides of the edifice ran corridors communicating with the buildings that comprised the dwellings of the Levites and the schools. One end of the synagogue was more elevated than the rest, and here toward the center rose an ornamented pillar with little cases and projections running up around it, in which were kept the rolls of the Law. Behind the pillar was a table, and near it a curtain that could be drawn to cut off the neighboring space from the rest of the synagogue. A couple of steps farther back was a row of seats for the priests, with one more elevated in the middle for the preacher. Back of these seats stood an altar of incense above which, in the roof of the synagogue, was an opening; and behind this altar, at the far end of the edifice, were tables upon which the offerings were

deposited. The men, ranged according to their classes, stood in the center of the synagogue. To the left, on a slight elevation and separated by a grating, was the place for the women; and on the right was that of the school children grouped in classes, the boys and girls separate.

The feast of today celebrated the reconciliation between God and man.

There was a general confession of sin made either in public or private, according to individual desire. All gathered round the altar of incense, offered gifts of expiation, received a penance from the priests, and made voluntary vows. This ceremony bore a striking resemblance to our Sacrament of Penance. The priest from the teacher's chair spoke of Jacob and Esau, who had today been reconciled with God and each other, also of Laban and Jacob who had again become friends and offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and he earnestly exhorted his hearers to penance. Many of those present had by John's teaching and that of Jesus during the past days been very much touched, and were waiting only for this great festival to do penance. Some men, whose consciences reproached them with grave faults, went through the door in the grating near the teacher's chair around behind the altar, and laid on the tables their offerings, which a priest received. Then, returning to the priests in front of the pillar containing the Law, they confessed their sins either publicly to the assembled priests, or privately to one of their own choice. In the latter case, both priest and penitent retired behind the curtain, the confession was made in a low voice, a penance imposed, and at the same time incense was cast upon the altar. If the smoke arose in a certain way, the people took it as a sign of the genuineness of the penitent's contrition and of the pardon accorded his sins. The rest of the Jews chanted and prayed during the confessions. The penitents made a kind of profession of faith, promising fidelity to the Law, to Israel, and to the Holy of Holies. Then they prostrated and confessed their sins, often with abundant tears. The female penitents followed after the men, and their offerings were received by the priests. Then retiring behind a grating, they called for a priest and confessed.

The Jews accused themselves of sins against the Ten Commandments and of all violations of established usages. There was something singular in their confession, which I hardly know how to repeat. They bemoaned the sins of their forefathers. They spoke of a soul prone to sin received from their progenitors, and of another, a holy one, received from God. They appeared indeed to speak of two distinct souls. The priests in their exhortation likewise said something to the same effect, namely, "May their" (the ancestors') "sinful soul remain not in us, but may our holy soul remain in us!" I cannot now recall what was said of the influence mutually exerted by these two souls upon, and by, and in, each other. Jesus next spoke. He touched upon

this same point, but treated it differently from the Doctors. He said that it should indeed be so no longer. The sinful soul received from their forefathers should not remain in them. It was a touching instruction, clearly signifying that Jesus Himself was about to make satisfaction for all souls. They also lamented the sins of their parents, as if knowing that all kinds of evils had descended to them through their progenitors, as if through them they were still in possession of the sad heritage of sin.

The penitential exercises had already begun when Jesus arrived. He was received at the entrance of the synagogue, and for awhile He remained standing at one side on the platform among the Doctors, one of whom was preaching. It was about five o'clock when He arrived. The offerings of the penitents consisted of all sorts of fruits, money, articles of clothing for the priests, pieces of stuff, silken tassels and knots, girdles, etc., and principally of frankincense, some of which was burned at once.

And now I witnessed a touching spectacle. While the confessions were going on and the offerings were being made by the penitents, I noticed a distinguished-looking lady in a private seat near the secluded place of penance. Her seat was cut off from the rest by a grating. I noticed her troubled and agitated appearance. Her maidservant was nearby, having just deposited on a stool at her mistress' side a basket containing the gifts intended for the offering. The lady was impatient for her turn to come, and when at last she could no longer restrain her agitation and desire for reconciliation, she arose, drew her veil and, preceded by her maid with the offerings, passed through the grating and straight to the priests, into a place to which entrance was forbid-den to women. The wardens tried to prevent her, but the maid would not be stopped. She forced her way in, exclaiming: "Make way! Make way for my mistress! She wants to make her offering, she wants to do penance! Make way for her! She wants to purify her soul!" The lady, agitated and bowed down by sorrow, advanced toward the priests, threw herself on her knees, and begged to be reconciled. But they told her to withdraw, they could not hear her there. One of them however, younger than his brethren, took her by the hand, saying: "I will reconcile thee! If thy corporal presence belongs not here, not so thy soul, since thou art penitent!" Then turning with her toward Jesus, he said: "Rabbi, what sayest Thou?" The lady fell on her face before Jesus, and He answered: "Yes, her soul has a right to be here! Permit this daughter of Adam to do penance!" and the priest retired with her into the curtained enclosure. When she reappeared, she prostrated in tears upon the ground, exclaiming: "Wipe your feet on me, for I am an adulteress!" and the priests touched her lightly with the foot. Her husband, who knew nothing of what was transpiring, was sent for. At his

entrance, Jesus occupied the teacher's chair, and His words sank deep into the man's heart. He wept, and his wife, veiled and prostrate on the ground before him, confessed her guilt. Her tears flowed abundantly, and she appeared to be more dead than alive. Jesus addressed her: "Thy sins are forgiven thee! Arise, child of God!" and the husband, deeply moved, reached out his hand to his penitent wife. Their hands were then bound together with the wife's veil and the long, narrow scarf of the husband, and loosened again after they had received a benediction. It was like a second nuptial ceremony. The lady was now, after her reconciliation, quite inebriated with joy. At the moment her offerings were presented, she had cried out: "Pray! Pray! Burn incense, offer sacrifices, that my sins may be forgiven!" and she falteringly repeated various passages from the Psalms, while being conducted to her place by the priests.

Her offering consisted of many costly fruits such as they were accustomed to use at the Feast of Tabernacles. They had been carefully arranged in the basket, so that they would not injure one another by pressure. There were also borders, silk tassels, and fringes for priestly vestments. She at the same time committed to the flames several magnificent silk robes in which her vanity had arrayed itself for the gaze of her paramour. She was a tall, robust, beautifully formed woman of an ardent and vivacious temperament. Her deep contrition and voluntary avowal of guilt had won for her forgiveness, and her husband was heartily reconciled with her. She had had no children by her illicit connection, had been the first to dissolve her sinful bonds, and had won over her paramour to penance. She did not, however, make him known either to the priests or to her husband. It was forbidden to the latter to make inquiries, and to her to name the guilty one. The husband was a pious man; he forgave and forgot with all his heart. The multitude present did not indeed catch the details of the scene. Still they saw the interruption, they saw that something extraordinary was transpiring, and they heard the lady's cry for prayer and sacrifice. All prayed earnestly for her, and rejoiced over a soul doing penance. The people of this place were very good, as they generally were on the east side of the Jordan, for they had retained more of the manners and customs of the ancient patriarchs.

Jesus continued teaching in beautiful and touching language. I recall distinctly His allusion to the sins of our forefathers and our own share in the same, and He rectified the ideas of some of His auditors on that subject. Once He used the expression: "Your fathers have eaten grapes, and your teeth have been set on edge."

The schoolteachers were then questioned upon the faults of their pupils, while the latter were reminded that if they accused themselves and were

sorry, they would be forgiven. There were many sick outside the synagogue and, although it was not customary for them to enter on the Feast of Tabernacles, yet Jesus directed the disciples to bring them into the corridor between the sacred building and the dwellings of the Doctors. At the close of the feast, the whole synagogue having long before been lighted up with lamps, He went out into the corridor and cured many of them. At the moment Jesus entered the corridor, a messenger appeared from the lately reconciled lady, begging Jesus to grant her a few words. Jesus went to her and retired apart with her a few instants. She threw herself at His feet and exclaimed: "Master, he with whom I sinned, implores Thee to reconcile him to God!" and Jesus promised to see him there in that same place after the repast.

The curing of the sick was followed by an entertainment in honor of the feast, and given on one of the open squares of the city. Jesus, the disciples, the Levites, and the most distinguished personages of the city took their places under a large and beautiful bower that formed the center of many others, the men and women separate. The poor were not forgotten. Everyone sent the best from his own table to them. Jesus went around from table to table, not excepting that of the women. The reconciled sinner was full of joy, as were also her female friends. They gathered around her, heartily wishing her every happiness. As Jesus was making the rounds of the tables, she seemed to be very uneasy about something, and frequently cast anxious glances toward Him, hoping that He would not forget His promise to reconcile the partner of her guilt, for she knew that he was already waiting at the place designated. When Jesus drew near to where she sat, He quieted her anxiety, telling her that He knew what was troubling her and bidding her rest assured that all would be well in its own good time. When the guests separated for their homes, Jesus started for His lodgings near the synagogue. He was met by the man who had been waiting in the corridor for Him, and who now threw himself at His feet and confessed his sin. Jesus exhorted him to sin no more and imposed on him as penance to give the priests every week for a certain time something for a charitable purpose. He was not obliged to make public offerings, but to mourn his sin in private.

When Jesus returned from Socoth to Ennon, He gave instructions at the place of Baptism, cured the sick, and visited the Gentiles. Several little parties of neophytes were baptized. There were still standing here some of the arrangements John had made when baptizing for the first time at the Jordan near On, a tent and the baptismal stone. The neophytes leaned over a railing, their heads over the baptismal pool. Jesus received the confessions of many and granted them absolution from their sins, a power which He had imparted

to some of the older disciples—for instance, to Andrew. John the Evangelist did not yet baptize. He acted as witness and sponsor.

Before Jesus again left Ennon with His disciples, He had an interview with Mary the Suphanite in her own house. He gave her salutary advice. Mary was entirely changed. She was full of love, zeal, humility, Jesus in Akrabis and gratitude; she busied herself with the poor and the sick. When journeying after her cure through Ramoth and Basan, Jesus had sent a disciple to Bethania to inform the holy women of it and of her reconciliation, in consequence of which announcement Veronica, Johanna Chusa, and Martha had been to visit her.

On His departure from Ennon, Jesus received rich presents from Mary and many other people, all of which were at once distributed to the poor. The gateway by which He left the city was decorated with an arch of flowers and garlands. The assembled crowd saluted Him with songs of praise, and He was met outside the city by women and children who presented Him with wreaths. This was one of the customs at the Feast of Tabernacles. Many of the citizens accompanied Him beyond the city limits. For two hours His road ran to the south, through the valley of the Jordan, and on this side of the river. Then it wound for about half an hour to the west, then turned again to the south and led to the city of Akrabis, which was situated upon a ridge of the mountain.