

My Free Bible History: The New Testament



Madonna and Child

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Nihil Obstat: Reverend Monsignor Michael J. Chaback
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Bishop of Allentown

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Given at the Chancery on this sixth day of June, the Feast of Mary, Mother of the Church, Diocesan Patroness, in the Year of Our Lord, two-thousand twenty-two, in the fifth year of my Episcopate.



Eugene P. Ritz
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Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert
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DEDICATED
TO
THE HOLY CHILD JESUS
AND HIS MOTHER
MARY, QUEEN OF PEACE

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

This book of bible stories is not intended for little children. In spite of the numerous pictures and illustrations included with the text, the book is intended for pupils in the upper grades and the adult Catholic who wishes to have a basic knowledge of Bible History, but who is intimidated by, or who has no time to read, the actual Bible. I added bible references, footnotes and short commentaries, so that catechists and bible enthusiasts may find the book useful as well. The book is copyrighted, but FREE. You may freely copy and distribute this book to friends and family, provided no alteration is made, and this notice is kept intact. The sale of this book is strictly prohibited.

The present book may serve as a companion to any catechism of the Catholic Faith. The bible stories contained here are not intended just for entertainment, but are meant to stimulate discussion, as well as to illustrate and reinforce lessons in the catechism.

My Free Bible History is not a new translation of the Bible. It is simply a retelling of the same stories contained in Holy Scripture. I used and followed closely the 1899 *Douay-Challoner-Rheims* version of the Bible because this version is in the public domain. However, I updated, abridged, and simplified the text for the modern reader. I avoided old English terms, such as the “thee’s” and the “thou’s,” and I used the modern names that are currently found in most Bibles today. For example, I used *Joshua* instead of *Josue*, *Elijah* instead of *Elias*, *1 & 2 Chronicles* instead of *1 & 2 Paralipomenon*, etc. Likewise, I adopted the numbering of the *Psalms* as found in the newer versions of the Bible. Those who use the newer versions should therefore still be able to use the biblical references given in this book.

In writing this Bible History I kept the stories as close to the original stories of Holy Scripture as possible. Any detail added is intended only to clarify the meaning of the sacred text, not to add drama to the stories. Commentaries (in red texts) are mainly for catechists and bible enthusiasts, although any diligent reader will also find them helpful. I added them to indicate archaeological data that shed light to biblical events, and to give some insights based on the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. To keep the reader’s focus on the Bible as *history*, I still kept the discussion of moral and catechetical lessons to a minimum. Those who are looking for an extensive exposition of moral and religious truths from the Bible will find plenty of them in the excellent work of Bishop Frederick Justus Knecht (see link next page).

Most of the pictures and illustrations used here are believed to be in the public domain here in the U.S. However, there are a few copyrighted ones that I took the liberty of using based on the concept of “fair use,” as defined by Title 17, U.S. Code §107 for educational and non-commercial purposes. Picture credits and a link to their sources and license are given at the end of the book.

Although I made this book as a lay Dominican, this book is my personal project and not the project of the Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic. Therefore, any error, omission, or legal infraction that may be detected in this book is solely my responsibility and does not in any way implicate the Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic or the Order of Preachers as a whole.

USEFUL LINKS

New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE) - from the USCCB website.

This Bible contains the text of Holy Scripture in modern English. It also has an expanded introductory material and an extensive set of footnotes based on recent biblical research.

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible>

Douay-Challoner-Rheims (DCR) Bible with Haydock's Commentary

This is the classic English translation of St. Jerome's *Biblia Vulgata*, and uses old-style English. The Haydock commentary is a collection of timeless commentary by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church and by other renowned Catholic scholars. On top of each page is a menu which contains a tab for the Old Testament and a tab for the New Testament. The text of Holy Scripture is on the right column of each page, and the Haydock commentary is on the left, which makes it neat and easy to use. Both the DCR Bible and the Haydock Commentary are in the public domain.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20161013003500/http://haydock1859.tripod.com/index.html>

A Practical Commentary on Holy Scripture, by Frederick Justus Knecht, D.D.

An excellent resource for those who teach Bible History in the secondary schools. This commentary is based on the text of the DCR Bible, and is also in the public domain.

<https://www.ecatholic2000.com/knecht/untitled-198.shtml>

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<http://gregoryblvdcc.org/Bible%20Maps/Bible%20Atlas%20Online%20by%20Access%20Foundation.htm>

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC):

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

There are 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament, for a total of 73 books.

OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

Book	Abbrev.	Book	Abbrev
Genesis	Gen	Song of Songs (<i>Canticles</i>)	Sg
Exodus	Ex	Wisdom	Wisd
Leviticus	Lev	Sirach (<i>Ecclesiasticus</i>)	Sir
Numbers	Num	Isaiah (<i>Isaias</i>)	Isa
Deuteronomy	Deut	Jeremiah (<i>Jeremias</i>)	Jer
Joshua (<i>Josue</i>)	Jos	Lamentations	Lam
Judges	Jgs	Baruch	Bar
Ruth	Ruth	Ezekiel (<i>Ezechiel</i>)	Ez
1 Samuel (<i>1 Kings</i>)	1 Sam	Daniel	Dan
2 Samuel (<i>2 Kings</i>)	2 Sam	Hosea (<i>Osee</i>)	Hos
1 Kings (<i>3 Kings</i>)	1 Kgs	Joel	Joel
2 Kings (<i>4 Kings</i>)	2 Kgs	Amos	Am
1Chronicles (<i>1 Paralipomenon</i>)	1 Chr	Obadiah (<i>Abdias</i>)	Ob
2 Chronicles (<i>2 Paralipomenon</i>)	2 Chr	Jonah (<i>Jonas</i>)	Jon
Ezra (<i>1 Esdras</i>)	Ezr	Micah (<i>Micheas</i>)	Mi
Nehemiah (<i>2 Esdras</i>)	Neh	Nahum	Nah
Tobit (<i>Tobias</i>)	Tob	Habakkuk (<i>Habacuc</i>)	Hab
Judith	Jdt	Zephaniah (<i>Sophonias</i>)	Zep
Esther	Esth	Haggai (<i>Aggeus</i>)	Hg
Job	Job	Zechariah (<i>Zacharias</i>)	Zec
Psalms	Ps	Malachi (<i>Malachias</i>)	Mal
Proverbs	Prov	1 Maccabees (<i>1 Machabees</i>)	1 Macc
Qoheleth (<i>Ecclesiastes</i>)	Qo	2 Maccabees (<i>2 Machabees</i>)	2 Macc

The names given in the table are those used in most modern versions of the Bible. The names in italics and in parentheses are the names used in the old Douay-Challoner-Rheims version. The books highlighted in yellow are regarded by Protestants as apocryphal, and are therefore missing in the Protestant canon. The book of Daniel is not missing, but Daniel 3:24-90, as well as Chapters 13 and 14, are missing.

Some old Bibles combine Jeremiah and Lamentations into one book, thus ending with a total of only 45 books in the Old Testament.

NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

Book	Abbrev.	Book	Abbrev.
Matthew	Matt	1 Timothy	1 Tim
Mark	Mark	2 Timothy	2 Tim
Luke	Luke	Titus	Tit
John	John	Philemon	Phlm
The Acts of the Apostles	Acts	Hebrews	Heb
Romans	Rom	James	Jas
1 Corinthians	1 Cor	1 Peter	1 Pet
2 Corinthians	2 Cor	2 Peter	2 Pet
Galatians	Gal	1 John	1 John
Ephesians	Eph	2 John	2 John
Philippians	Phil	3 John	3 John
Colossians	Col	Jude	Jude
1 Thessalonians	1 Thes	Revelation	Rev
2 Thessalonians	2 Thes		

How Passages in the Bible Are Referenced

All books of the Bible are divided into chapters, and every sentence, called a verse, is numbered. When a passage or text is quoted from the Bible, the author will usually give the name of the book, the chapter, and the verse number. Frequently, only the abbreviation, rather than the full name of the book, is given. The verse is separated from the chapter by a colon (:). For example, consider the following:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land” (Matt 5:3-4).

The symbol at the end of the quotation, Matt 5:3-4, indicates that the text was taken from the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 5, verses 3 thru 4.



Fig 1 The Good Shepherd (John 10:1-16)
Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

Frontispiece

(Click the title or sub-title to go directly to each topic.)

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2. The Woman with Hemorrhage and the Daughter of Jairus

Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist

First Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes

Christ Walks on the Water

Christ's Discourse on the Bread of Life

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Third Missionary Voyage of Saint Paul
Paul's Voyage to Rome

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My Free Bible History: The New Testament

PART ONE – The Birth, Infancy and Childhood of Christ

CHAPTER 1 THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The Annunciation of John the Baptist

(Luke 1:5-25)

In the days of Herod the Great, the king of Judea, there lived a certain priest named Zechariah, and his wife, Elizabeth. They were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord without blame. But they had no child, for Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. (Luke 1:5-7)

One day, he went into the temple to serve according to the custom of his priestly office, for it was his lot to burn incense. The entire multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. Seeing the angel, Zechariah was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him: “Do not fear, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall name him **John**. You shall have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth, for he shall be great before the Lord. He shall drink no wine nor strong drink,¹ and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. He shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah that he may turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the skeptics to the wisdom of the just, to prepare a perfect people for the Lord.” (Luke 1:8-17)

¹ This indicates that John would be consecrated to the Lord as a Nazarite, as Samson was (Num 6:3). John was to be dedicated as a Nazarite because of his special mission as a precursor of Christ.

Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this is the case? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” The angel answered him, “I am Gabriel, who stand before God and am sent to speak to you and to bring you these good news. Behold, you shall be dumb and shall not be able to speak until the day these things come to pass because you have not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time.” (Luke 1:18-20)



Fig 1.1.1 The Angel Gabriel Punishes Zechariah for His Unbelief
Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

The people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them, and they understood that he had seen a vision. He made signs to them and remained dumb. (Luke 1:21-22)

After the days of his office were completed, he departed to his own home. Soon Elizabeth his wife conceived and hid herself five months, saying, “Thus has the Lord done this to me, that He has regarded it time to take away my reproach² among men.” (Luke 1:23-25)

COMMENTARY

1. Zechariah doubted the angel’s word, a doubt that may be regarded as a venial sin. But observe how severely he was punished for it. Let us be careful, then, in giving little account of our venial sins. They could have serious consequences.
2. Venial sins should be avoided, not only because they *dispose* us to commit mortal sins, but also because the frequency and number of venial sins that we commit can render them grave. St. Augustine tells us that *many little sins, if they be neglected, kill*. What can be smaller than a drop of rain? Yet it is these minute rain drops that fill our rivers and our lakes. “Minute are the grains of sand,” continues St. Augustine, “but if much sand is put together, the heap presses and crushes.” *Tractate on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 12, #14.

² Among the Hebrews being barren is regarded as a disfavor from the Lord. This is why Isaac prayed fervently that his wife, Rebekah, might have a child because she was barren (Gen 25:21). His prayers were answered and she was blessed with a twin: Jacob and Esau. This is also why Jacob’s wife, Rachel, who was childless for many years although she was prettier than her sister Leah, was so happy when God finally answered her prayers with her first child, Joseph. She said, “God has taken away my reproach” (Gen 30:23). Samuel’s mother, Hannah, prayed every day at the Tabernacle in Shiloh, and promised to consecrate her child to the Lord, if only God would give her one (1 Sam 1:1-20).

The Annunciation of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26-38)

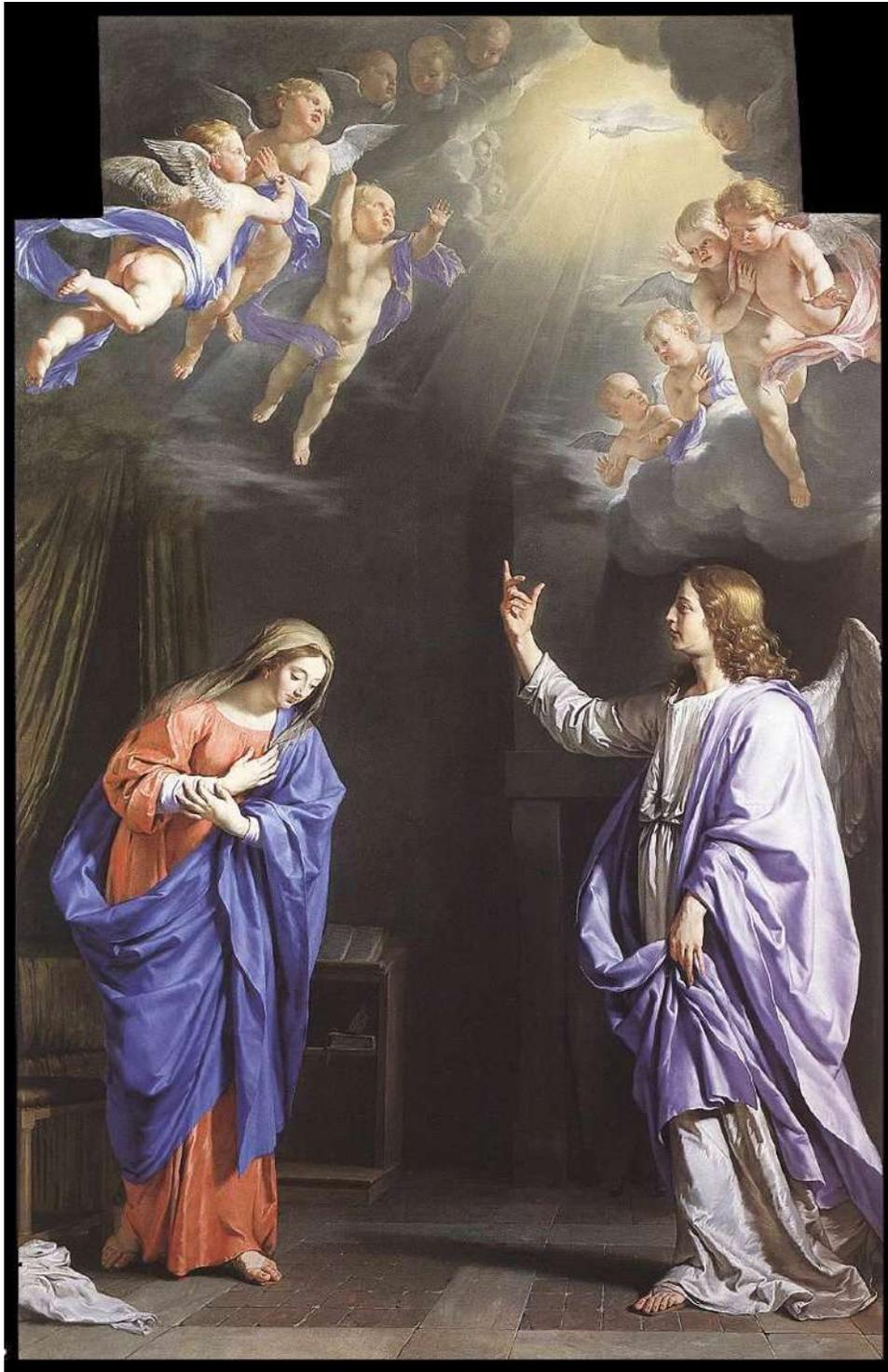


Fig 1.1.2 The Annunciation

Artist: Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674)

In the sixth month [of Elizabeth's pregnancy] the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged³ to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of King David. The virgin's name was Mary. Having entered her house, the angel said to her, "*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you.*" (Luke 1:26-28)

Having heard this, Mary was troubled at what the angel said, and pondered what kind of greeting this should be. The angel said to her, "Fear not, Mary, for you have found grace with God. Behold you shall conceive in your womb and shall bear a Son, and you shall name Him **Jesus**. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God shall give to Him the throne of David His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom shall have no end." Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be done, since I do not know man⁴?" (Luke 1:29-34)

The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you. Therefore, the Holy One who shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God. Behold, your cousin, Elizabeth, has also conceived a son in her old age. This is already her sixth month of pregnancy although she is known to be barren, for nothing shall be impossible with God." (Luke 1:35-37)

Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."⁵ And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38)

³ The Jewish engagement or "betrothal" is not a mere promise to marry. Legally, a "betrothed man" has a spouse whom he can divorce, and who shall be regarded as his widow if he dies.

⁴ "I do not know man" is understood in Hebrew as "not having *intimate* knowledge of, or sexual relations with, a man." It was the Blessed Virgin Mary's way of saying that, although she was engaged to Joseph, she was still a virgin.

⁵ In that very same instant, when the Virgin Mary gave her consent, the Son of God was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

COMMENTARY

1. *“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you.”* These were the words by which the angel Gabriel greeted the Virgin Mary. Notice that the angel did not address the Blessed Virgin by her first name. Instead, he said: “Hail, full of grace.” This substitution of an adjective for a name has a similar effect in English as in the original Greek. Try to greet a lady by saying, “Good morning, beautiful,” and you will see what wonderful effect it makes. For her, your salutation is not a mere greeting but a song of praise.
2. The original Greek text of the angelic salutation is, *“Chaire, kecharitomene, ho kyrios meta sou.”* It is unfortunate to see many contemporary Bibles abandon the traditional translation of *Chaire, kecharitomene*, as “Hail, full of grace.” For example, one popular Bible translates the phrase as, “Rejoice, you who enjoy God’s favor!” This translation is not as exact as the traditional translation. Among other things, it lacks the high note of praise that accompanied the angel’s greeting. Because grace is not merely the condition of being “favored.” Rather, it is a free gift that transforms the soul and makes a person pleasing to God. Therefore, to say that the Virgin Mary is “full of grace,” in contrast to simply saying that she is the “favored one,” is to extol the beauty of her soul. Certainly, the Virgin Mary was the favored one, for God chose her to be the Mother of His Son. But God’s way of showing favor is precisely by endowing the favored one with grace. Therefore, it is inexact, if not incorrect, to diminish the force of the Greek text, *kecharitomene*, which means “full of grace,” or “one who has received grace abundantly.” Our Lady was not merely “favored” because God chose her to be the Mother of His Son. Precisely in view of this election, God also endowed her richly with *sanctifying grace* by which she fully lived the divine life in her soul.
3. *“How shall this be done, since I do not know man?”* Most contemporary Bibles in English translate the Virgin Mary’s question as, “How *can* this be done...,” as if she was doubting the angel’s word. The traditional translation (from the *Vulgate*) is, “How *shall* this be done?” Stated in this manner, the question implies that the Virgin Mary did not doubt the angel’s word, but that she merely wanted to know the *manner* in which God’s plan was to take place.

4. The reason given by Mary, “because I know not man,” is puzzling because at the time of the annunciation she was already betrothed to St. Joseph, although they were not living together yet. Saint Augustine observes that the reason makes sense only if the Virgin Mary had previously made a vow to remain a virgin, and that Saint Joseph had decided to respect it. See St. Augustine, *On Holy Virginity*, par. 4
5. From their visions the mystics said that both the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph independently made a private vow of virginity before their betrothal. See Raphael Brown, *The Life of Mary as Seen by the Mystics*, Bruce Publishing Co., 1951, Ch. 7. However, Saint Thomas Aquinas explained (in *Summa Theologiæ*, Part III, Q. 28, Art. 4), that this could not be an absolute, but only a conditional vow of virginity; that means, a promise to remain a virgin, provided that it pleases God. For, an absolute vow of virginity before their betrothal would have been against the Old Law (Deuteronomy 7:14). Probably, therefore, the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph ratified their vows and made them absolute *after* their betrothal, but *before* the Annunciation. Some biblical scholars today find this idea of a mutual vow of virginity difficult to accept because it was not explicitly stated in Holy Scripture. However, we know that every marriage that is moved by God’s grace tends toward chastity. In the case of the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, is it altogether unlikely that they found their marriage precisely to be the means of safeguarding their virginity?
6. Virginity does not merely mean sexual abstinence. Saint John Chrysostom said that she who is anxious about the things of the world is not really a virgin. (See *On I Corinthians, Homily 19*, on 1 Cor 7:35.) The essence of virginity consists rather in one’s consecration to God. The virgin abstains from sex to devote his or her being entirely to God. In this sense, bodily virginity is only a sign of one’s total consecration. If the Virgin Mary is the Queen of Virgins, it is not so much because she practiced the virtue of chastity best, but because her whole being was consecrated to God.

The Visitation

(Luke 1:39-56)

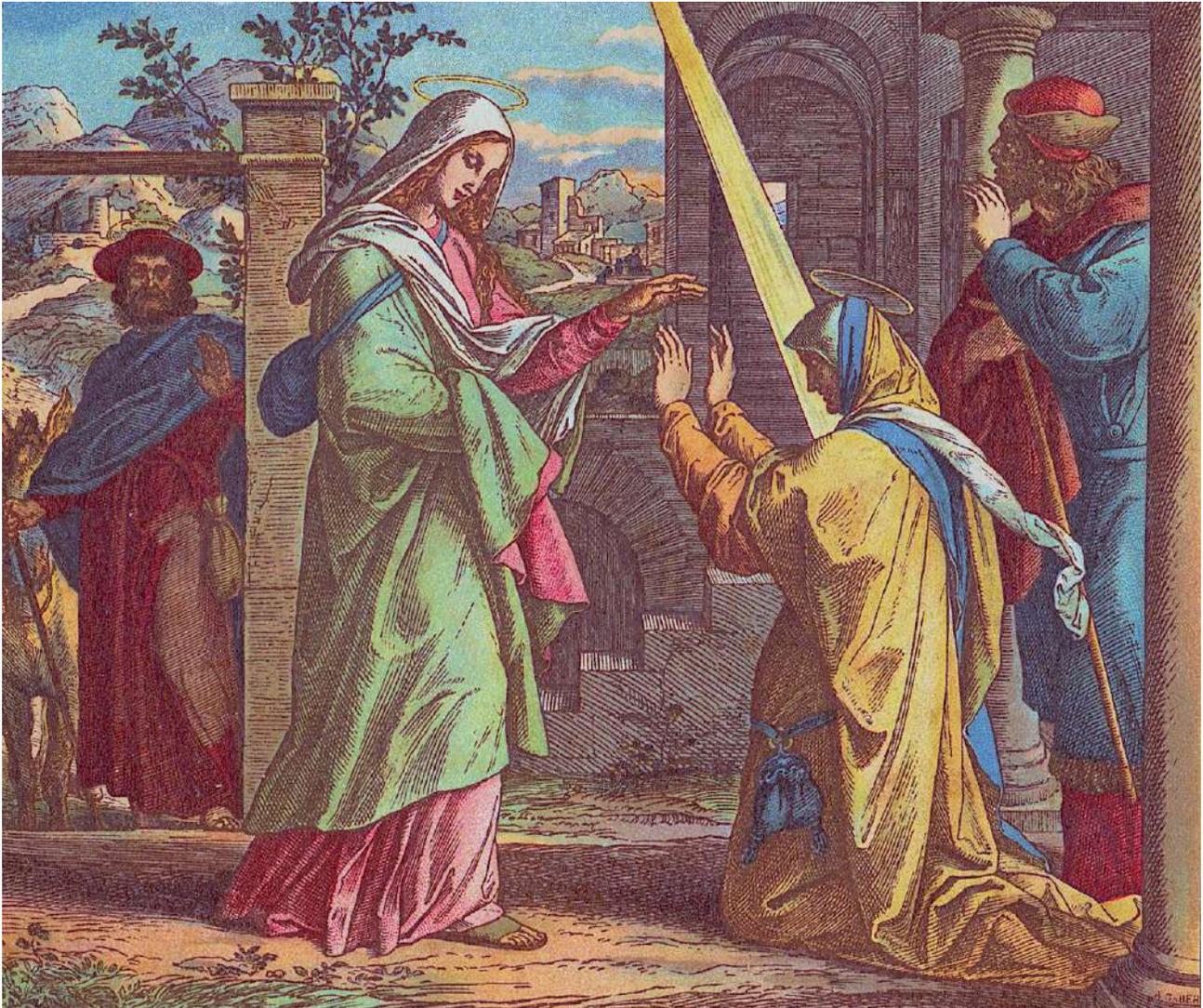


Fig 1.1.3 The Virgin Mary Visits Her Cousin Elizabeth

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah. She entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she cried out with a loud voice and said, "*Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your*

womb.⁶ How is this that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who have believed, because those things that were spoken to you by the Lord shall be accomplished.” (Luke 1:39-45)

Mary said:

*“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior
Because He has regarded the humility of His handmaid;
Behold, from now on all generations shall call me blessed
Because He that is mighty has done great things for me,
And holy is His name ...*

*“He has cast down the mighty from their thrones
And has exalted the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich He has sent away empty.
He has received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy,
As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to His children
forever”⁷*

(Luke 1:46-55)

Mary lived with Elizabeth about three months. Then she returned to her own house in Nazareth. (Luke 1:56)

⁶ The words of the *Hail Mary* prayer therefore came from the Bible. The first phrase, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you” was spoken by the Angel Gabriel, and the second phrase, “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb,” came from Mary’s cousin, St. Elizabeth.

⁷ Mary’s canticle (the italicized text), in which her soul proclaims or *magnifies* the Lord, is known as the *Magnificat* in Latin.

COMMENTARY

1. *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah.* Saint Luke said that our Lady went “with haste.” One might think that this was because the Virgin Mary could not wait to verify the angel’s word. But that isn’t true. She knew that her cousin, Elizabeth, was expecting. So, she travelled with haste that she might assist her in her pregnancy and join her in praising God for His blessings.
2. *When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb.* It is common knowledge that babies occasionally leap in their mother’s womb. But in the case of Saint Elizabeth’s baby, which leaped as soon she heard the Virgin Mary’s voice, we may say that there was something supernatural about it because, as the Holy Scripture says, *Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.*
3. Let us be careful, lest we think that the words of the *Magnificat* were not Mary’s own words, but were merely an adaptation by St. Luke of some Old Testament texts, particularly the *Song of Hannah* (1 Sam 2:1-10). This cannot be, for our Lady’s canticle contained a prophecy not found in Hannah’s song: “*Behold, from now on all generations shall call me blessed.*” How could Saint Luke ever put into the lips of the Blessed Virgin a prophecy that would be true of all faithful generations? Did he know that future artists, such as Michelangelo, Murillo and Raphael, would one day come to honor her in their artwork and masterpieces? Did he know that future writers, such as Dante and Jacopone da Todi, would one day come to praise her in lyrics and poetry? Did he know that future musicians and composers, such as Bach and Vivaldi, would immortalize her words in song and music? Did he know that future saints and scholars, such as Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, would someday come to extol her glory in their tracts and treatises? Therefore, it makes more sense simply to accept that the *Magnificat* was the Blessed Virgin Mary’s own song of joy, and not a mere repetition of Hannah’s song.
4. After living with Elizabeth for three months, Mary returned to her own house, not Saint Joseph’s, because they were only engaged and not married yet.

The Birth of John the Baptist

(Luke 1:57-80)



Fig 1.1.4 The Naming of the Baptist

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Now when Elizabeth's time to give birth came, she delivered a son, and her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown His great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they called him by his father's name Zechariah. His mother said, "No, he shall be called John." They said to her, "There is none among your family that is called by that name." They made signs to his father, asking how he would have the child named. He demanded a writing tablet, then wrote, "John is his name." Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. (Luke 1:57-64)

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Zechariah prophesied, saying,

*"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel
Because He has wrought the redemption of His people,
And has raised up a horn of salvation to us,
In the house of David His servant..."*

*"You, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
For you shall go before the Lord to prepare His ways,
To give knowledge of salvation to His people
For the remission of their sins,
Through the tender mercy of our God,
In which the Rising Sun from on high has visited us;
To enlighten those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death;
And to direct our feet into the way of peace."*⁸

(Luke 1:67-79)

The child grew and was strengthened in spirit. He was in the wilderness until the day of his manifestation to Israel. (Luke 1:80)

⁸ The italicized text is known as the *Canticle of Zechariah* or (the *Benedictus*). The *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat* are recited by the Church every day in her Morning and Evening Prayers respectively.

COMMENTARY

1. Although Saint Luke did not mention the Virgin Mary's name in the above narrative, which describes Saint John's birth and circumcision, we cannot conclude from this that the Blessed Virgin Mary had already left for Nazareth when Saint John was born. One of the reasons for our Lady's visit was to assist Saint Elizabeth in her pregnancy. Therefore, she probably stayed with Saint Elizabeth at least until Saint John was born before going back to Nazareth. And because the circumcision was just a few days away, she probably stayed to witness it also.
2. *"You shall go before the Lord to prepare His ways."* Zechariah's prophecy foretells that John the Baptist will grow up to be the herald of Christ. That means, before Jesus Christ makes Himself known to the public, John will preach to the Jews and prepare their souls to receive Him.

The Dream of St. Joseph

(Matt 1:18-25)



Fig 1.1.5 The Dream of St. Joseph
Artist: Francisco Rizi (1608-1685)

When Mary was espoused to Joseph, and before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband, being a just man, yet not willing to publicly expose her, was considering divorcing her privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary, your wife, to yourself, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She shall bring forth a Son, and you shall name Him Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” (Matt 1:18-21)

All this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: “Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son. They shall call His name *Emmanuel*, meaning, God with us.” (Matt 1:22-23)

Rising up from sleep, Joseph did as the angel had commanded him, and took his wife to himself. Joseph had no relations with her before she brought forth her first born Son, and he named Him Jesus. (Matt 1:24-25)

COMMENTARY

1. The Blessed Virgin Mary was already three months pregnant when she came back to Nazareth from St. Elizabeth’s house. At this time, she could not hide her pregnancy from Saint Joseph anymore. When Saint Joseph found out about the Child in Mary’s womb, the news disturbed him. But contrary to common belief, the reason that Saint Joseph was disturbed was not because he suspected our Lady of adultery. It is necessary to pay attention to the words of Saint Matthew’s Gospel: “When Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, *of the Holy Spirit*.” In other words, *before* the angel appeared to him in a dream, Saint Joseph already knew, probably from Mary herself, that the Child in her womb was not the Child of another man, but of God. Then what disturbed him? Why did he think of divorcing the Virgin Mary quietly? One plausible opinion, expressed by St. Bernard of Clairvaux (a Doctor of the Church), is that St. Joseph found himself unworthy to be the Virgin Mary’s

husband anymore, if she conceived of the Holy Spirit. Realizing the sacred relationship that existed between the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Spirit, Saint Joseph felt that he had no right to be a part of *that* family anymore. As St. Bernard puts it, “Joseph’s reason was the same as Peter’s when he said, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,’ and that of the centurion when he exclaimed, ‘I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof.’ Joseph looked on himself as a sinner and as unworthy to entertain one in whom he beheld a superhuman dignity. He beheld with awe in the Virgin-Mother a certain sign of the Divine Presence, and as he could not penetrate the mystery, he wished to put her away.”⁹

2. If the above analysis is correct, then the angel appeared to Saint Joseph, not so much to explain the supernatural origin of the Child (which Saint Joseph already knew), but to tell him of God’s wish that he should take care of the Virgin and the Child. By accepting the Child, whom he knew was not his own, Saint Joseph became an even more trustworthy witness of our Lady’s virtue. As Saint Bernard noted in the same homily (*Missus Est*), our Lady’s virginity became for us more credible because of her husband, who did *not* reject her, than because of any testimony that she alone might give of herself. Saint Bernard sees in the Blessed Virgin’s espousal a certain similarity with the doubt of the Apostle Thomas. The Gospel of Saint John tells us that the Apostle Thomas did not believe the resurrection at first, until he touched the wounds of our Lord (John 20:24-29). Instead of diminishing our faith, the Apostle’s doubt served rather to fortify it. Because of our weakness, we find it easier to believe the testimony of one who doubted and then believed, rather than one who did not doubt at all. Just as the Apostle Thomas, by doubting, became a staunch witness of the resurrection, so Saint Joseph, by espousing the Virgin Mary, became a most reliable witness of her purity.
3. Since Saint Joseph was legally married to the Virgin Mary, her Son legally belonged to Him even if he himself had nothing to do with His conception. In the same manner, if crops were to grow miraculously in a farmer’s field, the farmer would be the rightful owner of the crops even if he himself did not plant a seed.

⁹ See St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons of St. Bernard on Advent & Christmas*, Part II – On the “Missus Est,” Homily II, p. 44.

The Birth of Jesus Christ – (ca. 1 B.C.) (Luke 2:1-7)



Fig 1.1.6 Christ Is Laid in a Manger
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

In those days Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, wanted to know how many people belonged to his empire. He made an order that everyone should go to his hometown to register and be counted. Because he was a descendant of King David, Joseph went up from Nazareth into the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. He took his wife, Mary, who was with child, so she, too, could register. When they were there, the day came that she should give birth, and she brought forth her firstborn Son, wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

COMMENTARY

1. Saint Thomas Aquinas says that the conception of Christ was a miracle.¹⁰ But so was His birth. For our Redeemer came out of the Virgin's womb without opening her womb and without violating her virginity, so that the Virgin Mary was a virgin not only *before* His birth, but also *during*, and *after*, His birth.¹¹ Now, this does not mean that the birth of Christ was all the work of God alone, and that the Virgin Mary had no role in it. On the contrary, St. Luke says, "And she *brought forth* her firstborn son," which speaks of our Lady's cooperative role in the process. Probably the Blessed Virgin did not experience the difficulty of labor in the usual sense. But neither was she wholly passive during the delivery. According to the private revelations made to Saint Bridget of Sweden, the Blessed Virgin was absorbed in an *ecstasy of prayer* when Christ was born.¹²
2. *(Mary) wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes.* Concerning this text, St. Bede the Venerable (a Father and Doctor of the Church) commented: "He who clothes the whole world with its varied beauty, is wrapped up in common linen, that we might be able to receive the best robe; He by Whom all things are made, is folded

¹⁰ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part III, Q. 33, Art. 4.

¹¹ This is an official teaching of the Catholic Church and was expressly stated in the local Lateran Council of A.D. 649. See *Denzinger*, #256.

¹² Saint Bridget of Sweden, *Revelations*, D.&J. Sadlier & Co., 1862, Ch. VIII, pp. 37-38.

both hands and feet, that our hands might be raised up for every good work, and our feet directed in the way of peace.”¹³

3. *(Mary) laid Him in a manger.* He who is to call Himself the Bread of Life, was laid in a manger, literally a trough where animals eat out of. There is, therefore, a connection between Christ in the manger and Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, where He nourishes us by His Divine Flesh.
4. Christ was born in a stable *because there was no room for them in the inn.* Christ, who has Heaven for His throne, could have selected a better birthplace and a more glorious coming. But this was not His style. He did not come to display wealth or power, but to manifest God’s mercy and love. Citing Saint Bernard, Saint Alphonsus said that in the work of creation God manifested His power. In governing the world, He manifested His wisdom. But in the Incarnation, He demonstrated His mercy and His love.¹⁴
5. Artists often portray the stable where Christ was born with an ox and an ass. This could have been inspired by the words of Isaiah the prophet: “The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib” (Isa 1:3).

¹³ Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea*, Vol. III St. Luke, in Chap.2, Verse 7.

¹⁴ See Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, *The Incarnation, Birth and Infancy of Jesus Christ*, “Discourses for the Novena of Christmas,” Discourse I, Benziger Brothers, 1887, p. 19.

The Visit of the Shepherds (Luke 2:8-20)



Fig 1.1.7 The Visit of the Shepherds

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

In the same country there were shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. Behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. The angel said to them, “Do not fear; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For this day a Savior is born to you, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. You will find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.” (Luke 2:8-12)

Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.” After the angels departed from them into Heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has occurred which the Lord has declared to us.” They hurriedly went and found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger. They saw and understood what had been spoken to them about this Child. All that heard wondered at the things that the shepherds told them, but Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. After their visit the shepherds returned to their homes, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen. (Luke 2:13-20)

COMMENTARY

1. *There were shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. Behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them.* Why did God choose to announce the good news to the shepherds when there were many other people then in Bethlehem? One reason might be God's preference for the simple and the humble to accomplish His divine purposes. But Saint Francis de Sales, another Doctor of the Church, find here another reason. He said that God chose to announce Christ's birth to the shepherds because He, too, was a shepherd (John 10:11); indeed, the "prince" of shepherds (1 Pet 5:4). The shepherds symbolize the bishops, the priests, or the pastors of souls who, because of their mandate to lead their flock to heavenly pastures, need to be the first to know the mysteries pertaining to our salvation.¹⁵
2. *For this day a Savior is born to you, who is Christ the Lord.* Christ came to remedy the moral discord brought into the world by Adam's sin. By committing sin, Adam wounded human nature and introduced a sour note in the great symphony of God's creation. It is as if a musician in an orchestra has freely struck a discordant note that now flies irretrievably into space. Is there a way to end the disharmony produced in the universe by this bad note? The Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen said "Yes," but only on condition that the eternal Conductor sends someone from eternity who can turn that note into the first note of a new melody. So, God sent His Son into the world to be the new note or, as Saint Paul says, the new "Adam" (Romans 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:45). By becoming man, God the Son reformed human nature, and His humanity became the first note in a new symphony of love between God and man.¹⁶

¹⁵ See *The Sermons of St. Francis de Sales for Advent and Christmas, #4*. Par. #20.

¹⁶ See Fulton Sheen, *Life of Christ*, Ch. 2, pp. 22-23

CHAPTER 2 HIS INFANCY

The Visit of the Wise Men

(Matt 2:1-12)

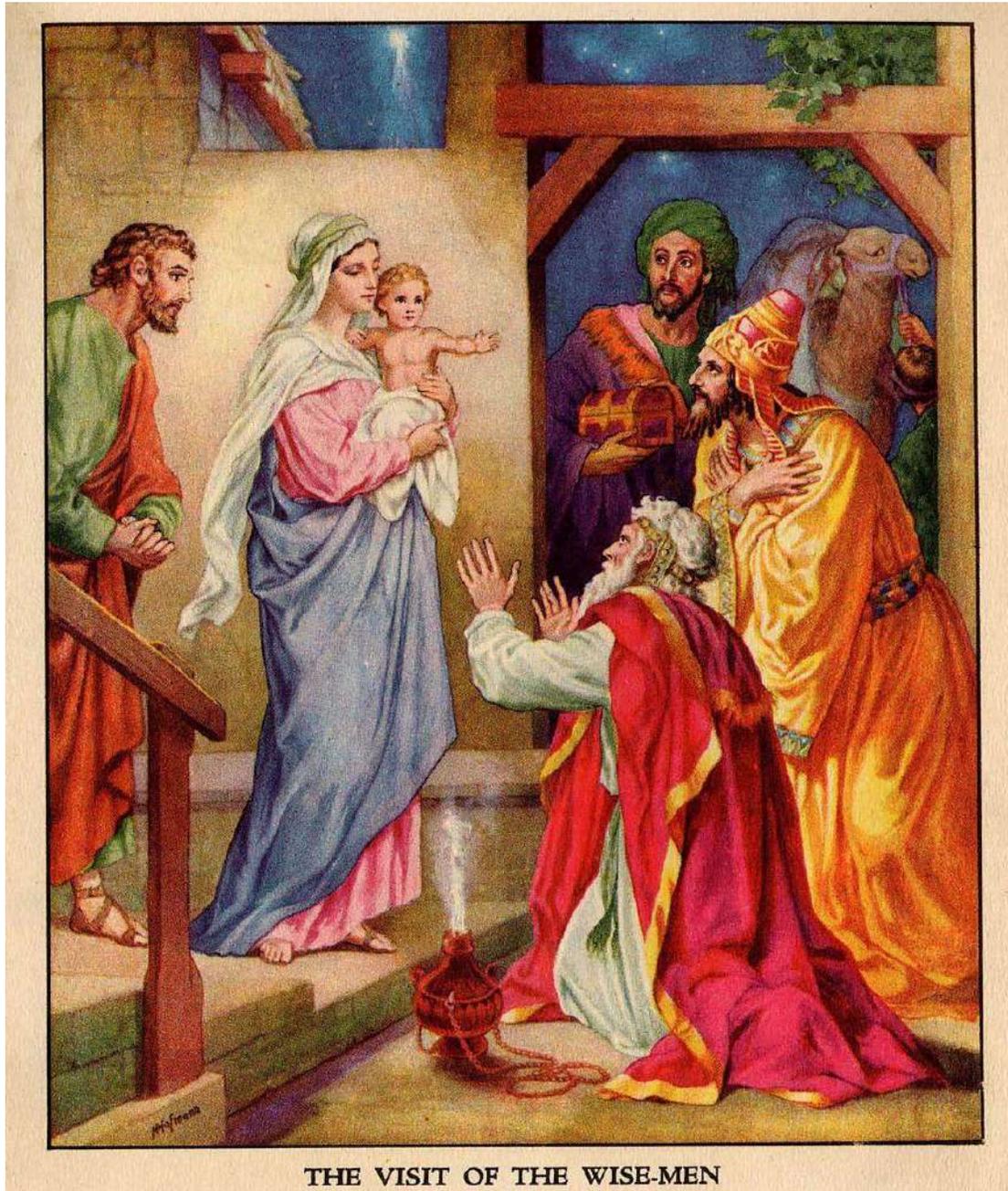


Fig 1.2.1 The Wise Men Offer Gifts

Original pencil drawing by Heinrich Hofmann (1824-1911), ca. 1887
Chromolithograph by Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953), Published 1891

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, there came wise men¹⁷ from the East to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to adore Him.” (Matt 2:1-2)

Hearing this, King Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ would be born. They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea.” They said this because there was a prophecy that says, “And you Bethlehem of the land of Judah are not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of you shall come forth the ruler that shall rule my people Israel” (Mi 5:2). Then Herod called the wise men privately and diligently learned from them the time the star appeared to them. Sending them into Bethlehem, he said, “Go and diligently search for the Child, and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore Him.” (Matt 2:3-8)

Having heard the king, they went their way. Behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it stood over where the Child was. Seeing the star, they rejoiced exceedingly. Entering into the *house*,¹⁸ they found the Child with Mary, His mother. They fell down and adored Him, and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Having been warned in their sleep not to return to Herod, the three wise men went back another way into their country. (Matt 2:9-12)

¹⁷ Many people believe that the “wise men,” probably astrologers and men of science, were also kings of small lands in the East because they carried precious gifts (gold, frankincense and myrrh) for the Baby Jesus during their visit. The “star of Bethlehem” could have been a dying star that became very bright for a few days, and which turned dark after the magi found the Child Jesus in Bethlehem.

¹⁸ The *house*, not the stable. Although many images of the nativity show the wise men together with the shepherds, the wise men actually came a few weeks later, when the Holy Family had already moved to a more suitable place or house in Bethlehem. Christ was still in Bethlehem when the wise men came, because the Holy Family waited at least forty days in Bethlehem until Mary’s purification was over and until Christ was presented in the Temple (Lev 12:2-7), before going back to Nazareth.

COMMENTARY

1. St. Matthew described Christ's visitors as "wise men" (or Magi) from the East, probably because they were learned men who knew the writings of the prophets and who were skilled in watching the sky (astronomers or astrologers). He never said that there were only three such men who came to visit the Messiah. The number probably was inferred from the fact that there were three gifts mentioned in the Bible: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. More importantly, however, Saint Irenaeus gave a mystical significance to these gifts. He said that gold was a tribute to Christ to show that He was *King*; the incense, to show that He was *God*; and the myrrh, a substance used to anoint the dead, to show that He was *human*.¹⁹
2. King Herod himself did not look for the Child. He cunningly requested the Magi to give him word when they find Him. But Saint Matthew ended his story by saying that the Magi, after being advised not to return to Herod in their sleep, went back to their home country by another route. So, King Herod in his craftiness was left ignorant of the whereabouts of the Child. Many critics of the infancy narratives regard the Gospel stories as "legendary" or "fanciful." They dismiss the historicity of Saint Luke's and St. Matthew's accounts simply because they contain supernatural elements, such as an angel appearing to the shepherds, or warning the Magi in their sleep, etc. Yet, it is incorrect to judge the historical value of a religious narrative by requiring *a priori* that miracles and supernatural elements play no part in it. We cannot demonstrate supernatural events in the same way that we verify scientific facts. But this does not mean that these supernatural events are either impossible or non-factual. If Holy Scripture is inspired by God, then we may justly believe these supernatural events as objects of *faith*. There is a spiritual reward for this humble acceptance of the mysteries of faith: it leads us closer to God. This is the *wisdom* that comes with faith. It is the wisdom of the saints, the wisdom of millions of faithful Catholics who believe God's word. In a sense they are like the Magi who did not know where Christ was. But because they believed in Him, they eventually found Him. In contrast, the modernist theologians who scoff at our faith are like King Herod and his Jewish rabbis. They knew where Christ was, but did not find Him.

¹⁹ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, Ch. 9, #2.

The Presentation

(Luke 2:22-40)



Fig 1.2.2 The Presentation

Artist: Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674)

After the days of Mary's purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord as it is written in the law of the Lord: "*Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord,*" and to offer a sacrifice, according to the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. (Luke 2:22-24)

There was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. This man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was with him. He received an answer from the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. He came by the Spirit into the temple, and when His parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him into his arms, blessed God and said, "Now You may dismiss Your servant, O Lord, according to Your word in peace. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel." (Luke 2:25-32)

The Child's father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken about Him. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel and to be a sign which shall be contradicted. Your own soul a sword shall pierce, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." There was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was far advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity and as a widow until eighty-four years of age. She did not depart from the temple, but served night and day with fasting and prayer. Now she, coming in at the same hour, gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke about the Child to all that looked for the redemption of Israel. After they had performed all things according to the Law, they returned to Galilee, to their city Nazareth. The Child grew and increased in strength. He was full of wisdom, and the grace of God was in Him. (Luke 2:33-40)

COMMENTARY

1. *After the days of Mary's purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they carried Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.* There were two reasons why the Blessed Virgin Mary went to the temple that day. The first was to fulfill a law that required the mother of a child to make a purification offering forty days after childbirth (Lev 12:2-7). The second was to present the Christ Child and dedicate Him to the Lord.²⁰ Strictly, the Virgin Mary had no need to make this offering because she conceived Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by receiving seed from a man. Likewise, our Lord had no need of being presented in the temple, for the law of Moses only applied to first-born males who were born naturally (Ex 13:2). Since His birth was miraculous, and He was born *without* opening Mary's womb, the law did not strictly oblige Him. Still, both Christ and the Virgin Mary complied with the law. As the Blessed Virgin, who had no need of purification, taught us by her example to seek the purity of our soul, so Christ, by His obedience, taught us obedience to the law.
2. *And to offer a sacrifice, according to the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.* As part of the purification ritual, the law of Moses required the mother to offer a young pigeon and a lamb for a sacrifice (Lev 12:6). However, the law also allowed the substitution of another pigeon or turtledove if the mother could not afford a lamb (Lev 12:8). That the Blessed Virgin did not bring a lamb but a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons was, therefore, a sign of her poverty. But, although the Virgin Mary did not have a lamb to offer, she had the Lamb of God to present to the Almighty Father. Never before had there been a better offering made in God's temple. In ancient times the patriarchs immolated victims and offered many holocausts — birds, sheep, goats or bulls. But there was none that could equal in value our Lady's own offering. In the temple she offered nothing less than her Son and her God!

²⁰ Christ must have been forty days old when He was presented in the Temple because the presentation was done with Mary's purification offering, and by law Mary's purification offering was to be made forty days after childbirth.

3. Having received the Divine Child in his arms, Simeon foretold to Mary that her Son was destined to be opposed, and to be *a sign which shall be contradicted*. Indeed, Christ was contradicted in everything: contradicted in His **claims** – for, instead of being believed, He was esteemed a blasphemer for claiming that He was the Son of God: “He has blasphemed” (Matt 26:65); contradicted in His **reputation** – for He was of royal descent, yet He was despised: “Is not this the carpenter’s Son?” (Matt 13:55); contradicted in His **teaching** – for He was Truth itself, and yet He was regarded as ignorant: “How does this man know letters, without being educated?” (John 7:15); contradicted in His **wisdom** – for He was Wisdom itself, yet He was treated as a madman: “He is possessed by the devil and is mad, why listen to Him?” (John 10:20); contradicted in His **righteousness** – for He was Goodness itself, yet He was considered wicked: “Behold a man that is a glutton and a drinker of wine, a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Luke 7:34); and contradicted even in His **miracles** – for He healed the sick and those possessed by demons, but He was accused of sorcery: “By the prince of devils He casts out devils” (Matt 9:34).

4. Then Simeon continued, *“Your own soul a sword shall pierce, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”* This prophecy means that because of the persecution, opposition and suffering that her Son would undergo, Mary would also experience a *compassionate suffering* in her soul. She herself would suffer in her heart the trials, pains and sorrows of her Son, and her soul shall therefore be pierced, as it were, by a sword of sorrow. Having experienced this sorrow in her soul, she would then be able to better understand the thoughts, pains and sorrows that many of us carry in our souls. The thoughts and sufferings of many hearts, which are burdened by the grief and sorrow of having offended God, will be revealed and made manifest to her. By this knowledge Mary could relate to us, console us and pray for us in our need for God’s mercy.

The Flight into Egypt

(Matt 2:13-23)



Fig 1.2.3 The Flight into Egypt

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

After they²¹ departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying, “Arise, and take the Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him.” He arose, and took the Child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt, and he was there until the death of Herod. That it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: *Out of Egypt have I called my son.*²² (Matt 2:13-15)

Then Herod perceiving that he was tricked by the wise men, was exceedingly angry, and gave orders to kill all the male children that were in and around Bethlehem, from two years old and under, according to the time he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: *A voice in Ramah was heard, lamentation and great mourning. Rachel bewailing her children, would not be comforted, because they are no more.*²³ (Matt 2:16-18)

But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Arise, and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they that sought the life of the Child are dead.” He arose, and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in place of Herod his father, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in sleep, he retired into the district of Galilee and dwelt in a city called Nazareth. (Matt 2:19-23)

²¹ “They” refers to the wise men (or the Magi), because this narrative is a continuation of Matthew’s Gospel in which he talked about the visit of the wise men.

²² A citation from Hos 11:1.

²³ A quotation from Jeremiah 31:15. The episode is known as the “Massacre of the Holy Innocents.”

COMMENTARY

1. *After they (the wise men) departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph...* Probably the wise men left a few days before Christ was presented in the temple. After the Presentation, and when the Holy Family was still in Jerusalem, the angel appeared to Joseph in his sleep, advising him to take Mary and the Child to Egypt because of Herod's intent to kill the Child. Therefore, the Holy Family did not return to Nazareth as they originally planned. They now had to make a difficult journey to Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod.
2. The flight into Egypt was a detail in the life of Christ that was omitted by St. Luke. But thanks to St. Matthew, we learn about the perilous journey made by the Holy Family when Christ was still an infant. **First**, notice that when the angel told Joseph in his sleep to flee to Egypt, the Holy Family undertook the journey immediately, *on that very night!* (Matt 2:14) They lost a night's sleep because they travelled at night, but then they had to keep travelling the next day because they obviously did not want Herod's soldiers to capture them. This was very stressful, even for the young Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. **Second**, the total distance from Jerusalem to Egypt is about 430 miles. Without a car, this would still mean a journey of at least 15 days (assuming they were able to get a horse and buggy). And with a baby as a passenger? A more realistic figure might be 30 days or more. **Third**, consider the road conditions (rough roads rather than paved roads), weather conditions (heat, strong winds in the desert, etc.), availability of food and lodging, danger of meeting wild beasts and robbers, etc. **Fourth**, the uncertainty of their future life in Egypt. How would they live? What would be their source of income? Would they be living with idolaters? Etc.
3. Fortunately, the Holy Family did not stay very long in Egypt because King Herod the Great died the following year. The angel of the Lord promptly advised St. Joseph to bring the Virgin Mary and the Child back to Israel. However, the return trip to Israel was just as perilous and difficult. And Christ was still in His infancy! Think. He, who came to suffer, couldn't wait to do His Father's Will, and began to suffer while still an infant.

4. The Journey to Egypt

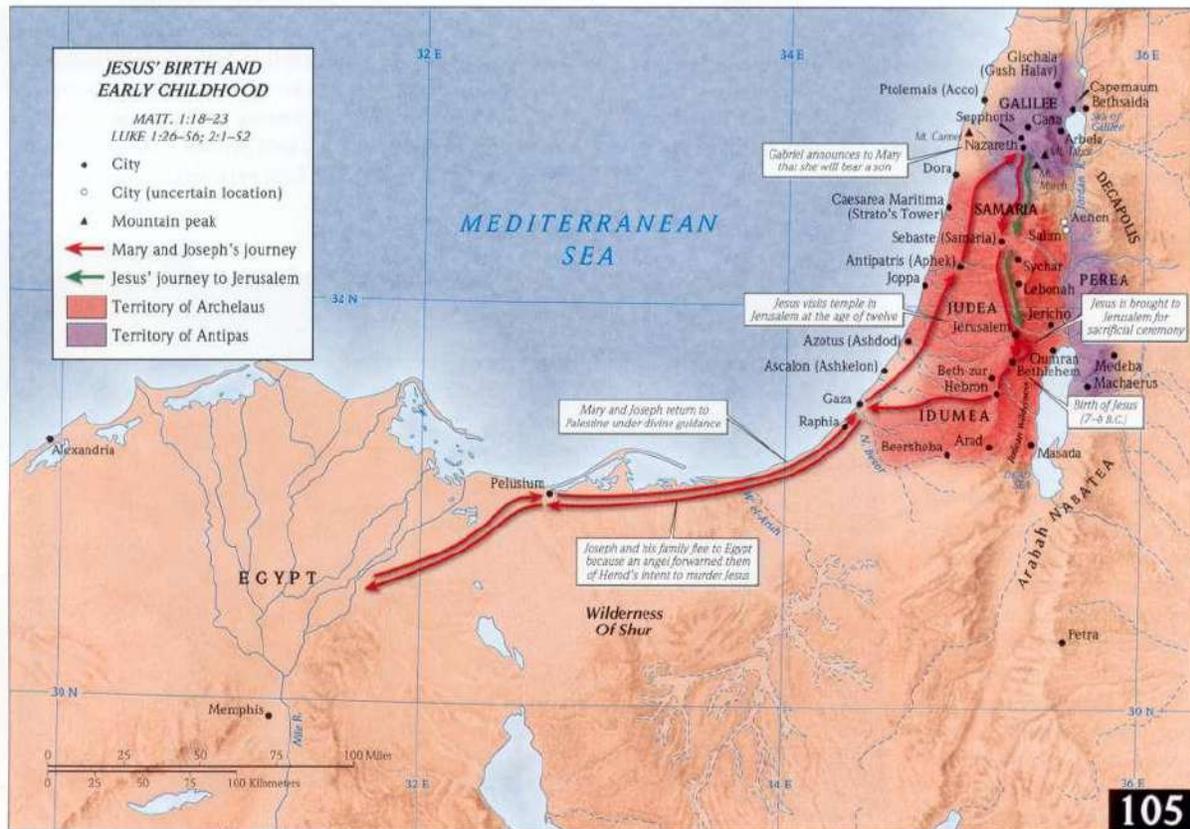


Fig 1.2.4 The Probable Route of the Holy Family's Journey to Egypt

From *Bible Atlas Online*, by Access Foundation

5. *Nazareth*. In 2008 Rene Salm challenged the reality of Nazareth in a book entitled *The Myth of Nazareth: The Invented Town of Jesus* (American Atheist Press, 2008). He gave the reasons for this doubt. The Book of Joshua 19:10-15 listed the towns of the tribe of Zebulun, but Nazareth was not in the list. Likewise, the *Talmud* did not mention it, although it cited 63 Galilean towns. However, recent archaeological researches and excavations that were conducted at the probable site of Nazareth have now produced plenty of corroborative evidence pointing to the existence of a small agricultural village in the area before the coming of the Romans. See *Surveys and Excavations at the Nazareth Village Farm Final Report*. In 2009 the Israel Antiquities Authority also reported that they exposed a residential dwelling there. See *A Home in Nazareth*. The common consensus of many archaeologists and researches today favor the opinion that the hometown of Christ actually existed, although it was really a small and backward village.

CHAPTER 3 HIS CHILDHOOD

The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple – (ca. A.D. 11) (Luke 2:41-52)



Fig 1.3.1 The Holy Family Goes to Jerusalem

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

His parents went every year to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover, and when He was twelve years old, they went again to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. (Luke 2:41-42)

After completing the feast days, they returned. But the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents did not know it. Thinking that He was in the caravan, they went a day's journey and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. Not finding Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. After three days, they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, listening to them and asking them questions. All that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers. (Luke 2:43-47)



Fig 1.3.2 Christ among the Doctors of the Law

Artist: Heinrich Hofmann (1824-1911)

Seeing Him, they wondered. His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Behold, Your father and I have sought You in sorrow.” He said to them, “How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” They did not understand what He spoke to them. (Luke 2:48-50)

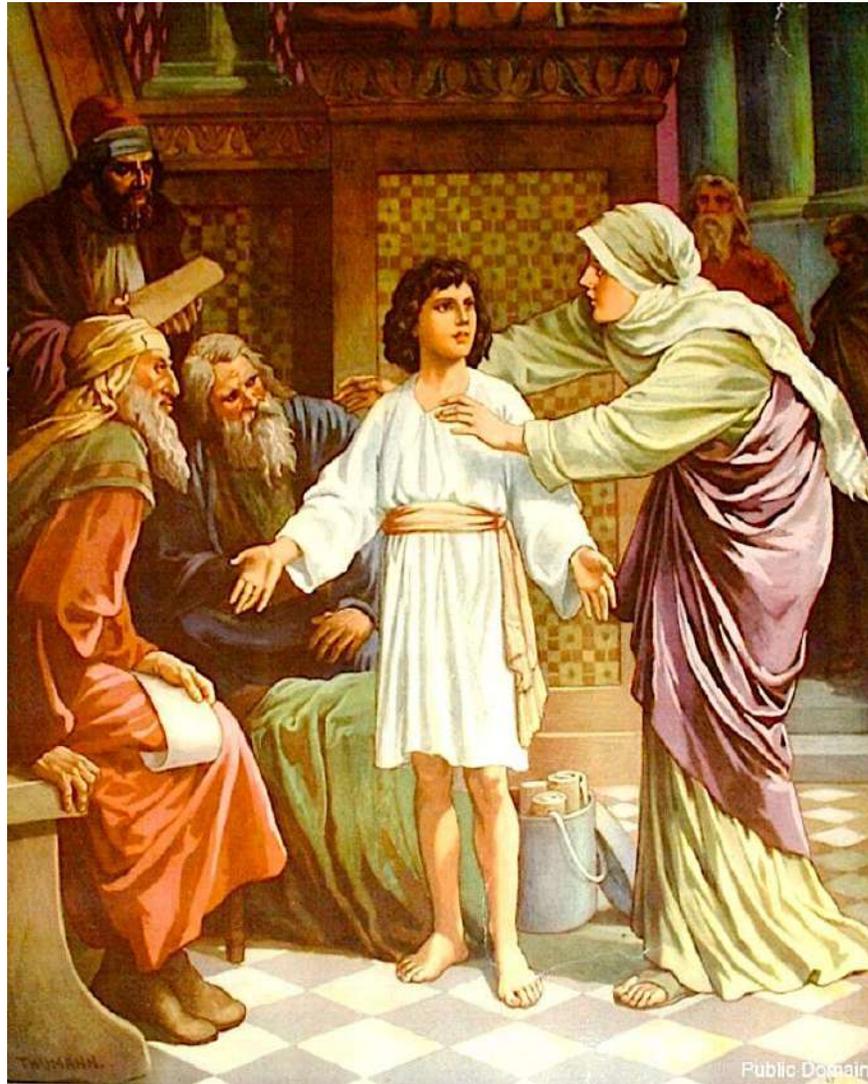


Fig 1.3.3 Joseph and Mary Find Jesus in the Temple

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them, and His mother kept all these words in her heart. Jesus advanced in wisdom, age and grace before God and men. (Luke 2:51-52)

COMMENTARY

1. *After completing the feast days, they returned. But the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents did not know it.* He, who spent His infancy in flight of His enemies, fled from His parents to stay in Jerusalem. He who wouldn't wait to begin His sufferings, didn't wait to do His Father's business. This was Jesus of Nazareth, the boy who one day would tell the world: "He that loves father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." (Matthew 10:37).
2. *His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Saint Alphonsus de Liguori does not see this remark as a rebuke made by a mother to a run-away son. It was rather a loving complaint, and a just one. As Saint Alphonsus tells us, our Lady's anguish in the loss of her Son was, in a sense, the greatest of all her sufferings.²⁴ Because in all her other sorrows Christ was always with her. Christ was with her in the temple when Simeon made his tragic prophecy. He was with her in their perilous flight into Egypt. He also was with her when she stood weeping at the foot of the cross. But in this particular sorrow, when she lost Christ in Jerusalem, the source of her comfort was gone.*
3. *They did not understand what He spoke to them.* What was it precisely that the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph did not understand? Did they not understand that Christ was speaking of God as His Father? Hardly, for they both knew that Christ's real Father was God Himself. They also knew that Christ was the promised Messiah. However, the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph did not yet fully know at this time in what activities His ministry was to consist. So, when the Gospel said that they did not understand what He spoke to them, the Gospel was referring to our Lady's and Saint Joseph's inadequate knowledge about the details of His ministry.
4. Notice here the incomparable dignity of Saint Joseph. On account of his marriage with the Virgin Mary, she is subject to him as the head of the family. And Christ, the fruit of her blessed womb, was likewise subject to him as His guardian. This subjection marks the unutterable humility of Christ, our Lord.

²⁴ St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, Discourse IX "On the Dolors of Mary", pp. 554-555

My Free Bible History: The New Testament

PART TWO – Christ’s Public Ministry

CHAPTER 1 PREPARATIONS FOR MINISTRY

Map of Palestine during the Time of Christ



Fig 2.1.1 Map from *Bible Atlas Online #103a* (by Access Foundation)
 Note: Click the “Bible Atlas Online” link to get a closer look at the map.
 This map is useful when locating various places mentioned in the Gospels.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way – (ca. A.D. 28) (Matt 3:2-4; Mark 1:5; Luke 3:1-3, 15-18)

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,²⁵ the word of the Lord was made known to John, the son of Zechariah, in the desert. He came into all the country around the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins. (Luke 3:1-3)



Fig 2.1.2 John the Baptist Preaching
Artist: Alessandro Allori (1535-1607)

²⁵ Tiberius became emperor in A.D. 14. Therefore, using the Jewish inclusive method of counting, John the Baptist began preaching in A.D. 28.

John preached, saying, “*Do penance*, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” For he was the one whom the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.’”²⁶ John had a garment of camel’s hair, and a leather girdle about his loins, and his food was locusts²⁷ and wild honey. (Matt 3:2-4)

Everyone from the country of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to John and were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. (Mark 1:5)

As the people were of the opinion, and all were thinking in their hearts that perhaps John might be the Christ, John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water, but there shall come One mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loosen. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His fan is in His hand, and He will purge His floor and will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.” He also exhorted many other things as he preached to the people. (Luke 3:15-18)

²⁶ Quoted from Isa 40:3.

²⁷ A species of grasshopper, an edible insect that Israelites were permitted to eat under the Old Law (Lev 11:22).

COMMENTARY

1. *John came ... preaching the baptism of penance.* This expression, “baptism of penance,” means that the baptism conferred by John induces sorrow for sin *and* the readiness to expiate sin by fasting and sacrifices (penance), thus disposing the sinner to receive pardon for sins. However, this baptism was not a sacrament. It disposed the sinner to receive pardon, but it itself did not forgive sin. The baptism to be conferred by Christ is different. He would baptize “with the Holy Spirit and with fire,” and this kind of baptism washes away sin and justifies the sinner.
2. *Confessing their sins.* Thus, the practice of confession as a means to expiate sin was not just an invention of the Catholic Church. It was an old Jewish practice that was prescribed even in the Old Law (Num 5:6-7).
3. *All were thinking in their hearts that perhaps John might be the Christ.* This is because John appeared to them with the spirit of the prophet Elijah (Luke 1:17). He preached penance, and practiced what he preached. He lived a frugal, mortified life in the desert, clothed with camel’s hair and his food was locusts and wild honey. Yet John said that he was not the Messiah, but only the herald of Him who was to come: “*There shall come One mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loosen*” (Luke 3:16).

The Baptism of Jesus Christ – (ca. A.D. 29) (Matt 3:13-17)



Fig 2.1.3 The Baptism of Jesus Christ

Artist: Paolo Veronese (1528-1588)

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan, to John, to be baptized by him. But John stopped Him, saying, “I ought to be baptized by You, and You come to me?” Jesus answered him, “Suffer it to be so now. For so it becomes us to fulfill all justice.” Then John allowed Him. Being baptized, Jesus came out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, a voice from Heaven said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt 3:13-17)

COMMENTARY

1. Why was the Savior, who was a saint from His birth, baptized, since baptism was instituted to purify sin? ANSWER: “It was fitting that he who came to teach men that by baptism they would become children of God, set an example for the future children of God. It was fitting that he who promised that God would give the Holy Spirit to all who would believe, saw the Divine Spirit descending visibly upon him, to give the faithful the sure hope that they would receive the same Spirit, though from an invisible way.” – Ambrosiaster, *Questions and Answers on the Gospel of Matthew*, Q. 49.
2. “The mystery of the Trinity is shown in this baptism. The Lord is baptized; the Spirit descends in the shape of a dove; the voice of the Father is heard giving testimony to the Son.” – St. Jerome (Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea* on Matthew 3:17)

The Fast and Temptation of Christ

(Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13)

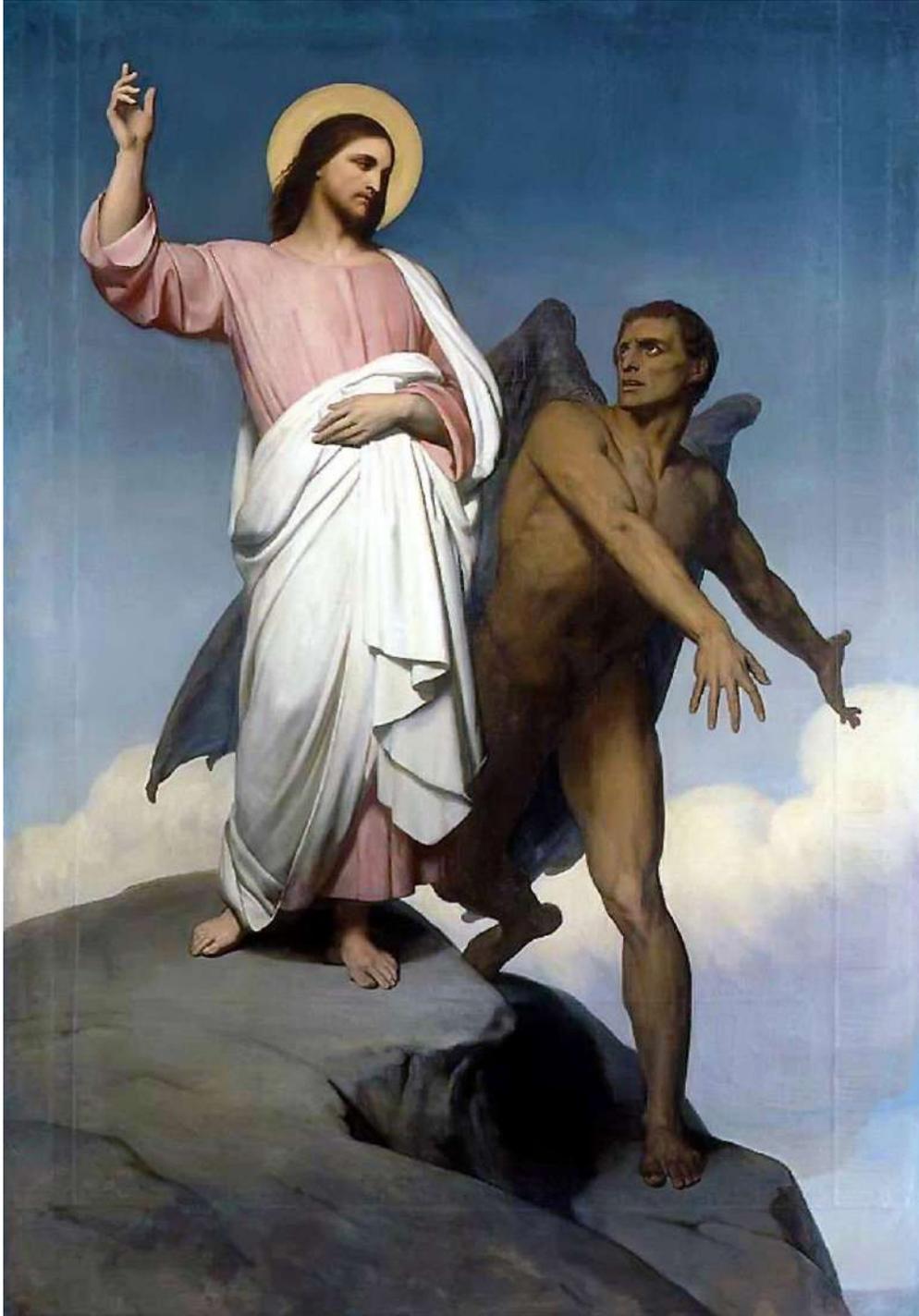


Fig 2.1.4 The Temptation of Christ

Artist: Ary Scheffer (1795-1858)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” (Matt 4:1-4)

Then the devil took Him up into the Holy City and set Him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down, for it is written that He has given His angels charge over You, and in their hands shall they bear You up, lest perhaps You dash Your foot against a stone.” Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” (Matt 4:5-7)

Again, the devil took Him up onto a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to him, “All these will I give you, if falling down you will adore me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Begone, Satan. For it is written, ‘The Lord your God shall you adore, and him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him. Behold angels came and ministered to him. (Matt 4:8-11)

COMMENTARY

1. *Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. What? Led by the Spirit? To be tempted by the devil? Yes, Holy Scripture is very clear. The Holy Spirit DOES lead us into temptation, and the phrase in the Lord's Prayer, "and lead us not into temptation," is not incorrect. However, let us not think that the Holy Spirit directly intended that the devil's temptation should cause Christ's downfall. Far from it! He only willed it *indirectly* for the sake of Christ's glorious triumph over the devil, for without temptation He could not claim victory. Since the Holy Spirit wanted to prove Christ as the Victor, He led Christ into the desert to be tempted by the devil, as though pitting an athlete against His greatest opponent. In this way Christ was able to show by His example, not only that He was the champion in the fight against evil, but that all of us, who are similarly tempted, can triumph by the grace that He infuses.*
2. The three temptations suffered by our Lord illustrate the temptations that we receive from the three enemies of our soul: the pleasures of the **flesh**, the glory of the **world**, and the power of the **devil**.
 - The flesh: "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."
 - The world: "I will give you all the kingdoms of the world, if you will adore me."
 - The devil: "If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down."

The Testimony of John the Baptist (John 1:29-34)



Fig 2.1.5 “Behold the Lamb of God”
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

The next day, John saw Jesus coming to him, and he said, “Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him who takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, ‘After me there comes a Man who ranks before me because He was before me.’ I did not know Him, but that He may be made manifest in Israel, I therefore have come baptizing with water.” (John 1:29-31)

John gave testimony, saying, “I saw the Spirit coming down, as a dove from Heaven, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, is He that baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen, and I have given testimony that this is the Son of God.” (John 1:32-34)

Christ Meets His First Disciples

(John 1:35-51)

The next day John again stood with two of his disciples. Beholding Jesus walking, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” The two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. (John 1:35-37)

Turning and seeing them following Him, Jesus said to them, “What do you seek?” They said to Him, “Rabbi (which means Master), where do You dwell?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He abode, and they stayed with Him that day. Now it was about the tenth hour after dawn. (John 1:38-39)

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who had heard John and followed Jesus. He found first his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah (meaning the Christ).” He brought him to Jesus, and Jesus looking upon him, said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas (which means Peter).” (John 1:40-42)

On the following day, He wanted to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. Jesus said to him, “Follow Me.” (John 1:43)

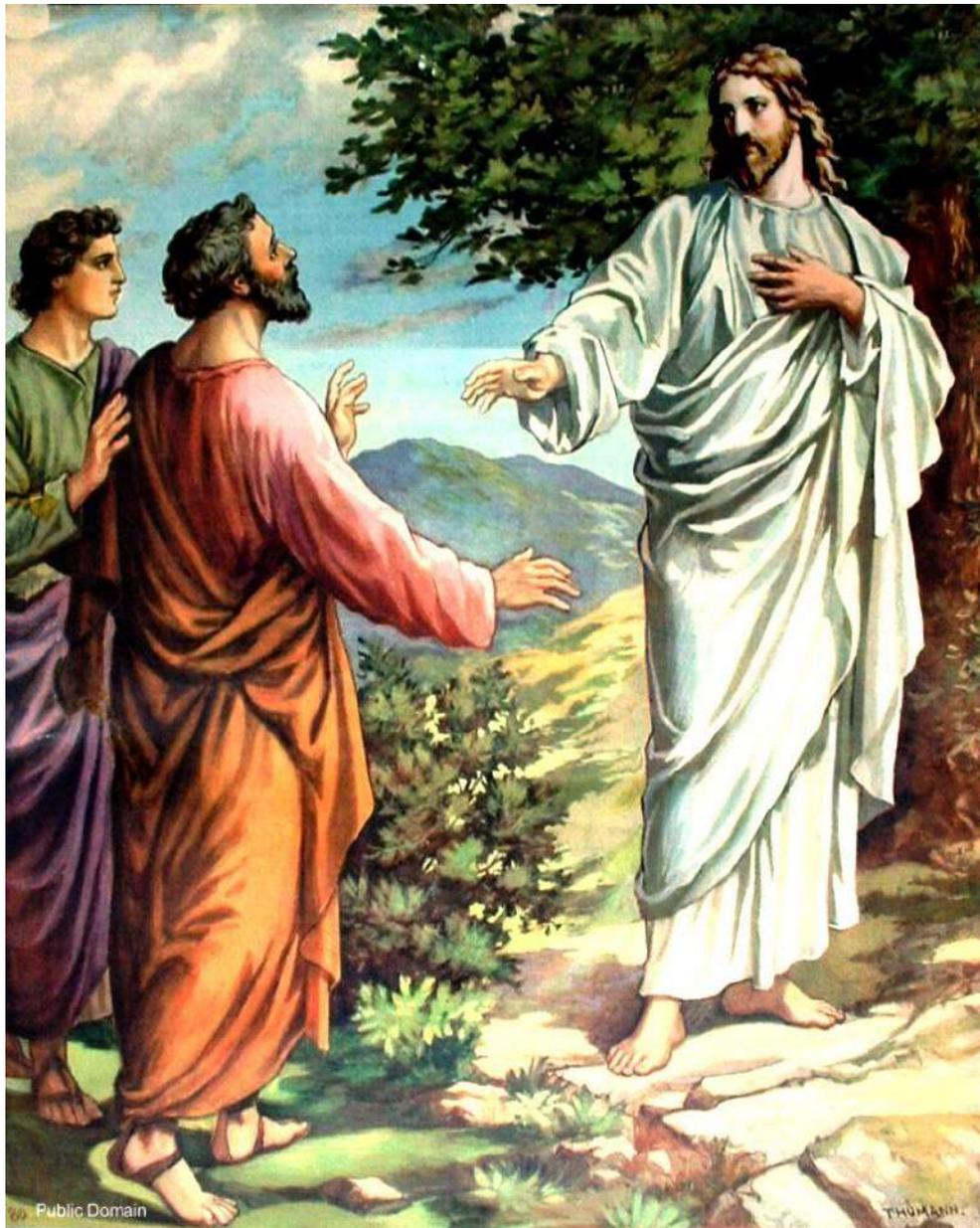


Fig 2.1.6 The First Disciples

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him about whom the Prophets and Moses in the Law wrote: Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth.” Nathanael said to him, “*Can anything good come from Nazareth?*” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” (John 1:44-46)

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and He said about him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.” Nathanael said to Him, “From where do You know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel.” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ you believe. Greater things than these shall you see.” Jesus said to him, “Amen, amen, I say to you, you shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” (John 1:47-51)

COMMENTARY

1. There is strong circumstantial evidence that Nathanael was the same person as Bartholomew the Apostle. This is indicated by the following: *First*, when Bartholomew is mentioned (in Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts), Nathanael’s name is not given; and when Nathanael is mentioned (in John’s Gospel), Bartholomew is not given. *Second*, there is no list of Apostles in the Gospel of St. John, but Nathanael’s name is mentioned whenever the Apostles are cited, as in John 21:2. *Third*, the names of Philip and Bartholomew are given together in Matt 10:3 and Luke 6:14, as though indicating some kind of relationship between them. This is confirmed in the Gospel of John, where Philip is described as a friend of Nathanael who brought him to Jesus (John 1:43-47).
2. Some scholars speculate that Nathanael was the first name, and Bartholomew the family name, of the same Apostle. However, the identification of Nathanael with Bartholomew is not certain. In fact, Blessed Catherine Emmerich, writing from her visions, spoke of Bartholomew as a different person from Nathanael. See Catherine Emmerich, *The Life of Jesus Christ and Biblical Revelations*, Vol. 2, Ch. 4 (p. 37 in the TAN Books edition).
3. “*Can anything good come from Nazareth?*” Nathanael’s question reflects Nazareth’s obscure and lowly state.

Marriage at Cana

(John 2:1-12)



Fig 2.1.7 Wedding Feast at Cana

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

On the third day, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus was also invited with His disciples to the marriage. When the wine was running out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no more wine.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, what is that to Me and to you? My hour has not yet come.” (John 2:1-4)

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His mother said to the waiters, “Do whatever He tells you.” Now there were set there six stone water jars for the Jews’ manner of purification which contained 20 to 30 gallons each. Jesus said to them, “Fill the water jars with water,” and they filled them up to the brim. Jesus said to them, “Draw out some now and carry it to the chief steward of the feast,” and they carried it. When the chief steward tasted the water made wine, not knowing where it came from (but the waiters knew), the chief steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Every man at first sets forth good wine, and when men have drunk well, then that which is worse. But you have kept the good wine until now.” (John 2:5-10)

This was the beginning of miracles that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee to manifest His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. After this He went down to Capernaum with His mother and His brethren and His disciples, but they did not remain there for many days. (John 2:11-12)

COMMENTARY

1. The changing of water into wine is symbolic of what happens at the Sacrifice of the Mass, when wine is changed into the Blood of Jesus Christ.
2. The word “Woman” here means “My Lady,” and is therefore a title of honor. “What is that to Me and to you? My hour has not yet come,” may seem harsh, but not in the original Hebrew dialect (Aramaic) in which the words were spoken by our Lord. They merely meant, “Why should we interfere? My time for showing my divinity has not yet come.” But the Virgin Mary understood that Jesus did not rebuke her. Confident that her Son in His kindness would not allow the newly-weds to be embarrassed by the shortage of wine, she instructed the waiters to do what Jesus would tell them to do.
3. Notice here the power of Mary’s intercession. Although Christ said, “My hour has not yet come,” He advanced His hour to grant Mary’s request.

CHAPTER 2 MINISTRY IN JUDEA

Christ Cleanses the Temple of Jerusalem the First Time (John 2:13-25)

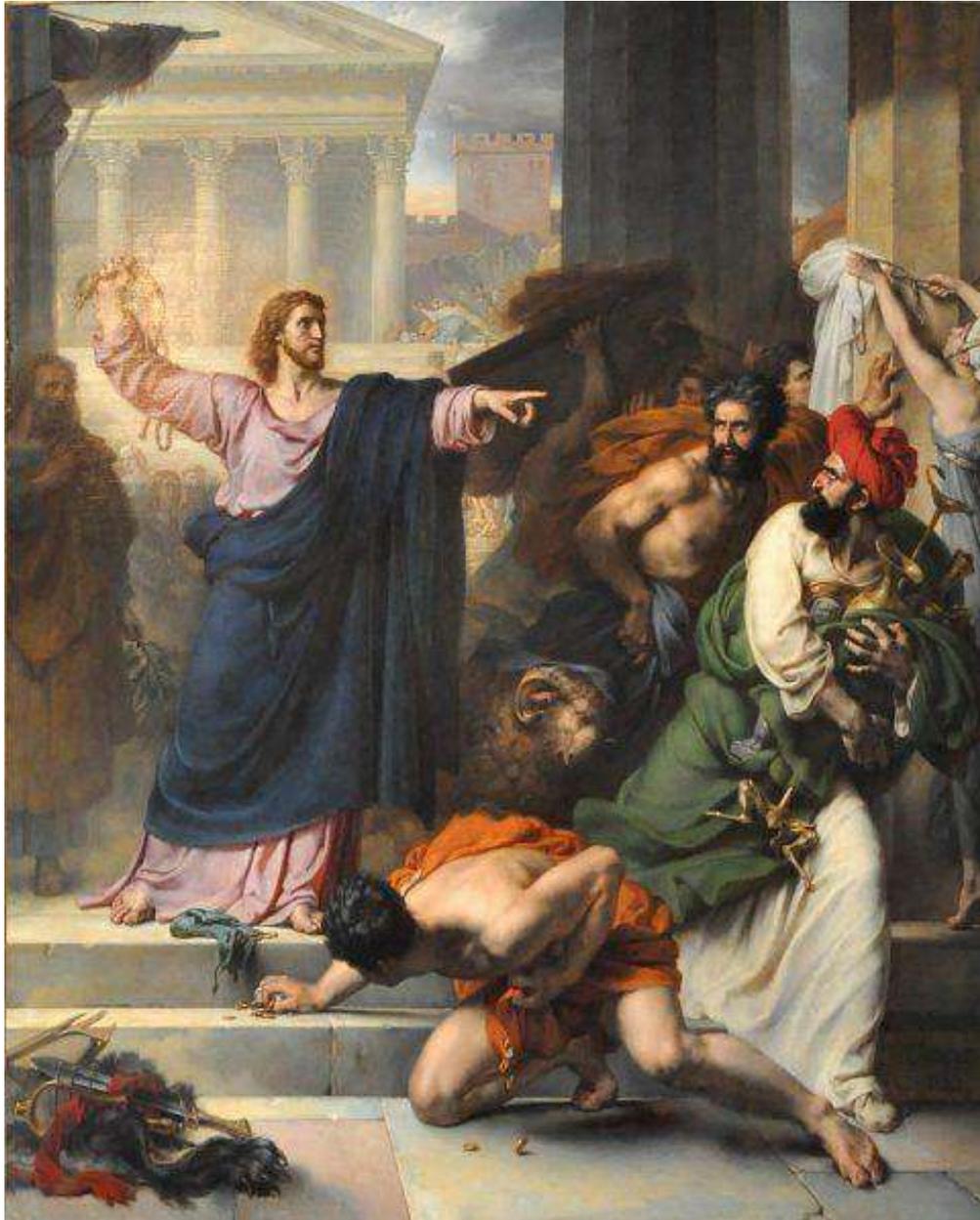


Fig 2.2.1 The Cleansing of the Temple
Artist: Antoine-Jean-Baptiste Thomas (1791-1833)

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found the moneychangers and those that sold oxen, sheep and doves sitting in the temple. When He had made a kind of scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen. He also poured out the money of the changers and overthrew the tables. He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things from here, and do not make the House of My Father a house of business.” (John 2:13-16)

His disciples remembered that it was written: “The zeal of Your house has consumed me.”²⁸ (John 2:17)

The Jews, therefore, answered Him, “What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “Forty-six years was this temple in building, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body. (John 2:18-21)

When therefore He had risen again from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had said. (John 2:22)

Now when He was at Jerusalem during the feast of the Passover, many believed in His name, seeing His signs which He did. But Jesus did not confide Himself to them because He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to give Him testimony about man, for He knew what was in man. (John 2:23-25)

²⁸ His disciples were citing Ps 69:10.

COMMENTARY

1. This episode was the first time that Christ cleansed the temple of those who were trying to convert God's House into a marketplace. The second time that Christ cleansed the temple of buyers and sellers was after Palm Sunday, shortly before His passion. See Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48.
2. St. Bede the Venerable said, "Our Lord on coming to Jerusalem, immediately entered the temple to pray; giving us an example that, wheresoever we go, our first visit should be to the house of God to pray. And He found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting." Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea*, on John 2:17.
3. But why would people be buying and selling sheep and oxen in the temple? Because they used these animals as sacrifices prescribed by the law. St. Bede continues to explain: "Those however, who came from a distance, being unable to bring with them the animals required for sacrifice, brought the money instead. For their convenience the Scribes and Pharisees ordered animals to be sold in the temple, *in order that, when the people had bought and offered them afterwards, they might sell them again, and thus make great profits*" (from the *Catena*). Thus, the religious leaders of the people, the Scribes and the Pharisees, were behind the profiteering going on in the temple of the Lord. This enraged our Lord Jesus Christ, who could not stand His Father's House being so profaned.
4. The unscrupulous behavior of the Scribes and Pharisees spoken of by St. Bede has historical evidences in the Talmud and in the writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus Flavius. The marketplace in the temple was being run by members of the family of Annas, the High Priest. And, not only were the moneychangers cheating the people, but the sellers were also charging exorbitant prices for their animals. See *Historical Evidence – Cleansing of the Temple*.

Christ Teaches Nicodemus (John 3:1-18)

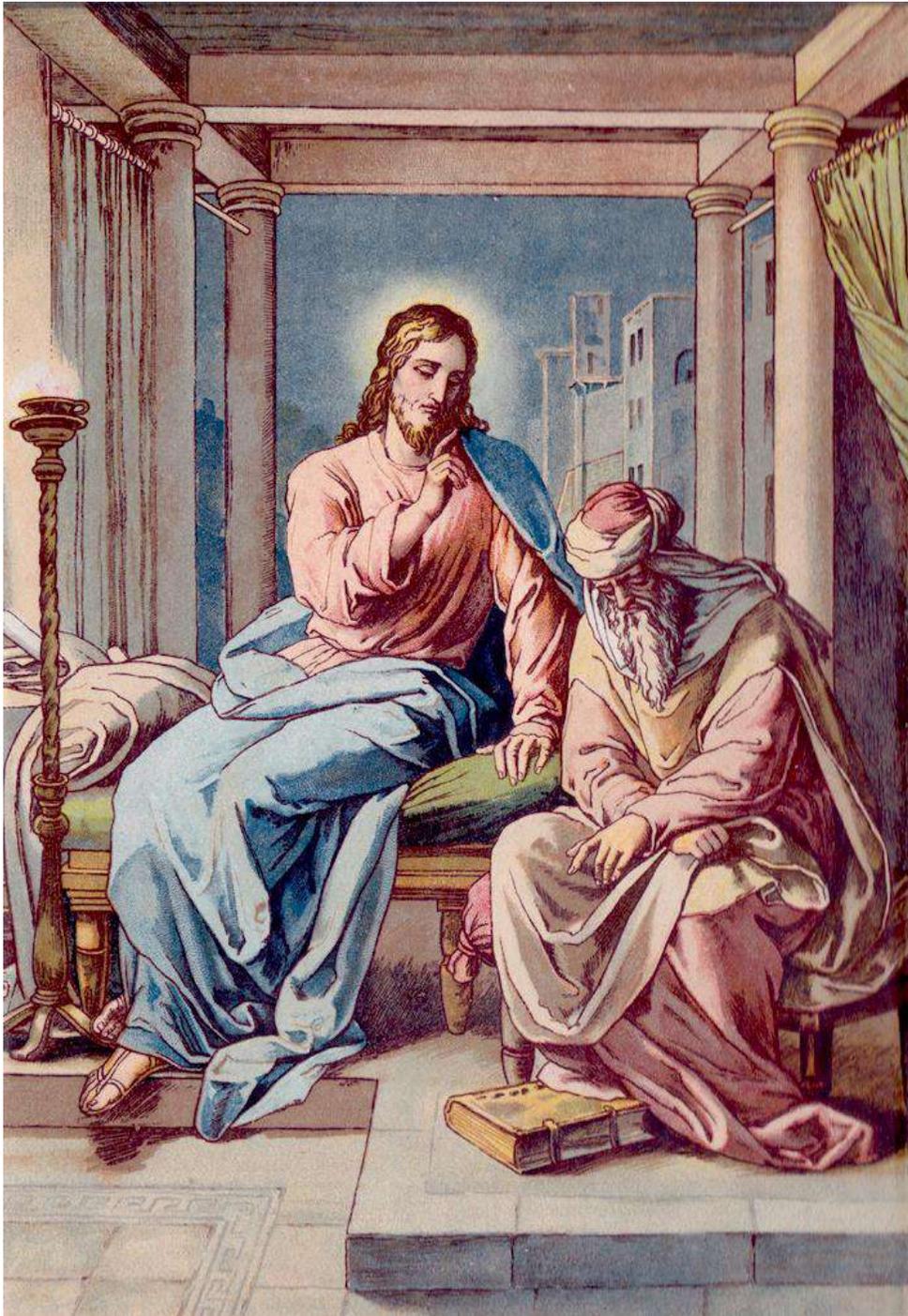


Fig 2.2.2 Christ Teaching Nicodemus
Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

There was one of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come as a teacher from God, for no man can do these signs which You do unless God is with him.” (John 3:1-2)

Jesus answered him, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter into his mother’s womb a second time and be born again?” (John 3:2-4)

Jesus answered, “Amen, amen, I say to you, *unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not wonder that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it will and you hear its sound, but you do not know from where it comes and to where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:5-8)

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be done?” (John 3:9)

Jesus answered him, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life. *For God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him may not perish but may have everlasting life.* For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him. He that believes in Him is not judged. But he that does not believe is already judged, because he does not believe in the Name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:14-18)

COMMENTARY

1. *Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* By these words Christ taught Nicodemus the necessity of Baptism. As the Israelites were freed from the bondage of Egypt by passing through the Red Sea, so we Christians are freed from the slavery of sin by the waters of Baptism.
2. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert...* In these words did our Savior teach Nicodemus that He would save the world by being lifted up and dying on the cross.

Imprisonment of John the Baptist – (ca. A.D. 30) (Matt 14:3-5; John 3:22-23)



Fig 2.2.3 St. John the Baptist in Prison
Artist: Juan Fernández Navarrete (1526-1579)

After His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea (outside Jerusalem), and there He abode with them and baptized the people. John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, for there was much water there. (John 3:22-23)

Herod (Antipas) arrested John and bound him, and put him into prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. For John said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Herod thought of putting John to death, but feared the people because they esteemed John as a prophet. (Matt 14:3-5)

COMMENTARY

1. *There He abode with them and baptized the people.* Actually, Christ Himself did not baptize the people, but His disciples did (John 4:2).
2. St. Luke said of St. John the Baptist that he went before Christ “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17). We now have a confirmation of these words of St. Luke. For, just as Elijah confronted King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, for the injustice they committed against Naboth (1 Kgs 21:1-23), so St. John the Baptist, full of the spirit of Elijah, risked his own life and publicly denounced King Herod for his adulterous relationship with his brother’s wife.
3. Although St. Matthew described the beheading of St. John the Baptist immediately after John was cast into prison (Matt 14:6-10), the actual execution of St. John happened a few months later, when Christ had already left for Galilee.

Christ and the Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-43)



Fig 2.2.4 Christ and the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well
Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

When Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been arrested (Matt 4:12), and understood that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made more disciples and baptized more than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples did), He left Judea and went again into Galilee. (John 4:1-3)

It was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria. He came therefore to a city called Sychar, near the land which Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Being wearied with His journey, Jesus sat on the well. It was about the sixth hour after dawn. (John 4:4-6)

A woman of Samaria came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone into the city to buy food. Then the woman said to Him, "How do You, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman,²⁹ for a drink?" For Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans. (John 4:7-9)

Jesus said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who He is that says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you perhaps would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing in which to draw water, and the well is deep. From where then do You have living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself with his children and his cattle?" Jesus answered her, "*Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again, but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall never thirst again, but the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into everlasting life.*" The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water that I may not thirst nor come here to draw water." (John 4:10-15)

²⁹ A Samaritan is an inhabitant of Samaria, which is the central region of Israel. The ancient city, called Samaria, which was the capital of the ancient Kingdom of Israel, was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Except for a few remains, the ancient city of Samaria no longer existed during the time of Christ, although the place was rebuilt during the time of Herod the Great. It had also since been renamed *Sebaste*, after the Roman Emperor Augustus (*Sebastos* in Greek).

Jesus said to her, “Go call your husband and come here.” The woman said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have said well, ‘I have no husband.’ For you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband. This you have said truly.” (John 4:16-18)

The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers adored on this mountain, and You say that at Jerusalem is the place where men must adore.” (John 4:19-20)

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me that the hour is coming when you shall adore the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... God is a spirit, and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:21-24)

The woman said to Him, “I know that the Messiah is coming (who is called the Christ). When He has come, He will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who am speaking with you am He.” (John 4:25-26)

Now many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman giving testimony: “He told me everything I have ever done.” So when the Samaritans came to Him, they desired that He would stay there, and He abode there two days. Many more believed in Him because of His own word, and they said to the woman, “We now believe not because of what you said, but because we ourselves have heard Him and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.” (John 4:39-42)

After two days, He left the place and went into Galilee. (John 4:43)

COMMENTARY

1. Christ refers to the grace of the Holy Spirit as *water*, because it figures the cleansing action accomplished by it and the great refreshment that it affords to those who receive it. See St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 32 on the Gospel of John*.
2. “He that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall never thirst again, but the water that I will give him shall become in him a *fountain of water, springing up into everlasting life*” (John 4:13-14). In another place Christ also said, “If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. He that believes in Me shall be as the Scripture says: ‘Out of his belly shall flow *rivers of living water*’” (John 7:37-38). The phrase “fountain of water,” or “rivers of living water,” which describes the water that Christ gives, speaks of the largeness and abundance of grace that comes from Christ. “For the grace of the Spirit, when it has entered into the mind and has been established, springs up more than any fountain, fails not, becomes not empty, stays not. To signify therefore at once its unfailling supply and unlimited operation, He has called it a well and rivers, not one river but numberless; and in the former case He has represented its abundance by the expression, springing.” St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 51 on the Gospel of John*.

CHAPTER 3 MINISTRY IN GALILEE

Christ Rejected in Nazareth

(Mark 6:2-6; Luke 4:16-30)

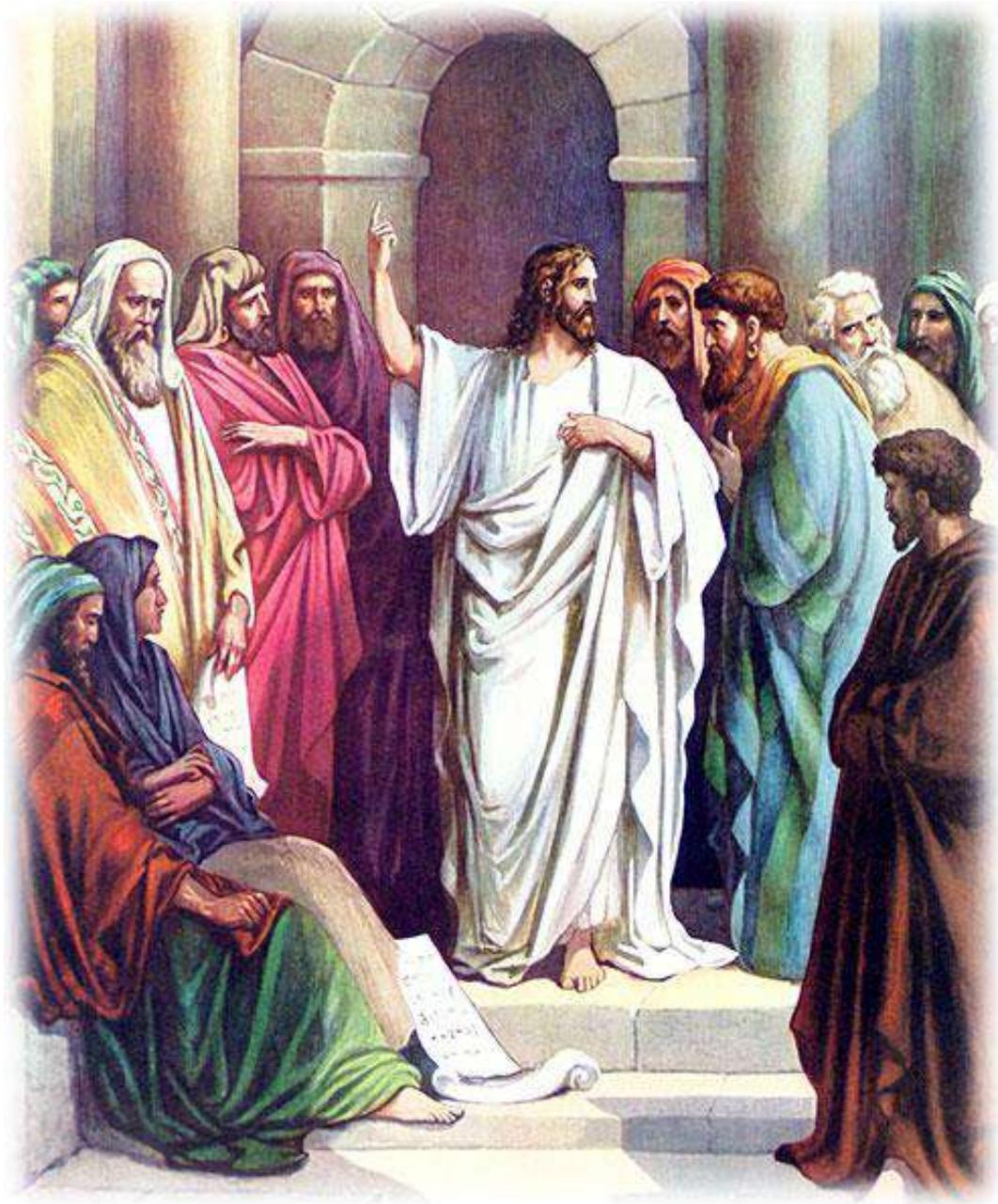


Fig 2.3.1 Christ Preaching

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

He came to Nazareth, the place where He grew up (Luke 4:16). On the Sabbath, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were astonished by His doctrine, saying, “How did this Man come by all these things? What wisdom is this that is given to Him, and such mighty works as are wrought by His hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and His brothers James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon? Are not also His sisters here with us?” They were scandalized³⁰ at Him. (Mark 6:2-3)

Jesus said to them, “*A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, and in his own house, and among his own kindred.*” He could not do any miracles there,³¹ but only cured a few that were sick, laying His hands upon them. He was amazed at their unbelief, but went teaching through the villages around it. (Mark 6:4-6)

He also said, “In truth I say to you, there were many widows in the days of Elijah in Israel, when the sky was shut up three years and six months, when there was a great famine throughout all the earth, and to none of them was Elijah sent, but to Zarephath of Sidon, a widow.”³² (Luke 4:25-26)

All those in the synagogue, hearing these things, were filled with anger³³ and rose up and thrust Him out of the city... But He passed through the midst of them and went away. (Luke 4:28-30)

³⁰ They were *scandalized*, that means, they were disgusted that Christ, an unknown figure – a mere carpenter, – was teaching them with such wisdom and doing mighty deeds.

³¹ He could not do any great miracles there, not for lack of power, but because He would not work miracles for obstinate and incredulous people.

³² In the days of Elijah, “the sky was shut up” (because it did not rain for three and a half years). There was famine in the land and God did not send Elijah to work any favors or miracles to all but to a faithful widow at Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:1-16). Christ cited this episode to show that God would sometimes refrain from doing miracles and favors, except to those who have faith.

³³ They were angry because they understood that He was referring to them as the reason why miracles and the grace of God were not being done in Nazareth.

COMMENTARY

1. “*His brothers James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon.*” We also read of “the brothers of our Lord” in other places of Holy Scripture, such as in Matt 12:46, Luke 8:19-20, John 2:12. However, these brothers and sisters of Christ were not necessarily children of the Virgin Mary. For books that were originally written in Greek, the word *adelphos* was commonly used to denote a brother, but it could also mean a friend, a neighbor, countryman, fellow believer, etc. Thus, this is the sense in which the word is used in Acts 7:23 and 26.
2. In Mark 6:3 James and Joseph were referred to as “brothers” of our Lord. In Mark 15:40 we read of a certain “Mary the mother of James” as being with Mary Magdalen during the crucifixion. Was this Mary, the mother of James, the same woman as Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was also present during the crucifixion? If that is the case, then Jesus and James would really be brothers. However, in John 19:25 it was also stated that there were actually three Marys who stood at the foot of the cross: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Mary’s sister who is known as Mary of Cleophas. Now, is it not possible that James was the son of another Mary, Mary of Cleophas, who happened to be the Virgin Mary’s sister? If this is the case, then James and Jesus were merely cousins, rather than siblings.
3. The foregoing discussion does NOT prove that the “brothers of the Lord” cited in various places in the Bible were not also children of Mary. It only shows that it is not necessarily the case. But there are other texts in Holy Scripture that indicate Christ to be the only child of Mary. For example, the story of the Finding of Jesus at the Temple (Luke 2:41-52) suggests that Jesus was an only child. If there were other children, why were they not with them on such a solemn day? Besides, isn’t it opposed to the dignity of the Holy Spirit, Who sanctified the virginal womb of Mary, to think that Mary conceived another child besides our Lord? In defending the perpetual virginity of Mary, the Catholic Church is defending the dignity of the Holy Spirit, Who forever loved Mary as His Spouse. Defending the perpetual virginity of Mary is not about putting Mary in a pedestal. It is about defending the honor and dignity of the Third Divine Person with whom Mary had a special relation.

Miracles at Capernaum

He went down into Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and there He taught them on the Sabbath days (Luke 4:31.) They were astonished at his doctrine, for *He taught them as one having power, and not as the scribes* (Mark 1:22).

Besides preaching, Christ also performed miracles while at Capernaum.

The First Miraculous Catch of Fishes (Luke 5:1-11)



Fig 2.3.2 The First Miraculous Catch of Fishes

Artist: Raffaello Sanzio, or Raphael (1483-1520)

When the multitude pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, Christ stood by the lake of Gennesaret and saw two boats situated by the lake, but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. (Luke 5:1-2)

Going into one of the boats, which was Simon's, He asked him to draw back a little from the land. He sat and taught the crowd from the boat. When He had ceased speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered Him, "Master, we have labored all night and have taken nothing, but at Your word I will let down the net." (Luke 5:3-5)

When they had done this, they caught a great multitude of fish, and their net was breaking. They signaled to their partners that were in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats, so that they were almost sinking. (Luke 5:6-7)

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all that were with him were wholly astonished at the catch of the fish which they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear. From now on you will be catching men."³⁴ (Luke 5:8-10)

Having brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him. (Luke 5:11)

³⁴ In the Gospel of St. Matthew, Christ said, "I will make you **fishers of men**" (Matt 4:19).

COMMENTARY

1. The above episode is called “the *first* miraculous catch of fishes” because there was a second miraculous catch. The second miracle happened *after* the resurrection of our Lord, and is given in the last chapter of St. John’s Gospel (John 21:1-14). The second miraculous catch is also sometimes called the “miraculous catch of **153** fish” because St. John gave the exact number (153) of big fishes that were caught (John 21:11).
2. The boat from which Christ taught the people is a figure of the Church from which St. Peter and his successors would teach all nations. The sea is the world, the fishers are the bishops and priests, and the fish are the faithful who voluntarily join the Church in order to be saved.
3. Although the Gospel of St. Luke only mentioned James and John (the sons of Zebedee) as Simon Peter’s fishing partners, there were actually seven fishermen among the Apostles, including Peter. The Apostles who were fishermen were the following:
 - a. Simon Peter – Matt 4:18; Mark 1:16
 - b. Andrew (Peter’s brother) – Matt 4:18; Mark 1:16
 - c. James, son of Zebedee – Matt 4:21; Luke 5:10; John 21:2-3
 - d. John, son of Zebedee – Matt 4:21; Luke 5:10; John 21:2-3
 - e. Thomas Didymus (or the doubting Thomas) – John 21:2-3
 - f. Nathanael (or Bartholomew) – John 21:2-3
 - g. Philip, a man from Bethsaida, John 1:43-44. He is believed to be one of the “two other disciples” fishing with Peter when Christ appeared to them in John 21:2.
3. The lake of *Gennesaret*. St. Bede explains that this place has been called by various names. It is the same as the sea of Galilee (named from the adjacent province) or the sea of Tiberias (named from a neighboring city). But in the Gospel of St. Luke, Gennesaret is the name given it from the nature of the lake itself, (which is thought from its crossing waves to raise a breeze upon itself,) being the Greek expression for ‘making a breeze to itself.’ (Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea* on Luke 5:1-3)

The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law and Others (Matt 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41)

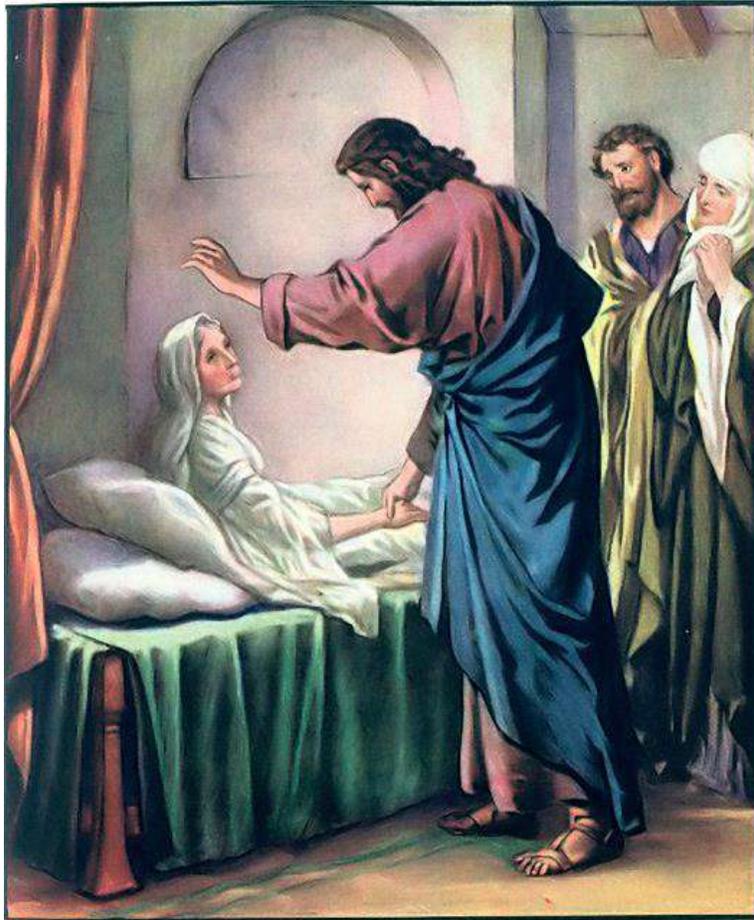


Fig 2.3.3 Christ Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

When Jesus came into Peter's house, He saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed and sick with fever. He touched her hand, the fever left her, and she arose and ministered to them. (Matt 8:14-15)

When evening came, they brought to Him many that were possessed with devils, and He cast out the spirits with His word, and He healed all that were sick, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "*He took our infirmities, and bore our diseases.*"³⁵ (Matt 8:16-17)

³⁵ An allusion to Isa 53:4. He *bore our diseases* means He carried the burden of our sicknesses.

COMMENTARY

1. The ancient city of Capernaum was an important village in the life of our Lord because it was the site of many incidents in His life. It was the place where He lived when He left Nazareth (Matt 4:13). It was also the place where He performed many healing miracles, including the curing of St. Peter's mother-in-law (Matt 8:5-15). It was the place where He first met the Apostles Peter, Andrew, James and John (Mark 1:29), the place where He healed those who were possessed by devils (Mark 1:32), and the place where He frequently taught – in the synagogue of Capernaum (John 6:60). Unfortunately, it was also the city that He cursed because of the people's lack of response to His teachings (Matt 11:23).
2. Although the synagogue was destroyed with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, another synagogue was built over it at around A.D. 250 – 300. The city remained occupied until it was abandoned in the 11th century A.D. Since then, the city had been ignored for about a thousand years until it was rediscovered in the 1800's by the British scholar, Edward Robinson, who first correctly identified the special building near the lake as a synagogue. This discovery led to further investigation and research. The excavation at the site continued for many years (although with some interruptions), which led to the discovery of the original synagogue where Christ taught, and the ruins of what was now believed to be the stone house of St. Peter. All these discoveries are important because they authenticate the fact that the biblical narratives are not fictitious tales, but real stories. For a good article on Capernaum, see [Capernaum](#). For more information, see [Capernaum, The City of Jesus](#).

The Cure of a Paralytic at Capernaum (Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26)

72. Public Domain

Fig 2.3.4 The Curing of a Paralytic
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Again, Jesus entered into Capernaum after some days. It was heard that He was in the house. Many came together, so that there was no room, not even at the door. And Jesus spoke the word to them. Some came to Jesus bringing a paralytic carried by four people. When they could not bring the man to Jesus because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where Jesus was, and opening it, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus had seen their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” (Mark 2:1-5)

There were some scribes sitting there and thinking in their hearts, “Why does this man say that? He blasphemes. Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Jesus, knowing what they thought, said to them, “Why do you think these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the paralytic: ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk?’ So that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (He said to the paralytic,) I say to you: arise, pick up your bed, and go into your house.” Immediately the man arose and, picking up his bed, went his way in the sight of all, so that all wondered and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this before.” (Mark 2:6-12)

COMMENTARY

1. “*Son, your sins are forgiven you.*” Instead of immediately curing the paralytic of his paralysis, Christ forgave him his sins. Why? St. Bede explains that our Lord did this to show that the ills that bind the body were often the result of sin, so that it was necessary to first loosen the sins that bind the soul before He could loosen the ills that bind the body. “Many sicknesses of body arise from sins, and therefore perhaps sins are first remitted, that the causes of sickness being taken away, health may be restored.” Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea on Mark*, Chapter 2, verses 1-12.
2. St. Bede also noted how Christ in His humility called the paralytic “son,” because his sins had been forgiven.

The Calling of Matthew

(Matt 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32)



Fig 2.3.5 The Calling of Matthew
Artist: Luca Giordano (1634-1705)

Jesus again went out to the seaside, and all the crowd came to Him. Jesus taught them. As Jesus was passing by the customs post, He saw Levi,³⁶ the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax office. Jesus said to him, “Follow Me.” Rising up, Levi followed Him. (Mark 2:13-14)

³⁶ Both Mark and Luke called the tax-collector “Levi,” but there is no doubt that he was the same person as Matthew, because that is how he was named in the Gospel of Matthew 9:9.

It came to pass, as Jesus sat at a meal in Levi's house, many publicans and sinners sat down together with Jesus and His disciples, for there were many who also followed him. (Mark 2:15)

The scribes and the Pharisees, seeing that He ate with publicans and sinners, said to His disciples, "Why does your Master eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" (Mark 2:16)

Jesus, hearing this, said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those that are sick do. For I did not come to call the just, but sinners." (Mark 2:17)

COMMENTARY

1. "*Follow Me.*" St. Bede explains: "To follow is to imitate, and therefore in order to imitate the poverty of Christ, in the feeling of his soul even more than in outward condition, he (Matthew) who used to rob his neighbor's wealth, now leaves his own." Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea on Mark*, Chapter 2, Verses 13-17.
2. "*Those who are well have no need of a physician.*" St. Bede tells us that by these words our Lord aimed to rebuke "the Scribes and Pharisees, who, thinking themselves righteous, refused to keep company with sinners." See the *Catena*.
3. St. Luke narrates the calling of Matthew (or Levi) in Luke 5:27-32. Then in the following chapter he tells us how Christ chose twelve of His disciples and called them Apostles (Luke 6:12-16). From this we know that **the choosing of the twelve** happened *after* the calling of Matthew and *before* His sermon on the mount. The names of the twelve Apostles are Simon **Peter**, **Andrew**, **James** and **John**, **Philip** and **Bartholomew** (aka Nathanael), **Thomas** and **Matthew**, **James** the son of Alphaeus, **Thaddeus**, **Simon** the Cananean, and **Judas Iscariot** (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16).

The Sermon on the Mount

(Matt 5:3-48; 6:1-7:27; Luke 6:20-36)



Fig 2.3.6 Sermon on the Mount
Artist: Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890)

The Beatitudes³⁷ (Matt 5:1-12; Luke 6:20-26)

Seeing the crowds, He went up onto a mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. (Matt 5:1)

Opening His mouth, He taught them, saying,

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall have their fill.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the clean of heart, they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

“Blessed are they that suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matt 5:2-10)

Duties of the Apostles (Matt 5:13-16)

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savor, with what shall it be salted? It is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden on by men. (Matt 5:13)

“You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hidden. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel basket, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in Heaven.” (Matt 5:14-16)

³⁷ There is no room in this book to make a full commentary on the beatitudes. But the explanations of Saint Augustine on the subject are recommended reading. See St. Augustine, *On the Sermon on the Mount*, Book I, Chapters 1 – 5.

Duties of Christians (Matt 5:17-26; Luke 6:27-36)

“Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until Heaven and earth pass, not one jot, or one tittle, will pass from the Law, until all be fulfilled. He that shall break the least of these commandments, and shall so teach men shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But he that shall observe and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. *For I tell you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* (Matt 5:17-20)

“If therefore you are offering your gift at the altar, and there you remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to your brother, and then you shall come and offer your gift. Come to agreement with your adversary while you are on the way to court with him, otherwise the adversary might deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Amen, I say to you, you shall not leave from there until you repay the last penny.” (Matt 5:23-26)

But I say to you that hear: love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those that curse you and pray for those that calumniate you... If you love those who love you, what credit is it to you? For sinners also love those that love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is it to you? For sinners also do this. (Luke 6:27-33)

Sanctity of Marriage (Matt 5:27-32)

“You have heard that it was said to them of old: You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever shall look on a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matt 5:27-28)

“If your right eye be an occasion of sin to you, pluck it out and cast it from you, for it is better for you to lose one of your members than that your whole body be cast into hell. If your right hand be an occasion of sin to you, cut it off and cast it from you, for it is better for you to lose one of your members than that your whole body be cast into hell. (Matt 5:29-30)

“It has been said, that whoever shall put away his wife must give her a bill of divorce. But I say to you, that whoever divorces his wife, except on the cause of adultery, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” (Matt 5:32)

Doing Good Works and Almsgiving (Matt 6:1-4)

“Take heed that you do not do your acts of piety in order to be seen by men, otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father in Heaven. When you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.” (Matt 6:1-2)

How to Pray / “Our Father” (Matt 6:5-15)

“When you pray, do not be as the hypocrites, that love to stand and pray in the synagogues and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. (Matt 6:5)

“When you pray, enter into your room, and having shut the door, pray to your Father in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. When you pray, do not speak much as the heathens do, for they think that in speaking much they will be heard. Therefore, do not be like them, for your Father knows what is necessary for you before you ask Him. (Matt 6:6-8)

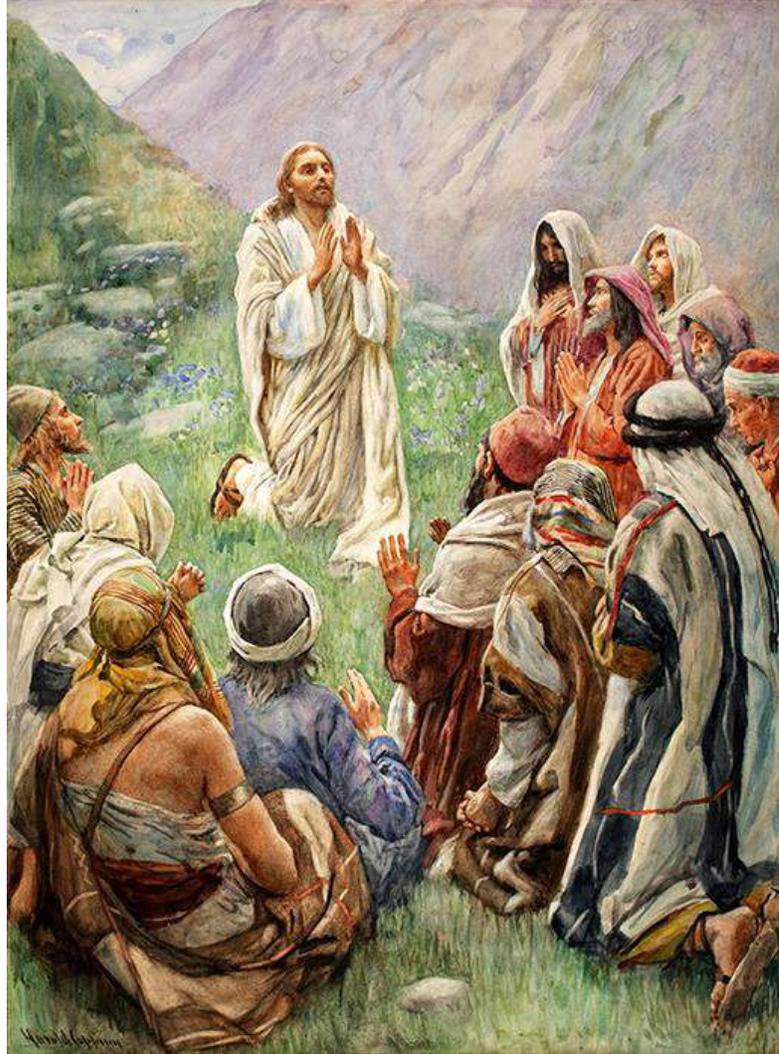


Fig 2.3.7 Christ Teaches the “Our Father”

Artist: Harold Copping (1863-1932)

“Then pray thus: *Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our supersubstantial bread.*³⁸ *And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen.*” (Matt 6:9-13)

³⁸ In a parallel passage St. Luke used the term “our daily bread” (Luke 11:3). But St. Matthew used the less popular, but more exact term, “supersubstantial bread,” which is commonly understood to be the **Bread of Life** – the Bread that we receive in the Blessed Sacrament – and by which our souls should be daily fed.

Trust in Divine Providence (Matt 6:25-34)

Fig 2.3.8 “Look at the Birds of the Air and the Lilies of the Field”

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

“Therefore, I say to you, do not be anxious about your life regarding what you shall eat, nor for your body regarding what you shall put on. Is not life greater than food, and the body greater than clothing? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of much more value than they? Which of you can add one cubit to his stature by thinking about it? Why are you anxious for clothing? Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow: they do not labor, nor do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. If God clothes the grass of the field in such a manner, which is here today, and is cast into the oven tomorrow, how much more you, O you of little faith? (Matt 6:25-30)

“Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat,’ or, ‘What shall we drink,’ or, ‘What shall we wear?’ For the heathens seek all these things; your Father knows that you have need of all these things. *Therefore, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.*” (Matt 6:31-33)

Power of Prayer (Matt 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13)

“Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened. (Matt 7:7-8)

“What man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will offer him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, will offer him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him?” (Matt 7:9-13)

More Healing Miracles

The Curing of a Leper (Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16)

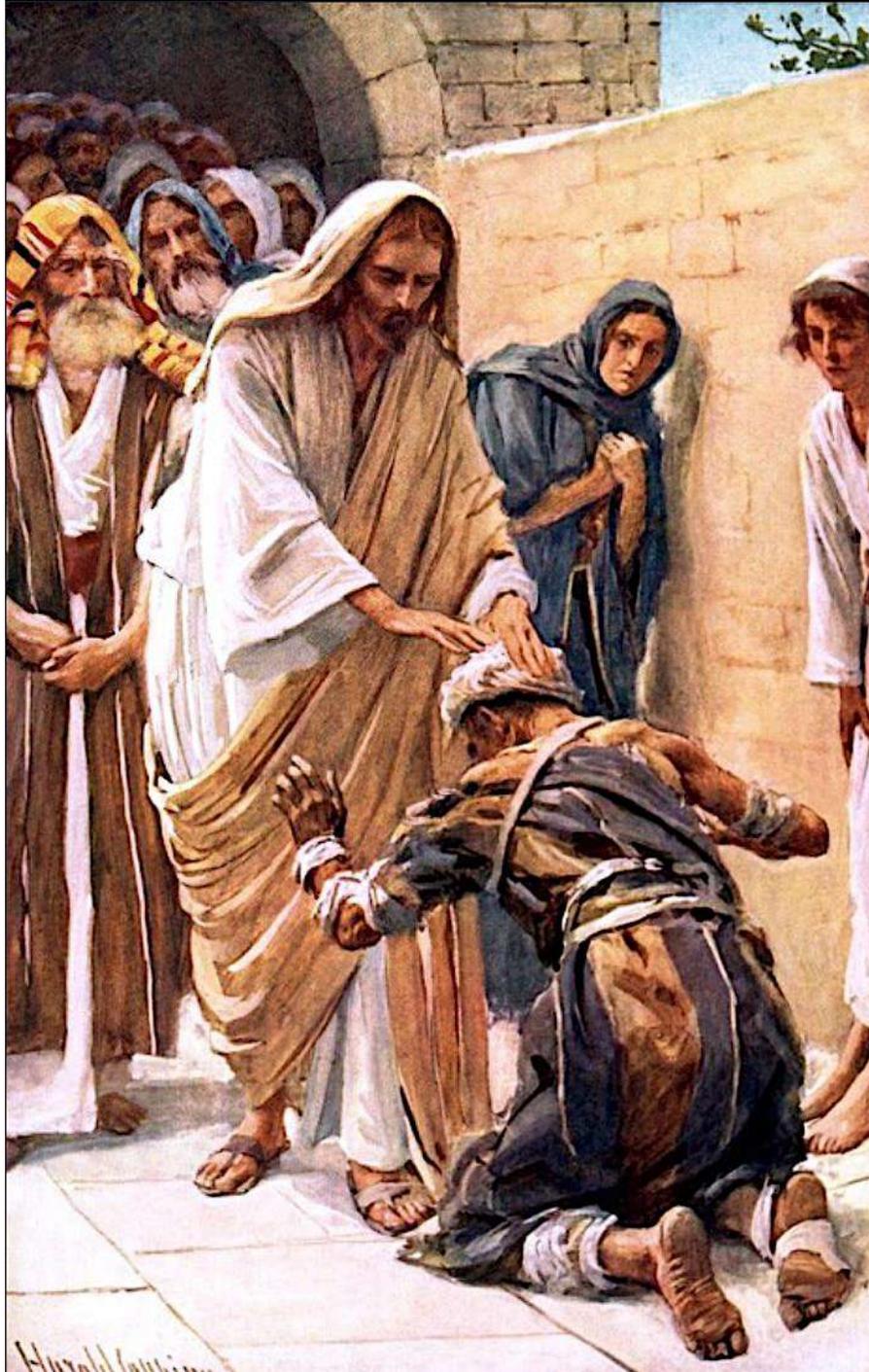


Fig 2.3.9 The Healing of a Leper
Artist: Harold Copping (1863-1932)

When He came down from the mountain, great crowds followed Him, and behold, a leper came and adored Him, saying, “Lord, if You will it, You can make me clean.” Stretching forth His hand, Jesus touched him, saying, “I will. Be made clean.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no man, but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.” (Matt 8:1-4)

COMMENTARY

1. In the Old Testament leprosy was known as a contagious disease, so that lepers were regarded as “unclean,” and were required to separate themselves from society (Num 5:2). Lepers suffer greatly from their affliction, which is why *Christ was moved with compassion* when a leper approached him and begged him for healing (Mark 1:41).
2. Some scholars have tried to discredit the gospel narrative by saying that there were no incidences of leprosy reported in medical literature during the time of Christ. However, a report published in December, 2009, said that a molecular analysis of human remains found in the “Tomb of the Shroud” (not to be confused with the Shroud of Turin), showed evidence of leprosy and tuberculosis during the time of Christ. See *Oldest Case of Leprosy Found in 1st Century Tomb*. Of course, it is possible that the word “leprosy” might also be used in antiquity as a generic term to include other kinds of skin diseases besides leprosy.
3. Although Christ commanded the leper to be silent about the miracle, we learn from St. Mark that he actually began to talk freely about it, so that Christ became so famous and could no longer enter a town without the people flocking around Him (Mark 1:45; Luke 5:15).

The Curing of the Centurion's Servant (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10)



Fig 2.3.10 The Curing of the Centurion's Servant
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, there came to Him a centurion, begging Him and saying, “Lord, my servant lies at home sick with paralysis, and is grievously tormented.” Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.” The centurion answered, “*Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed.* For I also am a man subject to authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” (Matt 8:5-9)

Hearing this, Jesus marveled and said to those who followed Him, “Amen, I say to you, I have not found such great faith in Israel. I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into the darkness outside; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt 8:10-12)

Jesus said to the centurion, “Go, and as you have believed, so be it done to you.” The servant was healed at the same hour. (Matt 8:13)

COMMENTARY

1. “*I will come and heal him.*” Here our Lord did something He had not done before. For whereas on every occasion He merely followed the wish of His supplicants, here He offered not only to heal the centurion’s servant, but also to come to his house. He did this to show the faith of the centurion. See St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 26 on Matthew*.
2. “*Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham... but the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into the darkness outside.*” The many who come from the east and the west are the Christians, who will join Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the heavenly feast. But the children of the Kingdom (that is, the reprobate Jews) who refuse to believe in Christ, will remain in eternal darkness. See Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, Sermon 12, #6.

The Raising of the Widow's Son to Life (Luke 7:11-17)



Fig 2.3.11 The Raising of the Widow's Son to Life
Artist: Pierre Bouillon (1776-1831)

It came to pass afterwards that He went into a city that is called Nain, and His disciples and a great crowd went there with Him. When He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A great crowd of the city was also with her. When the Lord had seen her, being moved with compassion towards her, He said to her, “Do not weep.” He came near and touched the bier, and those who carried it stood still. Jesus said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. (Luke 7:11-15)

Fear came upon them all, and they glorified God saying, “A great prophet has risen up among us,” and, “God has visited His people.” This account of Him spread throughout all Judea and throughout all the neighboring regions. (Luke 7:16-17)

COMMENTARY

1. Mystically the widow in this story signifies Mother Church, who weeps for those of her children who are dead in sin. At the word of God, those who are dead will rise up by the tears (prayers) of the Church and be returned to their mother. See St. Ambrose’s *Commentary on Luke*, Chapter 7, verses 11-17.
2. “A great prophet has risen among us.” The people said this because the resurrection miracles performed by our Lord match the mighty works of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. For Elijah also raised the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:17-24). Elisha likewise restored the life of the son of a Shunammite woman (2 Kgs 4:32-37).

The Messengers of John

(Matt 11:2-11; Luke 7:18-28)

Now when John heard in prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are You He who is to come, or shall we look for another?” Jesus answered them, “Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Blessed is he who takes no offense at Me.” (Matt 11:2-6)

As they went away, Jesus began to say to the crowd concerning John, “What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken with the wind? What did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold those who are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings. (Matt 11:7-8)

“But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: ‘*Behold I send My messenger before My face, who shall prepare Your way before You.*’³⁹ Amen I say to you, there has not risen among those who are born of women a greater than John the Baptist, yet he that is the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.” (Matt 11:9-11)

COMMENTARY

1. John knew that Christ was divine and had no doubt that He was the Messiah. But to give his disciples the opportunity to meet and follow Christ, he sent two of them to ask Him the question, “Are you He who is to come, or shall we look for another?”

³⁹ This echoes Mal 3:1.

A Penitent Woman Anoints the Feet of Jesus (Luke 7:36-50)

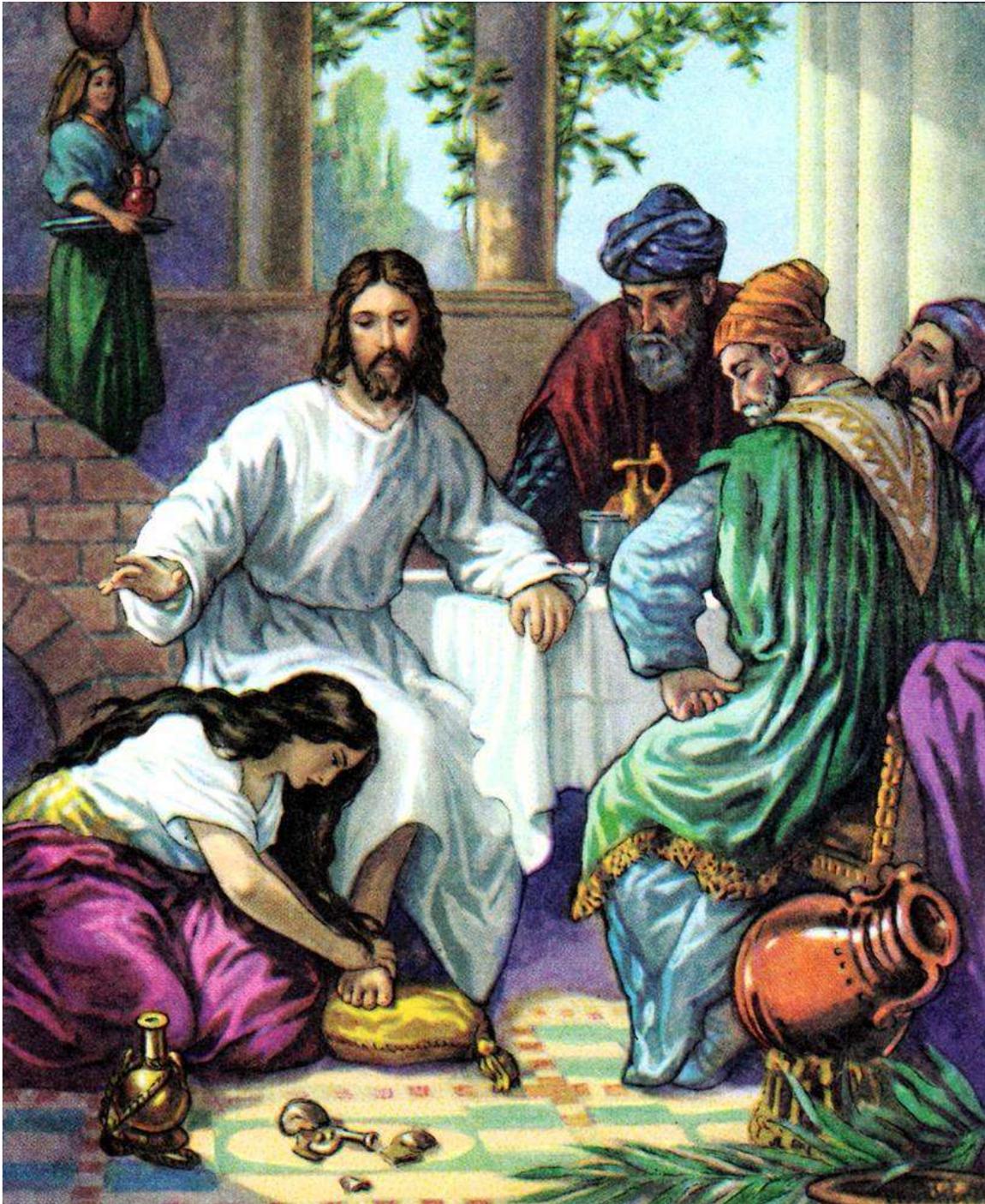


Fig 2.3.12 A Penitent Woman Anoints the Feet of Jesus
Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

One of the Pharisees desired that Jesus dine with him, and He went into the house of the Pharisee and reclined at table. A woman who was a sinner was in the city, and when she knew that He was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster box of ointment, and standing behind him, beside His feet, she began to wash His feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment. (Luke 7:36-38)

Seeing it, the Pharisee who had invited Jesus said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know surely who and what sort of woman this is that touches him and that she is a sinner." Jesus said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." Simon said, "Master, say it." (Luke 7:39-40)

"A certain creditor had two debtors: the one owed five hundred days' wages and the other fifty. As they did not have the means to pay, he forgave them both. Which of the two therefore will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose he to whom he forgave more." Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." (Luke 7:41-43)

Turning to the woman, Jesus said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered into your house; you gave Me no water for My feet. But she has washed My feet with tears and has wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss. But she, since she came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil. But she has anointed My feet with ointment. Therefore, I say to you, many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much. But he who is forgiven little loves little." (Luke 7:44-47)

Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven you." Those that reclined at table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this that also forgives sins?" Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has made you whole. Go in peace." (Luke 7:48-50)

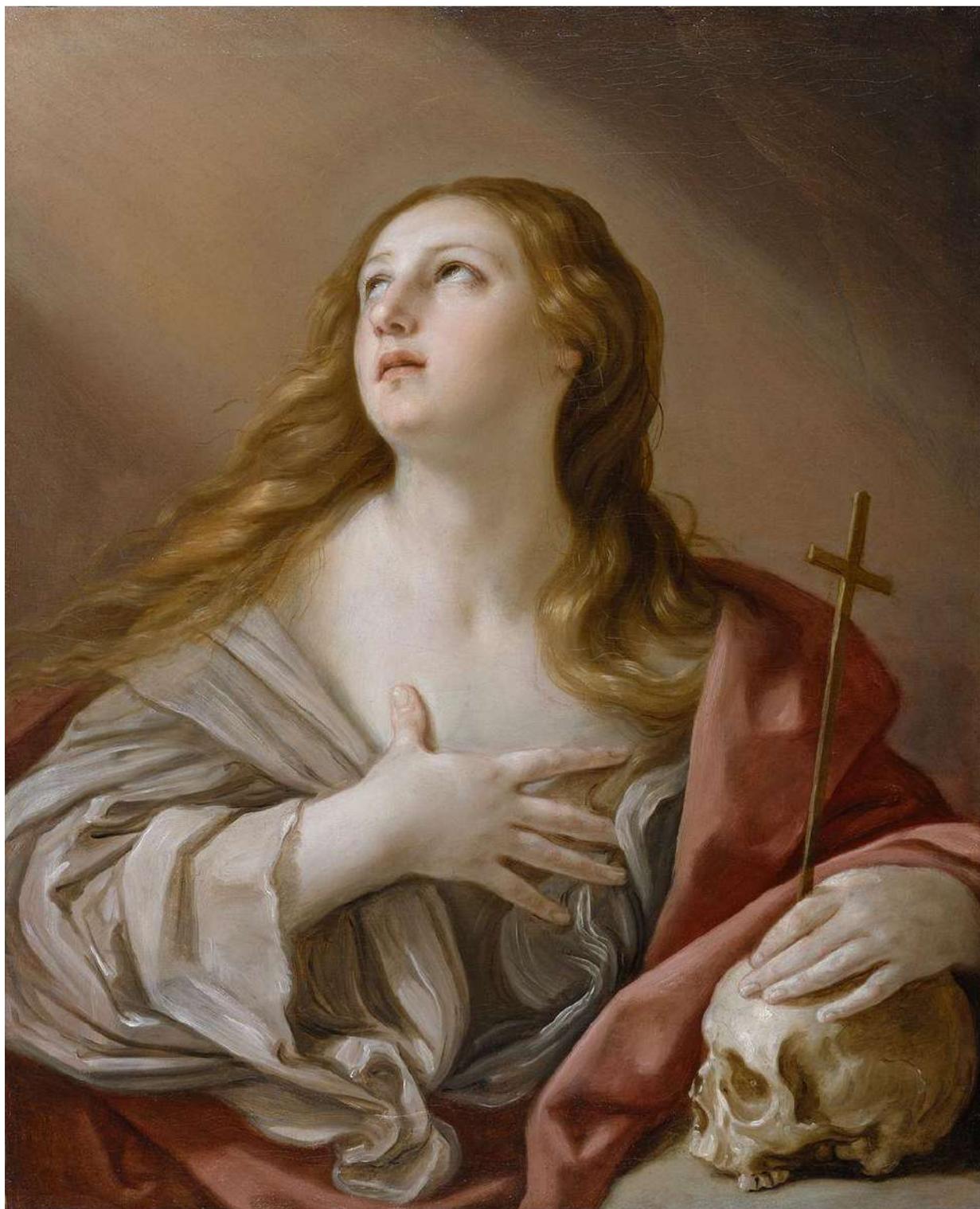


Fig 2.3.13 Mary Magdalene

The Penitent Woman who is Believed to Have Anointed Christ's Feet

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

COMMENTARY

1. St. Augustine noted that the sinful woman, when she knew that the Divine Physician was at dinner in the Pharisee's house, forced her way inside as an *uninvited guest*, that she might get the Lord's blessing. She who had been shameless in committing sin, became yet more shameless in seeking salvation. See St. Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, Sermon 49, par. 1.
2. St. Luke did not say the name of the penitent woman who anointed our Lord's feet. However, it is widely believed in Catholic tradition that she was **Mary Magdalene**. For, in the next chapter after Christ's dinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee, St. Luke said that certain women, who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, followed Christ when He continued preaching through the cities and towns in Galilee (Luke 8:2). One of these women was Mary Magdalene, out of whom Christ had ejected seven demons (Mark 16:9).
3. After being converted and healed by Christ of her vices (the demons in her soul), Mary began following and serving Christ until His death (Mark 15:40-41). On the day of His resurrection, she was also the first woman to arrive at His tomb, and the last to leave (John 20:1-11).
4. The anointing story, which was narrated by St. Luke, should be distinguished from similar anointing episodes in Matt 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-8. St. Luke's story happened at the house of Simon the Pharisee when Christ was still in Galilee, since Christ was ministering in Nain and Capernaum. On the other hand, the episodes narrated by the other evangelists happened at the house of Simon the Leper, which is in Bethany, a village in Judea, just before Christ's passion.

Christ Teaches in Parables

The Sower and the Seed (Matt 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15)

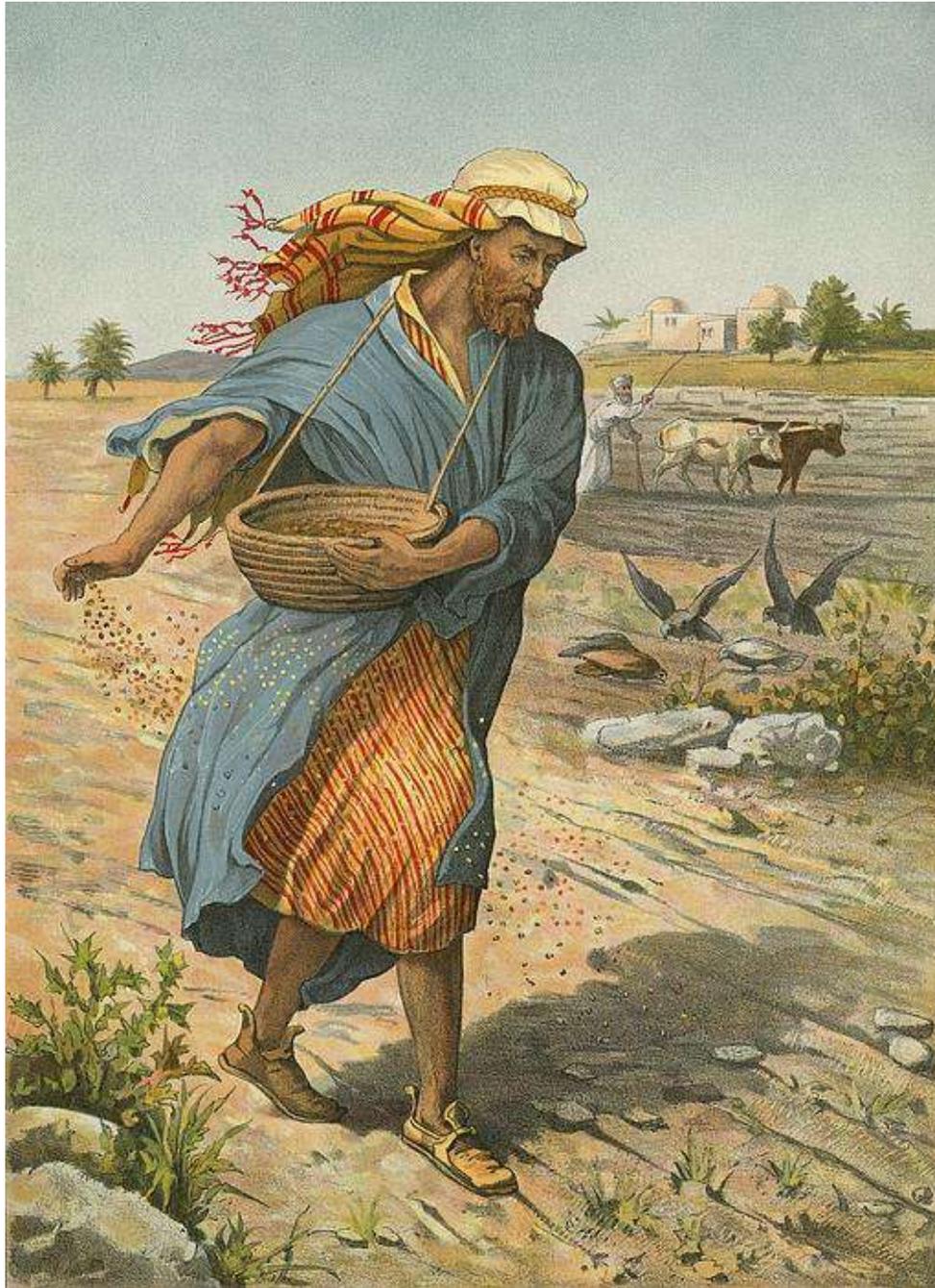


Fig 2.3.14 The Sower Sowing the Seed

Artist: English School

The same day, Jesus, going out of the house, sat by the sea side. Great crowds gathered together toward Him, so that Jesus went up into a boat and sat, and the crowd stood on the shore. Jesus spoke to them about many things using parables, saying, “Behold, a sower went forth to sow. While he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the birds of the air came and ate them up. Others fell upon stony ground, where they had not much earth, and they sprung up immediately, because they had no depth in the earth. When the sun was up they were scorched, and because they did not have roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell upon good ground, and they brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Matt 13:1-9)

Jesus’ disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” Jesus answered them, “Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but it is not given to them. For to him who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance. But from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away...” (Matt 13:10-12)

Hear therefore the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom, and does not understand it, the wicked one comes and snatches away that which was sown in his heart; this is he that received the seed by the wayside. He that received the seed upon stony ground is he that hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy. Yet he does not have root in himself, and it is only for a time, and when there arises tribulation and persecution because of the word, he quickly falls away. He that received the seed among thorns is he that hears the word, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke up the word, and he becomes fruitless. He that received the seed upon good ground is he that hears the word, understands, and bears fruit, and one yields a hundredfold, another sixty, and another thirty.” (Matt 13:18-23)

The Wheat and the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43)

He proposed to them another parable, saying, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went his way. When the blade sprang up, and brought forth fruit, then the weeds also appeared. The servants of the head of the house came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How does it have weeds then?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you wish that we go and gather them up?’ He said, ‘No, otherwise, while gathering up the weeds, you might also root up the wheat together with them. Permit both to grow until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘Gather up the weeds first, and bind them into bundles to burn, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” (Matt 13:24-30)

Then having sent the crowds away, Jesus came into the house, and His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” He answered them, “He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the Kingdom. The weeds are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world. The reapers are the angels. As weeds are gathered up, and burnt with fire, so will it be at the end of the world. The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all causes of sin and those who do evil. The angels will cast them into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then will the just shine as the sun⁴⁰ in the Kingdom of their Father. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Matt 13:36-43)

⁴⁰ St. Remigius says: “In the present world the light of the saints shines before men, but after the consummation of all things, the righteous themselves shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea on St. Matthew*, Ch.13, verses 36-43.

The Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)

Jesus proposed another parable⁴¹ to them, saying, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest indeed of all seeds, but when it has grown up, it is larger than all plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in its branches.” (Matt 13:31-32)

The Hidden Treasure (Matt 13:44)

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man, having found it, hid, and in joy went and sold all that he had and bought that field.” (Matt 13:44)

The Pearl of Great Price (Matt 13:45-46)

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant seeking good pearls who, when he had found one pearl of great price,⁴² went his way and sold all that he had, and bought it.” (Matt 13:45-46)

⁴¹ St. John Chrysostom sees in this parable the wisdom and greatness of the Gospel. The teachings of the Gospel might appear as a small thing (like the mustard seed). But by preaching the Gospel, the Apostles, who were not learned men and educators, triumphed in spreading the Catholic Faith to the whole world. See St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, Homily 46, par. 2

⁴² St. Augustine teaches that the pearl of great price is our Savior Jesus Christ Himself. When we find Him, we give up everything to keep His friendship. See *17 Questions on Matthew by Augustine*, Q. 13.

Miracles near the Lake of Gennesaret

The Calming of the Storm (Matt 8:18, 23-27; Mark 4:35-40; Luke 8:22-25)



Fig 2.3.15 Christ Asleep in the Tempest

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

One day Jesus went into a little boat with His disciples, and said to them, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they sailed away. While they were sailing, Jesus fell asleep on the boat. Behold, a wind storm came down upon the lake, and they were being filled with water by the waves and were in danger. (Luke 8:22-23)



Fig 2.3.16 Christ Calms the Storm
Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

The disciples came and woke Him, saying, “Master, we perish.” Rising up, He rebuked the winds and the sea. The storm stopped and there came a great calm. Jesus said to them, “Where is your faith?” They were afraid and wondered, saying, “Who is this (do you think) that commands both the winds and the sea, and they obey Him?” (Luke 8:24-25)

COMMENTARY

1. The stormy sea is a figure of the world and its waves of temptations. The sailors are our souls, and the boat is the Church, which rides safely as long as by faith Christ is awake in our hearts. See St. Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*, Sermon 13, par. 1.
2. “*Who is this that commands both the winds and the sea...?*” The Apostles asked this, not because they were ignorant of who Christ was, but out of admiration for the immensity of His power and the incomparable greatness of His sovereignty over nature. See St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Chapter 8, Sermon 43.

The Woman with Hemorrhage and the Daughter of Jairus (Matt 9:1, 18-26;
Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56)



Fig 2.3.17 Christ Restores Jairus' Daughter to Life
Artist: Heinrich Hofmann (1842-1902)

Entering into a boat, He crossed over the water and came into His own city. (Matt 9:1)

As Jesus was speaking these things to them, behold a certain ruler⁴³ came up and adored Him, saying, “Lord, my daughter has just died, but come, lay Your hand upon her, and she shall live.” Jesus rose up and followed him with His disciples. (Matt 9:18-19)

Behold a woman who had suffered from hemorrhage for twelve years⁴⁴ came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, “If I but touch His garment, I shall be healed.” Turning and seeing her, Jesus said, “Be of good heart, daughter, your faith has made you well.” The woman was healed from that hour. (Matt 9:20-22)

When Jesus came into the house of the ruler and saw the flute players and the crowd making a disturbance, He said, “Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeps.” They laughed at Him scornfully. When the crowd had been put outside, Jesus went in and took her by the hand. The girl arose. (Matt 9:23-25)

The report of this spread throughout the country. (Matt 9:26)

⁴³ He was a ruler of the synagogue, and his name was Jairus (Mark 5:22).

⁴⁴ This woman suffered excessive menstrual bleeding, a medical condition known as *menorrhagia*. She had already consulted many physicians and spent all her money, but was never cured and had only gotten worse (Mark 5:26). Under the law she was considered unclean (Lev 15:25), but concealing herself, she approached our Lord anyway and boldly touched His garment. Christ praised her for her faith, and called her “daughter.” See St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, Homily 31, Par. 2.

Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist – (ca. A.D. 31) (Matt 14:6-12; Mark 6:19-29)

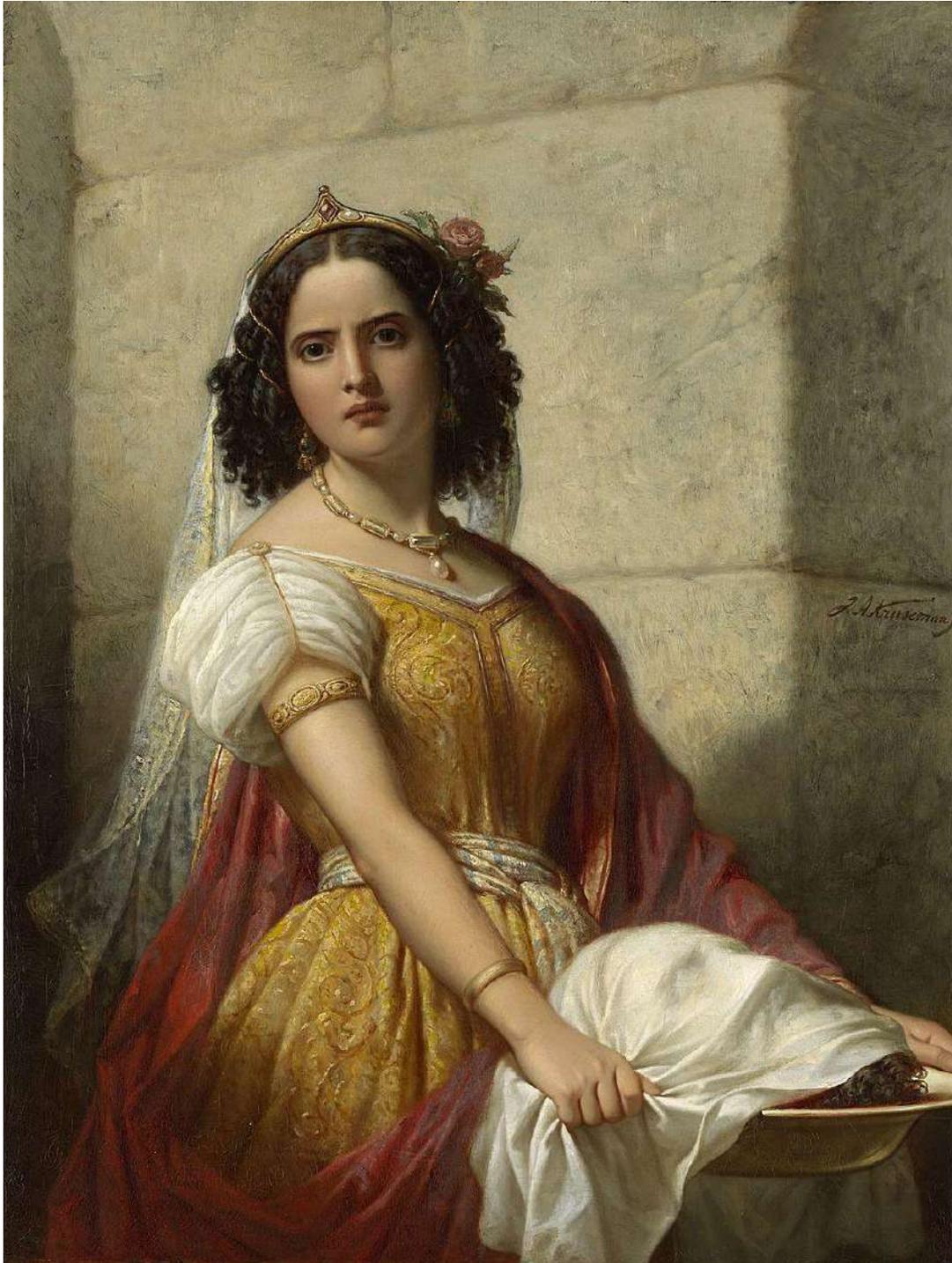


Fig 2.3.18 Salome with the Head of John the Baptist on a Platter
Artist: Jan Adam Kruseman (1804-1862)

Now Herodias had a grudge against him (John the Baptist), and wanted to put him to death, but could not. For Herod (Antipas) feared John, knowing him to be a just and holy man, and kept him, and when he heard him, he did many things, and he heard him willingly. (Mark 6:19-20)

A convenient day came when Herod gave a banquet for his birthday for the princes, tribunes, and chief men of Galilee. The daughter⁴⁵ of Herodias came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who were at table with him. The king said to the girl, “Ask of me what you wish, and I will give it to you.” He swore to her, “Whatever you ask I will give you, though it be half of my kingdom.” (Mark 6:21-23)

She went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask?” Her mother said, “The head of John the Baptist.” She came in immediately with haste to the king, and asked, “I wish that you at once give me the head of John the Baptist in a dish.” (Mark 6:24-25)

The king was struck with sadness. Yet, because of his oath and because of those who were with him at table, he would not displease her. Sending an executioner, he commanded that John’s head be brought in a dish. He beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a dish and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it her mother. (Mark 6:26-28)

Upon hearing this, his disciples came, took his body, and laid it in a tomb. (Mark 6:29)

⁴⁵ Although not mentioned in the Gospels, the name of Herodias’ daughter was *Salome*, which means “peace.” We know this from the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, in his book *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVIII, Ch. 5, #4.

COMMENTARY

1. Herodias had a grudge against John because John called out her adulterous relationship with Herod. She wanted to kill John, but Herod would not do it because Herod feared him, “knowing that he was a just and holy man” (Mark 6:20). Actually, it was not only that Herod feared killing a just and holy man, but that he feared the people who esteemed John as a prophet (Matt 14:5).
2. “*The king was struck with sadness.*” According to St. Bede, Herod was not truly sorry that he had to put John to death, “since the hypocrite bore sadness on his face, when he had joy in his heart.” The truth is, he wickedly used the need to fulfill his oath as an excuse for John’s murder, “that he might be impious under pretense of piety.” Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea on Mark*, Ch. 6, verses 17-29.
3. In the same place in the *Catena Aurea*, Theophylact added that Salome “begs that the head of John be given to her immediately, that is, at once, in that very hour, for she feared lest Herod should repent.”

First Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes

(Matt 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15)

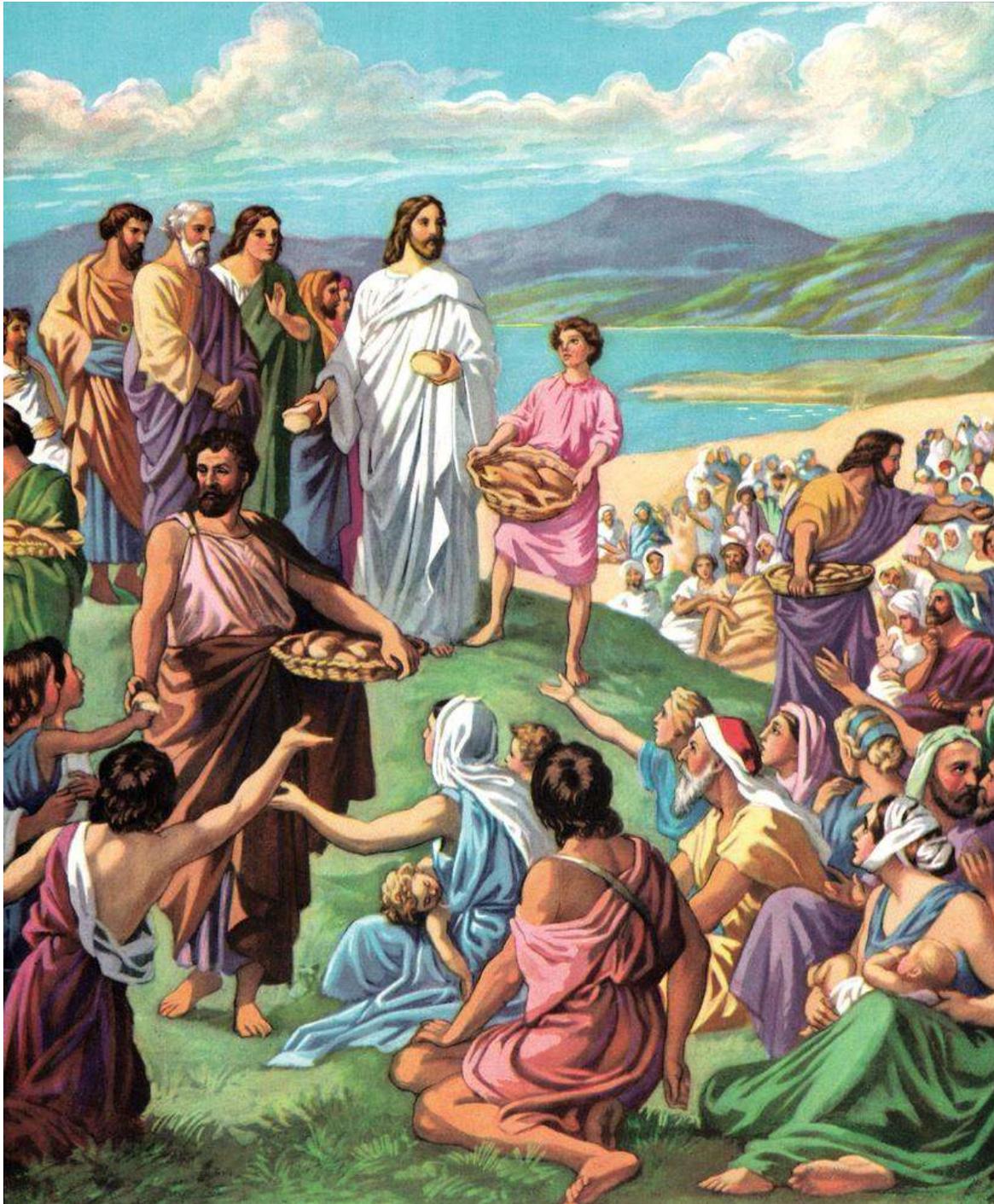


Fig 2.3.19 Christ Feeds the 5000
Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

After these things Jesus went across the sea of Galilee, which is also called Lake Tiberias. A great crowd followed Him because they saw the miracles which He wrought on those that were diseased. Jesus therefore went up onto a mountain and He sat there with His disciples. Now the Passover, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand. When Jesus therefore had lifted up His eyes and seen that a very great crowd had come to Him, He said to Philip, “From where shall we buy bread that these people may eat?” He said this to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, “Two hundred days’ wages of bread is not enough for everyone to take a little.” (John 6:1-7)

One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to Him, “There is a boy here that has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are these among so many?” Then Jesus said, “Make the men sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand.⁴⁶ (John 6:8-10)

Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed them to those who had sat down, and the fish also in the same way, as much as they pleased. When they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain so that they are not lost.” They therefore gathered up and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained in addition to that which had been eaten. (John 6:11-13)

Now those men, when they had seen the extent of the miracle Jesus had done, said, “This is truly the prophet that is to come into the world.” Jesus therefore, when He knew that they would come to take Him by force and make Him king, fled again into the mountains by Himself. (John 6:14-15)

⁴⁶ Five thousand men, not counting women and children (Matt 14:21)

COMMENTARY

1. This miracle happened in Bethsaida (Luke 9:10), which is north of the Sea of Galilee. It is called the “*first* multiplication of the loaves and the fishes” because there was a *second* similar miracle (recorded in Matt 14:15-21 and Mark 8:1-10), which happened at the coast of Decapolis (Mark 7:31), which is south of the Sea of Galilee. These are therefore two different miracles. In the first miracle, 5000 men were fed using five loaves and two fishes, with twelve baskets remaining. In the second miracle, 4000 were fed using seven loaves and a few little fishes, with only seven baskets remaining.
2. “He distributed them ... *as much as they pleased*” because, when the disciples at the command of Jesus distributed the loaves and the fish, their baskets miraculously never became empty! There was always more loaf and more fish for the next person, so that in the end there were even twelve baskets of food left over.
3. The miracle of the loaves and the fishes was a *true* miracle. The feeding of the five thousand did not happen because the people shared each other’s provisions, because they only had 5 loaves and two fish. What happened was that the five barley loaves and two fish were supernaturally *multiplied* to feed everyone present, thus prefiguring the Holy Eucharist by which our souls would also be fed. The miracle was so amazing that Christ had to flee secretly to the mountains when He detected those men would force Him to be their king on account of this awesome miracle.

Christ Walks on the Water

(Matt 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-56; John 6:16-21)



Fig 2.3.20 Christ Walks on the Water

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

When evening came, His disciples went down to the sea. When they had gone up into a boat, they went across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, but Jesus had not yet come to them. (John 6:16-17)

The boat was tossed with the waves in the midst of the sea, for the wind was against it. In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to them walking upon the sea. Seeing Jesus walking upon the sea, the disciples were troubled, saying, "It is an apparition." They cried out for fear. (Matt 14:24-26)

Immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good heart; it is I, do not fear." Peter said, "Lord, if it is You, bid me to come to You upon the waters." Jesus said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the wind was strong, Peter was afraid. When he began to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me." At once Jesus stretched forth His hand and took hold of him, and said to Peter, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt 14:27-31)

When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Those in the boat came and adored Him, saying, "Indeed you are the Son of God." (Matt 14: 32-33)

Having crossed the water, they came to the land of Gennesaret. When the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all that country, and brought to Him all those who were sick. They begged Jesus that they might just touch the hem of His garment. As many as touched it were healed. (Matt 14:34-36)

Christ's Discourse on the Bread of Life (John 6:27-72)



Fig 2.3.21 “I am the Bread of Life” (John 6:35)

Artist: Harold Copping (1863-1932)

Jesus said to them: "... Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for that which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, for God the Father has set His seal to Him." (John 6:26-27)

They therefore said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God: that you believe in Him whom He has sent." They therefore said to Him, "What sign do You therefore show that we may see and believe You? What do You work? Our fathers ate manna in the desert, as it is written: He gave them bread from Heaven to eat." (John 6:28-31)

Then Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, Moses did not give you bread from Heaven, but My Father will give you the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world." (John 6:32-33)

They therefore said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "*I am the Bread of Life. He that comes to Me shall not hunger, and he that believes in Me shall never thirst.* But I said to you that you also have seen Me, and you do not believe. All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me, and I will not cast him out who comes to Me. For I came down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. Now this is the will of the Father who sent Me: that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me but should raise it up on the last day. This is the will of My Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life. I will also raise him up on the last day." (John 6:34-40)

The Jews murmured at Him, because He had said, "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven." They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then does He say, 'I came down from Heaven?'" (John 6:41-42)

Jesus therefore answered them, “Do not murmur among yourselves. *No man can come to Me unless the Father, who has sent Me, draws him.* I will also raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets: ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone that has heard of the Father and has learned comes to Me. Not that any man has seen the Father, but He who is of God has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, He that believes in Me shall have everlasting life. (John 6:43-47)

“I am the Bread of Life. Your fathers ate manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which came down from Heaven, and if any man eats of it, he will not die. *I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is **My flesh.***” (John 6:48-52)

The Jews disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” (John 6:53)

Then Jesus said to them, “*Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood has everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. As the Living Father has sent Me and I live by the Father, so He that eats Me shall also live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your fathers who ate manna and are dead, he that eats this bread shall live forever.*” (John 6:54-59)

Jesus said these things while teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. Many of His disciples who heard it said, “This saying is hard. Who can listen to it?” (John 6:60-61)

Because Jesus knew that His disciples murmured at this, He said to them, “Does this repel you? What if you see the Son of man ascend up to where He was before? *It is the spirit that invigorates; the flesh benefits nothing.* The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you that do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning those who did not believe and the one that would betray Him. (John 6:62-65)

He then said, “Because of this I said to you that no man can come to Me unless it be given him by My Father.” After this, many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. (John 6:66-67)

Then Jesus said to the Twelve, “Will you also go away?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have known that You are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus answered them, “Have not I chosen you twelve? And one of you is a devil.” Now Jesus meant Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for Judas was about to betray Jesus and was one of the Twelve. (John 6:68-72)

COMMENTARY

1. *“I am the Bread of Life... I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”* Some Christians think that our Lord was only speaking *figuratively* when he said that His flesh was the Living Bread that came down from Heaven. Yet the Jews, who listened to Christ’s discourse, understood His words *literally*. For they asked, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” (John 6:53) Many of the them said, “This saying is hard. Who can listen to it?” (John 6:60-61). On account of this, many also went away and walked with Him no more (John 6:67). Now, did Christ run after them and say, “Hey wait! You misunderstood me. Don’t go away.” No, that is not what we read in the Gospel. On the contrary, Christ faced His Apostles and asked them: “Will you also go away?” He did not retract His words. Rather, He turned to them and challenged their faith. This shows that Christ expects us to literally interpret His words: *“He that eats My flesh and drinks My blood has everlasting life.”*
2. *“It is the spirit that invigorates; the flesh benefits nothing”* (John 6:64). Based on this text, some Christians assert that physically eating Christ’s Body or literally drinking His Blood *benefits nothing*; therefore, they assert again that Christ’s words should only be interpreted figuratively. However, this interpretation is based on an incorrect reading of John 6:64. The proper reading of John 6:64 is this: *It is the spirit that invigorates; (dead) flesh benefits nothing.* Now, Christ’s flesh is not dead flesh. It is a living flesh, which means that it is animated by the Spirit, and is profitable to consume. What Christ had asked us to eat was not His dead flesh, but His living flesh. In Holy Communion we receive the living Body and the living Blood of our Lord.

CHAPTER 4 MINISTRY OUTSIDE GALILEE

Cure at the Pool of Bethesda

(John 5:1-15)

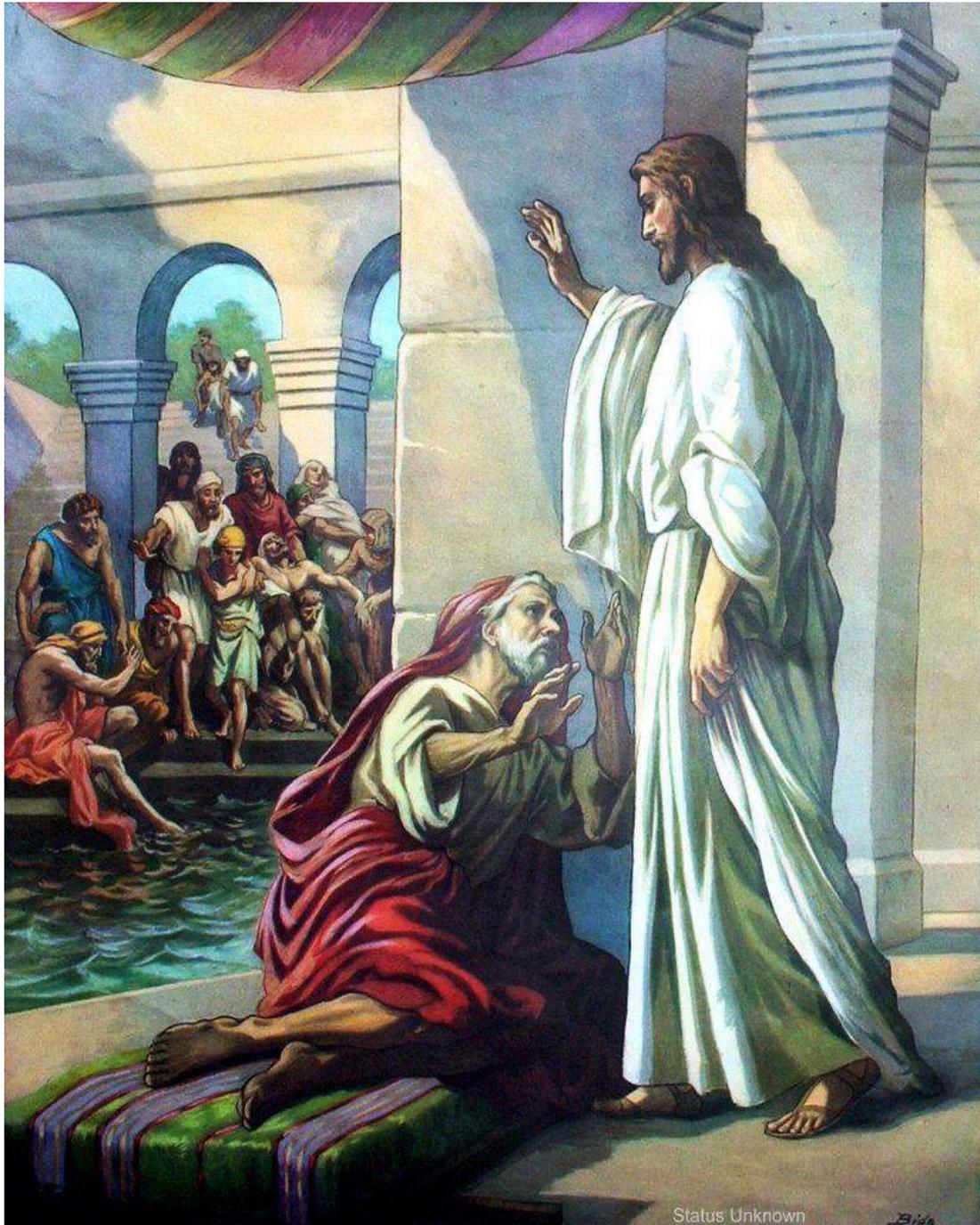


Fig 2.4.1 Cure at the Pool of Bethesda

Artist: Alexandre Bida (1813-1895)

After these things was a festival day of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem a pond called “Sheep Gate,” which in Hebrew is named Bethesda,⁴⁷ having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick, blind, lame, and disabled people waiting for the movement of the water. An angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pool and stirred the water.⁴⁸ He that went down first into the pool after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had. (John 5:1-4)

There was a certain man there who had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knowing that he had now been there a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to get well?” The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred, for while I am coming, another goes down before me.” (John 5:5-7)

Jesus said to him, “Arise, take up your bed and walk.” Immediately the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. It was the Sabbath that day. The Jews therefore said to him who was healed, “It is the Sabbath. It is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” He answered them, “He who cured me said to me, ‘Take up your bed and walk.’” They therefore asked him, “Who is that Man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’” The man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus slipped away, since there was a crowd standing in the place. (John 5:8-13)

Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you are cured. Sin no more, so that nothing worse may happen to you.” The man went and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had cured him. (John 5:14-15)

⁴⁷ **Bethesda** is sometimes rendered (especially in old bibles) as **Bethsaida**, but it should not be confused with the ancient fishing village, also named Bethsaida, which is the hometown of the Apostles Peter, Andrew and Philip. Bethesda is in Jerusalem, whereas Bethsaida is on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Bethsaida is also near the place where Christ fed the 5000 (Luke 9:10).

⁴⁸ Many Catholics believe the angel to be Raphael, the same angel who helped Tobias find a cure for his father’s injured eyes.

COMMENTARY

1. The **Pool of Bethesda** was described by St. John as having five porches (John 5:2) where the sick would lay waiting for the water of the pool to be stirred by an angel. But this particular feature of the Pool had actually been problematic. For, the usual rectangular pool only had four sides, and a five-sided pool (the shape of a pentagon), with a porch on each side, had never been found by archaeologists. Some Bible critics suspected that St. John only made up the “five porches” to represent the five books of Moses. However, in one archaeological excavation made in the 1900’s near the so-called Sheep Gate (north of the Temple Mount), Herr Conrad Schick unearthed two large reservoirs separated by a rock partition wall. Further study of the adjoining remains identified the basins as the biblical Pool of Bethesda. The five porches of a rectangular pool, that puzzled scholars for many years, now have a clear explanation. The twin rectangular reservoir could indeed have five porches: one on each long side, one on each short side, and one on the dividing wall between the two basins.
2. The discovery of the Pool is also significant because it adds more weight to the historicity of Bethesda which, according to an ancient tradition, was the location of the house of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Therefore, many people believe that Bethesda could also be the birthplace of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Canaanite Woman

(Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30)



Fig 2.4.2 The Canaanite Woman
Artist: Unknown

Jesus went from there and retired into the coast of Tyre and Sidon. Behold a Canaanite woman from those coasts came out and cried to Jesus, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David. My daughter is grievously troubled by the devil.” He did not answer her a word. His disciples came and begged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries after us.” Jesus said, “I was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and adored⁴⁹ Jesus, saying, “Lord, help me.” Jesus said, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” But she said, “Yes, Lord; but the whelps⁵⁰ also eat of the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” Then Jesus said to her, “O woman, great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was cured from that hour. (Matt 15:21-28)

COMMENTARY

1. Of this episode St. Jerome comments: “Wonderful are shown the faith, patience, and humility of this woman; faith, that she believed that her daughter could be healed; patience, that so many times overlooked, she yet perseveres in her prayers; humility, that she compares herself not to the dogs, but to the whelps. I know, she says, that I do not deserve the children’s bread, and that I cannot have whole meat, nor sit at the table with the master of the house, but I am content with that which is left for the whelps, that through humble fragments I may come to the amplitude of the perfect bread.” Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea on Matthew*, Ch. 15, verses 21-28.
2. St. Bede also made an interesting observation: “On account then of the humble and faithful saying of her mother, the devil left the daughter; here is given a precedent for catechizing and baptizing infants, seeing that by the faith and the confession of the parents, infants are freed in baptism from the devil, though they can neither have knowledge in themselves, or do either good or evil.” Quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea on Mark*, Ch. 7, verses 24-30.

⁴⁹ Adoration is usually shown either by bowing or kneeling, so the woman probably bowed or knelt before Jesus.

⁵⁰ “Whelps,” which means puppies.

The Second Multiplication of the Loaves

(Matt 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10)



Fig 2.4.3 Christ Feeds the 4000

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Jesus called His disciples together and said, “I have compassion on the crowd, because they stayed with Me three days now and have nothing to eat. I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint on the way.” (Matt 15:32)

The disciples said to Him, “Where then could we get so many loaves in the desert to feed so great a crowd?” Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven, and a few little fish.” (Matt 15:33-34)

Jesus commanded the crowd to sit down upon the ground. Taking the seven loaves and the fish, and giving thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. (Matt 15:35-36)

They all ate and were satisfied. They gathered seven full baskets of the fragments that remained. They that ate were four thousand men, besides children and women. (Matt 15:37-38)

Having dismissed the crowd, Jesus went into a boat and came to the coasts of Magadan. (Matt 15:39)

COMMENTARY

1. This is the second time that Christ performed the miracle of the multiplication of loaves to feed a large crowd. According to Theodore of Heraclea (c. A.D. 355), Christ performed this miracle, not only once but twice, in order to impress in the minds of the Jews that He was the same God who fed their fathers in the desert for forty years. Also, Christ did not merely feed them with a few loaves of bread, but also produced a surplus of several baskets, so that He might show Himself as far surpassing Elijah, who also caused the widow’s bread and oil to be multiplied (1 Kgs 17:7-16). See Theodore of Heraclea in *Fragmenta in Mattheaeum* 98, as quoted by Gary Hoag in *Generosity Monk*.
2. Some people claim that the second multiplication was not a different miracle, but only a second narration by Matthew and Mark of the same miracle. But they were really two different miracles, because they happened in two different places, and the two events had many significant circumstantial differences. Besides, our Lord Himself stated that they were two distinct events. See Matt 16:9-10.

Peter Appointed Head of the Church – (ca. A.D. 32) (Matt 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21)

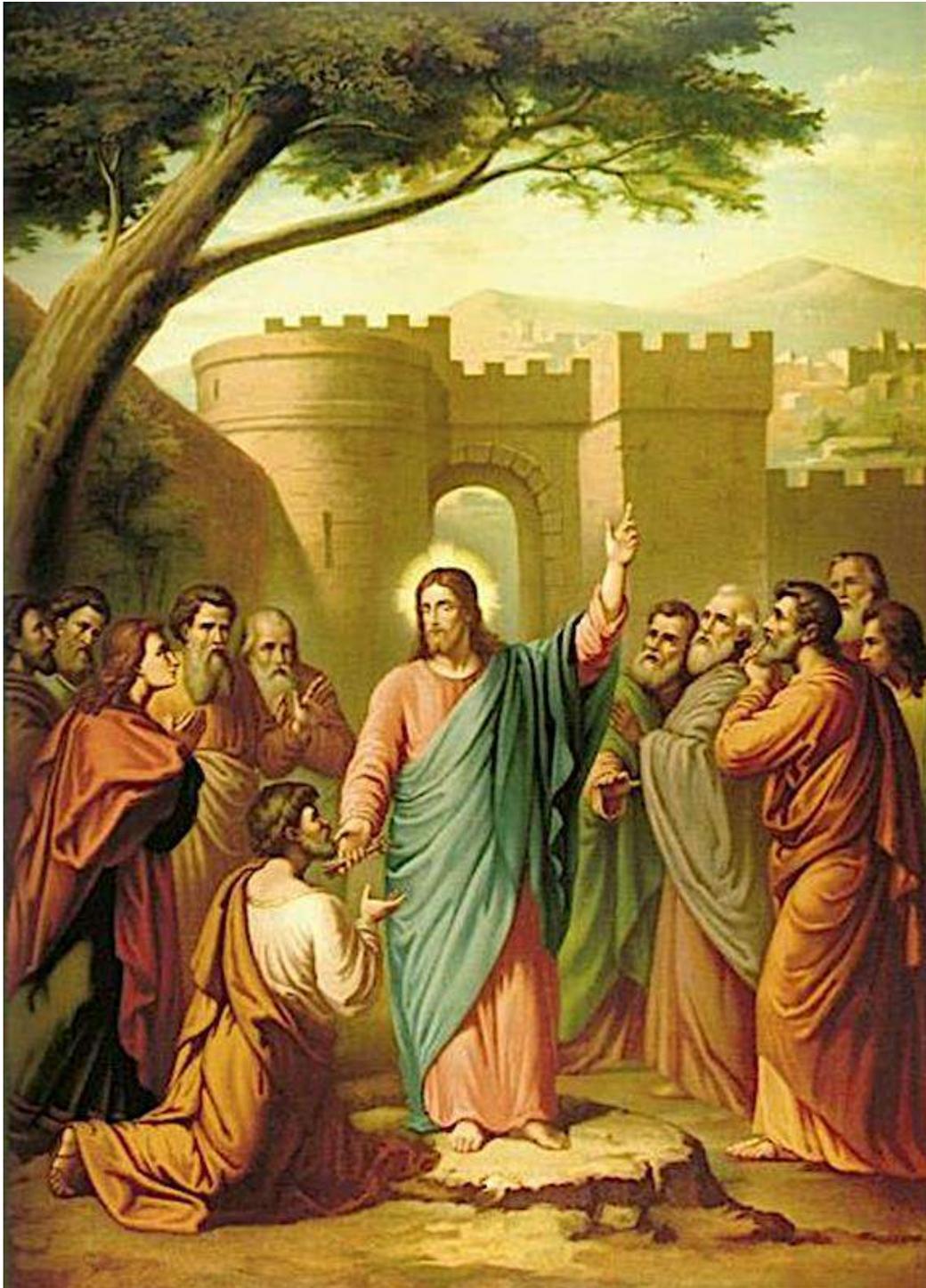


Fig 2.4.4 Christ Gives to Peter the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven

Artist: Unknown

Jesus came into the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi, and He asked His disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of Man is?” They said, “Some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” (Matt 16:13-14)

Jesus said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but My Father in Heaven. I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in Heaven.” (Matt 16:15-19)

Then Jesus commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ. (Matt 16:20)

COMMENTARY

1. Whenever God changes the name of a person, it is usually to indicate a change in the person's role, position or function. For example, when God changed the name of Abram to Abraham (Gen 17:5), it was on account of God's promise to make him a father of many nations (Abraham means “father of a multitude”). Now, Peter's original name was Simon. Christ changed it to “Peter,” which in Greek means “rock,” because St. Peter was to be the rock upon which the Church will be founded (Matt 16:18).
2. In Israel the keys represent authority. Thus, we see in the Book of Isaiah that God gave great authority to Eliakim by laying upon his shoulder the keys to the kingdom of David (Isa 22:20-22). In like manner Christ laid the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to St. Peter, indicating his supreme authority over the whole Church. Therefore, St. Peter was more than just the “first among equals.” He was truly the divinely-appointed head of the Church.

The Transfiguration

(Matt 17:1-8; Mark 8:1-7; Luke 9:28-36)



Fig 2.4.5 The Transfiguration
Artist: Carl Bloch (1834-1890)

After six days, Jesus took Peter, James and John, his brother, and brought them up onto a high mountain away from the rest. He was transfigured before them. His face shone as the sun, and His garments became white as snow. (Matt 17:1-2)

Behold Moses and Elijah appeared talking with Him. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You wish, let us make here three tents, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (Matt 17:3-4)

While he was still speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. A voice came out of the cloud saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him.” When the disciples heard this, they fell upon their faces, and were very much afraid. Jesus came and touched them, and said to them, “Arise, and do not fear.” When they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus. (Matt 17:5-8)

COMMENTARY

1. St. John Chrysostom explains why Christ allowed Himself to be transfigured in the presence of the Apostles (Peter, James and John), and why Moses and Elijah also appeared transfigured with Him. He said that this is because people were continually accusing Christ of transgressing the law, and regarding Him to be a blasphemer and usurper of the glory of the Father. Against these accusations, Christ allowed Moses and Elijah to bear testimony of His innocence by appearing with Him and talking to Him. For Moses was the giver of the Law, and Elijah was a zealous defender of the glory of the Father. See St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, Ch. 17, #3.
2. After going to various places outside Galilee, Christ returned to Capernaum, His hometown. Thus, although the exact location of the mount of transfiguration is not mentioned in the Gospels, many believe it to be Mount Tabor because it is near Capernaum.

Christ Teaches Child-like Humility

(Matt 18:1-5; Mark 9:32-36; Luke 9:46-48)

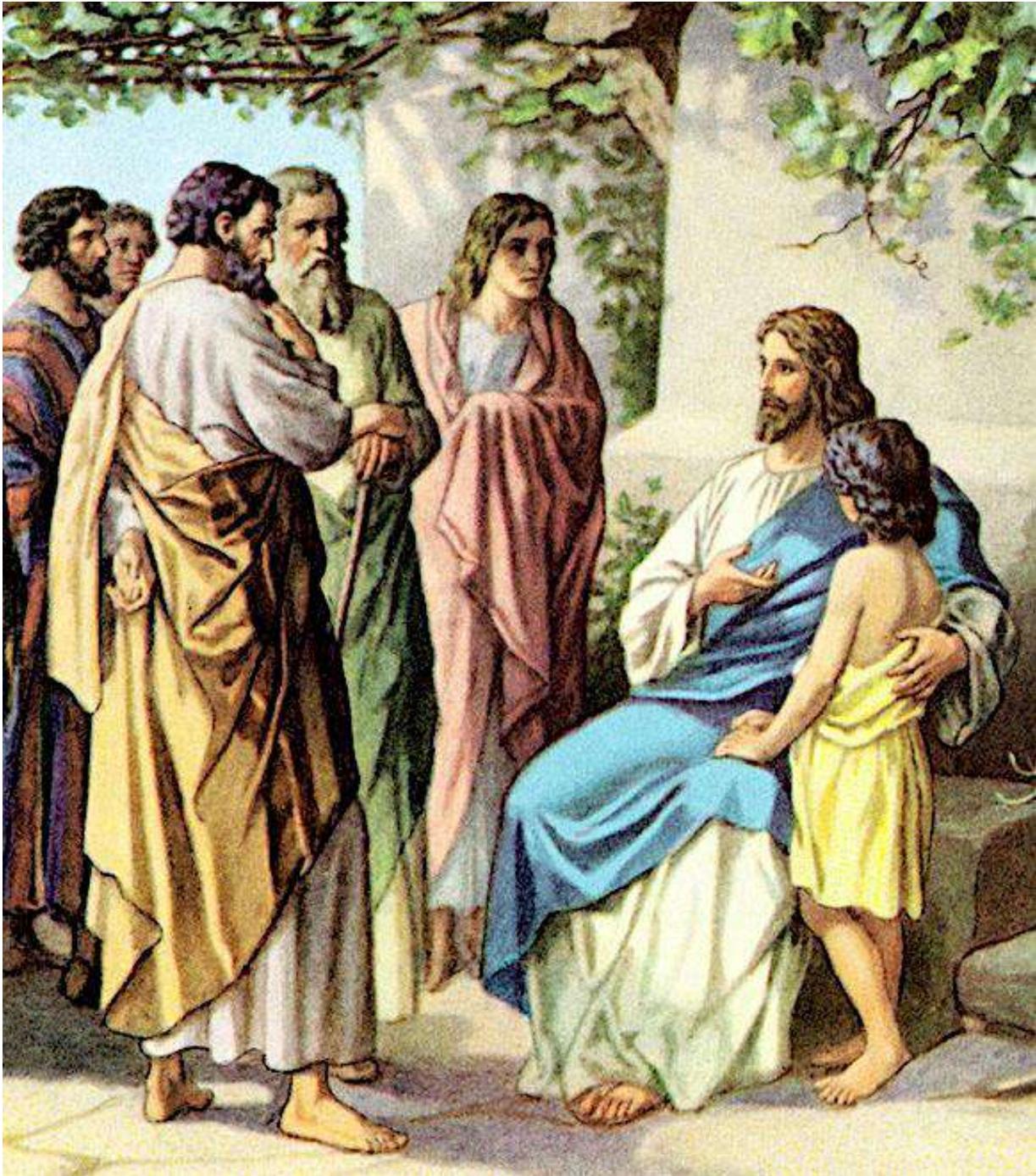


Fig 2.4.6 “Be Humble as a Little Child”

Artist: Unknown

They came to Capernaum. When they were in the house, Jesus asked them, “What did you discuss on the way?” But they remained silent, for on the way they had disputed among themselves which of them would be the greatest (in the Kingdom of Heaven). Sitting down, He called the Twelve and said to them, “If any man wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:32-34)

Calling a little child to Himself, Jesus put him in their midst, and said, “Amen, I say to you, *unless you convert and become as little children, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Whoever humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matt 18:2-4)

Jesus said to His disciples, “Temptations to sin will surely come. But woe to him through whom they come! *It would be better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck and he was cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.*” (Luke 17:1-2)

COMMENTARY

1. “*Unless you convert and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*” Our Lord did not say that the Kingdom of Heaven was intended literally for children, but for those who are childlike in heart. For our Lord was not talking about the age, but of the innocence and simplicity of children. St. Jerome says that a child “is not obstinate in anger, when injured does not bear it in mind, has no emotion at the sight of a fair woman, does not think one thing while he speaks another; so ye, unless ye have the like innocence and purity of mind, shall not be able to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas in the *Catena Aurea on Matthew*, Ch.18, verses 1-6.

Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt 18:23-35)



Fig 2.4.7 The Unforgiving Servant
Artist: "Yolanda"

A parable given by Jesus Christ while he was still in Capernaum was the *Parable of the Unforgiving Servant*. The Kingdom of Heaven, He said, can be compared to a king who took an account of his servants. When he began to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents.⁵¹ As he had no means to pay it, the king ordered him to be sold with his wife and children, and all that he had to make the payment. But the servant fell on his knees and begged for time, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” Being moved with pity, the king let him go and forgave him the debt. (Matt 18:23-27)

When that servant had gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants that owed him a hundred days’ wages. He seized him by the throat, saying, “Pay what you owe.” His fellow-servant fell on his knees and begged him for time, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” But he would not have mercy. Instead, he went and cast him into prison until he paid the debt. (Matt 18:28-30)

His fellow servants, seeing what has happened, were very much grieved, so they went and told the king. The king called his servant and said to him, “You wicked servant, I forgave you all your debt because you begged for mercy. Should you not have the same compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had compassion on you?” Being angry, the king cast him into prison until his own debt was paid. Then Christ said, “So also shall My Father in Heaven do to each of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”⁵² (Matt 18:31-35)

⁵¹ A talent is the equivalent of 750 ounces of silver.

⁵² This is why in the *Our Father* we say, “*And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*”

CHAPTER 5 BACK TO JUDEA

Journey to Jerusalem

Now the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. His brothers⁵³ said to Him, “Pass from here and go into Judea so that Your disciples may see the works You do.” (John 7:2-3)

Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37; John 7:2-13)



Fig 2.5.1 The Good Samaritan

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

⁵³ His “brothers” refer to His relatives (cousins, half-brothers, nephews, etc.), for He had no siblings.

On His way to Jerusalem, Christ met a certain lawyer who stood up to test Him and said, “Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:25-27)

Jesus said to him, “You have answered correctly. Do this, and you shall live.” But the lawyer, thinking he could trap our Lord into making a wrong answer, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:28-29)

In answer Christ told him the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*: A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers who, after stripping him naked and beating him, went their way and left him half dead. A certain priest happened to go down the same way, yet upon seeing the man, he just passed by. In the same manner a Levite,⁵⁴ when he was near the place and saw the man, also passed by. But a traveling Samaritan, on seeing him, was moved with compassion, and going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine to relieve the pain. Then, setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two days’ wages and gave them to the innkeeper and said, “Take care of him, and whatever more you spend above this, I will repay you on my return.” (Luke 10:30-35)

Then Christ asked, “Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the man that fell among the robbers?” The Lawyer said, “He that showed compassion toward him.” Jesus said to him, “You’re right again. Go, and do likewise.” (Luke 10:36-37)

⁵⁴ A member of a Hebrew tribe that often serve as assistant to the priest.

COMMENTARY

1. The Samaritans were not pure Jews, but half-Jews and half-Assyrian. They had their own version of the first five books of the Bible, so they comprised a different sect of Judaism. For these reasons, the Jews and the Samaritans usually did not deal with each other. The story of the good Samaritan is remarkable because the man who fell victim to the robbers was apparently a Jew, since he came from Jerusalem. Yet, the man who helped him was not his fellow Jews, but a Samaritan!
2. The obvious meaning of the above parable is clear: The true neighbor was the Good Samaritan who had compassion on the man who fell among robbers. This is its *literal meaning*, and it encourages us to identify ourselves with the Good Samaritan, or to be a Good Samaritan ourselves. However, St. Augustine has given this parable an alternative interpretation. Instead of asking us to identify ourselves with the Good Samaritan, he suggested that we could identify ourselves with the man who fell among the robbers, the Good Samaritan being Christ who came and rescued us. According to this interpretation, the man who fell among robbers was Adam (representing mankind). The robbers were the devil and his angels who stripped him of his immortality (which he enjoyed in the state of innocence). The Priest and Levite represented the Jews and Priests of Israel, who passed by but did not help him. The Good Samaritan was Christ, the beast of burden was His Body, the oil and wine were the Sacraments with which He treated the wounds. The Inn was the Church, the Innkeeper was the Holy Father and the Samaritan's return is the Second Coming of Christ. (See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea on Luke*, Ch. 10, verses 29-37). This is known as an *allegorical interpretation*. It is safe to read this type of hidden "meaning" in the sacred text provided that it does not contradict any part of Holy Scripture, is in agreement with Sacred Tradition, and is consistent with our Catholic Faith.

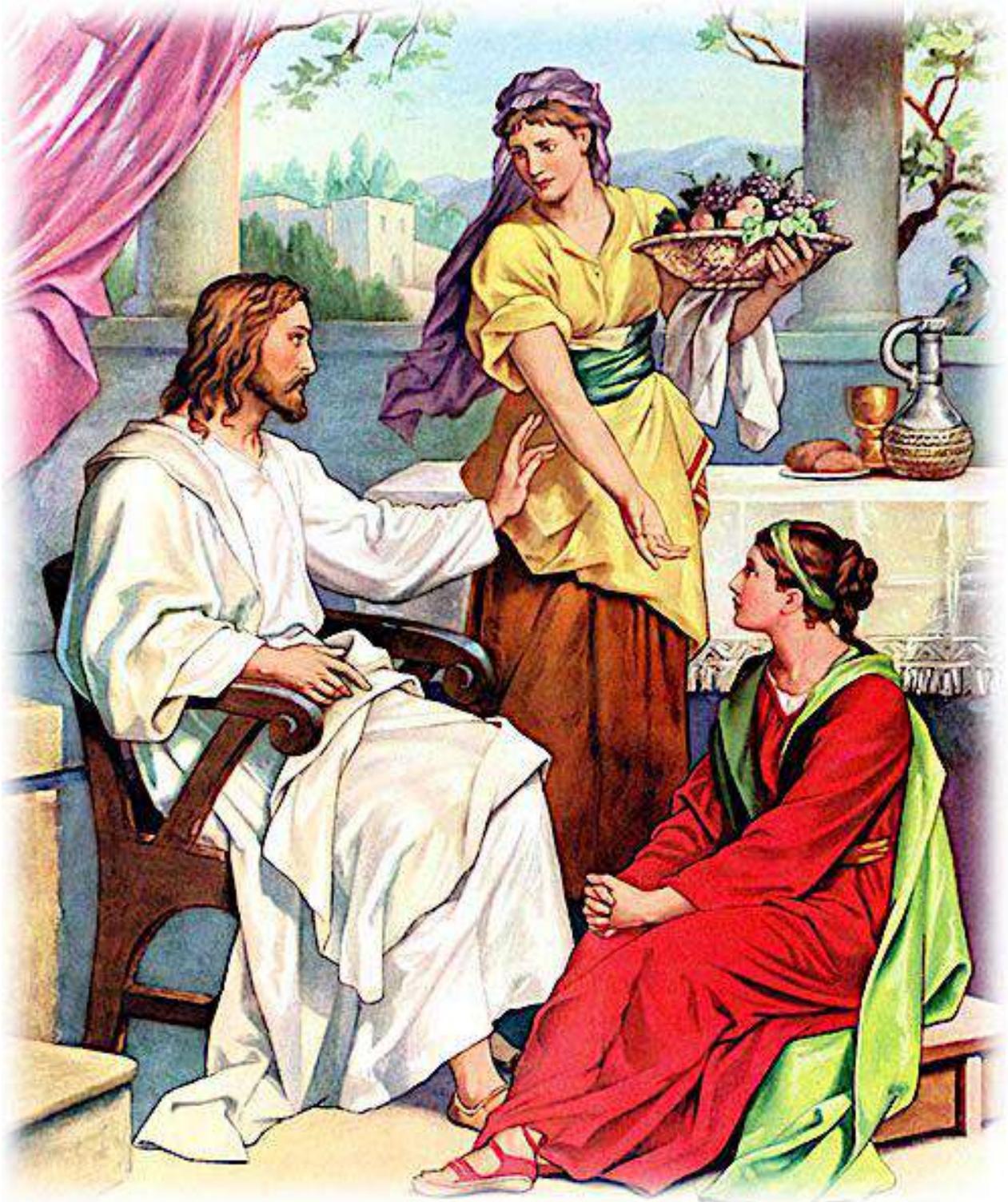
Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42)

Fig 2.5.2 Christ in the House of Mary and Martha
Artist: Heinrich Hofmann (1824-1911)

In the course of their journey, He entered into a certain town,⁵⁵ and a woman named Martha received Him into her house. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His word. (Luke 10:38-39)

But Martha was greatly occupied with the serving. Martha stood and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve by myself? Tell her to help me." (Luke 10:40)

The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are occupied and troubled with many things, but one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41-42)

COMMENTARY

1. In the Church there are those who are active in the ministry (represented by Martha), and there are also the contemplatives (represented by Mary), who do nothing but savor God's wisdom. "Be, like Mary, animated by the desire for wisdom," says St. Ambrose, "this is a greater, more perfect work. May the care of the ministry not prevent the knowledge of the heavenly word. Do not rebuke and do not judge idle those whom you will see occupied with wisdom... No one reproaches Martha for her good offices; but Mary has the preference, for having chosen a better part." St. Ambrose, *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke*, Luke 10:38-42.
2. In the same commentary, St. Ambrose noted that, even in Holy Scripture, the Apostles said that they had no reason "to leave the word of God, and serve tables" (Acts 6:2), which means that they'd rather ordain deacons who could administer the sacraments and serve the needs of the faithful, rather than neglect the ministry of the word (preaching and teaching), which is the "better part" of their work.

⁵⁵ Mary and Martha lived in the town of **Bethany** (John 11:1), which is about two miles from Jerusalem. They were sisters of Lazarus (John 11:1-2), whom Christ raised back to life after having been in the grave for four days (John 11:1-53).

Christ at the Feast of Tabernacles

The Jews therefore were looking for Him at the feast, and said, “Where is He?” (John 7:11)

Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the Temple and taught. The Jews wondered, saying, “How does this man have this learning since he has never studied?” Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not My own, but His who sent Me.” (John 7:14-16)

The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)

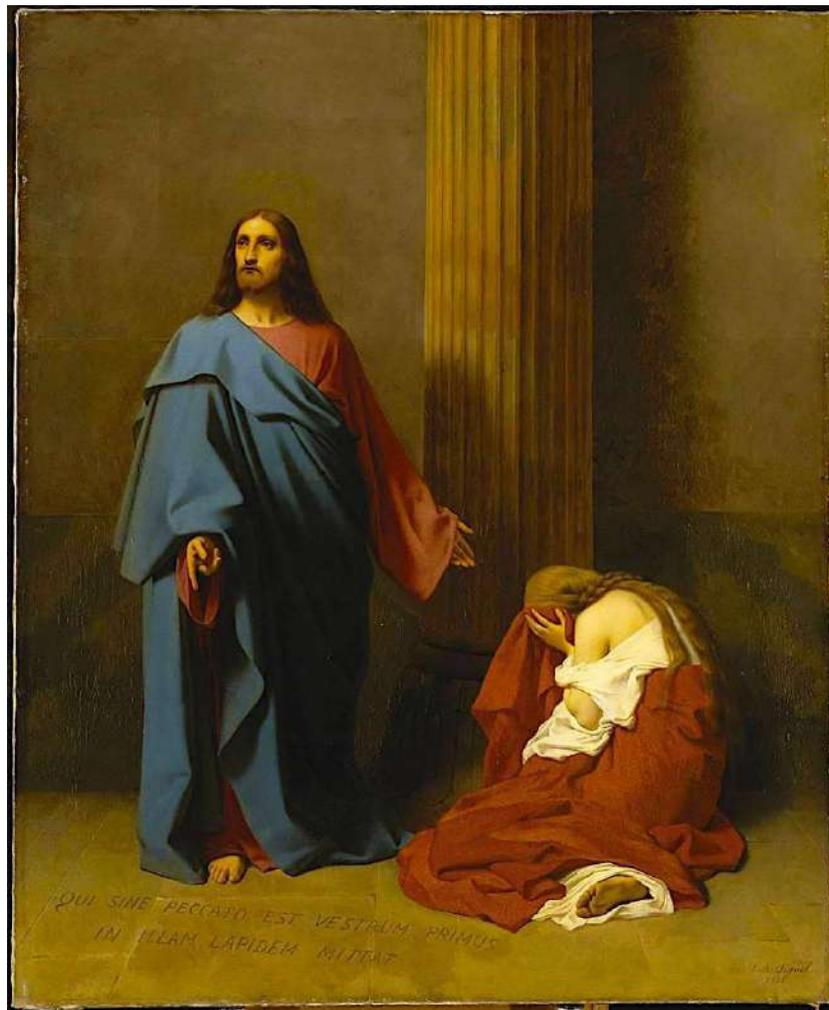


Fig 2.5.3 Christ and the Woman Caught in Adultery

Artist: Émile Signol (1804-1892)

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Jesus went to mount Olivet, and early in the morning He came again into the Temple, and all the people came to Him. He sat down and taught them. The scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery, and they set her in the middle and said to Him, “Master, this woman was caught in adultery just now. Now Moses in the law commanded us to stone such a one. But what do You say?” They said this to test Him so that they might accuse Him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger. (John 8:1-6)

When therefore they continued asking Him, He got up and said to them, “Let he who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again stooping down, He wrote on the ground. But they, hearing this, went away one by one, beginning with the eldest. Jesus alone remained, with the woman standing in the middle. (John 8:7-9)

Jesus got up and said to her, “Woman, where are those who accused you? Has no man condemned you?” She said, “No man, Lord.” Jesus said, “Neither will I condemn you. Go, and now sin no more.” (John 8:10-11)

COMMENTARY

1. The scribes and Pharisees did not bring the adulterous woman to Jesus because they were concerned with justice. They brought her to Jesus to test Him and, if He were to answer incorrectly, to find a reason for accusing Him.
2. “*Let he who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her,*” says our Lord. “This is the voice of justice,” says St. Augustine. “Let her, the sinner, be punished, but not by sinners: let the law be fulfilled, but not by the transgressors of the law. This certainly is the voice of justice by which justice, those men..., looking into themselves and finding themselves guilty, one after another all withdrew.” Saint Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 33, #5.

The Cure of the Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)

Fig 2.5.4 Cure of the Man Born Blind
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Jesus was passing by and saw a man who was blind from his birth. His disciples asked Him, “Master, did this man sin, or was it his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, *I am the light of the world.*” (John 9:1-5)

When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva and spread the clay upon the man's eyes and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is translated Sent.)" So, he went and washed, and came back able to see. The neighbors, therefore, and those who had seen him before as a beggar said, "Is this not he who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "This is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." But he said, "I am he." (John 9:6-9)

They said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered, "That man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' I went, I washed, and I see." They said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." (John 9:10-12)

They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. Now it was the Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight, but he said to them, "He put clay upon my eyes, I washed, and I see." (John 9:13-15)

Some of the Pharisees said, "This Man who does not observe the Sabbath is not from God." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such miracles?" And there was a division among them. They therefore said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him who has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." (John 9:16-17)

The Jews did not believe that the man had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, whom you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered them, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, but we do not know how he sees now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. He is of age; ask him. Let him speak for himself." His parents said these because they feared the Jews, for the Jews

had already agreed among themselves that if any man should confess Jesus to be the Christ he should be expelled from the synagogue. This is why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.” (John 9:18-23)

They again called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this Man is a sinner.” He said to them, “If He is a sinner, I do not know. I know one thing: that I had been blind and now I see.” They then said to him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” He answered them, “I have told you already, and you have heard. Why would you hear it again? Will you also become His disciples?” They therefore reviled him and said, “You be His disciple, but we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this Man, we do not know where He is from.” The man answered them, “Why, this is astonishing, that you do not know where He is from, yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if a man be a servant of God and does His will, He listens to him. *From the beginning of the world, it has not been heard that any man has opened the eyes of one born blind. Unless this man were from God, He could not do anything.*” They answered, and said to him, “You were entirely born in sin, and do you teach us?” And they cast him out. (John 9:24-34)

Jesus heard that they had cast him out. When He found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen Him, and it is He who is talking with you.” He said, “I believe, Lord.” He fell down and adored Him. Jesus said, “I have come into this world for judgment, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” Some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard this, and they said to Him, “Are we also blind?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you should have no sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.” (John 9:35-41)

The Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18)



Fig 2.5.5 The Good Shepherd
Artist: Harold Copping (1863-1932)

“Amen, amen, I say to you, he who does not enter into the sheepfold by the gate but climbs up another way, is a thief and a robber. But he that enters in by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens to him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has let his own sheep out, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. Yet they do not follow a stranger, but flee from him because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.” (John 10:1-5)

Jesus spoke this parable to them, but they did not understand what He spoke. Therefore, Jesus again said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate of the sheep. All others, as many as have come, are thieves and robbers, and the sheep do not listen to them. *I am the gate*. If any man enters in by Me, he shall be saved, and he shall go in and go out and shall find pastures. The thief does not come except to steal, to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly. *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep.*” (John 10:6-11)

“But the hireling and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf catches and scatters the sheep, and the hireling flees because he is a hireling, and cares not for the sheep. (John 10:12-13)

“I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know Me, as the Father knows Me and I know the Father, and I lay down My life for My sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also. They shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd. This is why the Father loves Me because I lay down My life, that I may take it up again. No man takes it away from Me, but I lay it down of My own choosing. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. I have received this commandment from My Father.” (John 10:14-18)

COMMENTARY

1. In this parable Christ calls Himself the gate: “*I am the gate.*” But then He also calls Himself the Shepherd: “*I am the good shepherd.*” To the extent that He is the way to the Father, He is a *gate*. To the extent that He takes care of us, He is a *Shepherd*. He calls Himself a Shepherd so that we may not suppose that being the gateway to the Father is His only job. See St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 59, John 10:2-4.
2. The parable is intended for bishops and priests who, like Christ, are supposed to be the good shepherds and pastors of souls. Sadly, many among the clergy choose to be a hireling rather than a good shepherd. What is a hireling? The hireling in the parable is someone who seeks mainly his own interest or personal gain, and has no real concern for the sheep. He runs away in the face of danger, or when the wolf comes. The hireling cleric is afraid to preach the Faith, or the teaching of the Church, or to rebuke or call out a public offender (such as a politician who promotes abortion), and would rather be silent or quiet for fear of losing the advantages of political friendship. St. Augustine deplores that some pastors and prelates in the Church work like a hireling rather than a true shepherd. “See, the wolf has caught a sheep by the throat; the devil has enticed a believer into adultery: you hold your peace — you utter no reproof. O hireling, you have seen the wolf coming and has fled! Perhaps he answers and says: See, I am here; I have not fled. You have fled, because you have been silent; you have been silent, because you have been afraid. The flight of the mind is fear. You stood with your body, you fled in your spirit, which was not the conduct of him who said, *Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit* (Col 2:5)” – St. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 46, #8.

Parables Told during the Feast of the Dedication

It was the Feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem, and it was winter. Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. The Jews therefore encircled Him and said to Him, "How long do You hold our souls in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I speak to you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in the name of My Father testify for Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep." (John 10:22-26)

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)



Fig 2.5.6 The Prodigal Son Receives His Share
Artist: Luca Giordano (1634-1705)

Jesus said this parable: “A certain man had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my inheritance.’ The father divided his estate between the two sons. (Luke 15:11-12)

“Not many days afterwards, the younger son gathered everything together and went abroad into a far country and wasted his inheritance in loose living. (Luke 15:13)



Fig 2.5.7 The Son Gambled and Wasted His Money with Bad Women

Artist: Palma il Giovane (1550-1628)

“After he had spent everything, a mighty famine came upon that country, and he began to be in want. He was forced to look for work and got hired by one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his farm to feed swine. (Luke 15:14-15)

“He would have happily filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, but no man offered them to him. Returning to his senses, he said, ‘How many hired servants in my father’s house abound with bread, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go back to my father and say to him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against you. I am not worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants.’ (Luke 15:16-19)



Fig 2.5.8 The Prodigal Son Feeding Swine

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

“Rising up, he came to his father. When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. Running to him, the prodigal fell upon his neck and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against you; I am now not worthy to be called your son.’ (Luke 15:20-21)

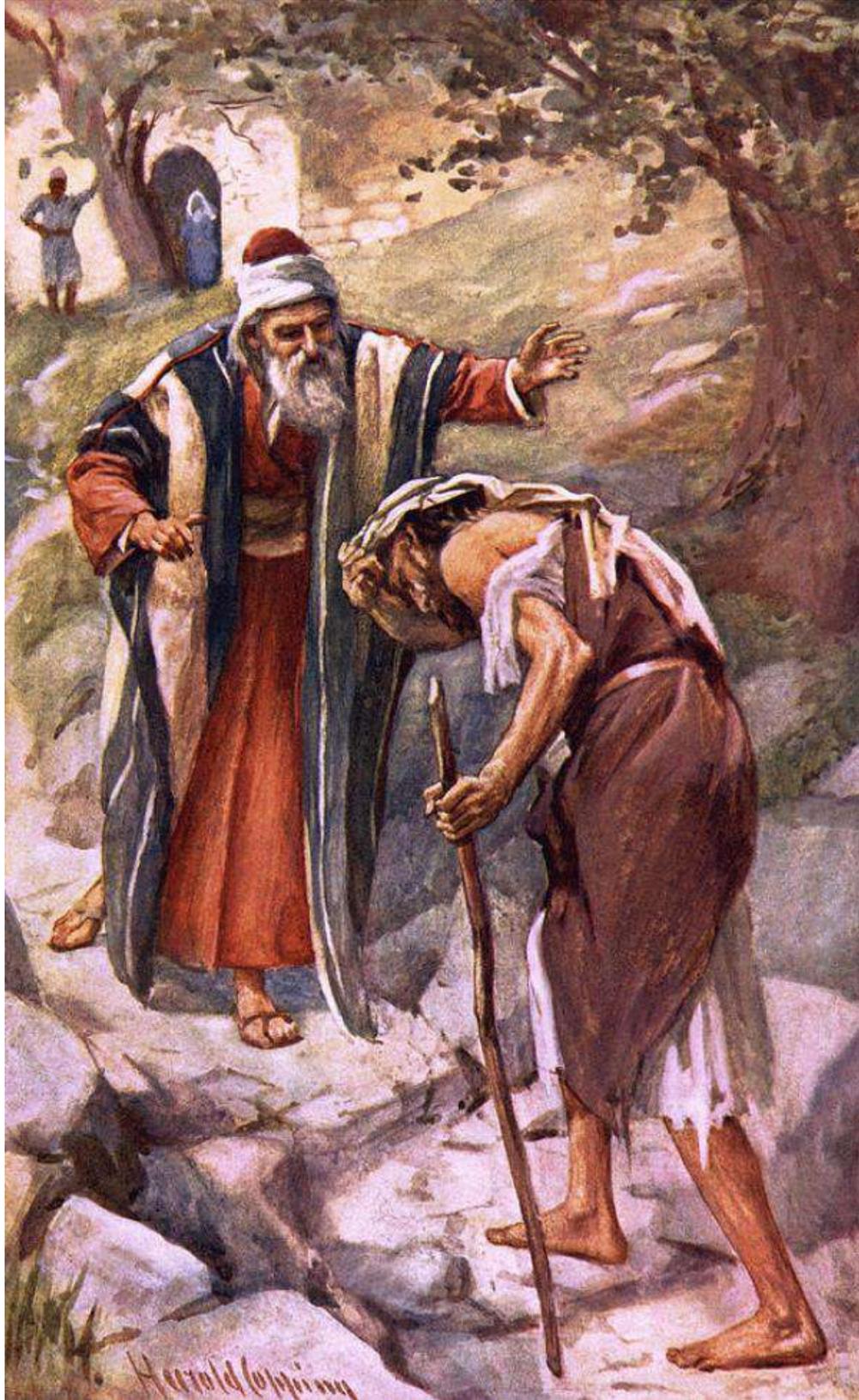


Fig 2.5.9 Return of the Prodigal Son
Artist: Harold Copping (1863-1932)

“The father said to his servants, “Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and make merry, because this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.” And they began to be merry. (Luke 15:22-24)

“Now his elder son was in the field. When he returned and drew near the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. The servant said to him, ‘Your brother has come and your father killed the fatted calf, because your brother came safe and sound.’ The elder son was angry and would not go in. His father came out and invited him. He answered his father, ‘Behold, for so many years I have served you and always obeyed you, yet you never gave me even a baby goat to celebrate with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours has come, who wasted his wealth with harlots, you kill the fatted calf for him.’ But the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all I have is yours. But it was fitting that we should celebrate and be glad, for your brother was dead and has come to life; he was lost, and has been found.’” (Luke 15:25-32)

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

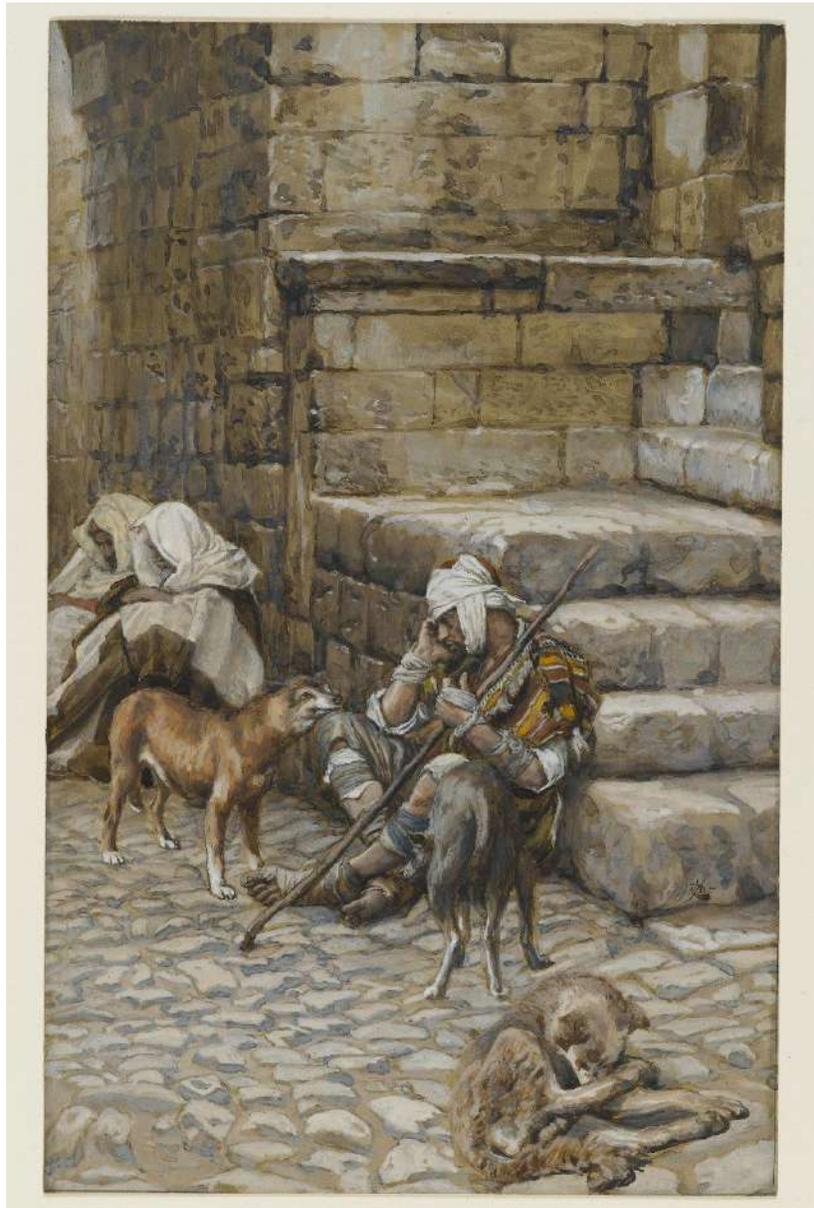


Fig 2.5.10 Poor Lazarus at the Rich Man's Door
Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. There was also a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate. He was full of sores and desired to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. No one gave them to him; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. (Luke 16:19-21)

“It came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and he was buried in hell. Lifting up his eyes when he was in torment, he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom, and he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.’ (Luke 16:22-24)



Fig 2.5.11 “Father Abraham, Have Mercy on Me and Send Lazarus”

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

“Abraham said to him, ‘Son, remember that you received good things in your lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and you are tormented. Besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great abyss, so that those who would pass from here to you cannot do so, nor can they come here from there.’ (Luke 16:25-26)

“The rich man said, ‘Then, father, I beg you that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ (Luke 16:27-28)

“Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.’ But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance.’ Abraham said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead.’” (Luke 16:29-31)

COMMENTARY

1. “*Abraham’s bosom*” refers to the “hell of the just,” where the souls of the Patriarchs and the saints resided till Christ had accomplished our redemption. The souls in Abraham’s bosom are not tormented as those in the “hell of the damned.” It is called “hell” because the souls there are deprived of the vision of God, but it is otherwise a place of rest.
2. The rich man was condemned to hell, not because he had stolen goods from other people, but because he did not share his goods to those who needed them. See Pope St. Gregory the Great, *Homily 40 on the Gospels*, #3.
3. Lazarus was not saved because he was poor; nor was the rich man condemned because he was rich. As St. Ambrose explains, not all poverty is holy, for poverty is not a virtue. Nor is wealth necessarily a sin. It is selfishness that disgraces wealth, while it is sanctity of life that renders poverty holy. See St. Ambrose of Milan, *Commentary on Luke*, Ch. 16, v. 19-31.

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)

Fig 2.5.12 The Pharisee and the Tax Collector
Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

To some who trusted in themselves as just and despised others, He also spoke this parable, “Two men went up into the temple to pray: one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed by himself thus: ‘O God, I give you thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ The tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes toward heaven, but struck his breast, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other, because everyone that exalts himself shall be humbled, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14)

Christ Blesses the Children

(Matt 19:3-15; Mark 10:2-16; Luke 18:15-17)

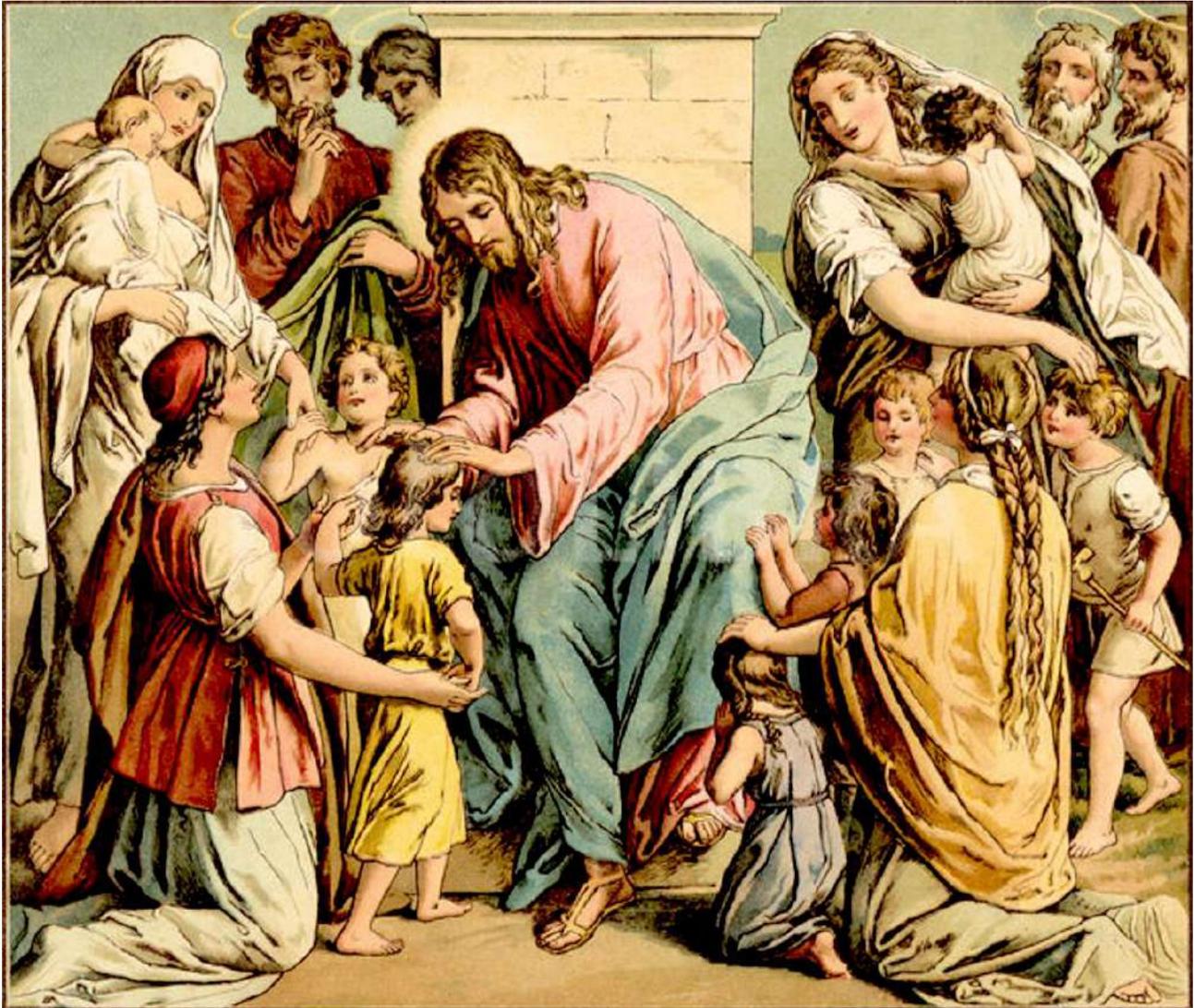


Fig 2.5.13 Christ Blesses the Children

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

They also brought infants to Jesus that He might touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus, calling them together, said, “Allow the children to come to me and do not forbid them, for to such does the Kingdom of God belong. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a child shall not enter into it.” (Luke 18:15-17)

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The Rich Young Ruler

(Matt 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30)



Fig 2.5.14 Christ and the Rich Young Ruler
Artist: Heinrich Hofmann (1824-1911)

A certain ruler asked Jesus, “Good master, what shall I do to possess everlasting life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? None is good but God alone. You know the commandments. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother.” (Luke 18:18-20)

The ruler said, “I have kept all these things from my youth.” When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “Yet one thing is wanting of you. Sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.” (Luke 18:21-22)

Having heard these things, he became sorrowful, for he was very rich. Seeing him become sorrowful, Jesus said, “How rarely shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:23-25)

They that heard it said, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus said to them, “The things that are impossible with men are possible with God.” Then Peter said, “Behold, we have left all things and have followed You.” Jesus said to them, “Amen, I say to you, there is no man that has left home or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the Kingdom of God’s sake who shall not receive much more in this present time, and everlasting life in the world to come.” (Luke 18:26-30)

COMMENTARY

1. *When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “Yet one thing is wanting of you. Sell all that you have...Then come, follow Me.”* There is one detail omitted by St. Luke, but mentioned by Saint Mark in a parallel text: “Jesus, looking on him, **loved him** and said to him, ‘You are lacking one thing. Go, sell whatever you have ... and come, follow Me.’” (Mark 10:21) Those who are called to the ministry are first loved when they are called. Those who feel that they have a vocation to the priesthood or to the religious life should keep this in mind, that their vocation itself is a sign of God’s prior love.
2. In the Gospels the “rich” are not merely those who have great possessions, but those who are *attached* to their possessions. Those who are attached to their possessions will find it difficult to enter God’s Kingdom: “How rarely shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:24).

The Raising of Lazarus – (ca. A.D. 33) (John 11:1-54)

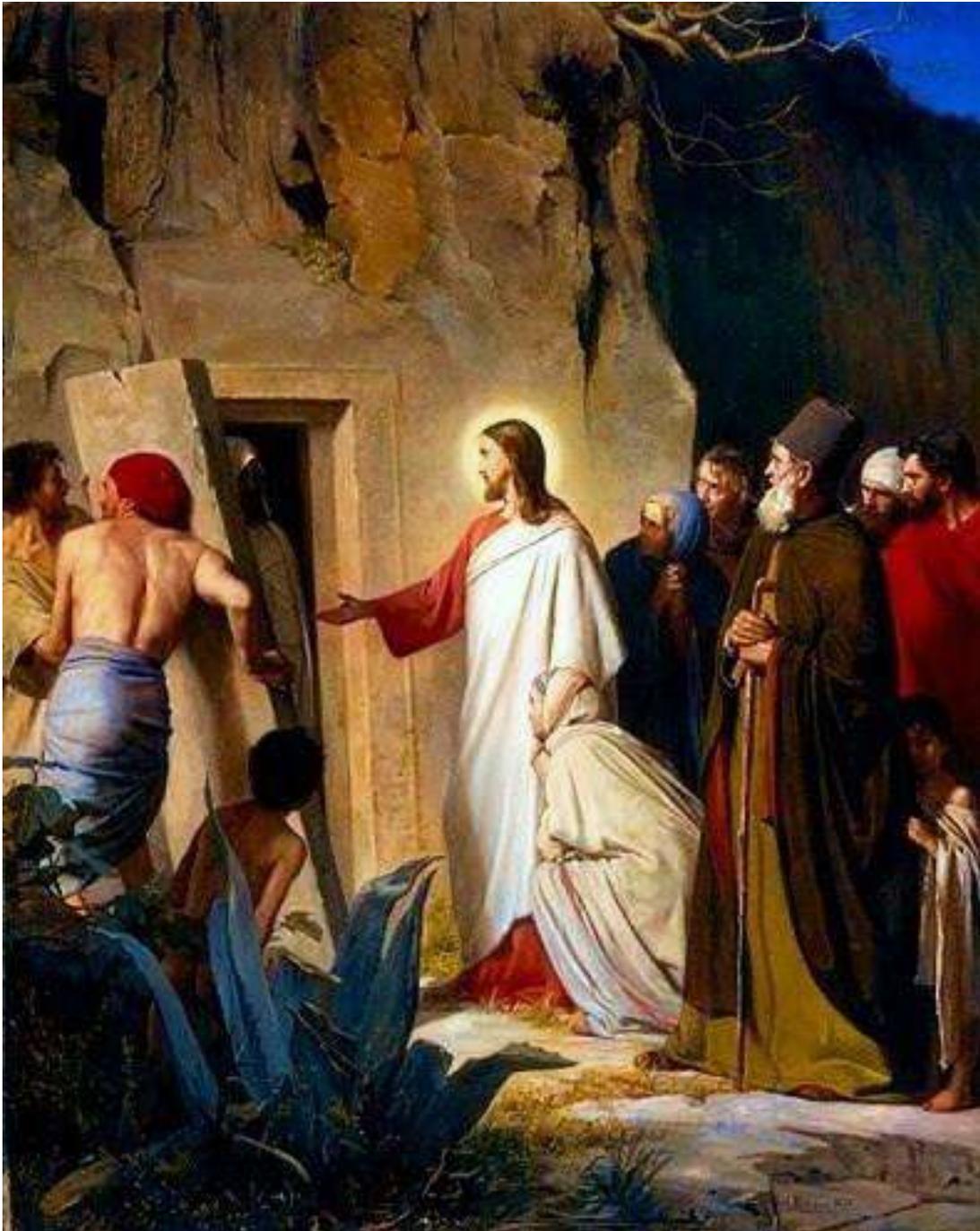


Fig 2.5.15 The Raising of Lazarus
Artist: Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890)

Now there was a certain sick man named Lazarus who lived in Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (John 11:1)

His sisters therefore sent news to Jesus, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” Jesus heard it and said to them, “This sickness is not for death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.” Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus. When He had heard that Lazarus was sick, He still remained in the same place two days. (John 11:3-6)

Then after that, He said to His disciples, “Let us go into Judea again.” The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, the Jews just now sought to stone You, and You are going there again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of the day? If a man walks in the day he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world, but if he walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not upon him.” (John 11:7-10)

He said these things, and after that He said to them, “Lazarus our friend sleeps, but I am going that I may awaken him from sleep.” His disciples therefore said, “Lord, if he sleeps, he shall do well.” But Jesus spoke of his death, and they thought that He spoke of the restfulness of sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. I am glad, for your sakes, that I was not there, that you may believe. But, let us go to him.” (John 11:11-15)

Consequently, Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.” Jesus therefore came and found that Lazarus had already been in the grave four days. (Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, nearly two miles away.) Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. Martha therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus had come, went to meet Him, but Mary sat at home. (John 11:16-20)

Martha therefore said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But I also know now that whatever You will ask of God He will give You.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother shall rise again.” Martha said to Him, “I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “*I am the resurrection and the life*; he that believes in Me, although he be dead, shall live, and everyone that lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:21-26)

She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, who has come into this world.” When she had said these things, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, “The Master has come and calls for you.” She, as soon as she heard this, quickly rose and came to Him. For Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was still in the place where Martha had met Him. When the Jews who were with Mary in the house comforting her saw Mary rise up speedily and go out, they followed her, saying, “She is going to the grave to weep there.” When Mary had come where Jesus was, she saw Him and fell down at His feet and said to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” Jesus, therefore, when He saw her weeping, and the Jews that had come with her weeping, groaned in the spirit and was troubled and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” (John 11:27-34)

And Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said, “Behold, how He loved him.” But some of them said, “Could not He that opened the eyes of the man born blind have caused that this man should not die?” Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself, came to the sepulcher. Now it was a cave, and a stone was laid over it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, “Lord, by this time he stinks, for he has been buried four days now.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe, you shall see the glory of God?” (John 11:35-40)

They therefore took the stone away, and Jesus, lifting up His eyes, said, “Father, I give You thanks that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me, but I have said it because of the people who stand around, that they may believe that You have sent Me.” When He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” (John 11:41-43)

He who had been dead immediately came out, bound feet and hands with winding bands, and his face was wrapped with a napkin. Jesus said to them, “Untie him and let him go.” Consequently, many of the Jews who had come to Mary and Martha and had seen the things that Jesus did believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things that Jesus had done. (John 11:44-46)

The chief priests and the Pharisees, therefore, gathered a council and said, “What do we do, for this Man does many miracles? If we leave Him alone, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation.” But one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing. Neither do you consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation should not perish.” This he did not speak of himself, but being the high priest of that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, yet not only for the nation, but to gather together into one the children of God that were dispersed. From that day therefore they devised to put Jesus to death. (John 11:47-53)

Because of this Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but He went into a country near the desert to a city that is called Ephraim, and He abode there with His disciples. (John 11:54)

The Anointing at Bethany

(Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-11)

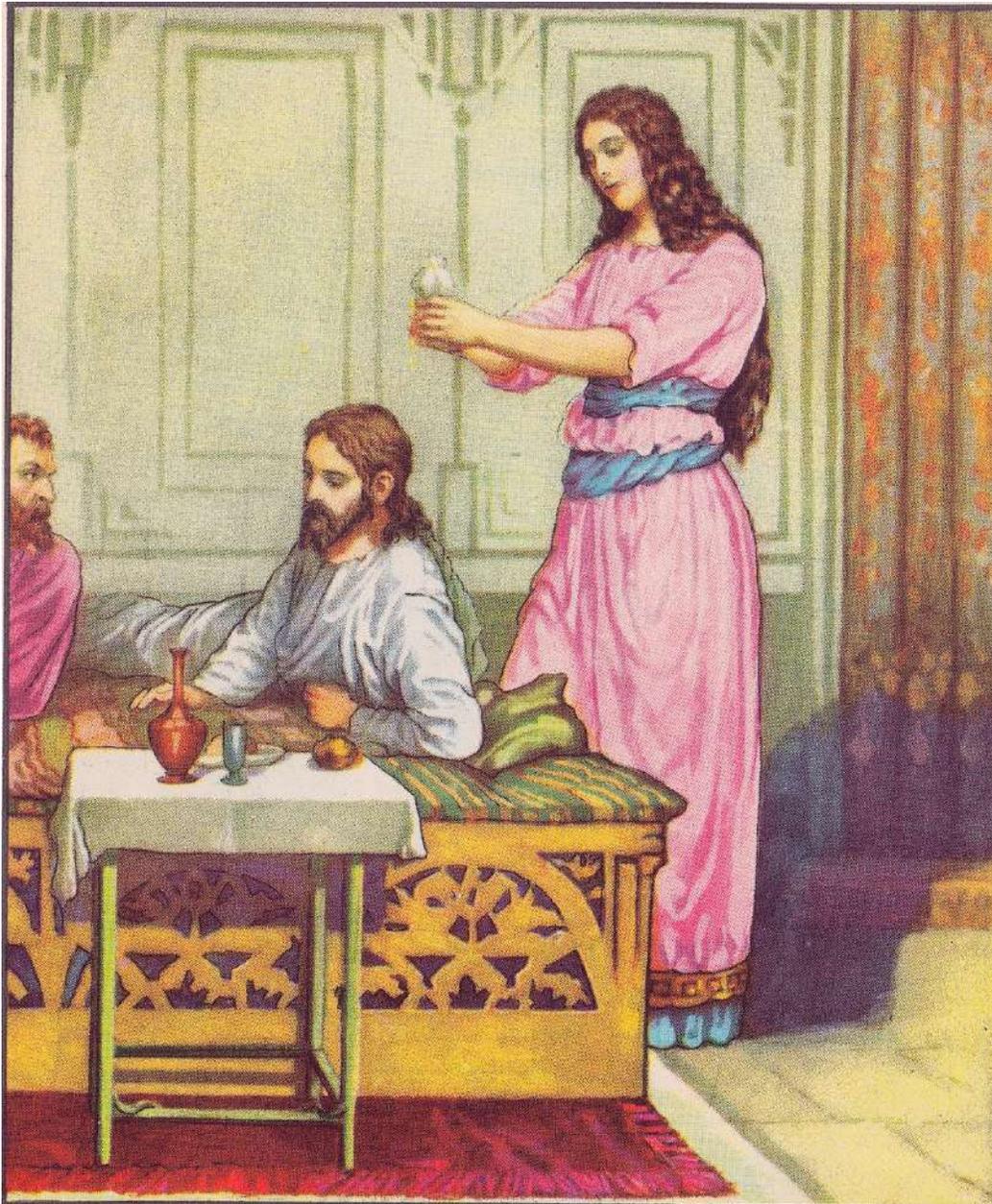


Fig 2.5.16 Mary of Bethany Anoints the Head of Jesus
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

When Jesus was in Bethany,⁵⁶ in the house of Simon the leper, there came to Him a woman having an alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it on His head as He was at table. (Matt 26:6-7)

The disciples seeing it had indignation, saying, “To what purpose is this waste? For this might have been sold for much and given to the poor.” Jesus, knowing it, said to them, “Why do you trouble this woman? For she has wrought a good work upon Me. For you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have Me. For she in pouring this ointment on My body has done it for My burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she has done shall be told for a memory of her.” (Matt 26:8-13)

COMMENTARY

1. This story, although similar to the anointing related in Luke 7:36-50, happened at the house of Simon the Leper in Bethany. Therefore, it is a different incident from the anointing given in St. Luke, which happened at the house of Simon the Pharisee in Galilee.
2. The anointing in Bethany was performed by Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, whom Christ raised from the dead. The earlier anointing in Galilee is believed to have been done by the penitent Mary Magdalene, who had since been following Christ after her conversion.
3. Matthew and Mark said that Mary of Bethany poured the precious ointment on Christ’s head, while John in his account said that she poured it on Christ’s feet (John 12:3). Of course, Mary could have poured the precious ointment on both Christ’s head and His feet, if she was doing it in preparation for Christ’s burial, since Christ had predicted his approaching passion and death (Matt 20:18-19).

⁵⁶ Christ and the twelve Apostles were on their way to Jerusalem to attend the feast of the Passover when they stopped by at Simon the Leper’s house in Bethany. Christ foretold His passion and death in Jerusalem (Matt 20:18-19; Mark 10:33-34; Luke 18:31-33).

My Free Bible History: The New Testament

PART THREE – Christ’s Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven

CHAPTER 1 CHRIST'S PASSION AND DEATH

Palm Sunday: Christ Enters Jerusalem – (ca. A.D. 33)

(Matt 21:1-11, 14-16; Mark 11:1-11a; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19)



Fig 3.1.1 Christ Enters Jerusalem on a Donkey

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

When they were coming close to Jerusalem and to Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the village that is in front of you, and immediately at your arrival there, you will find a colt tied, upon which no man has yet sat. Untie it and bring it to me. “If any man should say to you, ‘What are you doing,’ say that the Lord has need of it. And he will immediately let it come here.” (Mark 11:1-3)

Going their way, they found the colt tied in front of the gate outside, in the junction of two roads. They untied it. Some of those who stood there said to them, “What are you doing untying the colt?” They told them as Jesus had commanded. Those standing there let the colt go with them. (Mark 11:4-6)

They brought the colt to Jesus. They laid their garments on the colt, and Jesus sat upon it. Many spread their garments on the road, and others cut down boughs from the trees and strewed them on the road. Those who went in front and those who followed cried, “Hosanna; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. “Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David that comes; Hosanna in the highest.” (Mark 11:7-10)

When Jesus reached Jerusalem, the whole city was in commotion, saying, “Who is this?” The people said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.” (Matt 21:10-11)

There came to Him the blind and the lame in the temple, and Jesus healed them. The chief priests and scribes, seeing the wonderful things that Jesus did and the children crying in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” were moved with indignation, and said to Him, “Do you hear what these say?” Jesus said to them, “Yes, have you never read, ‘*Out of the mouth of infants and of babies You have perfected praise*’?”⁵⁷ (Matt 21:14-16)

⁵⁷ “Out of the mouth of infants...” – a citation from Ps 8:2.

Monday: Christ Cleanses the Temple a Second Time

(Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48)



Fig 3.1.2 Christ Overturns the Moneychangers' Tables
Image from Lds.org

They came to Jerusalem. When Jesus entered the temple, He began to cast out those who sold and bought in the temple, and He overthrew the tables of the moneychangers and the chairs of those who sold doves. He did not permit any man to carry a vessel through the Temple. Jesus taught, saying to them, “Is it not written: *My house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations?*⁵⁸ But you have made it a den of thieves.” (Mark 11:15-17)

When the chief priests and the scribes heard this, they sought how they might destroy Him. For they feared Him, because the whole crowd admired His teaching. (Mark 11:18)

⁵⁸ A reference to Isa 56:7.

Tuesday: Christ Teaches in Parables

Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13)

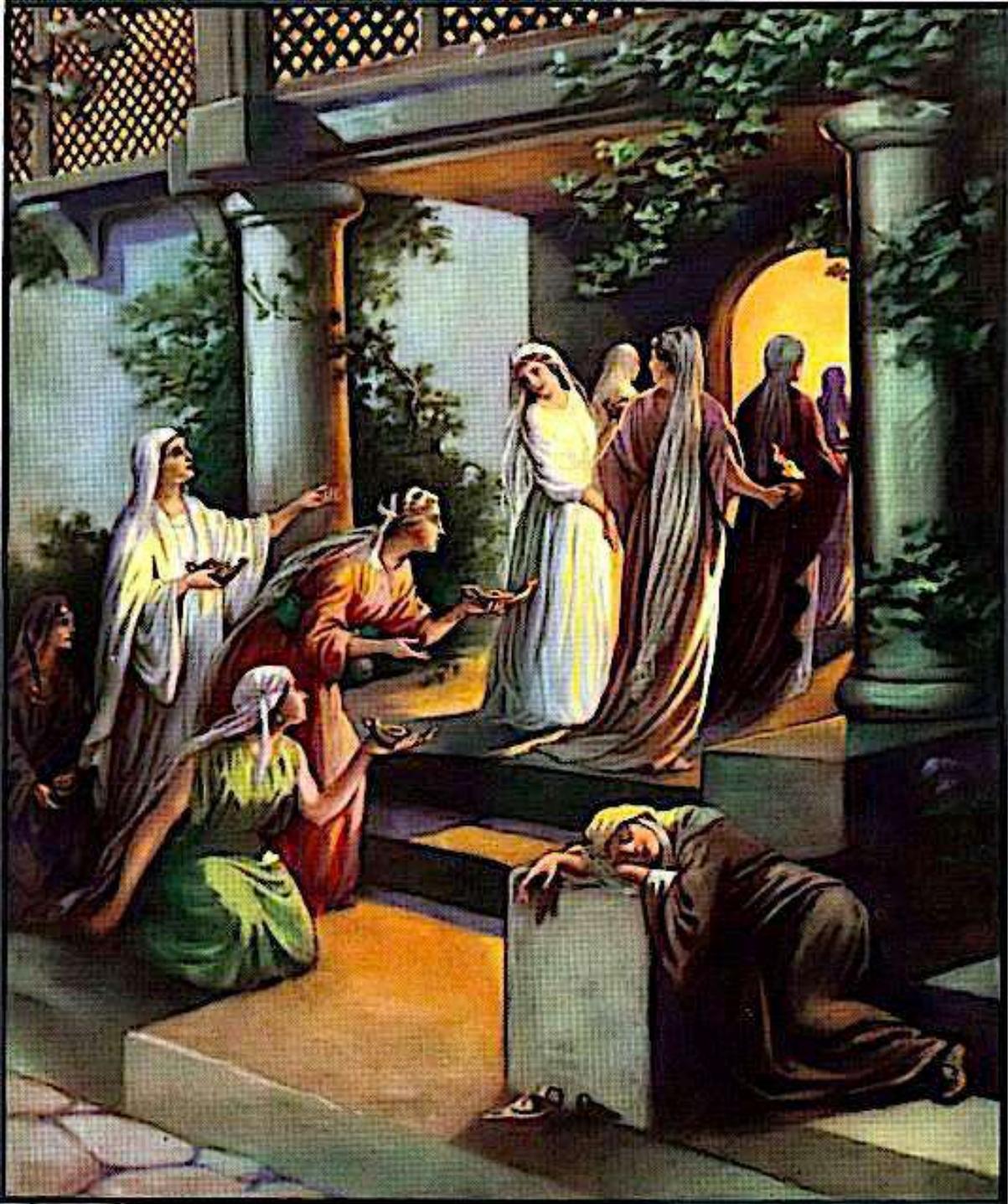


Fig 3.1.3 The Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

“The kingdom of heaven is comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. Five of them were foolish and five wise. The five foolish ones, having taken their lamps, did not take oil with them. But the wise ones took oil in their vessels with the lamps. (Matt 25:1-4)

“As the bridegroom was late in coming, they all slumbered and slept. At midnight there was a cry made: ‘Behold the bridegroom comes. Go out to meet him.’ (Matt 25:5-6)

“All those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ The wise answered, ‘There may not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers that sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ (Matt 25:7-9)

“Now while they went to buy the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage. The door was shut. But at last the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Amen I say to you, I do not know you.’ (Matt 25:10-12)

“Watch therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour.” (Matt 25:13)

COMMENTARY

1. The bridegroom represents the term of our life. We do not know the day nor the hour when our life would end. The lamp represents our Christian faith, and the oil is good works. As the lamp is fueled by oil, so faith is made alive by good works (Jas 2:17).
2. Those who are lacking in good works (oil) will be shut out of Heaven’s banquet when the end of their life (the bridegroom) unexpectedly comes.

Parable of the Talents⁵⁹ (Matt 25:14-30)

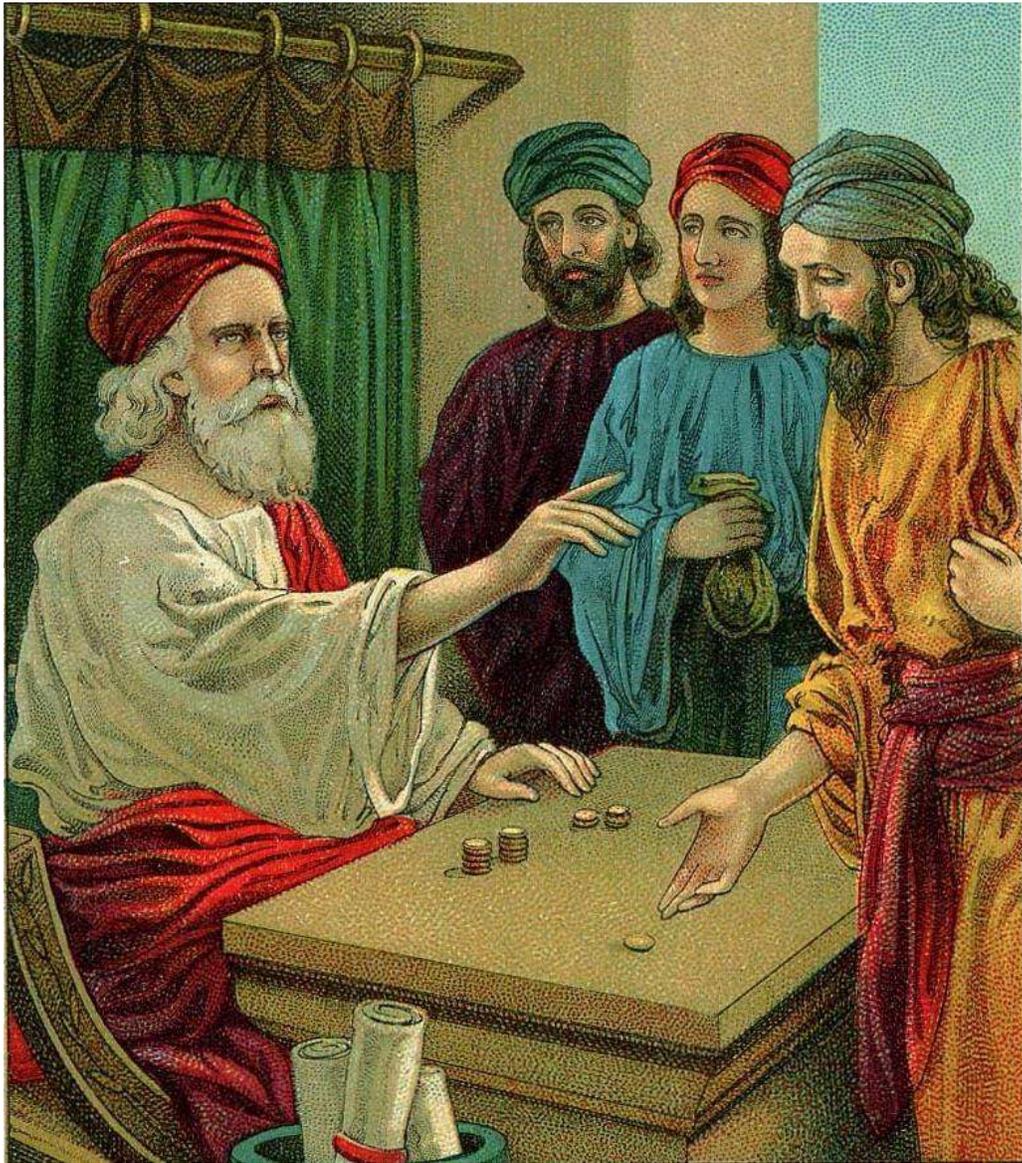


Fig 3.1.4 Parable of the Talents
Artist Unknown (public domain)

“A man going into a far country called his servants and handed over his goods to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each one according to his proper ability. Then at once he took his journey. (Matt 25:14-15)

⁵⁹ *Talents* are coins that represent huge sums of money, varying from 20 to 40 kg of gold. The modern concept of “talents” as our God-given abilities came from this parable.

“He who had received the five talents went his way and traded with them and gained another five. In a similar manner he who had received the two gained another two. But he who had received one talent went and dug into the ground and hid his lord’s money. (Matt 25:16-18)

“After a long time, the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. He who had received the five talents came forward and brought the other five talents, saying, ‘Lord, you handed five talents to me. Behold I have gained another five.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant, because you have been faithful over a few things, I will place you in charge over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ (Matt 25:19-21)

“He who had received the two talents also came forward and said, ‘Lord, you handed two talents to me. Behold I have gained two more.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant, because you have been faithful over a few things, I will place you in charge over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ (Matt 25:22-23)

“But he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I know that you are a hard man; you reap where you have not sown and gather where you have not scattered. Being afraid, I went and hid your talent in the earth. Behold here you have what is yours.’ His lord said to him, ‘Wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I have not scatter. You ought therefore to have given my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my money with interest. Take away therefore the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has more shall be given, and he will be rich, but from him who does not have, even that which he seems to have will be taken away. Cast out the unprofitable servant into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” (Matt 25:24-30)

The Parable of the Last Judgment (Matt 25:31-46)



Fig 3.1.5 The Final Judgment
Artist: Attributed to Pedro Rubiales (1511-1582)

“When the Son of Man comes in His majesty, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit upon the seat of His majesty. All nations will be gathered together before Him, and He will separate them from one another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (Matt 25:31-32)

“He will set the sheep at His right hand, and the goats at His left. Then the King will say to those at His right hand, ‘Come, blessed of my Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me food. I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink. I was a stranger, and you took Me in. Naked, and you covered Me. Sick, and you visited Me. I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ (Matt 25:33-36)

“Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? Or when did we see You a stranger and take You in? Or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick or in prison and come to visit You?’ The King will say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, as long as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me.’ (Matt 25:37-40)

“Then He will also say to those at His left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you did not give Me food. I was thirsty and you did not give Me drink. I was a stranger and you did not take Me in. Naked and you did not clothe Me. Sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ Then they also will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, as long as you did not do it to one of the least of these, neither did you do it to Me.’ (Matt 25:41-45)

“They will go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous will go into everlasting life.” (Matt 25:46)

Wednesday: The Council and the Betrayal

(Matt 26:1-5, 14-16; Mark 14:1-2, 10-11; Luke 22:1-6)

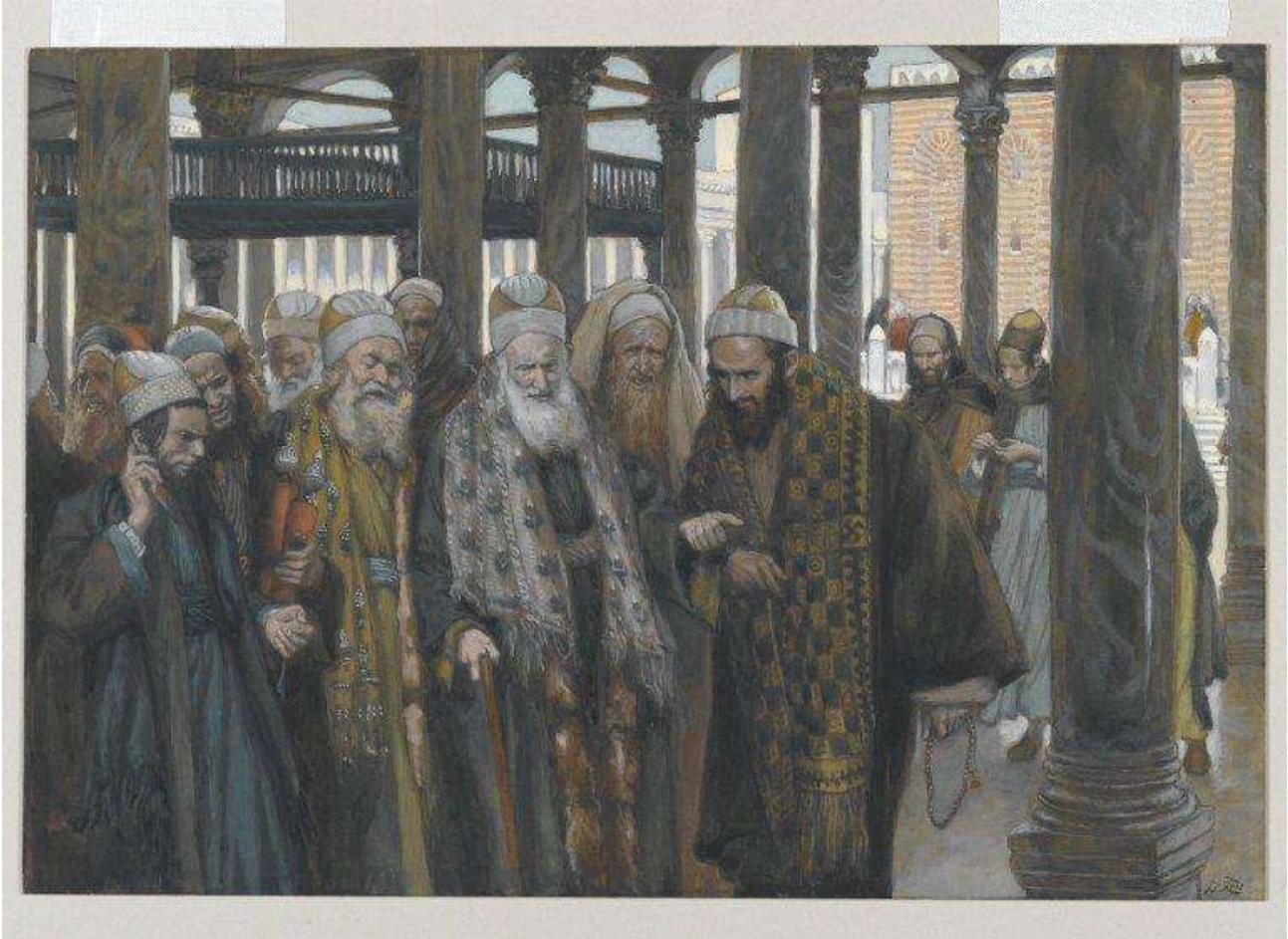


Fig 3.1.6 The Jewish Council Conspires against Jesus
Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

When Jesus had ended all these words, He said to His disciples, “You know that after two days will be the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” (Matt 26:1-2)

Then the chief priests and ancients of the people were gathered together into the court of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas. They consulted together that by treachery they might apprehend Jesus and put Him to death. But they said, “Not on the festival day, otherwise there might be a tumult among the people.” (Matt 26:3-5)

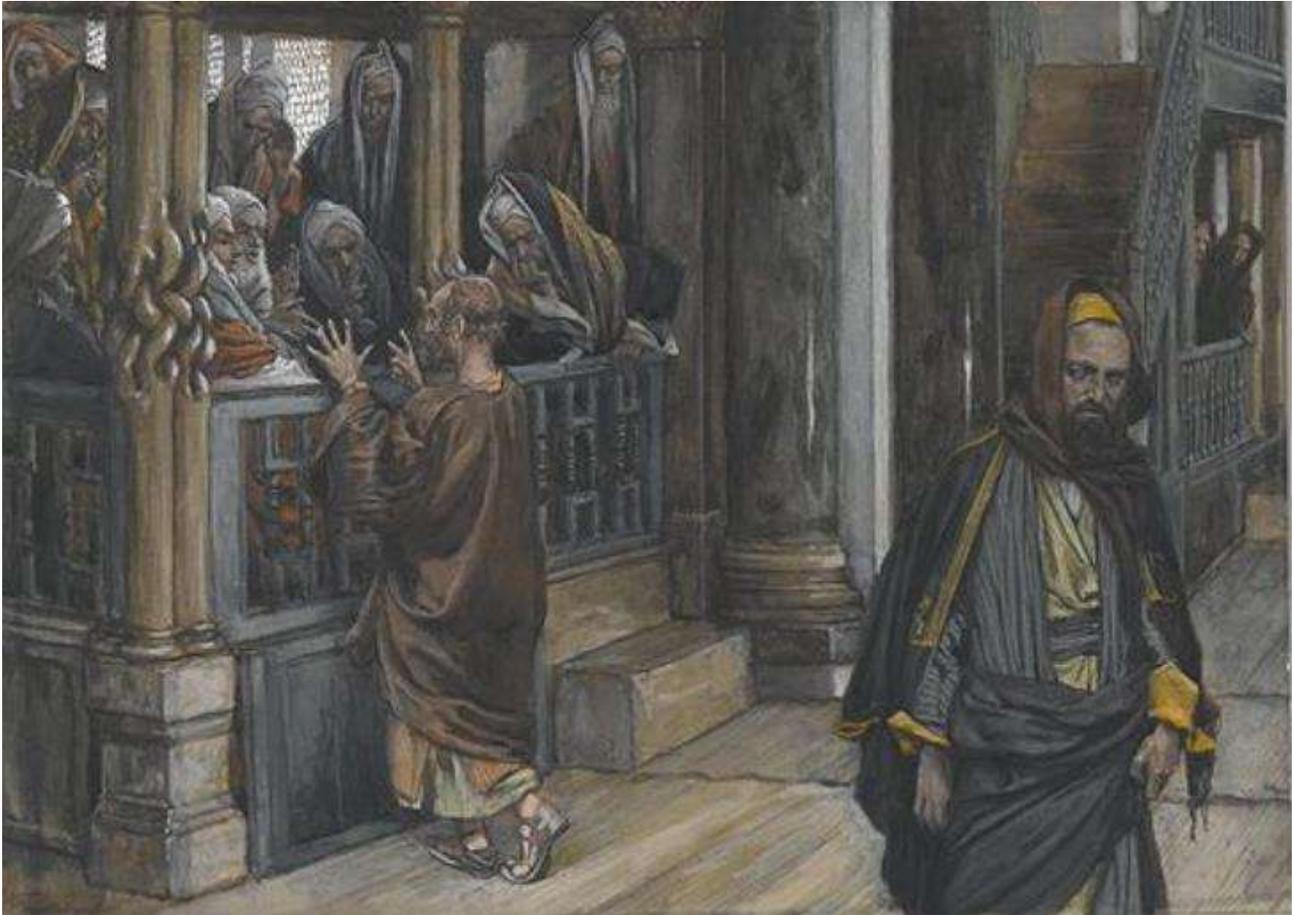


Fig 3.1.7 Judas Iscariot Sells Jesus to the Jews for Thirty Pieces of Silver

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said to them, “What will you give me to deliver Him to you?” *They paid him thirty pieces of silver.* From that time, he sought an opportunity to betray Jesus. (Matt 26:14-16)

Maundy Thursday: From the Last Supper to the Trial before Caiaphas

The Last Supper (Matt 26:17-35; Mark 14:12-31; Luke 22:7-34; John 13-17)

On the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where do You wish that we prepare for You to eat the Passover?” Jesus said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Master says, My time is near at hand; at your house I will keep the Passover with My disciples.’” The disciples did as Jesus instructed them, and they prepared the Passover. (Matt 26:17-19)

When supper was prepared (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him), knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands and that He came from God and would go to God, He rose from the supper table and laid aside His garments and, having taken a towel, girded Himself. After that, He put water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. (John 13:2-5)

He came to Simon Peter, and Peter said to Him, “Lord, do You wash my feet?” Jesus answered him, “You do not understand what I am doing now, but you will understand in the future.” Peter said to Him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you shall have no part with Me.” Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.” (John 13:6-9)

Jesus said to him, “He that is washed only needs to wash his feet, because the rest of him is clean. You are clean; but, not all of you are clean.” He knew who would betray Him, and that is why He said, “Not all of you are clean.” (John 13:10-11)

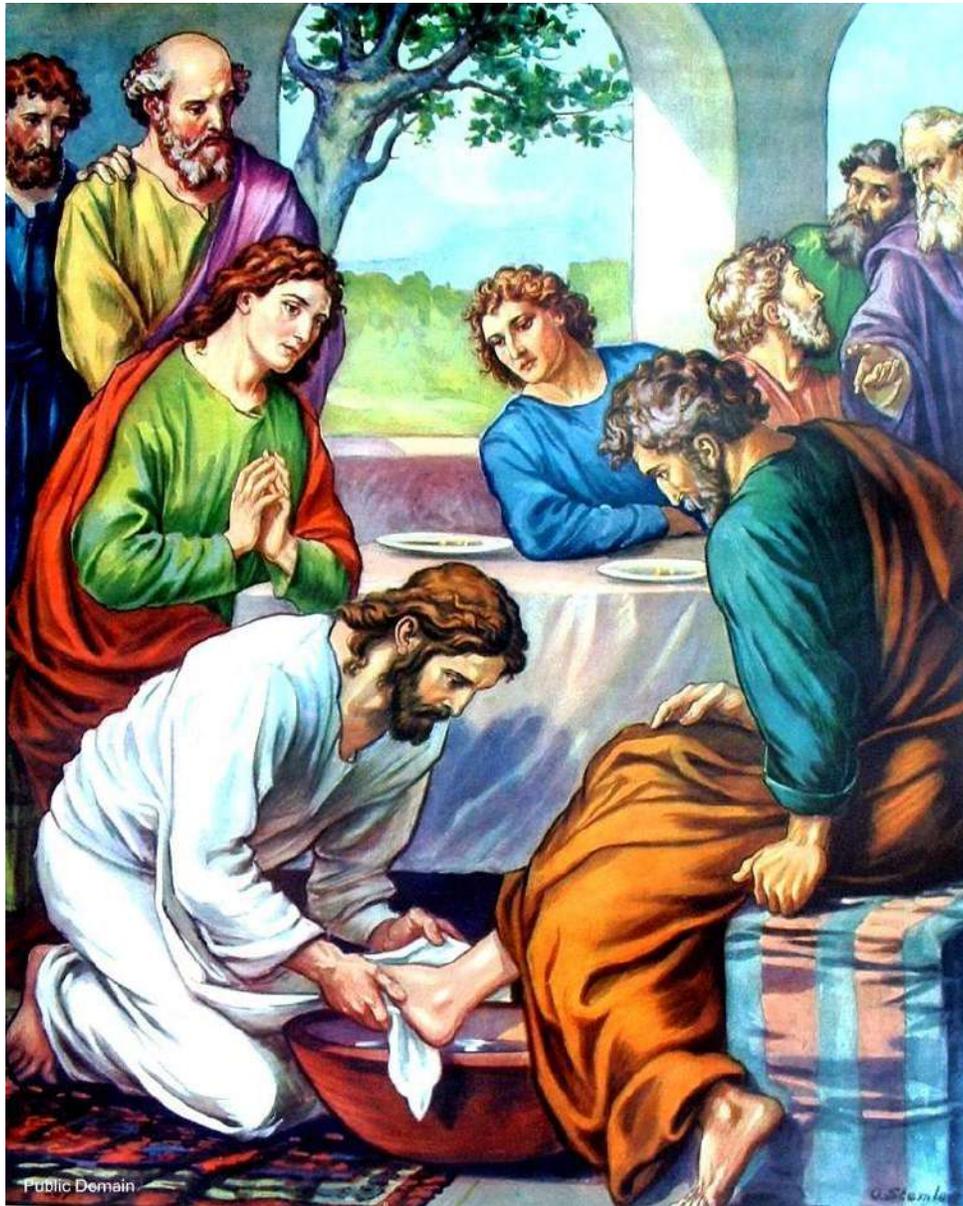


Fig 3.1.8 Christ Washes the Apostles' Feet

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Then after He had washed their feet and taken His garments, He sat down again and said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Master and Lord, and it is fitting that you say it, for so I am. If I then, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example: that as I have done to you, do also.” (John 13:12-15)

While they were eating, Jesus said, “Truly I say to you that one of you is about to betray Me.” They were very much troubled and everyone began to say, “Is it I, Lord?” But Jesus said, “He that dips his hand with Me in the dish shall betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of Him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had not been born.” (Matt 26:21-24)

Judas, who betrayed Him, said, “Is it I, Rabbi?” Jesus said to him, “You have said it.” (Matt 26:25)

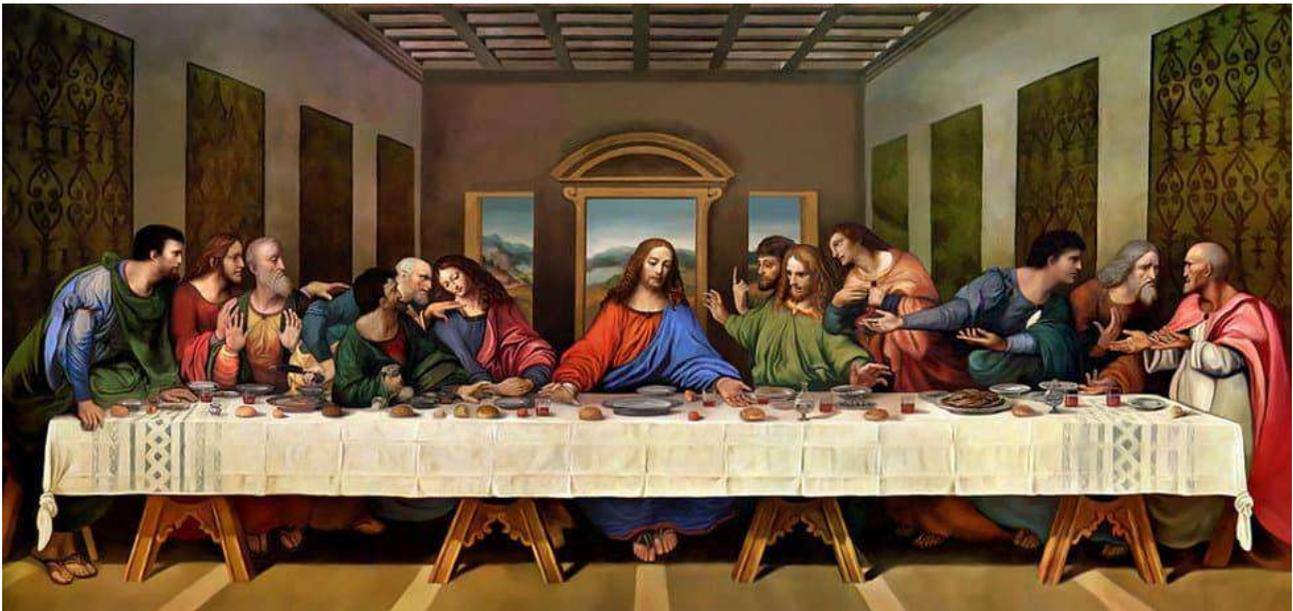


Fig 3.1.9 The Last Supper (restored)
Artist: Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

While they were at supper, Jesus took bread, blessed, broke, and gave it to His disciples and said, “*Receive and eat. This is My Body.*” (Matt 26:26)

Taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, “*Drink of this, all of you. For this is My Blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins.*” (Matt 26:27-28)

“I give you a new commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Jesus said to them, “You will all be struck with fear in My regard this night. For it is written: *I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be dispersed.*⁶⁰ But after I rise again, I will go before you into Galilee.” But Peter said to Him, “Although all be struck with fear for you, yet not I.” Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, today, even in this night, *before the cock crows twice, you shall deny Me three times.*” But Peter spoke the more forcefully, “Although I should die together with You, I will not deny You.” They all spoke in a similar manner. (Mark 14:27-31)

“I have many things to say to you yet, but you cannot bear them now. But *when the Spirit of Truth has come, He will teach you all truth.* For He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He shall hear, He shall speak, and He shall show you the things that are to come. (John 16:12-13)

Jesus spoke these things, and lifting up His eyes to Heaven, He said, “The hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You. As You have given Him power over all flesh, may He give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. *This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* (John 17:1-3)

“As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. I sanctify Myself for them, that they also may be sanctified in truth. *I pray not only for them, but also for those who through their word believe in Me, that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* (John 17:18-21)

⁶⁰ A reference to Zec 13:7.

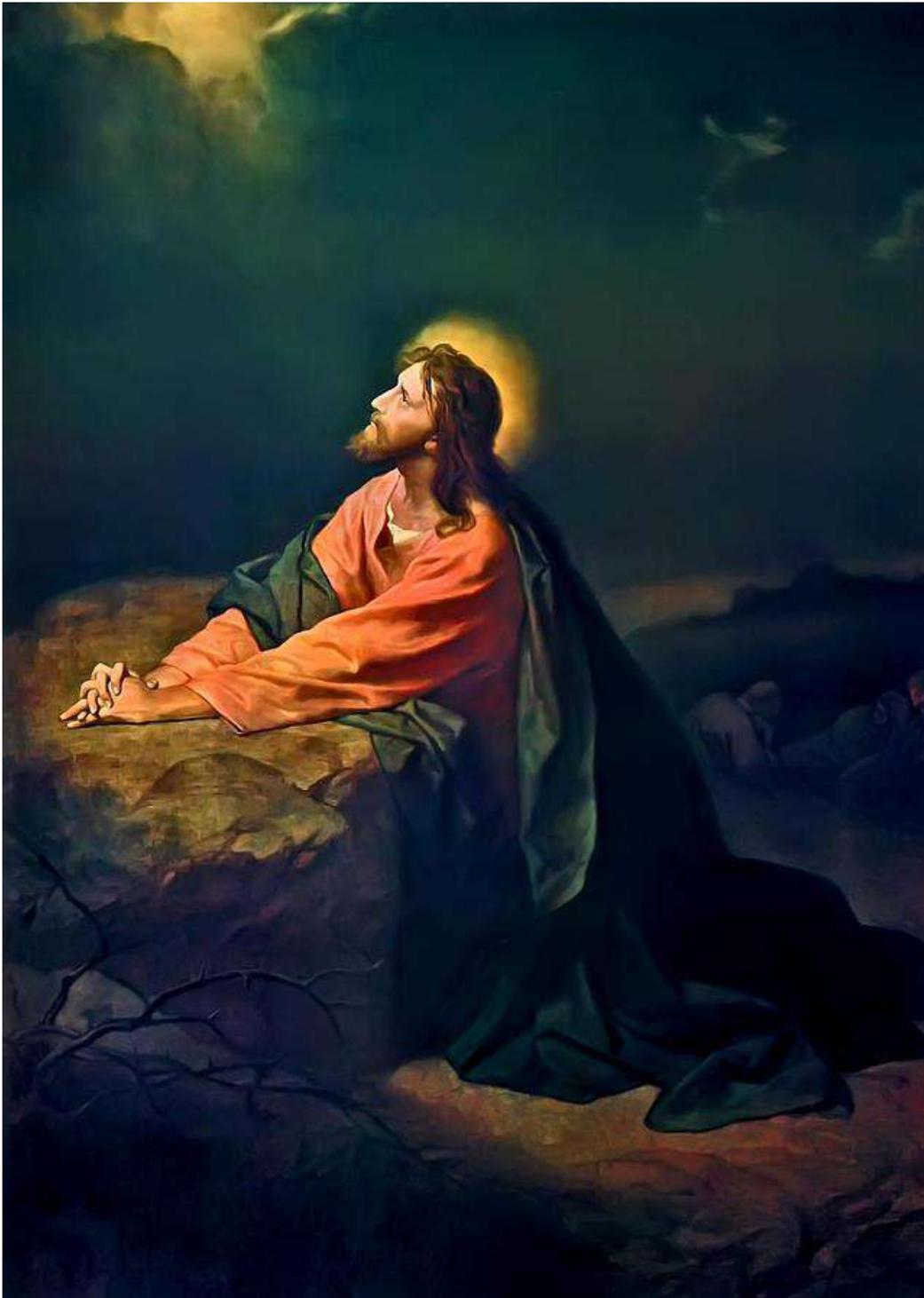
Agony in the Garden (Matt 26:30-56; Mark 14:26-52; Luke 22:39-54; John 18:1-12)

Fig 3.1.10 Christ Prays in Gethsemane⁶¹
Artist: Heinrich Hoffman (1824-1911)

⁶¹ The place in the Mount of Olives where Christ prayed is called *Gethsemane* (Mark 14:32).

Going out, He went to the Mount of Olives, according to His custom, and His disciples followed Him. He said to them, “Pray, lest you enter into temptation.” He withdrew away from them the distance of a stone’s throw, and kneeling down, He prayed, “Father, if You will, remove this chalice from Me; but yet not My will, but Yours be done.” There appeared to Him an angel from Heaven to strengthen Him. (Luke 22:39-43a)



Fig 3.1.11 An Angel Appears to Jesus to Strengthen Him

Artist: Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890)

Being in an agony, He prayed the longer. His sweat became like drops of blood trickling down upon the ground. When He rose from prayer and came to the disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. He said to them, “Why do you sleep? Arise and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.” (Luke 22:43b-46)

COMMENTARY

1. “*His sweat became like drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.*” One might think that this was some sort of miracle, but it was not. Sweating blood, also known as *hematidrosis*, is a natural but rare phenomenon experienced by those who are overcome by great grief. At the mount of Olives, Christ was in great sorrow. “My soul,” He said, “is sorrowful to the point of death” (Matt 26:38). So, this must be why this rare phenomenon happened.
2. In describing our Redeemer’s bloody sweat Saint Luke added yet another detail. He said that it was *trickling down upon the ground*. Now, this is not an insignificant detail, if we remember that the earth also was once cursed because of Adam’s sin: “Cursed is the earth in your work ..., thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you” (Genesis 3:17-18). The earth and, indeed, the whole universe, was contaminated by Adam’s sin. In a sense it needed redemption no less than Adam. Therefore, it was fitting that it, too, should be washed by the blood of the suffering Savior.
3. “*When He rose from prayer and came to the disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow.*” At a time when Judas the traitor was wide awake selling our Lord to His enemies, Christ found the Apostles asleep! In a real sense, this contrast also fittingly describes the tragedy that has fallen to many bishops and priests in the present world whose negligence has brought the present Church to a virtual collapse. Their sleepiness prevented them from safeguarding the faith, while the enemies of the Church were actively eroding it.

The Arrest of Jesus (Matt 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-12)

As He was yet speaking, a crowd came, and Judas, one of the Twelve, went ahead of them to kiss Him. Jesus said to Him, “Judas, do you betray the Son of man with a kiss?” ... Apprehending Him, they led Him to the house of the high priest, but Peter followed afar off. (Luke 22:47-48, 54)

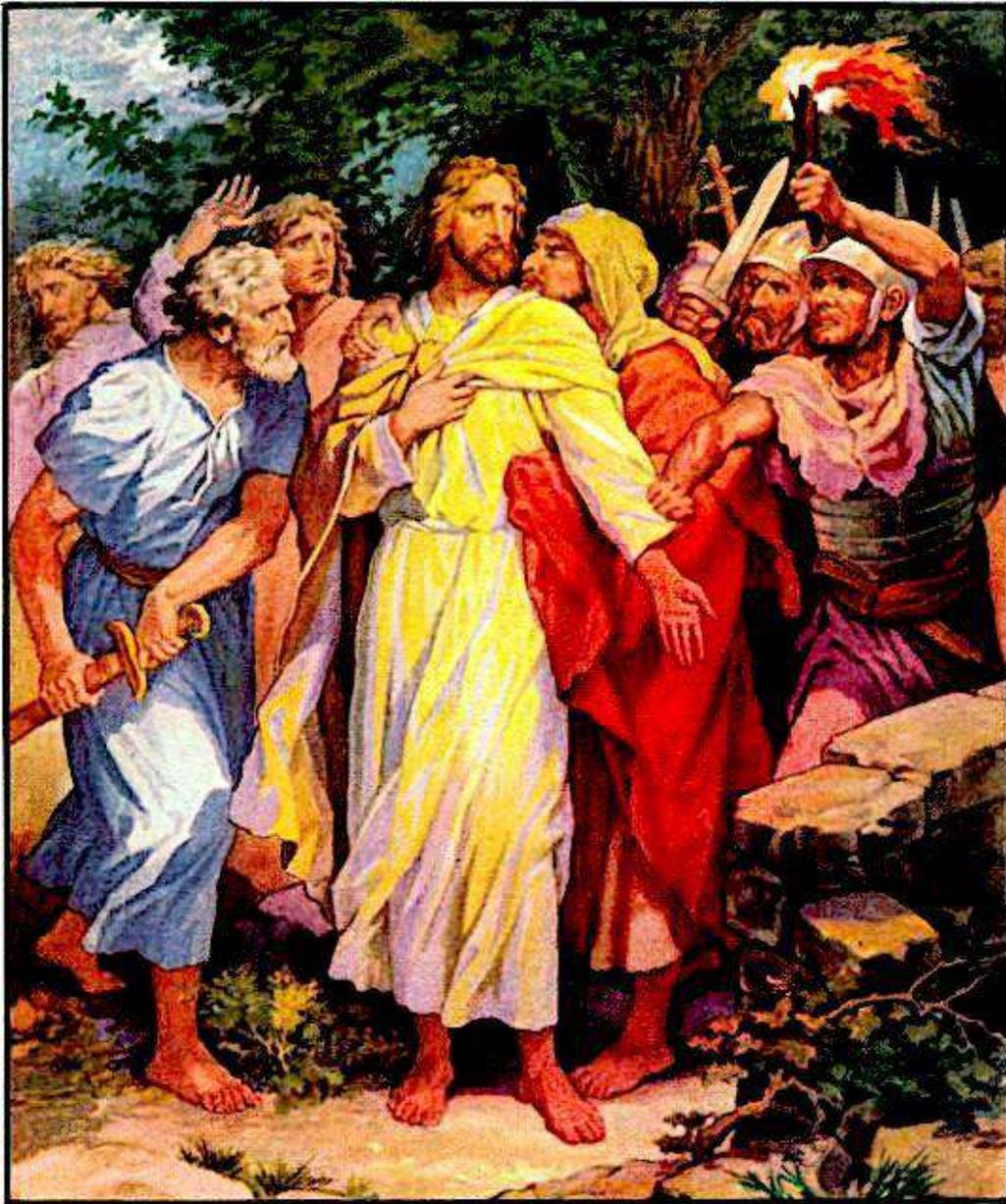


Fig 3.1.12 Judas Betrays Christ with a Kiss

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

COMMENTARY

1. “*Judas, do you betray the Son of man with a kiss?*” Oh, how painful it is to be betrayed by one whom you trusted! Great was the trust and affection that Christ had for Judas. It was he whom our Lord entrusted with the money that they received from the people (John 12:6). It was also he among a few others whom Christ explicitly addressed as His *friend* (Matt 26:50). Judas had frequently been with our Savior, which is why he among the disciples was quite capable of double-crossing Him. Reflecting on this fact, Fulton Sheen made this sarcastic remark:

“Judas had often been with Our Lord in that garden where He took His disciples to pray; he therefore knew where to find Him. The greatest betrayers are those who have been cradled in the sacred associations of Christ and His Church. They alone know where to find Christ after dark.” – Fulton Sheen, *Life of Christ* (McGraw Hill Book Co., 1958), Ch. 42, p. 341.

Christ before the High Priest (Matt 26:57-27:1; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54-71; John 18:13-27)

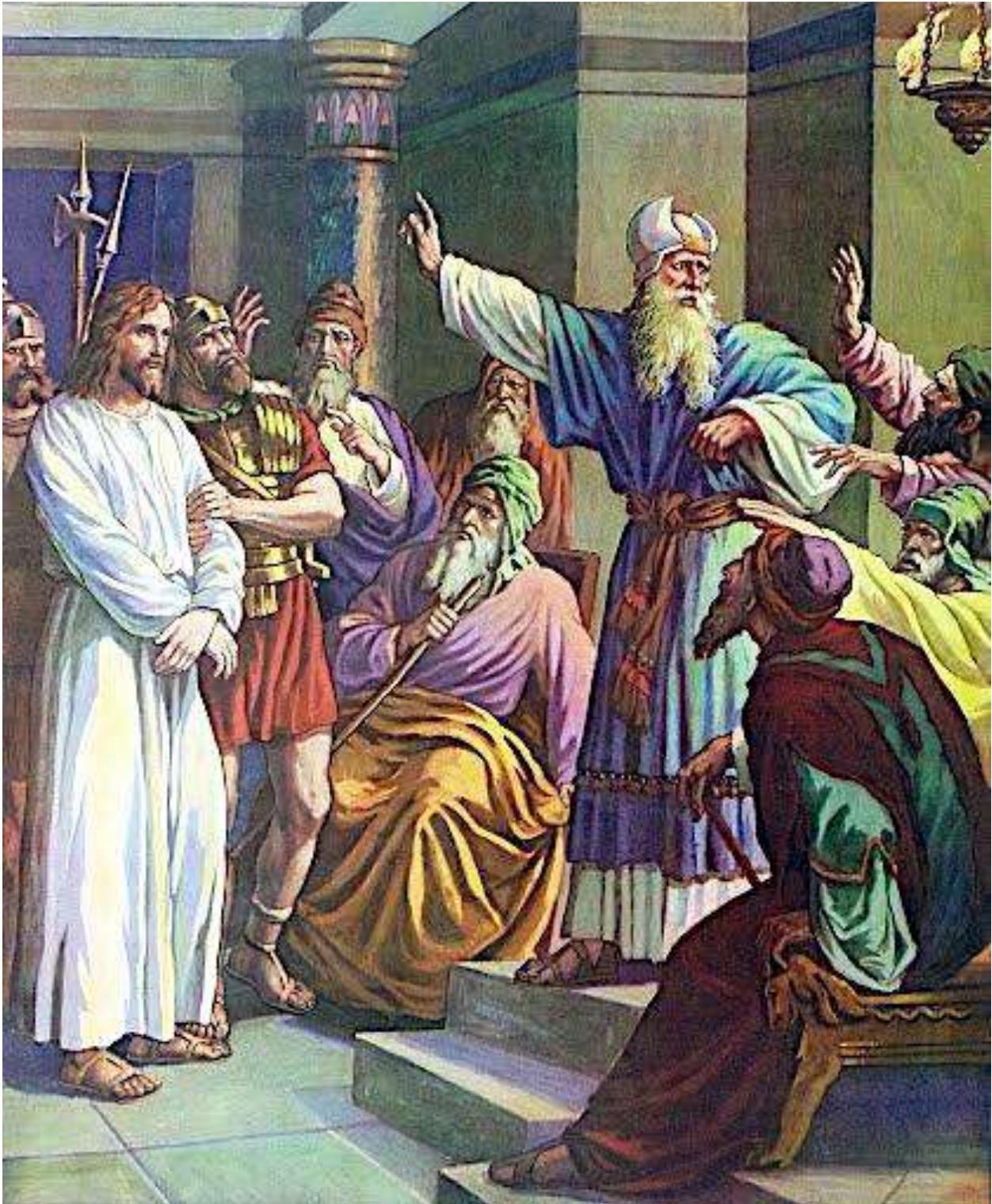


Fig 3.1.13 Christ before Caiaphas, the High Priest
Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

The chief priests and all the council sought for evidence against Jesus that they might put Him to death, and found none.⁶² For many bore false witness against Him, and their evidences were not agreeing... The high priest asked Him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed God?” Jesus said to him, “I am. You shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power of God and coming with the clouds of Heaven.” Then the high priest, rending his garments, said, “What need do we have of any further witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” They all condemned Him to be guilty of death. Some began to spit on Jesus and to cover His face and to buffet Him and to say to Him, “Prophecy.” Also, the servants struck Him with the palms of their hands. (Mark 14:55-65)

Now while Peter was in the court below, one of the maidservants of the high priest came. When she saw Peter warming himself, looking on him, she said, “You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.” But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you say.” He went out in front of the court; and the cock crowed. (Mark 14:66-68)

Again, a maidservant saw him and began to say to the bystanders, “This is one of them.” But he denied again. After a while those who stood by said again to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are also a Galilean.” But he began to curse and to swear, saying, “I know not this Man of whom you speak.” Immediately the cock crowed again. Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said to him, “Before the cock crows *twice*, you shall deny Me three times.”⁶³ Peter began to weep. (Mark 14:69-72)

⁶² Actually, this was just a mock trial, because out of envy the chief priests and Caiaphas, the high priest, already resolved to kill Jesus even before He was arrested (Matt 26:3-5; John 11:46-53).

⁶³ St. Matthew and St. Luke said, “Before the cock crow” (Mt. 26:75; Lk 22:61). But St. Mark said, “Before the cock crow twice” (Mk. 14:72). Saint Matthew and Saint Luke were both right, but Saint Mark was more complete. Saint Mark probably got this additional detail from Saint Peter himself, for he was Saint Peter’s disciple (1 Pet. 5:13).

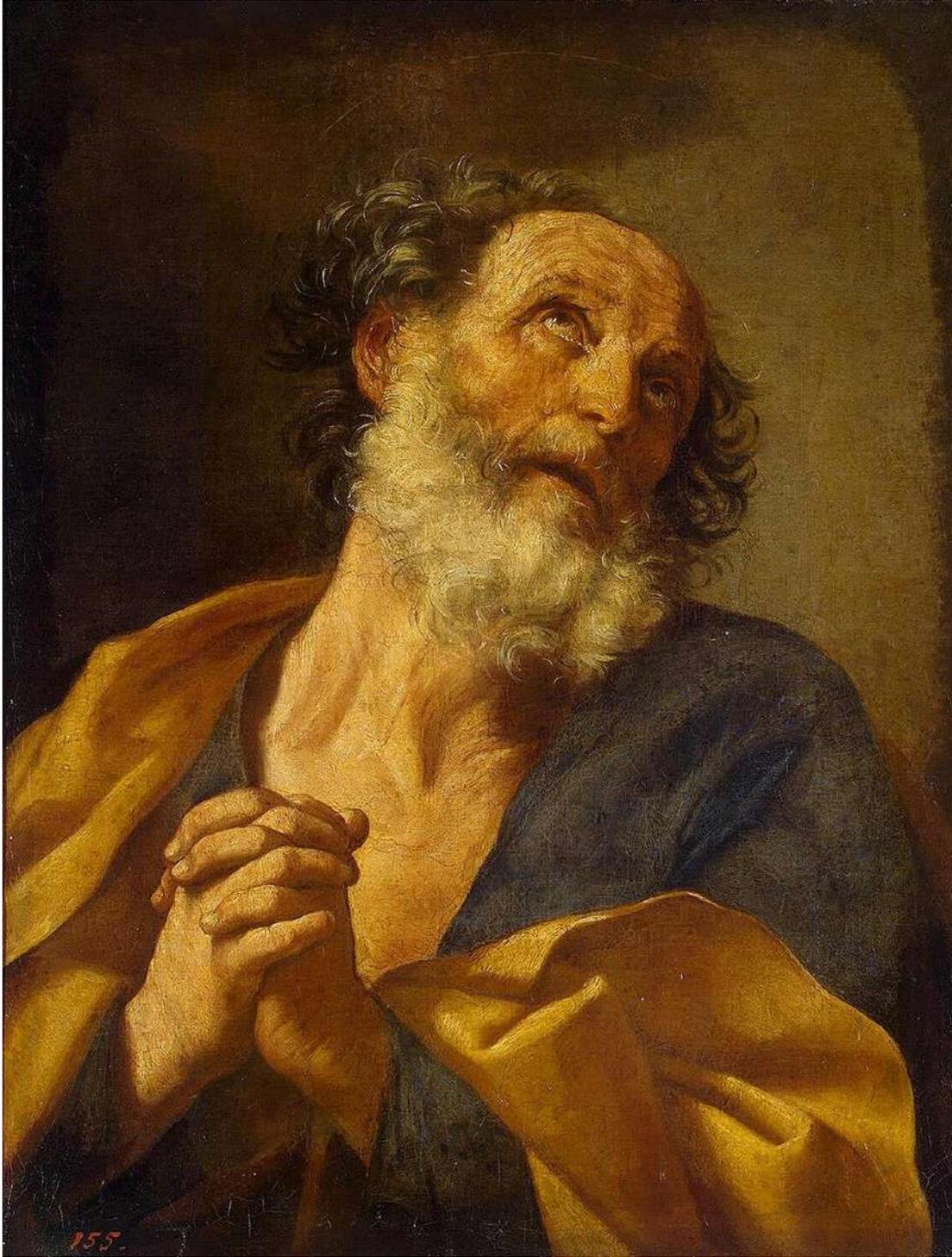


Fig 3.1.14 The Repentance of St. Peter

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

“Peter, the teacher of the world, was permitted to sin, so that having been forgiven himself he would be merciful to others” – St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on SS Peter and Elias*: PG 50, 727-8.

Now Judas, who betrayed Jesus, seeing that he was condemned, began to be sorry. He brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests, saying: “I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.” But they replied to him, “What is that to us? Look to it yourself.” Casting down the pieces of silver in the temple, Judas departed, and went and hanged himself with an halter. (Matt 27:3-5).



Fig 3.1.15 The Despair of Judas

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Good Friday – (April 3, A.D. 33)

Christ before Pilate (Matt 27:2-14; Mark 15:1b-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38)



Fig 3.1.16 Christ before Pontius Pilate
Artist: Il Tintoretto (1518-1594)

In the morning the whole crowd rose up and led Him to Pilate.⁶⁴ They accused Him, saying, “We have found this man perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar and saying that He is Christ the King.”⁶⁵ Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews? But He answered, “You have said it.” (Luke 23:1-3) Then He continued, “*My kingdom is not of this world.*”⁶⁶ If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly endeavor that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but, My kingdom is not of this world.” (John 18:36)

Pilate said to the chief priests and to the crowd, “I find no guilt in this man.” But they were more earnest, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place. But Pilate hearing Galilee, asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him away to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem in those days. (Luke 23:4-7)

Christ before Herod Antipas (Luke 23:8-11)

Herod saw Jesus and was very glad, for he had desired to see Him for a long time because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some sign wrought by Him. Herod questioned Jesus about many things, but He did not answer him anything. Meanwhile, the chief priests and the scribes stood by, earnestly accusing Him. Then Herod with his army scorned Jesus and mocked Him, putting a white garment on Him and sending Him back to Pilate. (Luke 23:8-11)

⁶⁴ Only the Roman governor had the authority to give a death sentence to a man (John 18:31). This was the reason why they had to bring Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea.

⁶⁵ To make the governor give a death sentence, they had to accuse Christ of a crime against Rome. They could not tell Pilate that the true reason was because Christ claimed to be the Son of God, because that was not a crime against Rome. So, they told Pilate that Christ claimed to be the king of the Jews and, therefore, a rival to Caesar.

⁶⁶ “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” This was to make Pilate understand that His kingdom was a spiritual, not an earthly kingdom and, therefore, not a threat to Rome.

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Back to Pilate (Matt 27:15-23; Mark 15:6-15a; Luke 23:13-22; John 18:39-40)

Calling together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, Pilate said to them, “You have presented this man to me as one that perverts the people, and behold, having examined Him before you, I find no cause in this man regarding those things in which you accuse Him.⁶⁷ Neither did Herod. For I sent you to Herod, and behold, nothing worthy of death was done to Him. I will chastise Him therefore and release Him.” (Luke 23:13-16)

Pilate was expected to release a prisoner on the feast day, but the whole crowd cried out together, saying, “Away with this man, and release Barabbas to us.” Barabbas had been cast into prison for a certain sedition made in the city and for a murder. Pilate again spoke to them, desiring to release Jesus, but they cried again, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.” (Luke 23:17-21)

He said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has this man done? I do not find any cause deserving death in Him. I will chastise Him therefore and let Him go.” (Luke 23:22)

⁶⁷ “I find no cause,” which means that Pilate did not find any reason to condemn Jesus to death. Jesus claimed to be a king, but not a rival of the Roman Emperor.

The Flagellation (or Scourging) (Matt 27:26; Mark 15:15b; John 19:1)

Pilate took Jesus and had Him scourged. (John 19:1)

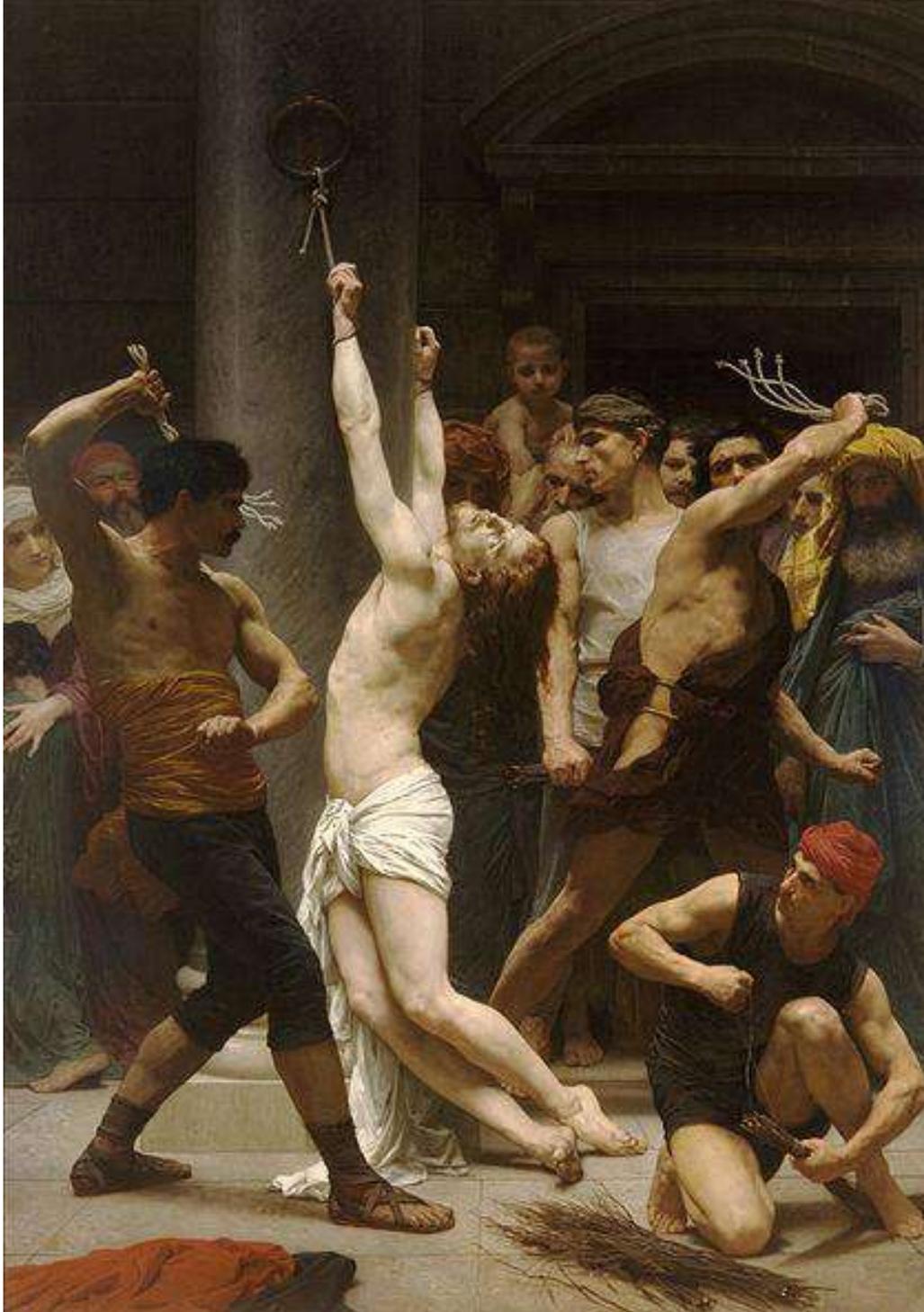


Fig 3.1.17 The Scourging

Artist: William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825-1905)

COMMENTARY

1. “*Pilate took Jesus and had Him scourged.*” The Evangelists had been quite brief in writing the passion narratives. We must therefore borrow a few details from archaeology and the visions of the mystics to gain some insight about how our Lord suffered at the hands of His executioners.
2. The Roman whip, known as the *flagrum* or the *flagellum*, consists of two or more thick leather straps or thongs with metal balls or small bones at the ends. The thongs lacerate the skin, while the balls make deep wounds into it. Among the Hebrews scourging was a popular form of punishment, too. But Hebrew law required the number of strokes to be proportionate to the gravity of the crime, and in no case should it exceed forty (Deut 25:3). To exceed this number would be brutal and inhumane. In the case of our just and merciful Lord, however, the executioners chastised Christ mercilessly, not according to Jewish custom, but after the manner of the Romans, which had no restriction on scourging criminals other than that of keeping them alive.
3. According to the mystics (Therese Neumann, Saint Bridget, etc.), Christ was quiet during the scourging. He did not cry of pain, nor did He curse His executioners for treating Him so brutally. Like a silent Lamb (Isa 53:7), He patiently suffered every wound lashed on His sacred body. Therese Neumann said that our Savior was scourged by two executioners at a time, and by a total of six executioners. Incited by the devils, the executioners mercilessly whipped Him more than 40 times. By repeated blows they added wounds to previous wounds, thus cutting deep into the muscle tissues right up to the bone itself. The executioners scourged Him first on the back, and then turned Him around and scourged Him also in front. Our Redeemer suffered wounds in His face, His shoulders, His arms, His back, His chest, His abdomen, His thighs and His legs. (These wounds may also be verified from the image at the Shroud of Turin). From the wounds caused by the executioners, precious blood gushed, shredded skin hung, and particles of His flesh fell on the floor of the praetorium. The Blessed Virgin Mary told Saint Bridget that after the scourging, Christ’s body was all bloody and torn, “so that no soundness could be found in Him.” This reminds us of Isaiah’s gruesome prophecy: “There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness... that we should be desirous of him” (Isa 53:2).

The Crowning with Thorns (Matt 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19; John 19:2-15)

The soldiers led Jesus away into the court of the palace, and they called together the whole band. They clothed Jesus with purple, and braiding a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head. They began to salute Him, “Hail, King of the Jews.” They also struck His head with a reed, and they spat on Him. Bowing their knees, they adored Him. (Mark 15:16-19)



Fig 3.1.18 The Mocking of Christ

Artist: Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890)

Pilate went out again and said to the them, “Behold, I bring Him out to you, that you may know that I find no crime in Him.” (Jesus therefore came out, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak.) Pilate said to them, “**Behold, the Man.**” (John 19:4-5)

When the chief priests and the servants had seen Him, they cried out, “Crucify Him, crucify Him.” Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no crime in Him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to the law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God.” When Pilate heard this, he feared the more. (John 19:6-8)

From then on Pilate sought to release Him. But the Jews cried out, “If you release this Man, you are not Caesar’s friend, for whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.” Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat, in the place that is called *Stone Pavement*, and in Hebrew *Gabbatha*. (John 19:12-13)

It was the preparation day for the Passover, about the sixth hour after dawn, and Pilate said to the Jews, “Behold, your king.” But they cried out, “Away with Him. Away with Him. Crucify Him.” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your king?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” (John 19:14-15)

Pilate gave the sentence that it should be as they required. (Luke 23:24)

Then therefore he delivered Him to them to be crucified. (John 19:16a)

COMMENTARY

1. *“They clothed Jesus with purple.”* Saint Matthew said that the cloak, which probably belonged to one of the soldiers, was scarlet (Matt 27:28), but Saint Mark and Saint John said that it was purple (Mark 15:17; John 19:2). The cloak was most likely scarlet, for red was the typical color of a Roman soldier’s cloak. But, because the intention of the soldiers was to mock Christ, both Saint Mark and Saint John mentioned the color as the soldiers pretended it to be: the royal purple.
2. *“If you release this Man, you are not Caesar’s friend.”* This outcry hit Pilate on his weakest side. The title, "Caesar's Friend," was an honorary title given to the legates of Rome. If Pilate was not Caesar’s friend, as the Jews would say, then he could no longer be a governor. Pilate trembled at the thought. He wanted to help Christ, but he valued his position more.
3. *“Pilate gave the sentence that it should be as they required,”* which means death. Thus did Pilate pronounce the sentence of death to the Author of Life itself.
4. *“Then therefore he delivered Him to them to be crucified.”* O Pilate! How could you do this? Many times, you stood and declared that you found this Man innocent. How then could you deliver Him into the hands of His enemies? You pretend to be the dispenser of justice, yet you passed a sentence to a Man whom you fully knew to be innocent? In the hands of the soldiers, Wisdom suffered like a fool, but in the hands of Pilate, Justice suffered injustice!
5. What did the Virgin Mary feel when she heard Pilate’s final judgment? What would any mother feel when she hears her son unjustly condemned? Of course, the Virgin Mary knew from the prophet Simeon that Christ would be misjudged. However, she thought that Christ would be misjudged merely by the ignorant. She did not expect that He would suffer injustice from an expert on jurisprudence, such as the praetor of Imperial Rome! Likewise, she thought that her Son would be hated merely by strangers, wrong-doers and criminals. She did not expect that He would be hated by His people and by Jewish priests! There were more profound sufferings in the hearts of Christ and the Virgin Mary than the physical pains caused by the crown of thorns.

The Carrying of the Cross (Matt 27:26-32; Mark 15:15b-21; Luke 23:24-32; John 19:4-17a)

After they had mocked Him, they took off the purple cloak from Him and put His own clothes on Him, and they led Him out to crucify Him. (Mark 15:20)

Bearing His own cross, He went out to the place which is called the *Place of the Skull*,⁶⁸ but in Hebrew *Golgotha*. (John 19:17)



Fig 3.1.19 The Carrying of the Cross

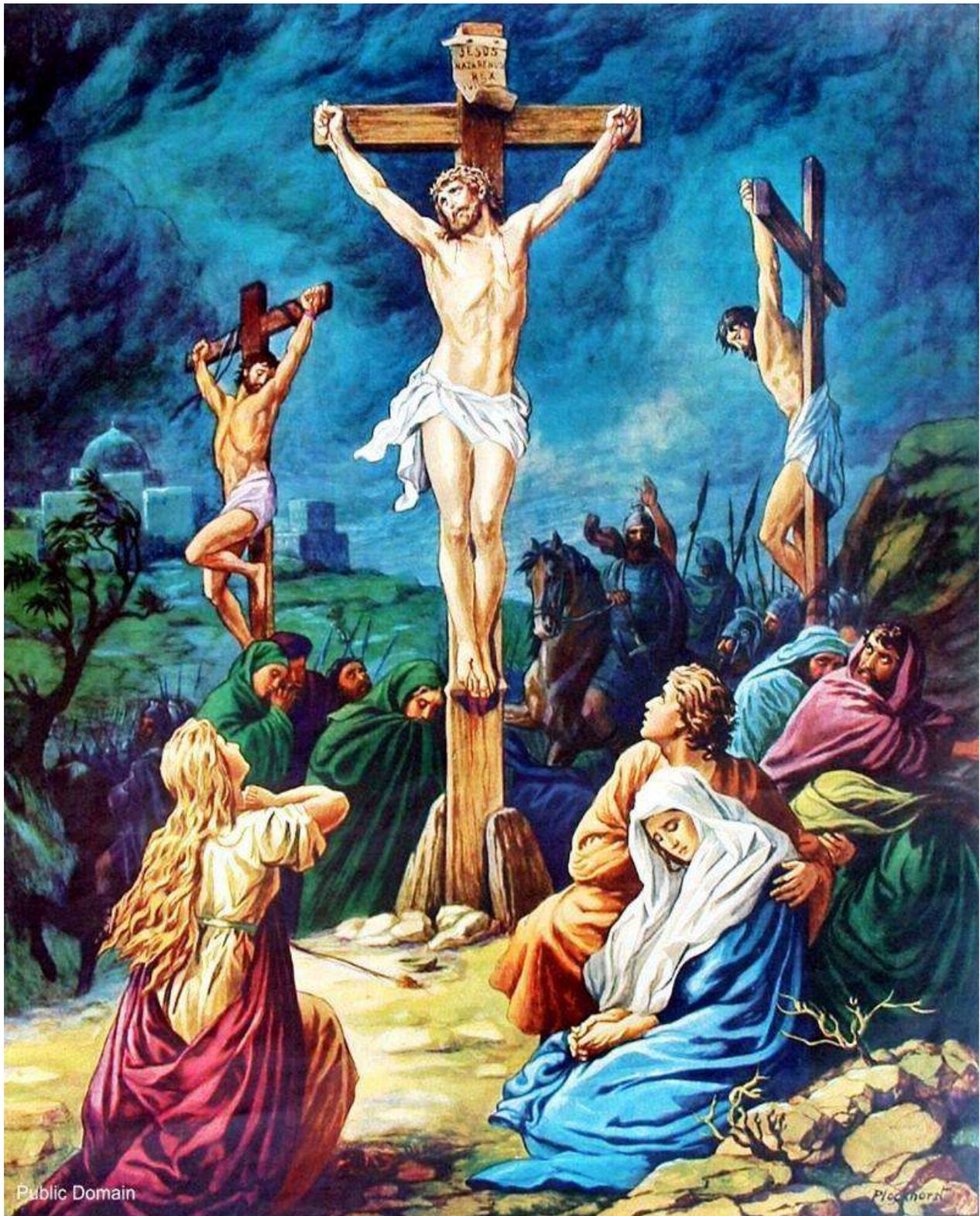
Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

⁶⁸ This place is also called **Calvary** (Matt 27:33).

As they led Jesus away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus. (Luke 23:26)

COMMENTARY

1. “*After they had mocked Him, they took off the purple cloak from Him and put His own clothes on Him...*” The condemned man usually carried his cross naked. In the case of Christ, the soldiers allowed an exception. But it was not out of mercy that the executioners permitted Christ to wear His clothes. The Venerable Mary of Agreda tells us from her visions that our Lord’s face was so bloody and disfigured that He could hardly be recognized without His clothes on. So, the executioners allowed Him to wear His clothes that the people might more easily recognize Him as the convict. See Ven. Mary of Agreda, *The Mystical City of God*, Vol. III, Book Two, Ch. 21, p. 620.
2. “*As they led Jesus away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus.*” But Saint John explicitly said that Christ also carried His cross (John 19:17). Therefore, Christ probably carried the cross at first. But when the soldiers noticed that He was getting too weak to go on further, they forced Simon to carry the cross for the remainder of the way. However, it was not out of mercy that the soldiers asked another man to carry the cross. Following Pilate’s orders, they wanted to please the Jews, who wished to see Christ crucified and remembered as a criminal. So, they asked another man to carry the cross to ensure that Christ would die, not on the way to Calvary, but on the cross.
3. According to Saints Matthew and Mark, the soldiers *forced* Simon to carry the cross of Jesus (Matt 27:32; Mark 15:21). Many of us are like Simon of Cyrene. We do not choose our cross, but are forced to carry one. Probably Simon later realized what a privilege it was to carry the cross of Christ. This, too, should be our attitude in facing the difficulties of our daily life. We must be thankful that we can share the burden of our suffering Lord.

The Crucifixion (Matt 27:33-56; Mark 15:22-41; Luke 23:33a-49; John 19:17b-37)**Fig 3.1.20 The Crucifixion**

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

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When they had come to the place which is called the Skull, they crucified Him there with the robbers, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” But dividing His garments, they cast lots. (Luke 23:33-34)

The people stood watching, and the rulers with them derided Jesus, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself, if he is the Christ, the Chosen One of God.” The soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him and offering Him vinegar and saying, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” There was also an inscription written over Him in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.” (Luke 23:35-38)

One of the robbers who was hung there reviled Him, saying, “If you are Christ, save yourself and us.” The other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, seeing that you are also under the same condemnation? We indeed have been condemned justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. But this man has done no evil.” He said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” Jesus said to him, “Amen I say to you, this day you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:39-43).

By the cross of Jesus there stood His mother and His mother’s sister, Mary of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.⁶⁹ When Jesus therefore had seen His mother and the disciple whom He loved⁷⁰ standing there, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” After that, He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” From that hour, the disciple took care of her as his own (John 19:25-27).

⁶⁹ There was actually one more woman who had been watching Christ during the crucifixion, and that was Salome (Mark 15:40). Mary of Clopas was the Virgin Mary’s half-sister, and was the same Mary who was the mother of James (the Less) and Joseph. Salome (called “Mary Salome” in medieval tradition) is believed to be also the Virgin Mary’s half-sister, and was the mother of James (the Greater) and the Apostle John – the “sons of Zebedee” (Matt 27:56).

⁷⁰ The disciple whom Jesus loved was St. John, the author of the fourth Gospel.

When the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour.⁷¹ At the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”⁷² Afterwards Jesus said, “I thirst.”⁷³ One ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, and putting it upon a reed, gave it to Jesus to drink. Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.”⁷⁴ And saying this, He gave up the spirit (Mark 15:33-37).

Behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth quaked and the rocks broke. The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had slept arose... The centurion and those who were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that had happened, were terrified, saying, “Indeed this was the Son of God” (Matt 27:51-52).

That the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, the Jews asked Pilate that the legs of the crucified be broken, so that their bodies might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first and of the other that was crucified with Jesus. But after they had come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear,⁷⁵ and immediately there came out blood and water (John 19:31-34).

⁷¹ The “sixth” hour was 12:00 noon, and the “ninth” hour was 3 P.M. The darkness from noon to 3 P.M. was probably due to an extended solar eclipse that happened that day.

⁷² Christ was reciting the opening lines of Ps. 22, which means that He was actually praying, rather than complaining to the Father.

⁷³ John 19:28.

⁷⁴ Luke 23:46.

⁷⁵ This was done to ensure that Jesus really died. Perhaps God permitted this to happen to answer those who would later doubt Christ’s resurrection from the dead.



Fig 3.1.21 The Piercing of Jesus' Side with a Spear
Artist: Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)

COMMENTARY

1. “When they had come to the place which is called the Skull, **they crucified Him there with the robbers.**” The Evangelists did not describe in detail the manner in which Christ was crucified. They did not need to, for they were writing for people who were already familiar with this method of execution. However, we in the present century must rely on archaeology and the visions of the mystics to understand the Roman crucifixion and how Christ suffered on the cross.
2. We know from Saint John that Christ was nailed through His hands and feet (John 20:24-25). But from her visions, Saint Bridget of Sweden said that besides using nails, the executioners also used ropes to support our Lord’s body on the cross. She saw the legs to be crossed, with the left foot on top of the right foot. See *Revelations of St. Bridget*, (D & J Sadlier & Co., N.Y.) Ch. XVI, p. 60.
3. Saint Thomas Aquinas described the pains suffered by Christ. The *physical pain* results from the fact that the hands and feet are most sensitive to pain. In addition, there was *internal pain* that resulted from the apprehension of something hurtful, which is called “sadness.” See *Summa Theologiae*, III, Q. 46, art. 6. The cruelties of the soldiers, the blasphemies of the priests, the incredulity of the Jews and the absence of His friends were among the causes of the sadness or interior pains suffered by Christ.
4. Christ on the cross has to rest the weight of His body on His wounds. So, the pain intensifies with every movement He makes. If He bows His head, then His arms and the ligaments in His hands stretch more. If He leans His head back, the cross pushes the thorns deeper into His head. If He leans His head on either side, the thorns pierce His shoulders (because of the sharp angle that His arms make on the cross). When He tries to support Himself by His legs to relax His arms, His feet hurt tremendously. And when He tries to relax His legs, then His hands, arms and chest writhes in pain. Eventually, as He continues to exchange one pain for another, His body eventually sags from exhaustion. Then, Christ begins to suffer an agonizingly painful muscular cramp. The muscles of the arms stiffen, the fingers of the hands close, and the nails about the median nerve multiply the pain a hundredfold. Finally, His throat dries. His pale face turns purple, then blue. His breathing becomes shorter and more difficult. Finally, He dies. See Pierre Barbet, M.D., *A Doctor at Calvary*, Ch. 12.

The Burial (Matt 27:57-66; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56b; John 19:38-42)

Fig 3.1.22 The Descent of Jesus from the Cross

Artist: Gaspar de Crayer (1584-1669)

In the evening there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for Christ's body (Matt 27:57-58). But Pilate wondered if Jesus was already dead. Sending for the centurion, he asked the centurion if Jesus was already dead. When he had understood from the centurion that it was so, Pilate gave permission to Joseph to take down the body of Jesus and bury it. Buying fine linen and taking Jesus down from the cross, Joseph wrapped Him up in the fine linen and laid Him in a sepulcher which was hewed out of a rock. Joseph rolled a stone to cover the door of the sepulcher. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus was laid (Mark 15:44-47).



Fig 3.1.23 The Wrapping of the Body of Jesus
Artist: Giovanni Battista della Rovere (1560-1627)

Holy Saturday: The Guarding of the Tomb

The next day (Saturday) the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying, “Sir, we remembered that Jesus said, while He was yet alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ Command therefore the sepulcher to be guarded until the third day, otherwise His disciples might come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’” Pilate said to them, “You have a guard. Go, guard it as you know best.” They departed and made the sepulcher secure, sealing the stone and setting guards (Matt 27:62-66).

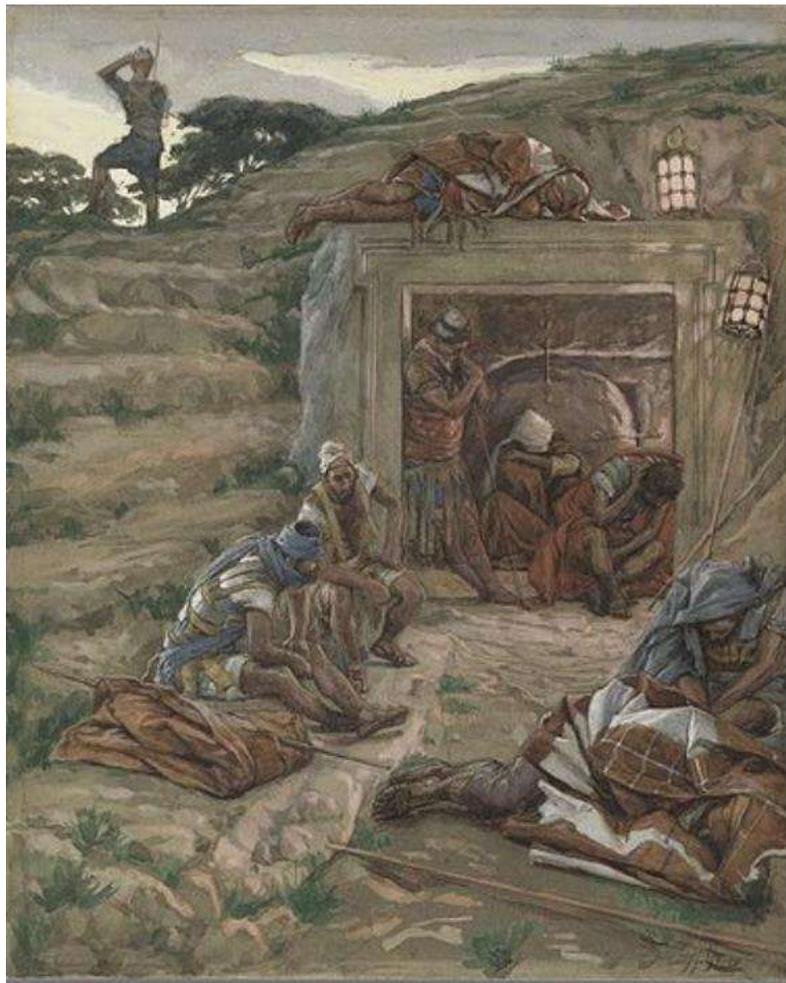


Fig 3.1.24 Guards at the Tomb

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

COMMENTARY

1. *“Command therefore the sepulcher to be guarded until the third day, otherwise His disciples might come and steal Him away.”* Did they really think that Christ’s disciples, who fled in fear when Christ was still living, would dare to steal His body after His death? Or were they perhaps apprehensive that Christ, who raised Lazarus from the dead, would rise on the third day as He promised? Oddly enough, the enemies of Christ seemed to have more faith in His words than His disciples. For the disciples did not expect His resurrection. (See #2 below.) Whereas, in asking Pilate that guards be assigned to watch the tomb, the priests and the Pharisees betrayed their secret faith in Jesus.
2. The disciples did not expect the resurrection. According to Saint Mark, the women went to the sepulcher to anoint the body (Mark 16:1). This means that they were *not* expecting Christ to rise from the dead. And when the women went to the apostles to tell them the news that Christ had risen, the Apostles did not believe them right away, for they thought that the story was just an “idle tale” (Luke 24:11).
3. What was the state of our Savior when His body laid in the tomb for three days? Was His soul in Heaven or on earth? It is an article of our Faith that, after His death, Christ “descended into hell” (from the *Apostles’ Creed*). However, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, Christ did not go to the “hell of the damned.” He went to deliver the souls of the Patriarchs and the saints who were in the “hell of the just,” waiting for their redemption. (CCC #632 and 633).

CHAPTER 2 CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN

Easter Sunday: the Resurrection

(Matt 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10)



Fig 3.2.1 An Angel Tells the Women that Christ Has Risen

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1872-1953)

At dawn of the first day of the week (that means, Sunday), Mary Magdalene and the other Mary⁷⁶ came to see the sepulcher. Before they came there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from Heaven and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him, the guards were frozen with terror and became like dead men. When the women arrived, the angel said to them, “Jesus is not here, for He has risen. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid.” (Matt 28:1-6).

⁷⁶ According to St. Mark there were three women who went to the sepulcher early that morning. They were Mary Magdalene, Mary of Clopas (the mother of James), and Mary Salome (Mark 16:1). They were the first to go to the sepulcher, but others (Joanna and others) followed (Luke 24:10).

When they had left, some of the guards went into the city and told the chief priests all the things that had happened. Being assembled together with the ancients and taking counsel, they gave a great sum of money to the soldiers and instructed them to say, “His disciples came by night and stole Him away when we were asleep.” The soldiers took the money and did as they were told, and this story was spread abroad among the Jews even to this day (Matt 28:11-15)

Coming back from the sepulcher, the women went and told what they had seen to the eleven Apostles and to the rest of the disciples. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women who told these things to the Apostles. *But these words seemed like idle tales to them*, and they did not believe them. So, Peter rose up and ran to the sepulcher⁷⁷ and, stooping down, he saw only the linen cloths laid by themselves, and he went away wondering to himself about what had come to pass (Luke 24:9-12).

COMMENTARY

1. One might wonder why the Blessed Virgin Mary was not with the women that Sunday morning. The mystics tell us the answer. Therese Neumann said that when Christ rose from the dead, He immediately went to see Mary, His mother. Since the Virgin Mary already knew that Christ had risen, there was no need for her to go back to the tomb. See Johannes Steiner, *The Visions of Therese Neumann* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1976), pp. 209-210.

⁷⁷ Actually, both Peter and John ran together (John 20:3-8). Although John got to the tomb first, he waited and allowed Peter to get in first. John went inside the tomb, too, but, like Peter, he did not see our Lord and so he believed that He had risen. Both Peter and John saw the linen cloth that was used to wrap the Lord's body, and which the Lord left inside the tomb.

2. The linen cloth that both Saints Peter and John saw in the tomb is now an important relic of the Catholic Church. For, after the resurrection an imprint of Christ's full body (front and back) was left on the cloth. The cloth, now in the possession of the Vatican, is called "The Shroud of Turin" because it has been kept in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin, Italy, since 1578.

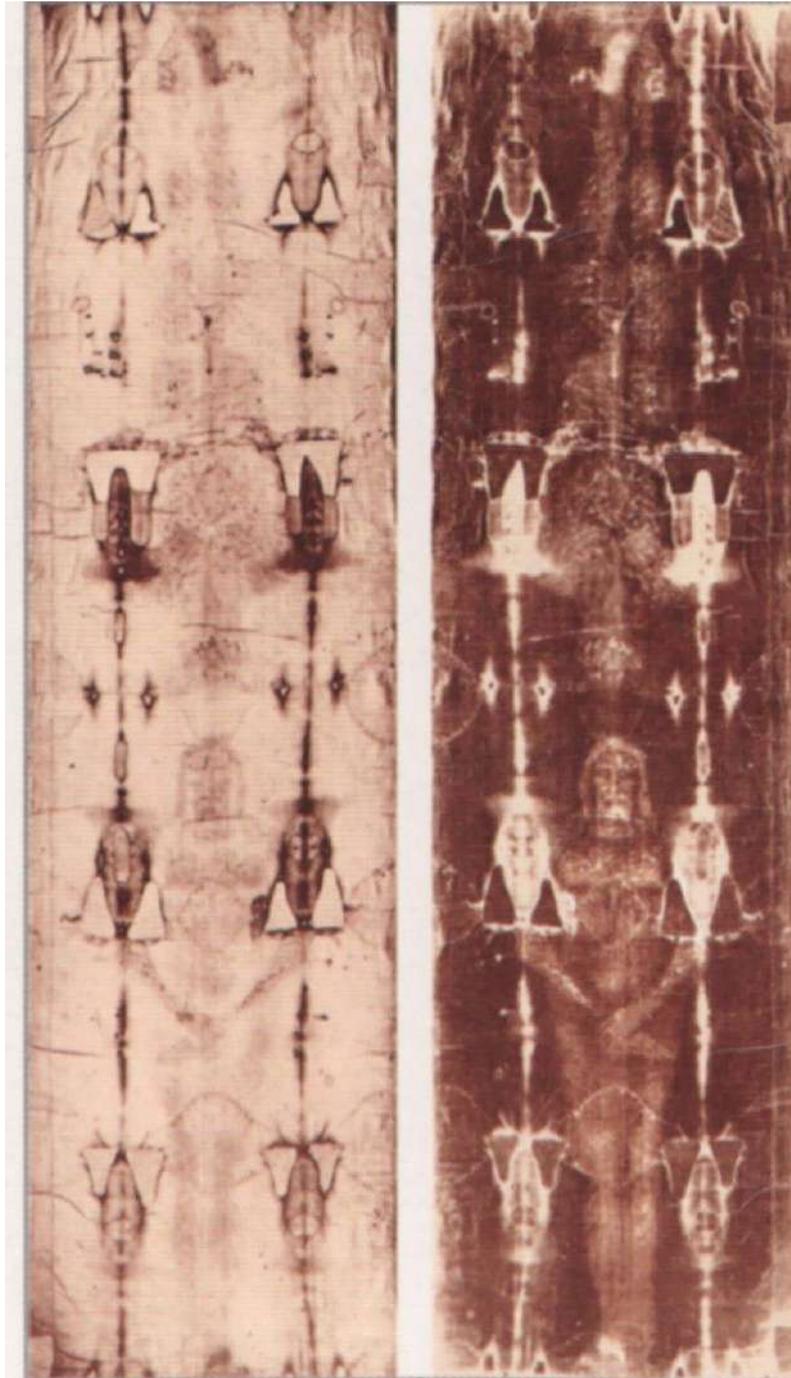


Fig 3.2.2 The Shroud of Turin

3. The picture on the left side shows the image on the Shroud as it appears to the human eye. The image is hard to see because it is actually a negative image. The picture on the right side is the negative of the one on the left. It is the negative of a negative, and is therefore a positive image, where the image could be seen more distinctly.
4. Is this relic authentic? There has been plenty of studies conducted indicating that the Holy Shroud is authentic, and that the image on the Shroud was that of Christ.
 - a. First, the image on the Shroud was a *negative* image. This type of representing an image was unknown to the entire world until the invention of photography late in the 19th century. Any artist, who would reproduce an image of Christ on the Shroud, would probably have attempted to make a positive rather than a negative image, as it could be more easily deciphered. The fact that the image on the Shroud came out as negative rather than positive – a matter that seems counter to all human wisdom – indicates powerfully that the Holy Shroud was probably not a forgery.
 - b. Second, the image on the Shroud was probably that of Christ. The details shown on the image perfectly fit the descriptions of the passion given in the Gospels. And, although crucifixion was a common form of punishment during the time of Christ, He was the only one on record who was crowned with thorns. The image on the Shroud showed wounds on the head, not just on the hands and feet. Also, most criminals were given the death blow by breaking their legs rather than thrusting a lance on their side. Most of them were tied with a rope rather than nailed on the hands and feet. The wounds on the head, the shoulder (from carrying the cross), the knees (when He fell three times), the side (from the spear), the hands and feet (from the nails), the body, arms and legs (due to the scourging) all point to the kind of torture imposed to only one man known in history – that was our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the image on the Shroud was most probably that of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ Appears to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18)

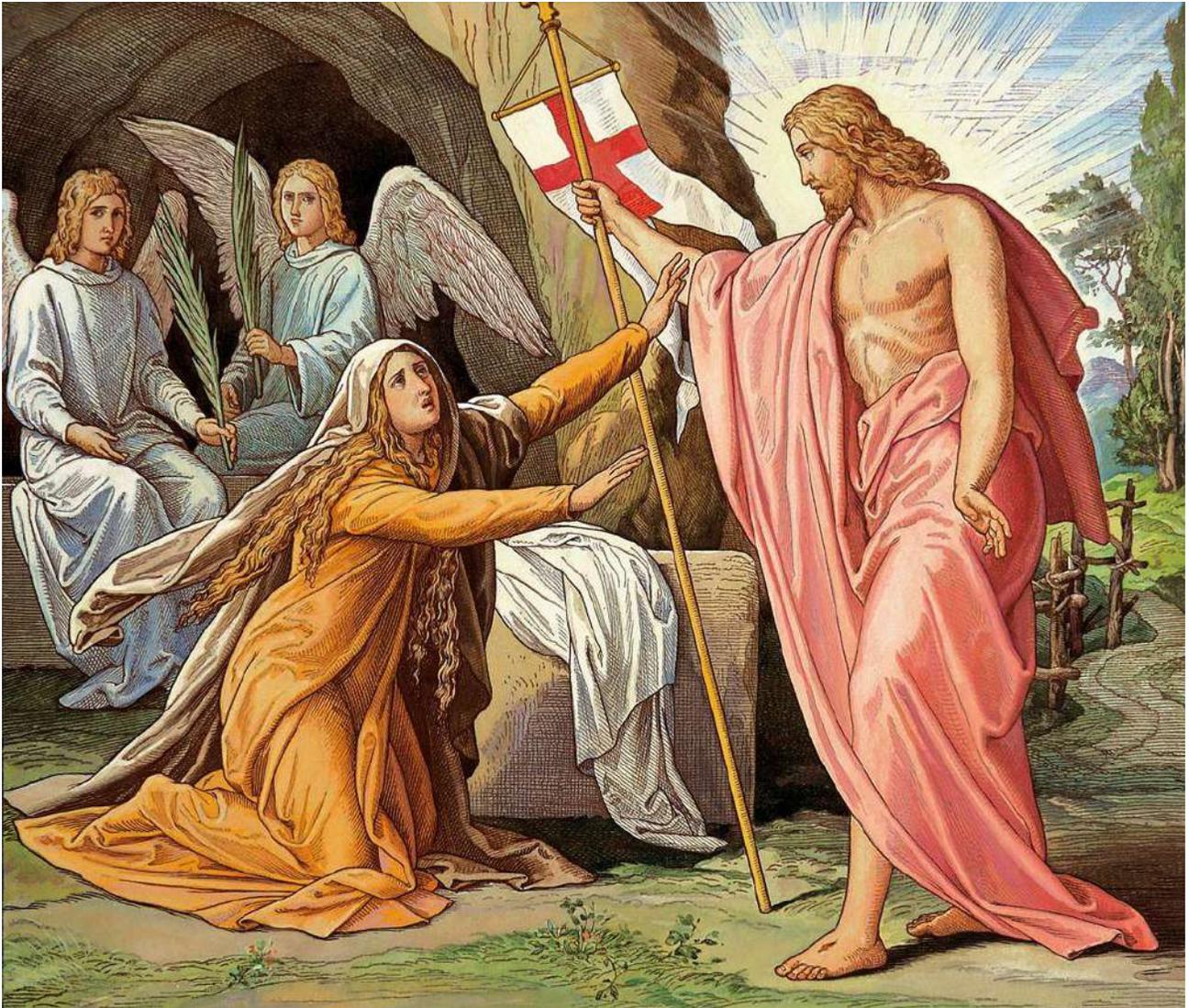


Fig 3.2.3 The Risen Christ Appears to Mary Magdalene

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Mary stood weeping outside the sepulcher. As she was weeping, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher, and saw two angels in white, one sitting at the head and one at the feet of where the body of Jesus had been laid. (John 20:11-12)

They said to her, “Woman, why do you weep?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. (John 20:13-14)

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?” She thought that He was the gardener and said to Him, “Sir, if You have taken Him from here, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni,” which means Master. (John 20:15-16)

Jesus said to her, “Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father. But go to My brothers and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God.’” (John 20:17)

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples, “I have seen the Lord, and these things He said to me.” (John 20:18)

COMMENTARY

1. Although Saint Mary Magdalene was among the first women who went to the sepulcher to embalm our Lord’s body, she did not enter the tomb with the other women. Rather, she ran immediately to Saint Peter and Saint John when she saw the stone had been rolled from it (John 20:1-2). Not having spoken to the angel or the angels yet, she reported that Christ’s body was taken away.
2. However, Saint Mary Magdalen went back to the sepulcher a second time (John 20:11-18). This time she looked into the tomb and saw two angels who then spoke to her. But while they were still speaking, she turned back and saw Christ behind her. Saint John Chrysostom explains that Mary Magdalene probably perceived from their gestures that the angels saw someone behind her, which is why she suddenly turned back without waiting for the angels to answer her question. See *Homily 86 on the Gospel of St. John*, John 20, verse 14.

Christ Appears to the Disciples at Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-35)

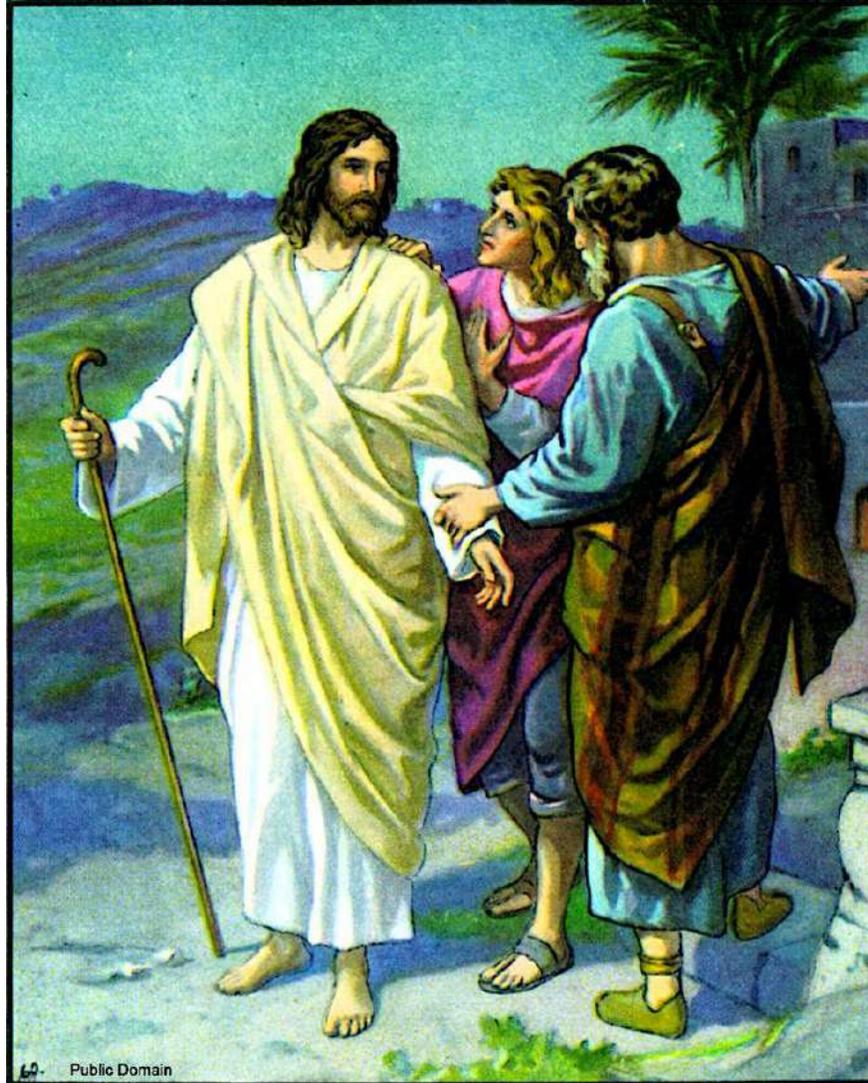


Fig 3.2.4 “Stay with Us, for the Day is Now Far Spent.”

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

That same day two of the disciples went to a town named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. They talked together about all these things which had happened. While they talked and reasoned among themselves, Jesus Himself also drew near and went with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. (Luke 24:13-16)

He said to them, “What are these discussions that you hold with one another as you walk and are sad?” One of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered Him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who has not known the things that have been done there in these past days?” (Luke 24:17-18)

He said to him, “What things?” They said: “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people. And how our chief priests and princes delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him. We hoped that it was He that would redeem Israel. And now besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. Yes, and certain women from our group astounded us who, before it was light, were at the sepulcher. Not finding His body, they came saying that they had all seen a vision of angels, who say that He is alive. Some of our people went to the sepulcher and found it as the women had said, but they did not find Him.” (Luke 24:19-24)

Then He said to them, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all the things which the prophets have spoken. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:25-26)

Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them all the things in the Scriptures that concerned Him. (Luke 24:27)

They drew near to the town where they were going, and He acted as though he would go farther. But they constrained Him, saying, “Stay with us, because it is toward evening and the day is now far spent,” and He went in with them. (Luke 24:28-29)



Fig 3.2.5 They Recognize Him at the Breaking of the Bread

Artist: Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890)

While He was at table with them, He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him, but He vanished out of their sight. They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?” Rising up the same hour, they went back to Jerusalem and they found the Eleven and those that were with them gathered together, saying, “The Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon.” They told what things had happened on the way, and how they knew Him in the breaking of bread. (Luke 24:31-35)

Christ Appears to the Apostles

(Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-29)

Now when it was late the same day (that means, Sunday evening), and the doors where the disciples were gathered together were shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them⁷⁸ and said to them, “Peace be to you.” (John 20:19)

When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side.⁷⁹ The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord. He therefore said to them again, “Peace be to you. As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” When He had said this, He breathed on them, and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain are retained.”⁸⁰ (John 20:20-23)

Now Thomas Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” (John 20:24-25)

⁷⁸ Christ came in even when the doors were shut! Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches that one of the characteristics of our Redeemer’s glorified body is *subtlety*, which means “being spirit-like.” Like a spirit, the body of Christ after the resurrection could pass through closed doors. The other characteristics of the glorified body are *impassibility* (or incorruptibility), *agility* (or the ability to move as swiftly as the soul), and *clarity* (clearness or luminosity). See *Summa Theologiae*, Supplement to Part III, Q. 82-85.

⁷⁹ The reason Christ showed His hands and His side was to prove to the Apostles that they were not seeing a ghost but a real body, the same body that died on the cross on Friday (Luke 24:37-39).

⁸⁰ By these words Christ gave the Apostles the power to forgive sins.



Fig 3.2.6 Saint Thomas Touches the Wounds of Christ
Artist: Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, aka Guercino (1591-1666)

After eight days, His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Though the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said, “Peace be to you.” Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger in here and see My hands, and bring your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be faithless, but believing.” (John 20:26-27)

Thomas answered Him, “My Lord and my God.” Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, Thomas, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” (John 20:28-29)

COMMENTARY

1. *Though the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them...* After the resurrection, Christ's body was "spirit-like" and could pass through closed doors. Strictly, therefore, Christ did not also need an angel to open the sepulcher for Him. He could just as easily pass through the walls of the sealed tomb. Then why did the angel roll back the stone? Evidently, the answer is not to let our Lord out, but to let the women in. Possibly, Christ already got out of the tomb before the angel even came to roll the stone back.
2. None of the Apostles directly witnessed the resurrection of Christ from the dead. And science cannot positively verify the resurrection any more than it can verify the appearance of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary. However, this does not mean that these events did not actually happen, nor that the early Christians merely fabricated "myths" pertaining to the resurrection of Christ. The fact is that it would be difficult to explain the faith of the early Christians if the stories circulated about Christ were not factual. If the early Christians derived any benefit, such as power, wealth or prestige, from their faith in Christ, then we might justly doubt their testimony and their faith. However, the early Christians were tortured, stoned to death, or thrown to the lions, because of their faith in Christ. So, it could not be the faith of the Christians that invented the events about Christ. Rather, *it was the reality of Christ's resurrection that explains their faith.*

The Second Miraculous Catch of Fishes

(John 21:1-14)

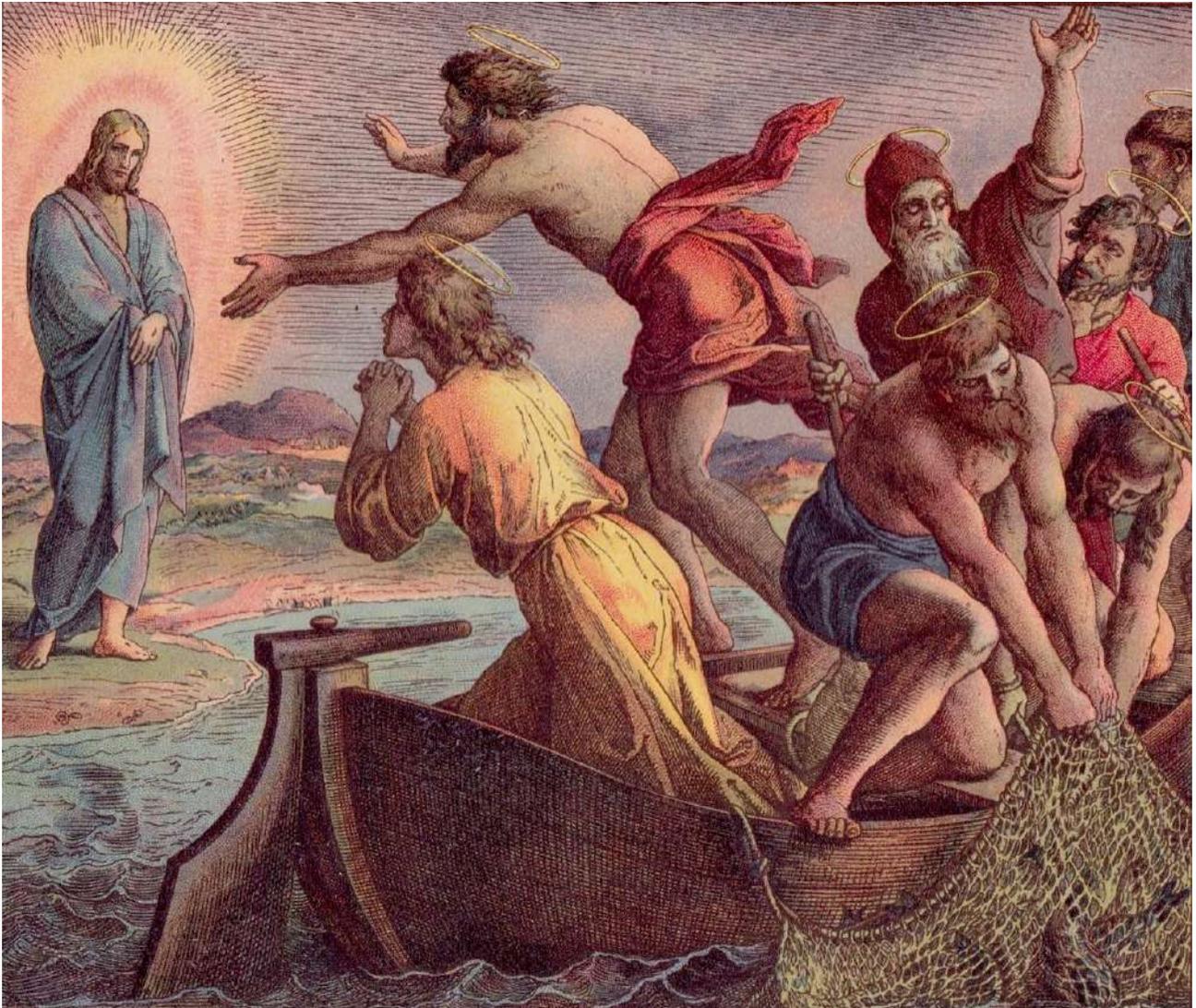


Fig 3.2.7 The Second Miraculous Catch of Fishes
Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

After this Jesus showed Himself to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. He showed Himself in this manner: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael (from Cana in Galilee), the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. (John 21:1-2)

Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We are also coming with you.” They went out and got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning had come, Jesus stood on the shore, yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them, “Young men, do you have any fish?” They answered Him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find them.” They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it because of the great number of fishes. (John 21:3-6)

That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” Simon Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat around him (for he had not been wearing it) and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat (for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards) dragging the net with fish. (John 21:7-8)

Then, as soon as they came to land, they saw hot coals lying there with a fish laid on it, and bread also. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish here which you have just caught.” Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of *one hundred and fifty-three* large fish. Although there were so many, the net was not broken. (John 21:9-11)

Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of those who were at the meal dared ask Him, “Who are You?” knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish in the same way. This was now the third time that Jesus was manifested to His disciples after He had risen from the dead. (John 21:12-14)

Peter's Responsibility

(John 21:15-17)



Fig 3.2.8 Christ's Charge to Peter
Artist: Raffaello Sanzio, or Raphael (1483-1520)

When therefore they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him again, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him a third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He had said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My sheep.” (John 21:15-17)

COMMENTARY

1. Christ's three statements *Feed my Lamb, ... Feed my Lamb, ... Feed my sheep*, show Him commissioning St. Peter to be the Chief Shepherd of the flock, although the other Apostles had the same, but subordinate role (Acts 20:28). St. Peter's duty was to feed the entire people of God with Truth and to administer the graces of the sacraments by which the flock shall be fed. His authority therefore has three characteristics:
 - His authority is *universal*, extending not only to all the faithful ("Feed my Lamb"), but also to all their pastors and bishops ("Feed my sheep").
 - His authority is *immediate* and can be exercised on all the faithful, pastors and bishops, without having to get approval from any council or college of bishops.
 - His authority is an *ordinary* power in the sense that it is not something that he may exercise only in exceptional cases, like the extraordinary exercise of infallibility that belongs to him only when teaching *ex cathedra*. His authority to govern the Church does not require an extraordinary act, but belongs to him ordinarily by virtue of his office as Head of the Church.

The Ascension

(Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:44-53; John 20:30-21:25; Acts 1:8-11)



Fig 3.2.9 The Ascension
Artist Unknown

The eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. Seeing Jesus, they adored Him, but some doubted. Jesus came and said to them, “All power has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. Behold I am always with you, even to the end of the world.” (Matt 28:16-20)

“You shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and even to the uttermost part of the earth.” When He had said these things, while they looked on, Jesus was raised up. And a cloud received Him out of their sight. While they were watching Him go up to Heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments.⁸¹ They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up to Heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall come again in the same way as you have seen Him going into Heaven” (Acts 1:8-11).

COMMENTARY

1. As the angels said, Christ will come again. But His second coming will be totally unlike the first. He will come again in the manner *that He ascended*, but not in the manner that He first descended. Our Redeemer’s first coming was in poverty and obscurity, but His second coming will be in glory. When He first came to earth, it was to be judged. But when He comes again, it will be to judge.
2. When Christ comes to judge us, He will not do so merely as God, but as the Son of Man. This means that on the day of judgment we shall not be able to use His Divinity as an excuse, saying that, after all, God in His eternal splendor cannot understand our weakness. Since Christ became one of us and lived our life, He as the Son of Man shall be the competent Judge of our life and our consciences.

⁸¹ The two men in white garments were angels.

My Free Bible History: The New Testament

PART FOUR – The Acts of the Apostles

CHAPTER 1 THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

The Descent of the Holy Spirit

(Acts 1:12 – 2:47)

After Christ's ascension into Heaven, the Apostles and other disciples returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, and there they went up into the upper room where the Apostles lived. Everyone in the assembly, including some women, and numbering a total of about one hundred and twenty persons, persevered with one mind in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus. (Acts 1:12-14)

Peter rose up and proposed to the whole assembly that a new apostle should be chosen to fill the place left vacant by Judas Iscariot. The new apostle, he said, should be one who had been a follower of Jesus from the time He was baptized by John until His ascension into Heaven. Two names were proposed: Joseph, called Barsabbas, and Matthias. The disciples then prayed and cast lots, to see who should take the ministry from which Judas had fallen. The lot fell upon **Matthias**. And from that time on, he was numbered among the Apostles. (Acts 1:15-26)

When the feast of Pentecost⁸² had come, the disciples were all together in one place. Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. There appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire,⁸³ and it sat upon every one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them to speak. (Acts 2:1-4)

⁸² The Jewish feast of Pentecost (Shavuot) was fifty days after the Passover feast (Lev. 23:18-21)..

⁸³ The "tongues of fire" that descended upon the Apostles looked like fire, but were not natural fire.



Fig 4.1.1 The Descent of the Holy Spirit
Artist Unknown

At that time there were in Jerusalem many Jews from various nations under heaven. Having heard what had taken place, they came together to the place where the apostles were gathered. How amazed they were when they heard the disciples speak. They wondered, “Are not these men Galileans? How then do we hear them speak our own language?” But others mocked them and said, “These men are full of new wine.” (Acts 2:5-13)

But Peter stood up, and spoke to them: “You, men of Judea, and all you that dwell in Jerusalem, know that these men are not drunk, as you suppose. What is happening is the fulfillment of the prophecy by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh.’ You men of Israel, hear these words: You killed Jesus of Nazareth, a man who, by miracles and wonders, proved Himself sent by God. Yet God raised Him up again, and we are all witnesses of His resurrection. Being exalted therefore by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out the Spirit which you see and hear. Therefore, let all Israel know that God has made this same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” When they heard these things, many were sorry for their sins, and asked: “What shall we do?” Peter answered, “Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins. Then you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” All those who believed Peter’s words were baptized. About three thousand persons were baptized in that day. (Acts 2:14-41)

The first converts persevered in the teachings of the apostles, in prayer and in the breaking of the bread.⁸⁴ They shared their goods in common, and divided them to all according to each one’s needs. Because of their good works, God increased the number of converts daily. (Acts 2:42-47)

⁸⁴ “The breaking of the bread” is the term used by the early Christians to refer to the celebration of the holy sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion, which they practiced daily (Acts 2:46).

COMMENTARY

1. At Babel the tower was not finished because there was a multiplication of languages. God confounded the language of the people, so that everyone spoke a different language and was not able to understand one another. At Pentecost there was also a multiplication of languages, in that God made the people of other nations hear the speech of the Apostles in their own languages. Thus, whereas in Babel the multiplication of languages resulted in widespread confusion and misunderstanding, at Pentecost the multiplication of languages resulted in the people's spiritual enlightenment and common understanding of the Gospel message preached by the Apostles.
2. The new converts in Jerusalem formed the first Christian community. Their conduct was edifying. They offered what they had to help others (Acts 4:32-37). You could tell they were Christians by their love. The Apostles were their leaders. With Peter as their leader the Apostles preached, administered the sacraments, and governed the community of the faithful that we call "The Church." Incidentally, the Blessed Virgin Mary, with whom they persevered in prayer before the coming of the Holy Spirit, was also still on earth when the Church began to expand. She was the comfort of the Apostles in their trials, their "go to" person when they had problems or needed advice. She was truly the Mother of the Church. In his book, *The Life of the Virgin*, Chapter 7, #99, St. Maximus the Confessor said that the Virgin Mary played a key role in the development of the infant Church.

Peter Heals a Man Born Lame (Acts 3 and 4)

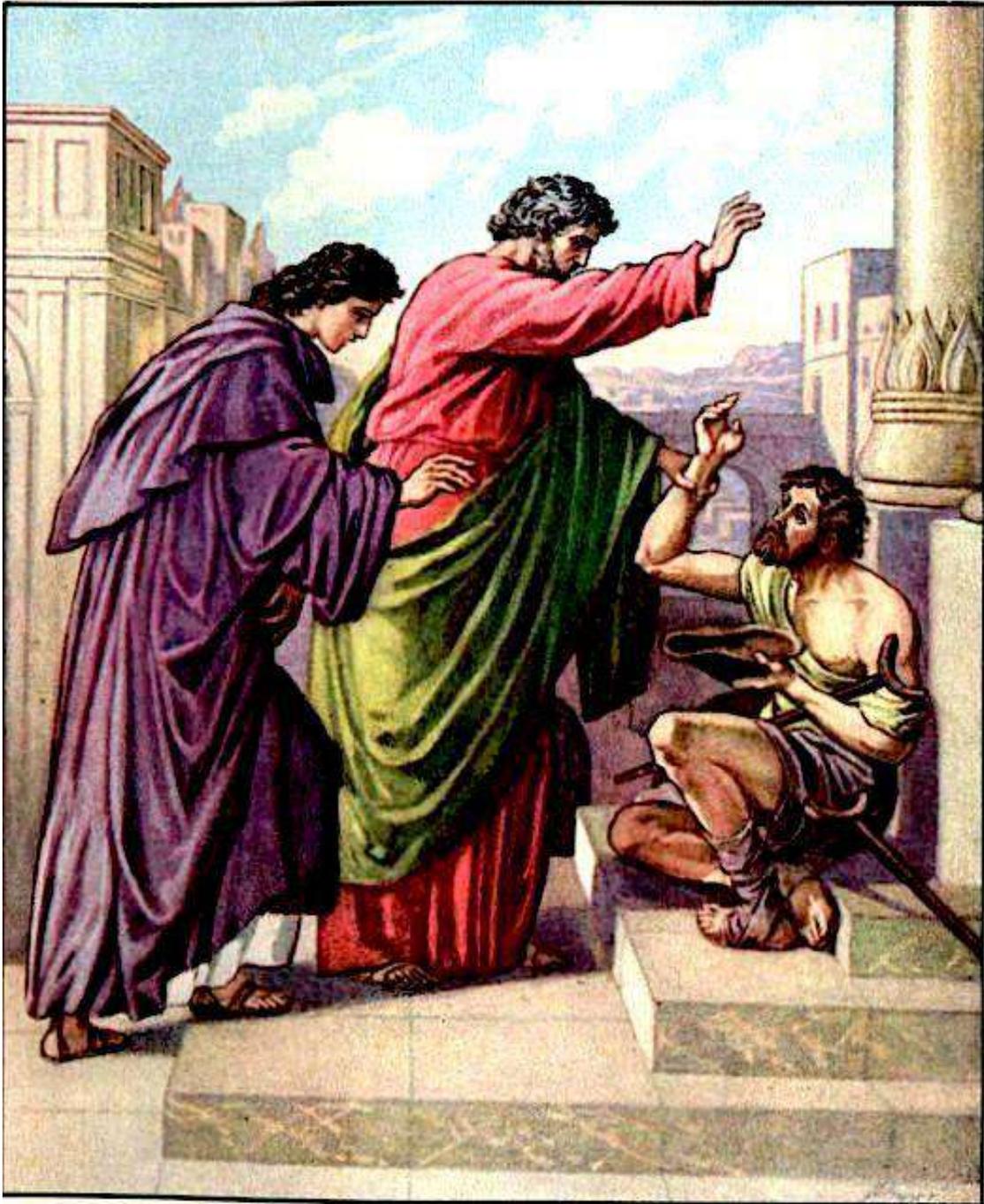


Fig 4.1.2 Peter Heals a Man Born Lame
After Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Peter and John went up to the temple to pray. A certain man, who was lame from his birth, was carried to the gate of the temple every day to beg alms from those who entered. Seeing Peter and John coming in to the temple, he asked them for an alms. Peter said to him, “Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk!” The man sprang up, walked, and went with Peter and John into the temple praising God. (Acts 3:1-9)

All those who saw this miracle were amazed. They ran to the Apostles, but Peter said to them: “You men of Israel, why do you wonder at this? Why do you look upon us as if we made this man walk by our strength or power? God glorified His Son Jesus, whom you denied and delivered to Pilate to be killed. But God raised Him from the dead, of which we are witnesses. It is by faith in the name of Jesus that this man walks. I know that you and your rulers persecuted Christ through ignorance. Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” (Acts 3:10-19)

As the Apostles were yet speaking to the people, the priests, the officer of the temple, and the Sadducees,⁸⁵ came upon them. Unhappy that the Apostles taught the people, and preached the resurrection of the dead through Jesus Christ, they laid hands on them and held them in prison till the next day. But many who had heard the speech of Peter, believed; and the number of male converts increased to five thousand.⁸⁶ (Acts 4:1-4)

⁸⁵ The Sadducees were a religious group that denied the existence of angels, spirits, and the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8).

⁸⁶ At Pentecost there were already about 3000 people who were converted and baptized, which included men, women and children. But after hearing Peter’s speech regarding the cure of the man born lame, the number of male converts alone had increased to about 5000.

The following day, Annas the high priest, together with Caiaphas and all who were related to the high priest, gathered together and called the Apostles for questioning. They asked, “By what power, or in whose name have you done this?” (Acts 4:5-7)

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter answered, “Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, and Whom God has raised from the dead, this man stands here before you whole. Jesus is the foundation stone which you the builders rejected, and which has become the cornerstone. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:8-12)

Seeing the constancy of Peter and John, the priests wondered what to do next. They could not intimidate the Apostles, nor could they deny the fact that the Apostles miraculously cured the man who was born lame. They therefore commanded the Apostles to go outside of the Council, and they talked among themselves. To prevent this incident from being farther spread among the people, they recalled the Apostles and threatened them not to speak nor teach to anyone anymore in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John said to them, “Is it just that we obey you rather than God? We cannot but speak of the things which we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:13-20)

Not finding how they might punish the Apostles, the chief priests finally sent them away for fear of the people, for everyone praised God for the things that had come to pass. Peter and John then returned to their disciples and told them all that the chief priests had said to them. Having heard their story, the disciples with one accord lifted up their voice to God in prayer. When they had prayed, the place where they were gathered was moved, and they were all filled by the Holy Spirit; they then spoke the word of God with confidence. (Acts 4:21-31)

The Holy Life of the First Christians

(Acts 4:32 – 5:11)

The disciples and the first Christians led holy lives. They had but one heart and one soul. No one claimed that what he possessed was his own, for they held everything in common, and shared what they owned with one another. The Apostles gave powerful testimony of the resurrection of our Lord, and great grace was in all the faithful. For there was none needy among them. Because those who owned lands or houses sold them, and laid the proceeds before the feet of the Apostles, who distributed them to each one according as he needed. (Acts 4:32-35)

But there were also a few bad fruits among the Christians. The example of Ananias and Sapphira was a case in point.

A certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of land. He secretly kept back part of the price of the land, and his wife knew about it. He laid only a portion of the price at the feet of the Apostles, pretending that it was all that he received for the land, and the rest he kept for himself. Peter said to him, “Ananias, why did you let Satan tempt your heart, that you should lie to the Holy Spirit? Why did you conceive this thing in your heart, that you keep a part of the price of the land for yourself? You have not lied to men, but to God.” Upon hearing these words, Ananias fell dead, and there came great fear among those who heard it. (Acts 5:1-5)

Young men came and removed Ananias’ body. They carried it outside and buried it. (Acts 5:6)



Fig 4.1.3 The Death of Ananias

Artist: Raffaello Sanzio, or Raphael (1483-1520)

Three hours later, his wife Sapphira came in, not knowing what had happened. When Peter confronted her, she repeated the same lie, and said that they only received so much for the land. Peter said to her, “Why have you agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of them who buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out, too.” Immediately Sapphira fell dead also before his feet. The young men came, and seeing her dead, they carried her out and buried her by her husband. There came great fear upon the whole church, and upon all who heard these things. (Acts 5:7-11)

The Apostles Are Thrown into Prison (Acts 5:12-42)

The Apostles worked many miracles among the people, and the number of those who believed in the Lord increased. The people especially held Peter in great esteem. For they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, so that even the shadow of Peter might fall upon them and cure them. (Acts 5:12-15)

Filled with envy, the high priest and his companions laid hands on the Apostles and cast them into prison. But in the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and led them out, telling them to continue teaching the people. (Acts 5:17-20)

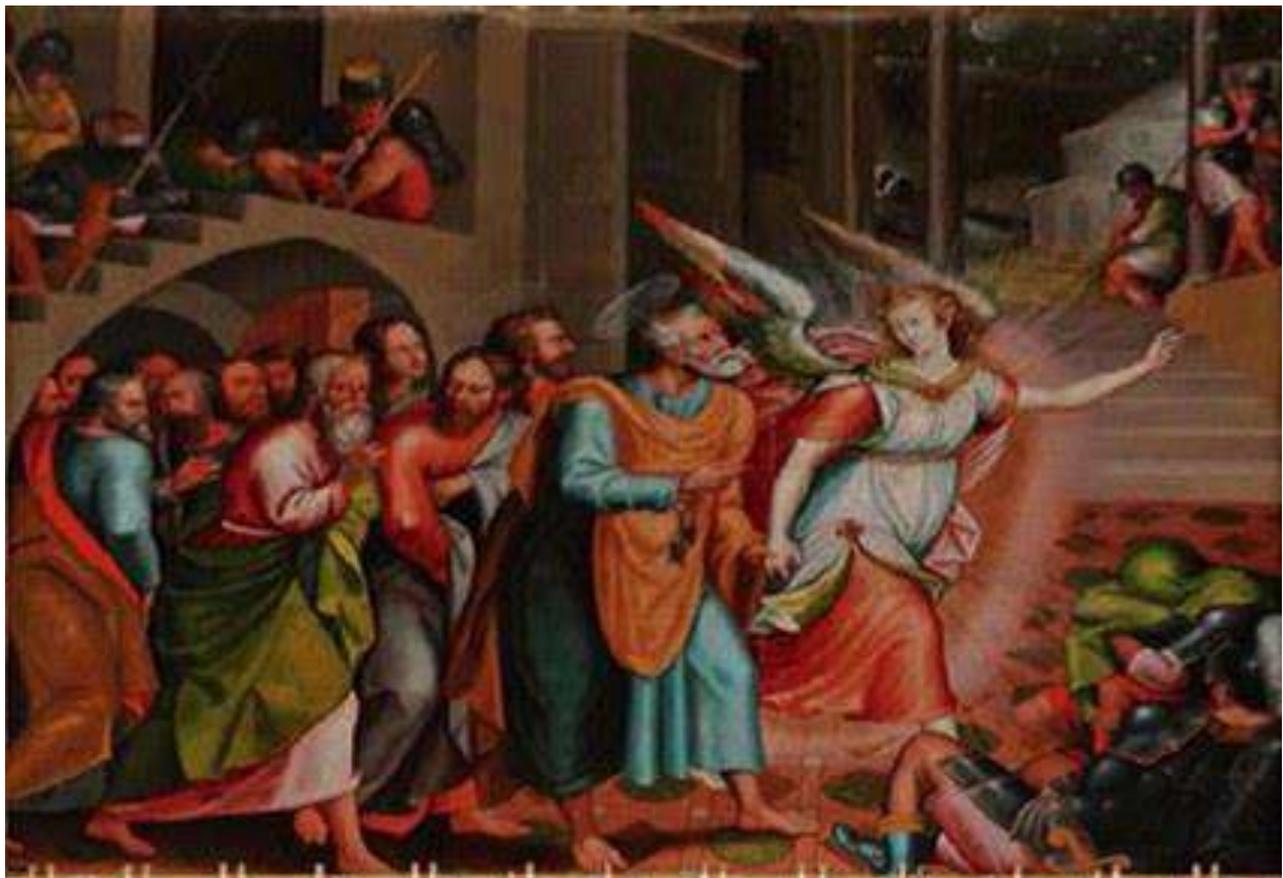


Fig 4.1.4 An Angel Helps the Apostles to Get Out of Prison

Artist: Probably Juan Rodríguez Samanez (1585-1651)

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Early in the morning, the Apostles entered into the temple and began teaching. When the high priest found out that the Apostles were no longer in the prison, and were instead in the temple teaching the people, he sent the officer with the ministers to bring the Apostles back before the Council. Then he told the Apostles, “We commanded you that you should not teach in Jesus’ name; and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.” Peter and the other Apostles answered, “We ought to obey God, rather than men.” (Acts 5:21-29)

The high priest and the members of the Council were angry, and they thought of putting the Apostles to death. But one respected member of the Council, a Pharisee named **Gamaliel**, said, “Take heed how you treat these men. *If their work is of men, it will come to nothing. But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it, lest you find yourself fighting against God.*” They agreed with him. (Acts 5:33-39)

The Council had the Apostles scourged, and afterwards ordered them not to speak at all in the name of Jesus; then they dismissed them. The Apostles left the Council rejoicing that they were found worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. Every day in the temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach about Christ Jesus. (Acts 5:40-42)

COMMENTARY

1. Gamaliel’s wise counsel points to the Indestructibility of the Catholic Church. For, the Church founded by Christ was a work that the Apostles helped to build. If the Church was just the work of men, then it should already have passed away. Many kingdoms, civilizations and societies, including the great Roman Empire, have already come and gone. But the Catholic Church is still with us. It has survived persecutions, heresies, and all antagonisms within and without. Nothing was able to destroy or overthrow the Church during its long history, which indicates that it was not just the work of men, but of God.

The Stoning of Stephen – (ca. A.D. 35) (Acts 6 – 7)

As the number of Christians increased, some complained that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The twelve Apostles said, “It is not fit that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.”⁸⁷ Therefore, they directed the people to choose seven men of good reputation, who were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, and whom they could appoint to handle the temporal needs of the Church, while they themselves would devote their time continually to prayer and to the ministry of preaching. Seven disciples were chosen; among them were Stephen and Philip. (Acts 6:1-5)

The Apostles prayed and imposed hands upon the seven disciples.⁸⁸ These were the first seven deacons of the Church. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and Stephen, full of grace and fortitude, performed many miracles. Some of the Jews disputed with him, but they could not refute his arguments. As they were unable to resist his wisdom and the power of his words, they paid false witnesses and charged him before the Council. The false witnesses said that they heard Stephen speak blasphemy against Moses and against God. But, looking on him, all who sat in the Council saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel (Acts 6:6-15)

The high priest asked him whether the charges against him were true. Stephen replied by making a long speech reviewing the history of the Jewish people; then he rebuked the Jews for resisting the Holy Spirit, persecuting the prophets, and killing the Messiah. (Acts 7:1-53)

⁸⁷ By this the Apostles meant that the ministry of preaching of the word of God was more important than that of overseeing the temporal needs of the poor.

⁸⁸ This means that the seven disciples were ordained as deacons. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is done with the laying on of hands.



Fig 4.1.5 The Martyrdom of Stephen

Artist: Jean-Baptiste de Champaigne (1631-1681)

Upon hearing this, the Jews became angry. They drove Stephen out of the city, then stoned him to death. The witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of the young Saul,⁸⁹ a Pharisee and persecutor of Christians. Before he died, Stephen prayed for his murderers, saying, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” (Acts 7:54-59)

COMMENTARY

1. Christians began to be persecuted more violently after the death of Stephen. But the more they were persecuted, the faster Christianity spread in the world. For this reason, Tertullian said that the blood of Christians was the seed of Christianity. See Tertullian, *The Apology*, Chapter 50.
2. During the time of the Apostles, the Christian converts were persecuted mainly by members of the Jewish religion. The systematic persecution of Christians by the Romans was started by Emperor Nero in A.D. 64.

⁸⁹ Saul was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) and a persecutor of the early Christians. He was also known by his other name, Paul (Acts 13:9). Saul, the persecutor of the early Christians, was therefore the same person as the one who was later celebrated as St. Paul the Apostle.

The Baptism of the Ethiopian Man (Acts 8:1-40)

At Jerusalem there was great persecution against the Church. The persecutor, Saul, entered from house to house, dragging away men and women, and committing them to prison. Philip, who was a deacon like Stephen, went to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ there. People listened to him because he worked many miracles. Many were converted and baptized. Now there was a certain man named Simon, who had been a magician in that city.⁹⁰ He, too, believed and was baptized when he saw the miracles performed by Philip. (Acts 8:1-13)

When the Apostles in Jerusalem heard the many conversions taking place in Samaria, they sent Peter and John there. These two laid their hands upon those who had been baptized, and they received the Holy Spirit.⁹¹ When Simon saw, that by the imposition of the hands of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit was given, he offered the Apostles money, saying, “Give me also this power, that those on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”⁹² But Peter said to him, “Keep your money to perish with yourself, because you thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Do penance, and pray that your thought may be forgiven.” After testifying and preaching the word of God, they all returned to Jerusalem and preached the gospel to many countries of the Samaritans. (Acts 8:14-25)

⁹⁰ Simon the magician is sometimes referred to as Simon Magus.

⁹¹ In other words, the Apostles confirmed those who had been baptized, because the Sacrament of Confirmation is conferred by the laying on of hands. Philip could not confirm those whom he had baptized because he was only a deacon. Only the Apostles and their successors could administer the Sacrament of Confirmation.

⁹² The buying or selling of something spiritual is sinful. The sin is named “simony,” after Simon Magus who tried to buy the power of conferring the gifts of the Holy Spirit from the Apostles.



Fig 4.1.6 Philip and the Ethiopian

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise, go toward the south, to the way that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” And so, he went. On the way he met an Ethiopian man, the treasurer of Queen Candace of Ethiopia. He had come to Jerusalem to adore, and was returning, sitting in his chariot, and reading from the prophet Isaiah. Directed by the Holy Spirit, Philip ran toward him and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The man replied, “How can I, unless someone teach me.” He asked Philip to join him in the chariot. Philip then explained the Scripture to him, and spoke to him about Jesus.⁹³ (Acts 8:26-35)

⁹³ This incident shows that we need the Church to explain the Bible to us.



Fig 4.1.7 Philip Baptizes the Ethiopian Man

Artist: Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669)

As they went on their way, they came to a place where there was water. The man asked, “See, here is water. What will prevent me from being baptized?” Philip answered, “If you believe with all your heart, you may be baptized.” The Ethiopian said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Philip took the man down into the water and baptized him. When they had come out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took away Philip, and the Ethiopian saw him no more. He went on his way rejoicing. However, Philip was found in Azotus; and passing through, he preached the gospel to all the cities, till he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8:36-40)

CHAPTER 2 SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

The Conversion of Saul – (ca. A.D. 36) (Acts 9:1-30)



Fig 4.2.1 The Conversion of Saul
Artist: Nicolas Bernard Lépicié (1735-1784)

Saul, who was also known as Paul (Acts 13:9), and an active persecutor of the early Christians, went to the high priest and asked for letters to the synagogues of Damascus, that he might bring Christians as prisoners to Jerusalem. On his way to Damascus, a bright light suddenly shone round about him, and he fell to the ground. He heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” Saul asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The voice answered, “I am Jesus whom you persecute.” (Acts 9:1-5)

Trembling and astonished, Saul asked, “Lord, what do you wish me to do? The voice answered, “Arise, and go into the city. There you will be told what you must do.” The men who were with Saul stood amazed, because they heard the voice, but saw no man. (Acts 9:6-7)

Saul arose from the ground. He opened his eyes, but could not see. Leading him by the hands, his companions brought him to Damascus. He was there three days without sight. Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Go look for a man named Saul of Tarsus. I have selected him to carry my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” (Acts 9:8-16)

Ananias went and found Saul. Laying his hands upon him, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, that you may receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately Saul received his sight, and Ananias baptized him. Saul stayed for some days with the disciples who were there at Damascus; then he began preaching Jesus in the synagogues, saying that he was the Son of God. (Acts 9:17-20)

Those that heard him were astonished and said, “Is this not he who persecuted in Jerusalem?” As Saul continued to preach Jesus, the Jews plotted to kill him. But Saul found out. (Acts 9:21-24).

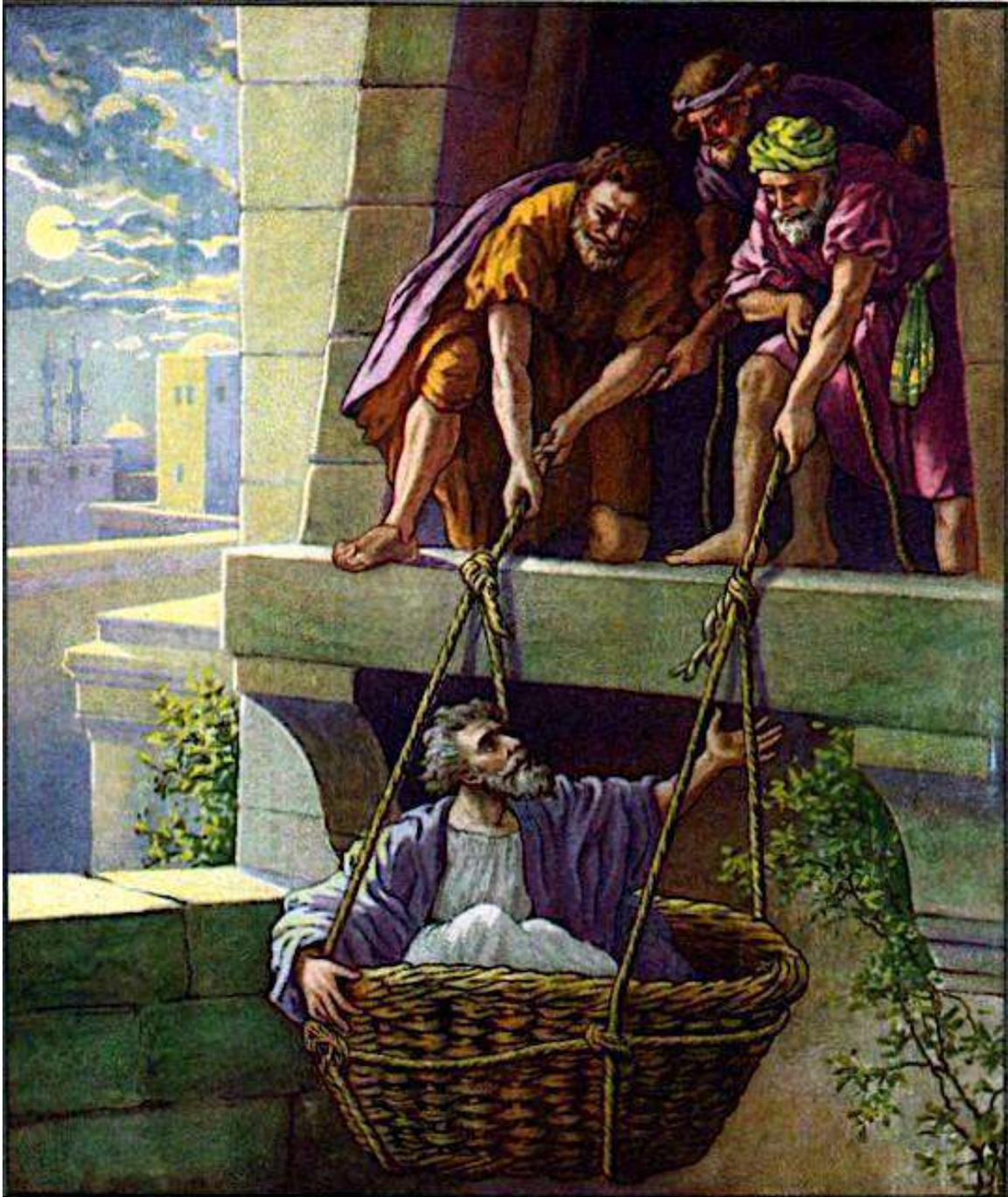


Fig 4.2.2 Saul Escapes Damascus

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

The disciples at night conveyed him away by the wall, letting him down in a basket. Saul escaped to Jerusalem, where he was received by the Apostles. (Acts 9:25-30)

Peter's Wonderful Works

(Acts 9:31-42)

The church had peace throughout Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria. As Peter was visiting these places, he came to the town of Lydda. He found there a man named Aeneas who for eight years had been sick of the palsy. Peter said to him, “Aeneas, the Lord Jesus Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.” At once Aeneas arose, cured. All those who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they were converted to the Lord. (Acts 9:31-35)



Fig 4.2.3 Peter Raises Tabitha to Life
Artist: Fabrizio Santafede (1560-1623)

In another place, named Joppa, there was a disciple named Tabitha. This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds, but she also became sick and died. They washed her and laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples told Peter about her. Peter rose up and went with them from Lydda to Joppa. When he came, they brought him into the upper room. All the widows stood about him weeping and showing him the coats and garments that Tabitha made them. Kneeling down, Peter prayed. Turning to the body, he said, “Tabitha, arise.” Tabitha opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. Giving her his hand, he lifted her up. When he had called the widows, he presented her to them alive. This miracle was made known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. (Acts 9:36-42)

The Conversion of Cornelius

(Acts 10:1-48)

While Peter was still in Joppa, there was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a religious man. He gave much alms to the people and was always praying to God. One day an angel appeared to him in a vision and told him to send for Peter, who would tell him what to do. Cornelius sent three men to summon Peter. (Acts 10:1-8)

As the messengers approached Joppa, Peter went upstairs to pray. Here Peter also had a vision. He saw the heavens opened, and as it were a great linen sheet was let down, in which were all manner of four-footed beasts, creeping things and birds. (Acts 10:9-12)



Fig 4.2.4 Peter's Vision

Artist: Domenico Fetti (1589 - ?)

Then a voice said to him, “Arise, Peter; kill and eat.” But Peter said that he had never eaten anything that is common and unclean. The voice spoke again and said, “Do not call common what God has cleansed.” While Peter was thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Three men seek you. Arise, and go with them.” (Acts 10:13-20)

Peter received the strangers. On the following day he, accompanied by some of the brethren from Joppa, went with the them to meet Cornelius at Caesarea. Upon meeting Cornelius and his kinsmen, Peter said, “You know how abominable it is for a man that is a Jew, to keep company with one of another nation. But God has shown to me to call no man common or unclean.”⁹⁴ (Acts 10:21-28)

When Cornelius told Peter about his vision, Peter opened his mouth and said, “In very deed I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons. But in every nation, he that fears Him and works justice, is acceptable to Him.” Peter continued to speak about Jesus to Cornelius and his household. As he was yet speaking, the Holy Spirit came down upon the Gentiles who heard the word. The circumcised Jews who came with Peter were astonished that the grace of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Gentiles also. For they heard them speaking in different languages and glorifying God.⁹⁵ Peter then commanded that the Gentiles be baptized. (Acts 10:29-48)

⁹⁴ In other words, Peter understood that henceforth there should be no distinction between the Gentiles, who previously were considered unclean, and Jews, because all were cleansed by the blood of Christ.

⁹⁵ As on the day of Pentecost.

Peter Cast into Prison – (ca. A.D. 44) (Acts 12:1-25)

After the conversion of Cornelius, Peter returned to Jerusalem.⁹⁶ At that time the king, Herod Agrippa,⁹⁷ persecuted the church. He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. Then he proceeded to apprehend Peter and cast him into prison. The church prayed for Peter without ceasing. In the night, an angel appeared to Peter and led him out of prison. (Acts 12:1-10)



Fig 4.2.5 Peter is Freed by an Angel
Artist: Bartolome Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

⁹⁶ See Acts 11:2

⁹⁷ Herod Agrippa was the nephew of Herod Antipas, the king who mocked our Lord.

Peter went to the house of Mark where the disciples were gathered together in prayer. When he knocked at the door, a young girl came to open. But as soon as she heard Peter's voice, she was overjoyed and forgot to open the door. She ran to tell the disciples, but they said to her: "You are mad." But she affirmed that it was Peter. (Acts 12:12-15)

Peter continued knocking. When the disciples opened the door, they saw Peter and were astonished. He motioned to them with his hand to hold their peace, and told them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. In the morning Herod sought for him in the prison but found him not. Having examined the prison guards, he commanded they should be put to death. Shortly afterward, while making a speech to the ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon, the people praised him, saying, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." But because he had not given the honor to God, an angel of the Lord struck him, and he died. (Acts 12:16-23)

First Missionary Voyage of Saint Paul – (ca. A.D. 45) (Acts 13-14)

At Antioch there were prophets and doctors. Among them were Saul and Barnabas. While they were ministering to the Lord, and fasting, the Holy Spirit made it known to them that Saul and Barnabas were to preach elsewhere. So, the Church rulers imposed hands on them and sent them away. (Acts 13:1-3)

Being sent by the Holy Spirit, Saul and Barnabas first went to Seleucia, then they sailed to Cyprus. When they reached Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. After preaching through the whole island, they met a magician at Paphos who tried to turn away the Roman proconsul from the faith. But Saul, *otherwise known as Paul*, struck him blind. Seeing what was done, the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus, believed, admiring the doctrine of the Lord. (Acts 13:4-12)

Paul and Barnabas came to Antioch in Pisidia. Rising up, Paul preached about Jesus, the Savior. “In Him,” he said, “everyone who believes is justified.” Seeing that many were converted, the Jews were filled with envy and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas. Leaving the place, the Apostles went to Iconium. (Acts 13:14-51)

In Iconium a great many Jews and Greeks believed. The Lord gave testimony to the word of the Apostles by granting miracles wrought by their hands. But the people were divided. Some believed, but others tried to stone them. The Apostles fled to Lystra. At Lystra, Paul met a man crippled from birth. Paul saw that he had faith to be healed. He said with a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” The man leaped up, and walked. When they saw the miracle, the people said, “The gods are here with us in the likeness of men.” (Acts 14:1-10)

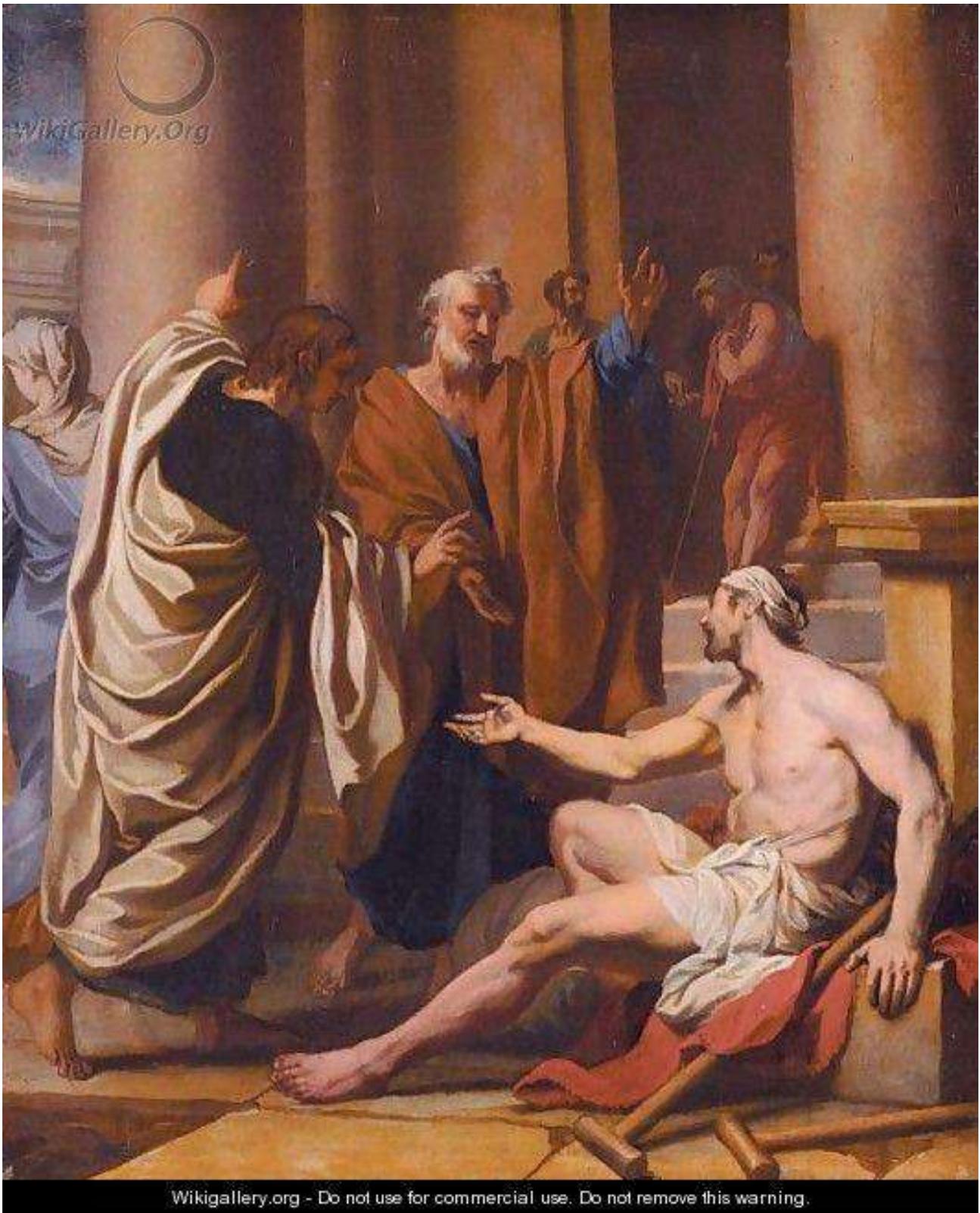


Fig 4.2.6 St. Paul Heals the Cripple at Lystra

By French School

The people attempted to offer sacrifices to the Apostles, bringing oxen and garlands. Rending their clothes, Barnabas and Paul leaped up and said, “Why do you do these things? We are also mortals, men like you. We are preaching to turn you away from false gods, and to tell you of the living God who made the Heaven and the earth.” (Acts 14:11-14)

Now there came certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium who, persuading the people, stoned Paul and drove him out of the city. The next day Paul departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch. (Acts 14:18-20)

And so, the Church spread. Wherever they went, Paul baptized and confirmed those who were converted. He also ordained for them priests in every church. (Acts 14:21-22)

COMMENTARY

1. In his missionary travels, St. Paul converted many pagans. This is why he is known as the *Apostle of the Gentiles*.
2. Contrary to common belief, God did not change Saul's name to Paul. He had changed Abram's name to Abraham, Jacob's name to Israel, and Simon's name to Peter. But He did not change Saul's name to Paul. Actually, Saul had two names. Paul was just Saul's other name (Acts 13:9).
3. The **route of Paul's first missionary voyage** was this: From Antioch in Syria, Paul and Barnabas went to Salamis in the island of Cyprus. They crossed the island as far as Paphos. Then they sailed to Perga and travelled by land to the Antioch in Pisidia. Then they proceeded to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, then back again to Perga and, finally, to Antioch in Syria where they started. See Map, next page.

4. Map of St. Paul's First Missionary Voyage



Fig 4.2.7 St. Paul's First Missionary Voyage

The Council of Jerusalem – (ca. A.D. 49) (Acts 15:1-35)

At Antioch some of those who came from Judea taught the disciples: *Unless you be circumcised according to the law of Moses, you cannot be saved.*⁹⁸ But when Paul and Barnabas made a big objection against this principle,⁹⁹ the Jews decided that Paul and Barnabas should go up and consult the Apostles in Jerusalem about this question. (Acts 15:1-2)

When they came to Jerusalem, they were received by the Church, by the Apostles and the ancients, who praised them for the great things that God had done with them. The Apostles and the ancients assembled to deliberate on the subject. After much debate, Peter rose up and said, “God, who knows the heart, has given testimony, because He poured out the Holy Spirit to them as well as to us. Therefore, let there be no difference between us (the Jews) and them (the Gentiles). By the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we believe to be saved in the same way as they are.” (Acts 15:4-11)

The crowd became silent. Then Barnabas and Paul spoke, telling them what great miracles God had wrought among the Gentiles through them. James spoke next, and supported the opinion that the Gentiles should be exempt from circumcision. The Apostles and the ancients decided to send letters to the churches in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, informing them of the decision of the Council: “It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no further burden upon you (the Gentiles) than these necessary things: that you abstain from idolatry, fornication, etc.” (Acts 15:12-29)

⁹⁸ This means that the Gentiles who had been newly converted to Christianity must also be circumcised first in order to be saved.

⁹⁹ Paul and Barnabas were of the opinion that circumcision, which was a requirement of the Mosaic law, need not be applied to the Gentiles, because they were saved by their faith in Jesus Christ, and not by the observance of Moses' laws.



**Fig 4.2.8 “It Has Seemed Good to the Holy Spirit and to Us ...”
The Council of Jerusalem¹⁰⁰**

Paul and Barnabas continued at Antioch, teaching and preaching, with many others, the word of the Lord. (Acts 15:35)

¹⁰⁰ Every so often the bishops of the Catholic Church, who are the successors of the apostles, gather together under the leadership of the Pope, who is the successor of Peter, to make certain decisions that affect the whole church. This is called a **general council**. The Council of Jerusalem is the first of the general councils of the church.

Second Missionary Voyage of Saint Paul – (ca. A.D. 50) (Acts 15:36 – 18:22)

After some time, Paul and Barnabas parted ways. Barnabas sailed to Cyprus, while Paul, taking Silas for his companion, went from Antioch to Syria and Cilicia. At Lystra Paul met Timothy who also joined them in their journey. They visited the churches in Phrygia and Galatia, but were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia. (Acts 15:36-16:6)

They went to Troas, then to Philippi, which was a chief city in Macedonia. Here Paul drove away an evil spirit out of a girl who brought much profit to her masters by fortune-telling. Her masters, seeing that the hope of their profit was gone, apprehended Paul and Silas. They brought them to the authorities, and said, “These men are Jews. They disturb our city by preaching practices that are not lawful for us Romans to observe.” The authorities commanded that the Apostles be beaten with rods and cast into prison. Acts (16:8-24)

At midnight, Paul and Silas praying, praised God. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, all the doors were opened, and the chains of the prisoners were broken. The prison guard would have killed himself, if the prisoners escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.” Trembling, he fell down at the feet of the Apostles. Bringing them out, he said, “Masters, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:25-30)

They told him, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you and your household will be saved.” Taking the Apostles to his house at night, he with his household was converted and baptized. (Acts 16:31-34)



Fig 4.2.9 Paul and the Prison Guard at Philippi

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

In the morning, the authorities heard that Paul was a Roman citizen. Afraid that they had illegally punished and detained a Roman citizen, they released the Apostles from prison and begged them to leave the city. Paul and Silas left the prison, comforted the disciples, and left. (Acts 16:35-40)

After visiting other cities, Paul and his companions came to Thessalonica, and then to Berea, to preach about Jesus. But in both places, they were persecuted by the Jews. The disciples helped Paul go away unto the sea, leaving Silas and Timothy behind. They brought Paul as far as Athens, which was a city wholly given to idolatry. (Acts 17:1-16)



Fig 4.2.10 Paul at the Areopagus in Athens

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

The Athenians brought Paul to the Areopagus, a place where the philosophers and city leaders usually assemble. It was here that Paul made his famous sermon, “To the Unknown God,” which was a title that he found written by the Athenians on one of their pagan altars. (Acts 17:19-23)

Paul said, “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For passing by, and seeing your idols, I found an altar also, on which was written: *To the unknown God*. What therefore you worship, without knowing it, that I preach to you. God, who made the world, and all things therein, being Lord of Heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands. Neither is he served with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing it is He who gives to all of us life, and breath, and all things. He has made of one stock, all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed times, and the limits of their habitation; that they should seek God, if happily they may feel after Him or find Him, although He be not far from every one of us. For in Him we live, and move, and are; as some also of your own poets said: ‘For we are also his offspring.’ Being therefore the offspring of God, we must not suppose the divinity to be like unto gold, or silver, or stone, carved by the art and device of man. God indeed having winked at the times of this ignorance, now declares unto men, that all should everywhere do penance. Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world with justice, by a Man whom He has appointed, and whom He has guaranteed to all by raising him up from the dead.” (Acts 17:22-31)

From Athens Paul went to Corinth. He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. He was earnest in preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. After staying at Corinth for a year and half he returned to Antioch by way of Ephesus, Caesarea and Jerusalem. (Acts 18:1-22)

COMMENTARY

1. It was during his second missionary voyage that St. Paul wrote his first and second letters to the Thessalonians.

First Letter to the Thessalonians – The epistle opens with St. Paul’s joy and thanksgiving for the steadfastness of the first converts at the church in Thessalonica. Then St. Paul continues with instructions and exhortations for the Thessalonians to continue living a life of holiness for God. His letter touches on the *parousia*, or the second coming of Christ, which aims to comfort them rather than to scare them about Christ’s return at the end of the world (1 Thes 4:14-18).

Second Letter to the Thessalonians – In this epistle Saint Paul encourages the Thessalonians to persevere in the face of persecutions, knowing that Christ will in the end judge their persecutors. Paul speaks of the *Antichrist*, but criticizes the false preachers who called the end of the world as imminent, St. Paul insists that the end of the world is nowhere near at hand. He reprimands those who had stopped working and given themselves to idleness on account of it.

2. The **route of Paul’s second missionary voyage** was this: Paul and Silas (his new companion) started at Antioch, passed through Syria and Cilicia, then went to Derba and Lystra (where they were joined by Timothy), then to Phrygia, Galatia, Troas, and Philippi (capital of Macedonia) where he established a small church (Acts 15:40-16:18). Paul and Silas were arrested for preaching the Gospel, but asked to leave when the authorities found out that they were also Roman citizens (Acts 16:19-40). Paul proceeded to Thessalonica, Berea and several other cities including Athens and Corinth; finally, returning by way of Ephesus, Caesarea and Jerusalem, he came back to Antioch (Acts 18:18-22). See Map, next page.

3. Map of St. Paul's Second Missionary Voyage



Fig 4.2.11 St. Paul's Second Missionary Voyage

Third Missionary Voyage of Saint Paul – (ca. A.D. 53) (Acts 18:23-20:38)

After spending some time in Antioch, Paul left again for his third missionary journey. He went through Galatia and Phrygia and finally came to Ephesus, where he stayed two years baptizing and confirming the disciples, and preaching the word of the Lord. (Acts 18:23-19:10)

God performed more than common miracles by the hand of Paul. Handkerchiefs and aprons touched by him were brought to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. Fear fell on those who saw these things, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Many believed, and those who had practiced magical arts gathered their books and burnt them. (Acts 19:11-20)

At Ephesus there was a grand temple dedicated to the goddess Diana. But Paul turned many away from the worship of idols, saying: “They are not gods which are made by hands.” The silversmiths, who made miniature temples of Diana, and who used to sell them at a great profit, saw that their business was in danger of being lost because of Paul’s teachings. Therefore, they raised a great persecution against him, and Paul was forced to leave Ephesus and go to Macedonia. (Acts 19:24-20:1)

Paul went to Troas. Paul preached until midnight, as he was to depart in the morning. While he was preaching, a young man named Eutychus, who was sitting on the window, fell asleep and fell from the third floor down, and was taken up dead. When Paul had gone down, he laid himself upon him, and embracing him, said, “Be not troubled, for his soul is in him.” The young man was brought back to life. (Acts 20:6-12)



Fig 4.2.12 Paul Revives Eutychus

Artist: Jacques-François Courtin (1672-1752), CC BY-SA 4.0

Paul went to Assos, Chios, Samos and Miletus. In Miletus he summoned the clergy of the church at Ephesus to bid them farewell, for he was going to Jerusalem. To the bishops he said, *“Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops. You are to be the shepherds of that flock, which He purchased with His own Blood.”* There was much weeping among them, and they brought him on his way to the ship. (Acts 20:13-38)

COMMENTARY

1. St. Paul wrote the following epistles during his third missionary voyage: The Epistle to the Galatians, First and Second Corinthians, and the Epistle to the Romans.

Letter to the Galatians – Writing from Ephesus, Saint Paul writes this epistle to help the Galatians, whose faith was being perverted by Judaizers, to get back on track in their faith. The Judaizers were promoting strict observance of the Mosaic law and Jewish rites. But St. Paul insists that Christians are now under the New Law of the Gospel, not the law of Moses, and that justification now comes through faith in Christ, not through circumcision.

First Letter to the Corinthians – St. Paul writes this epistle to address reports of immorality and disunity he heard among the Corinthians. This epistle turns out to be one of the most important Pauline epistles, and the one most often read in Sunday Mass. For, in this epistle St. Paul stresses the importance of purity and virginity, clarifies the nature and purpose of marriage, resolves questions regarding the marriage of the unbaptized (Pauline Privilege), explains the nature of spiritual gifts (charismata), the excellence of charity, the resurrection of the dead, and the need to celebrate the Eucharist with respect.

Second Letter to the Corinthians – In this sequel to 1 Corinthians St. Paul talks about his spiritual labors, shows clemency to repentant sinners, exhorts the Corinthians to almsgiving and continues to defend his apostolic calling against false teachers who question his credibility. St. Paul talks about his sufferings as well as the graces and favors he received from God.

Letter to the Romans – In this epistle St. Paul proves his main contention that salvation is accessible to both Jews and Gentiles alike. He says that all have sinned. How then are they saved? Through faith in Jesus Christ. Justification by faith is a free gift from God, demonstrated by the graces received by those who become intimately united with Christ. St. Paul contrasts the Gospel Law of Love with the Old Testament Law of Fear, and predicts that the Jews (who missed Christ) will one day also return to the fold (Rom 11:1-36).

2. The route of Paul's third missionary voyage was this: He started from Antioch, passed through Galatia and Phrygia, and came to Ephesus where he remained for two years. He then passed over to Philippi in Macedonia, then to Corinth in Greece, and to Troas, where he stayed a week. He continued his tour of the islands of Lesbos and Chios, thence to Samos and Miletus. Then he sailed again to Tyre and Caesarea, and finally he was back to Jerusalem. See map below.



Fig 4.2.13 Paul's Third Missionary Voyage

Paul's Voyage to Rome – (ca. A.D. 60) (Acts 21 – 28)

When Paul entered the temple of Jerusalem, he was persecuted. The Jews dragged him out of the temple, and were about to kill him, when the Roman tribune came to stop the commotion. The Roman tribune commanded that Paul be confined to the barracks. (Acts 21:27-34)

At night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, “Be constant. As you have borne witness to me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness to me in Rome.” In the morning, some of the Jews gathered together and said that they would neither eat nor drink, till they killed Paul. (Acts 23:11-12).

Knowing that Paul was a Roman citizen, the Roman tribune, Lysias, wrote a letter to Felix, the Roman governor, to move him to Caesarea to protect him from being murdered by the Jews. Acts (23:26-30)

In Caesarea Paul was kept in prison for two years. (Acts 24:27).

Being a Roman citizen, Paul appealed to the Emperor at Rome. He was sent to Rome at his request to be judged by the Emperor. (Acts 25:10-12)

Thus, Paul had a fourth but non-missionary voyage, and that was his journey to Rome. But on his voyage, the ship was wrecked at a certain island. Paul and others in the ship were saved by a miracle. (Acts 27:21-25)

The island's name was Malta. In the three months that they stayed in Malta, Paul cured many sick people and performed miracles (Acts 28:1-10)

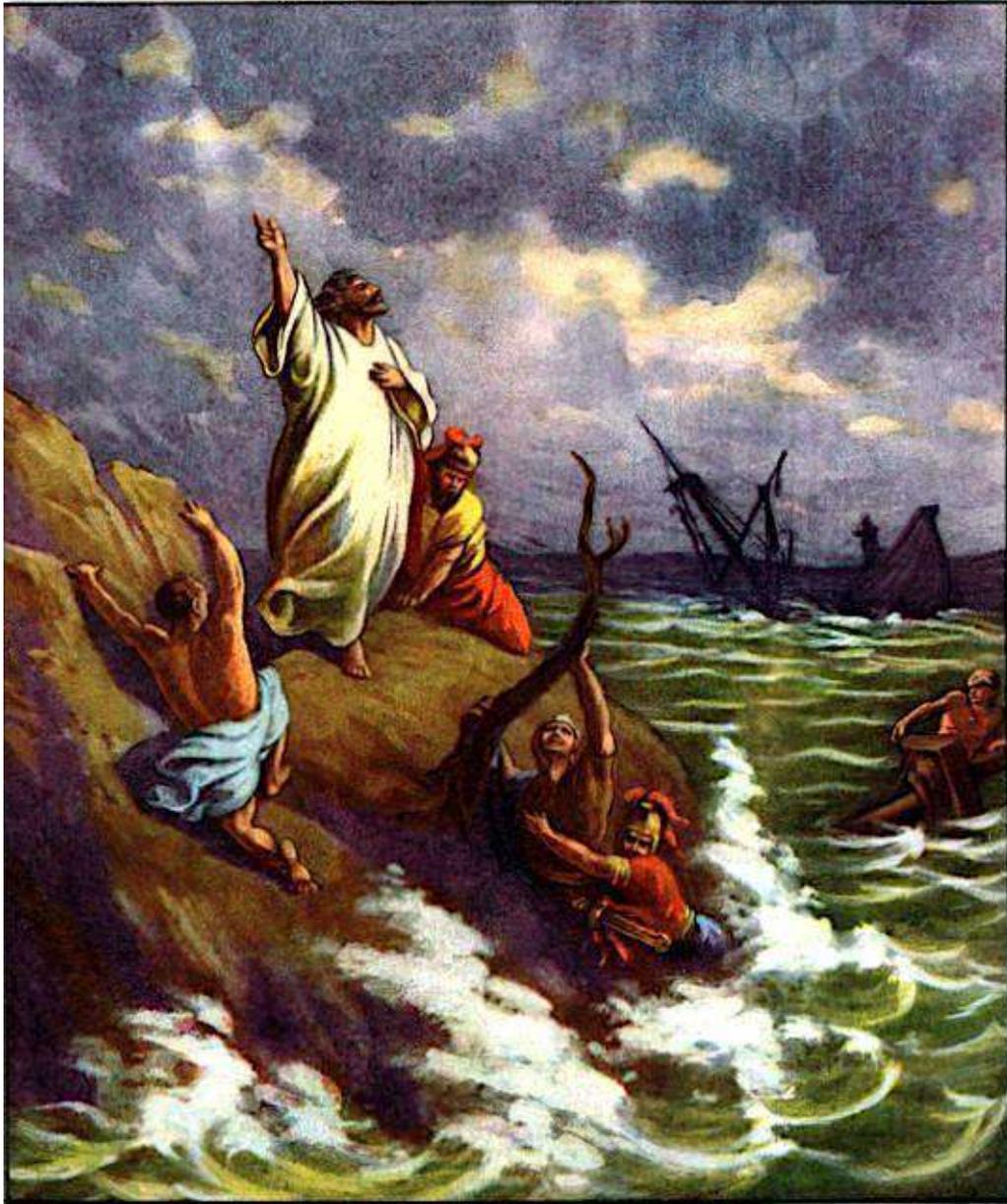


Fig 4.2.14 Paul Shipwrecked at Malta

Artist: Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

Finally, Paul arrived in Rome and was placed under military custody. While in prison he wrote more epistles or letters, particularly, the *Epistle to the Ephesians*, the *Philippians*, the *Colossians* and the *Epistle to Philemon*. After two years, he was set free and travelled some more (2 Tim 4:13). After his return he was imprisoned for the second time in Rome just before his martyrdom, and wrote the rest of his epistles.

COMMENTARY

1. In A.D. 64 the Roman Emperor Nero started a 90-day fire in Rome and blamed it on the Christians. A brutal persecution of the Christians followed. St. John was put into a cauldron of boiling oil in Rome, but survived it.¹⁰¹ He was then exiled in the island of Patmos, where he wrote the *Book of Revelation*.
2. In A.D. 65, Nero beheaded St. Paul on the same day that he crucified St. Peter upside down.



Fig 4.2.15 The Beheading of Saint Paul

Artist: Enrique Simonet (1866-1927)

¹⁰¹ This incident was not recorded anywhere in the New Testament, but we know it from the writings of Tertullian in *Prescription against Heretics*, Ch. 36.

3. The crucifixion of Saint Peter.



Fig 4.2.16 The Crucifixion of Saint Peter

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

“At his [Nero’s] hands he received the crown of martyrdom being nailed to the cross with his head towards the ground and his feet raised on high, asserting that he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord.” – St. Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* (On Illustrious Men), Ch. 1

4. The Death of the Apostles¹⁰²

THE DEATH OF THE APOSTLES		
NAME	PLACE OF APOSTOLIC LABORS	DEATH
<i>Judas Iscariot</i>		Hung himself, after betraying Christ for 30 pieces of silver.
<i>St. James the Greater</i> (This was James, the son of Zebedee, and brother of John)	Jerusalem	Beheaded by order of Herod Agrippa in Jerusalem in A.D. 44; first Apostle martyred and the only Apostle whose martyrdom is mentioned in the Bible (Acts 12: 1-2)
<i>St. Philip</i>	Phrygia, Asia Minor	Crucified at the city of Hierapolis of ancient Phrygia (in western Turkey) in A.D. 54.
<i>St. Andrew</i> (Peter's brother)	Scythia, Greece, Constantinople	Crucified suspended in an olive tree at Patras, Greece in A.D. 60.
<i>St. James the Less</i> (This was James, the son of Alphaeus)	Bishop of Jerusalem	Stoned and clubbed to death by the Jews in Jerusalem in A.D. 62.
<i>St. Peter</i>	Preached in Jerusalem, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia and Asia; Bishop of Antioch; Pope and Bishop of Rome	Crucified by order of Emperor Nero in A.D. 65; crucified upside down at his own request.
<i>St. Paul</i>	St. Paul made three missionary journeys to Mediterranean countries.	Beheaded at Rome in A.D. 65 on the same day that St. Peter was crucified.
<i>St. Matthias</i>	Chosen by Apostles to replace Judas; details of his life are unknown.	Stoned and beheaded in Colchis.
<i>St. Thomas Didymus</i> (This was the doubting Thomas in John 20:24-25)	Parthia, India, Far East	Martyred at the city of Calamene, in India.
<i>St. Bartholomew</i>	Arabia, Parthia, India, Armenia	Skinned alive in Armenia; crucified with his head downward.
<i>St. Matthew</i> , Evangelist	Arabia, Egypt	Martyred at Hieres, a town in Parthia.
<i>St. Jude Thaddeus</i>	Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia	Tied to a cross and shot to death with arrows in Armenia.
<i>St. Simon Zelotes</i>	North Africa, Persia	Crucified in Persia by idolatrous priests.
<i>St. John</i> the Evangelist	Asia Minor, Ephesus, Patmos; Guardian of Mary after the death of Christ	Escaped martyrdom of boiling oil under Emperor Nero; died at Ephesus in A.D. 100.

¹⁰² Many of the details regarding the death of the Apostles came from the writings of St. Hippolytus of Rome, *On the Apostles and Disciples*, but some were taken from the Catholic Encyclopedia.

Picture Credits / Sources

Cover Page: Madonna and Child (cropped)

Artist: Raffaello Sanzio, or Raphael (1483-1520)

<https://useum.org/artwork/The-Small-Cowper-Madonna-Raphael-1505/download/nojs>

Fig 1 The Good Shepherd (Frontispiece)

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Lord_is_my_Good_Shepherd.jpg

Fig 1.1.1 The Angel Gabriel Punishes Zechariah for His Unbelief

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From an old book, *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen* (undated, ca. 1914), with pictures by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld and colored by Prof. W. Zimmer.

Fig 1.1.2 The Annunciation

Artist: Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674)

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Fig 1.1.3 The Virgin Mary Visits Her Cousin Elizabeth

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *The Life of Our Savior*, Constance Christian Book, ca. 1900

Fig 1.1.4 The Naming of the Baptist

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From an old book, *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen* (undated, ca. 1914), with pictures by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld and colored by Prof. W. Zimmer.

Fig 1.1.5 The Dream of St. Joseph

Artist: Francisco Rizi (1608-1685)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rizi,_Francisco_-_The_Dream_of_St._Joseph_-_Goole_Art_Project.jpg

Fig 1.1.6 Christ Is Laid in a Manger (cropped image)

Illustrator: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration from a book by Adolf Hult, *Bible Primer New Testament*, published by Augustana Synod, 1920, p.6, and Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book One, 1925, p. 36.

Full image: <https://4000jesuspictures.com/700-jesus-nativity/madonna-modern/otto-a-stemler-01.jpg.html>

Enhanced image: <https://twitter.com/Prolife321/status/1080118974887723008/photo/1>

Fig 1.1.7 The Visit of the Shepherds

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From Mrs. C. D. Francis, *The Children's Book of New Testament Story*, 1914, Frontispiece

Fig 1.2.1 The Wise Men Offer Gifts

This is a chromolithograph by Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) of a pencil drawing by Heinrich Hofmann (1824-1911), from Hofmann's 1887 series: *Kommet zu mir! Bilder aus dem Leben des Heilandes; Festgabe für Christliche Familien (Come Unto Me! Images from the Life of the Savior; Statement for Christian Families)*, published by photogravure in 1891, and perhaps earlier in German.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_visit_of_the_wise-men.jpg

Fig 1.2.2 The Presentation

Artist: Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674)

<https://wordpress.catholicapedia.net/le-glaive-de-simeon/>

Fig 1.2.3 The Flight into Egypt

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Julius_Schnorr_von_Carolsfeld_-_Flight_into_Egypt_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

Fig 1.2.4 The Probable Route of the Holy Family's Journey to Egypt

From *Bible Atlas Online*, by Access Foundation

<http://gregoryblvdcc.org/Bible%20Maps/Bible%20Atlas%20Online%20by%20Access%20Foundation.htm>

Fig 1.3.1 The Holy Family Goes to Jerusalem

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

https://www.flickr.com/photos/bernhard_plockhorst/8550483961/in/photostream/

Fig 1.3.2 Christ among the Doctors of the Law

Artist: Heinrich Hofmann (1824-1911)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ChristInTheTemple.jpg>

Fig 1.3.3 Joseph and Mary Find Jesus in the Temple

Illustrators: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration used in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Two, 1925, p. 43.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104/with/10807467776/>

Fig 2.1.1 Map from *Bible Atlas Online #103a* (by Access Foundation)

Fig 2.1.2 John the Baptist Preaching

Artist: Alessandro Allori (1535-1607)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alessandro_Allori_-_The_Preaching_of_St_John_the_Baptist_-_WGA0183.jpg

Fig 2.1.3 The Baptism of Jesus Christ

Artist: Paolo Veronese (1528-1588)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Veronese_-_Baptism_of_Christ,_circa_1583-1584.jpg

Fig 2.1.4 The Temptation of Christ

Artist: Ary Scheffer (1795-1858)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ary_Scheffer_-_The_Temptation_of_Christ_\(1854\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ary_Scheffer_-_The_Temptation_of_Christ_(1854).jpg)

Fig 2.1.5 “Behold the Lamb of God”

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in Adolf Hult, Bible Primer, New Testament, published by The Augustana Synod, 1920, p. 24.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104/page1>

Fig 2.1.6 The First Disciples

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104>

Fig 2.1.7 Wedding Feast at Cana

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872). Colored version is found in several places in the Internet without provenance.

<https://archive.org/details/diebibelinbilder00schn/page/n409/mode/2up>

<https://caminhoscarmelitas.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/tmp938484555755552770.jpg>

Fig 2.2.1 The Cleansing of the Temple

Artist: Antoine-Jean-Baptiste Thomas (1791-1833)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_Christ_chassant_les_marchands_du_temple_-_Thomas.JPG

Fig 2.2.2 Christ Teaching Nicodemus

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From *Das Alte und Neue Testament in vierundzwanzig Bildern*, ca. 1890

Fig 2.2.3 St. John the Baptist in Prison

Artist: Juan Fernández Navarrete (1526-1579)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Juan_Fernández_de_Navarrete_-_St_John_the_Baptist_in_the_Prison_-_WGA16467.jpg

Fig 2.2.4 Christ and the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From Mrs. C. D. Francis, *The Children's Book of New Testament Story*, 1914, p. 40.

Fig 2.3.1 Christ Preaching

A public domain image found in the Internet.

Artwork is signed, but signature is undecipherable.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104/page1>

Enhanced image: <https://kidsclubforjesus.org/bible-lessons-mbf-21.html>

Fig 2.3.2 The First Miraculous Catch of Fishes

Artist: Raffaello Sanzio, or Raphael (1483-1520)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:V%26A_-_Raphael,_The_Miraculous_Draught_of_Fishes_\(1515\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:V%26A_-_Raphael,_The_Miraculous_Draught_of_Fishes_(1515).jpg)

Fig 2.3.3 The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law

Illustrators: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration used in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Two, 1925, p. 49.

Fig 2.3.4 The Curing of a Paralytic

Illustrator: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in Adolf Hult, *Bible Primer*, New Testament, published by The Augustana Synod, 1920, p. 36, and in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Two, 1925, p. 87.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104/page1>

Fig 2.3.5 The Calling of St. Matthew

Artist: Luca Giordano (1634-1705)

<https://www.library.georgetown.edu/special-collections/art/guac/Giordano>

Fig 2.3.6 Sermon on the Mount

Artist: Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bloch-SermonOnTheMount.jpg>

Fig 2.3.7 Christ Teaches the "Our Father"

Artist: Harold Copping (1863-1932)

<https://galileejournal.wordpress.com/2016/05/23/scripture-picture-harold-copping/>

Fig 2.3.8 "Look at the Birds of the Air and the Lilies of the Field"

Illustrators: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration used in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book One, 1925, p. 117.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104/page1>

Fig 2.3.9 The Healing of a Leper

Artist: Harold Copping (1863-1932)

<https://archive.org/details/HaroldCoppingIllustrations/0CD66B1B-AFEC-41C8-84E9-91F1A7FED8DE.jpeg>

Fig 2.3.10 The Curing of the Centurion's Servant

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104/page1>

Fig 2.3.11 The Raising of the Widow's Son to Life

Artist: Pierre Bouillon (1776-1831)

Image cropped from source.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pierre_Bouillon_-_Jesus_Resurrecting_the_Son_of_the_Widow_of_Naim.jpg

Fig 2.3.12 A Penitent Woman Anoints the Feet of Jesus

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

<https://4000jesuspictures.com/714-artist-sets/hofmann-plockhorst/ministry/bernard-plockhorst-86.jpg.html>

Fig 2.3.13 Mary Magdalene

The Penitent Woman who is Believed to Have Anointed Christ's Feet

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guido_Reni_-_The_Penitent_Magdalene_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

Fig 2.3.14 The Sower Sowing the Seed

Artist: English School

Fig 2.3.15 Christ Asleep in the Tempest

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *The Life of Our Savior*, Constance Christian Book, ca. 1900

Fig 2.3.16 Christ Calms the Storm

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

Illustration used in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Two, 1925, p. 94.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104/with/10807707693/>
<https://4000jesuspictures.com/714-artist-sets/hofmann-plockhorst/miracles/bernard-plockhorst-10.jpg.html>

Fig 2.3.17 Christ Restores Jairus' Daughter to Life

Illustrator: Heinrich Hofmann (1842-1902)

<https://4000jesuspictures.com/714-artist-sets/hofmann-plockhorst/miracles/heinrich-hofmann-86.jpg.html>

Fig 2.3.18 Salome with the Head of John the Baptist on a Platter

Artist: Jan Adam Kruseman (1804-1862)

From Rijksmuseum, CC BY-SA 3.0

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_Adam_Kruseman_-_Salomé_met_het_hoofd_van_Johannes_de_Doper_001.JPG

Fig 2.3.19 Christ Feeds the 5000

Illustrator: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

Illustration used in Adolf Hult, *Bible Primer, New Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1920, p. 46, and in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers, Book Two*, 1925, p. 105.

<https://4000jesuspictures.com/714-artist-sets/hofmann-plockhorst/miracles/bernard-plockhorst-02.jpg.html>

Fig 2.3.20 Christ Walks on the Water

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From Mrs. C. D. Francis, *The Children's Book of New Testament Story*, 1914, p. 77

Fig 2.3.21 “I am the Bread of Life” (John 6:35)

Artist: Harold Copping (1863-1932)

<https://archive.org/details/HaroldCoppingIllustrations>

Fig 2.4.1 Cure at the Pool of Bethesda

Artist: Alexandre Bida (1813-1895)

Illustration used in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers, Book Two*, 1925, p. 81.

<http://www.artnet.com/artists/alexandre-bida/le-christ-guérisant-un-malade-2others-3-works-KzJ2rsdvcv1t6aw2qv1hUJw2>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/10807453945/in/album-72157637569720104/>

Fig 2.4.2 The Canaanite Woman

Artist: Unknown

Cropped from source: Diocese of Phoenix

<https://dphx.org/a-canaanite-womans-great-faith/>

Fig 2.4.3 Christ Feeds the 4000

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *The Life of Our Savior*, Constance Christian Book, ca. 1900

Fig 2.4.4 Christ Gives to Peter the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven

Artist: Unknown

Illustration # 16 in a Portuguese catechism of 1910.

<http://www.sendarium.com/p/catecismo-ilustrado-de-1910.html>

Fig 2.4.5 The Transfiguration

Artist: Carl Bloch (1834-1890)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Transfigurationbloch.jpg>

Fig 2.4.6 “Be Humble as a Little Child”

Artist: Unknown

Free image found in the Internet.

<https://4000jesuspictures.com/703-jesus-disciples/training/kingdom-of-heaven.jpg.html>

Fig 2.4.7 The Unforgiving Servant

Image found in various places in the Internet without provenance.

<https://paolaserra97.blogspot.com/2015/08/perdonare-sempre-la-parabola-del-re.html>

Fig 2.5.1 The Good Samaritan

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

Source: *Das Alte und Neue Testament in vierundzwanzig Bildern*, ca. 1890

Fig 2.5.2 Christ in the House of Mary and Martha

Artist: Heinrich Hofmann (1824-1911)

<https://4000jesuspictures.com/714-artist-sets/hofmann-plockhorst/ministry/heinrich-hofmann-111.jpg.html>

Enhanced image from: <https://kidsclubforjesus.org/bible-lessons-mbf-21.html>

Fig 2.5.3 Christ and the Woman Caught in Adultery

Artist: Émile Signol (1804-1892)

https://en.muzeo.com/sites/default/files/styles/image_moyenne_def/public/oeuvres/paintings/heritage/la_femme_adulteere27832.jpg

Fig 2.5.4 Cure of the Man Born Blind

Illustrator: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in Adolf Hult, *Bible Primer, New Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1920, p. 66.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104/with/10807580454/>

Fig 2.5.5 The Good Shepherd

Artist: Harold Copping (1863-1932)

<https://archive.org/details/HaroldCoppingIllustrations/EBA9B360-B7F0-4FB2-A8BA-0E49EA173786.jpeg>

Fig 2.5.6 The Prodigal Son Receives His Share

Artist: Luca Giordano (1634-1705)

Photo Credit: National Trust

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-parable-of-the-prodigal-son-receiving-his-portion-220246>

Fig 2.5.7 The Son Gambled and Wasted His Money with Bad Women

Artist: Palma il Giovane (1550-1628)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palma_il_Giovane_-_Amusements_of_the_Prodigal_Son_-_1595-1600.jpg

Fig 2.5.8 The Prodigal Son Feeding Swine

Artist: Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Murillo_-_The_Prodigal_Son_Feeding_Swine,_NGI.4544.jpg

Fig 2.5.9 Return of the Prodigal Son

Artist: Harold Copping (1863-1932)

<https://archive.org/details/HaroldCoppingIllustrations/29920689-C011-49EF-A5AA-DA471FC6FB34.jpeg>

Fig 2.5.10 Poor Lazarus at the Rich Man's Door

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/13420>

Fig 2.5.11 "Father Abraham, Have Mercy on Me and Send Lazarus"

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/4511>

Fig 2.5.12 The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *The Life of Our Savior*, Constance Christian Book, ca. 1900

Fig 2.5.13 Christ Blesses the Children

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From the *Life of our Lord* by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, ca. 1890.

Fig 2.5.14 Christ and the Rich Young Ruler

Artist: Heinrich Hofmann (1824-1911)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hoffman-ChristAndTheRichYoungRuler.jpg>

Fig 2.5.15 The Raising of Lazarus

Artist: Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RaisingofLazarusBloch.jpg>

Fig 2.5.16 Mary of Bethany Anoints the Head of Jesus

Illustrators: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration from Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Three, 1926, p. 155.

Fig 3.1.1 Christ Enters Jerusalem on a Donkey

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

<http://www.redeemerofisrael.org/2010/03/day-1-triumphal-entry.html>

Fig 3.1.2 Christ Overturns the Money-Changers' Tables

A free (for non-profit use) image from Lds.org

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media-library/images/jesus-cleanses-temple-948976?lang=spa>

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email: romeomariadsn@gmail.com

Fig 3.1.3 The Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins

Illustrator: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in Adolf Hult, Bible Primer, New Testament, published by The Augustana Synod, 1920, p. 72, and in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Six, 1929, p. 163.

Fig 3.1.4 Parable of the Talents

Artist Unknown

From a bible card published by Providence Lithograph Co., 1906

Fig 3.1.5 The Final Judgment

Artist: Attributed to Pedro Rubiales (1511-1582)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Attributed_to_Roviale_Spagnolo_\(Pedro_Rubiales\)_-_The_Last_Judgment_-_62.43_-_Minneapolis_Institute_of_Arts.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Attributed_to_Roviale_Spagnolo_(Pedro_Rubiales)_-_The_Last_Judgment_-_62.43_-_Minneapolis_Institute_of_Arts.jpg)

Fig 3.1.6 The Jewish Council Conspires against Jesus

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

<https://www.dappledthings.org/deep-down-things/19071/holy-week-illustrated-by-james-tissot-palm-sunday>

Fig 3.1.7 Judas Iscariot Sells Jesus for Thirty Pieces of Silver

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

<https://www.dappledthings.org/deep-down-things/19127/holy-week-illustrated-by-james-tissot-wednesday>

Fig 3.1.8 Christ Washes the Apostles' Feet

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Fig 3.1.9 The Last Supper (restored)

Artist: Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Art-100.jpg>

Fig 3.1.10 The Agony in the Garden

Artist: Heinrich Hoffman (1824-1911)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Christ_in_Gethsemane.jpg

Fig 3.1.11 An Angel Appears to Jesus to Strengthen Him

Artist: Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gethsemane_Carl_Bloch.jpg

Fig 3.1.12 Judas Betrays Christ with a Kiss

Illustrator: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in Adolf Hult, Bible Primer, New Testament, published by The Augustana Synod, 1920, p. 74, and in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Five, 1928, p. 117

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104/with/10807568334/>

Fig 3.1.13 Christ before Caiaphas, the High Priest

Illustrators: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953) and Bess Bruce Cleaveland (1876-1966)

Illustration from Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Five, 1928, p. 121

Fig 3.1.14 The Repentance of St. Peter

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

From Hermitagemuseum.org, with CC BY-SA 4.0 International License

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reni_-_Repentance_of_St_Peter,_1635.jpg

Fig 3.1.15 The Despair of Judas

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

See Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *Bibel in Bildern*, Leipzig, Georg Wigand's Verlag, p. 481

Fig 3.1.16 Christ before Pontius Pilate

Artist: Il Tintoretto (1518-1594)

<https://www.artbible.info/art/large/46.html>

Fig 3.1.17 The Scourging

Artist: William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825-1905)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William-Adolphe_Bouguereau_\(1825-1905\)_-_The_Flagellation_of_Our_Lord_Jesus_Christ_\(1880\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William-Adolphe_Bouguereau_(1825-1905)_-_The_Flagellation_of_Our_Lord_Jesus_Christ_(1880).jpg)

Fig 3.1.18 The Mocking of Christ

Artist: Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Mocking_of_Christ_by_Carl_Heinrich_Bloch.jpg

Fig 3.1.19 The Carrying of the Cross

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872); colored by Fritz Kredel

Source: *The Big Golden Book of Bible Stories*, Simon and Schuster, NY, 1958, p.63.

Fig 3.1.20 The Crucifixion

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

Illustration used in Adolf Hult, *Bible Primer, New Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1920, p. 78, and in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Six, 1929, p. 195

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/32495192@N07/albums/72157637569720104/with/10807686763/>

Fig 3.1.21 The Piercing of Jesus' Side with a Spear

Artist: Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peter_Paul_Rubens_-_Christ_on_the_Cross_between_the_Two_Thieves_-_WGA20235.jpg

Fig 3.1.22 The Descent of Jesus from the Cross

Artist: Gaspar de Crayer (1584-1669)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gaspar_de_Crayer_-_The_Descent_from_the_Cross.jpg

Fig 3.1.23 The Wrapping of the Body of Jesus

Artist: Giovanni Battista della Rovere (1560-1627)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jesus_wrapping_-_g.battista.JPG

Fig 3.1.24 Guards at the Tomb

Artist: James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902)

<https://www.dappledthings.org/deep-down-things/19184/holy-week-illustrated-by-james-tissot-holy-saturday>

Fig 3.2.1 An Angel Tells the Women that Christ Has Risen

Artist: Bernhard Plockhorst (1825-1907)

<http://ellogosenelarteuniversal.blogspot.com/2016/03/>

Fig 3.2.2 The Shroud of Turin

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turin-plash.jpg>

Fig 3.2.3 Christ Appears to Mary Magdalene

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872). Colored version is found in many places in the Internet without provenance.

<https://archive.org/details/diebibelinbilder00schn/page/n493/mode/2up>

<https://paxlaur.com/2017/04/16/cristos-a-inviat-3/>

Fig 3.2.4 “Stay with Us, for the Day is Now Far Spent.”

Illustrator: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in Adolf Hult, *Bible Primer, New Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1920, p. 86, and in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers, Book Five*, 1928, p. 133

Fig 3.2.5 They Recognize Him at the Breaking of the Bread (cropped)

Artist: Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834-1890)

<https://frfoy.wordpress.com/2020/04/>

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bloch_Carl_The_Road_to_Emmaus.jpg

Fig 3.2.6 Saint Thomas Touches the Wounds of Christ

Artist: Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, aka Guercino (1591-1666)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guercino_-_The_Incredulity_of_Saint_Thomas,_1621.jpg

Fig 3.2.7 The Second Miraculous Catch of Fishes

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *The Life of Our Savior*, Constance Christian Book, ca. 1900

Fig 3.2.8 Christ’s Charge to Peter

Artist: Raffaello Sanzio, or Raphael (1483-1520)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:V%26A_-_Raphael,_Christ%27s_Charge_to_Peter_\(1515\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:V%26A_-_Raphael,_Christ%27s_Charge_to_Peter_(1515).jpg)

Fig 3.2.9 The Ascension

A traditional image found in many places in the Internet without provenance.

<https://classicalliberalarts.com/rosary/>

Fig 4.1.1 The Descent of the Holy Spirit

A traditional image found in many places in the Internet without provenance.

<https://classicalliberalarts.com/rosary/>

Fig 4.1.2 Peter Heals a Man Born Lam

Reproduction based on an original B/W drawing by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

See Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *Bibel in Bildern*, Leipzig, Georg Wigand's Verlag, p. 507

Fig 4.1.3 The Death of Ananias

Artist: Raffaello Sanzio, or Raphael (1483-1520)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:V%26A_-_Raphael,_The_Death_of_Ananias_\(1515\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:V%26A_-_Raphael,_The_Death_of_Ananias_(1515).jpg)

Fig 4.1.4 An Angel Helps the Apostles to Get Out of Prison

Artist: Probably Juan Rodríguez Samanez (1585-1651), from Cuzco, Peru.

<https://colonialart.org/archives/locations/peru/departamento-de-cusco/ciudad-de-andahuaylillas/iglesia-de-san-pedro#c3189a-3328b>

Fig 4.1.5 The Martyrdom of Stephen

Artist: Jean-Baptiste de Champaigne (1631-1681)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean-Baptiste_de_Champaigne_-_The_Martyrdom_of_Saint_Stephen.jpg

Fig 4.1.6 Philip and the Ethiopian

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in Adolf Hult, *Bible Primer, New Testament*, published by The Augustana Synod, 1920, p. 100.

Fig 4.1.7 Philip Baptizes the Ethiopian Man

Artist: Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rembrandt,_The_Baptism_of_the_Eunuch,_1626,_Museum_Catharijneconvent,_Utrecht.jpg

Fig 4.2.1 The Conversion of Saul

Artist: Nicolas Bernard Lépicier (1735-1784)

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ConversionStPaul.JPG>

Fig 4.2.2 Saul Escapes Damascus

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Five, 1928, p. 149

Fig 4.2.3 Peter Raises Tabitha to Life

Artist: Fabrizio Santafede (1560-1623)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fabrizio_Santafede_-_Saint_Peter_raises_Tabitha.jpg

Fig 4.2.4 Peter's Vision

Artist: Domenico Fetti (1589 - ?)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Domenico_Fetti_-_Peter%27s_vision_of_a_sheet_with_animals_-_Kunsthistorisches_Museum_Wien.jpg

Fig 4.2.5 Peter is Freed by an Angel

Artist: Bartolome Esteban Murillo (1617-1682)

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/bartolome-esteban-murillo/liberation-of-st-peter-1667>

Fig 4.2.6 St. Paul Heals the Cripple at Lystra

By French School

https://www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting_384803/French-School/Saints-Paul-And-Barnabas-Healing-The-Cripple-At-Lystra

Fig 4.2.7 St. Paul's First Missionary Voyage

From *The Complete Sunday School Atlas*, published by the New York Sunday School Commission, 1910-1911

Fig 4.2.8 "It Has Seemed Good to the Holy Spirit and to Us ..."**The Council of Jerusalem**

The Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles, Russian, 14th century, Moscow Museum

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Synaxis_of_the_Twelve_Apostles_by_Constantinople_master_\(early_14th_c.,_Pushkin_museum\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Synaxis_of_the_Twelve_Apostles_by_Constantinople_master_(early_14th_c.,_Pushkin_museum).jpg)

Fig 4.2.9 Paul and the Prison Guard at Philippi

Artist: Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in Adolf Hult, *Bible Primer*, New Testament, published by The Augustana Synod, 1920, p. 104.

Fig 4.2.10 Paul at the Areopagus in Athens

Artist: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872)

From Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, *The Life of Our Savior*, Constance Christian Book, ca. 1900

Fig 4.2.11 St. Paul's Second Missionary Voyage

From *The Complete Sunday School Atlas*, published by the New York Sunday School Commission, 1910-1911

Fig 4.2.12 Paul Revives Eutychus

Artist: Jacques-François Courtin (1672-1752), CC BY-SA 4.0

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cathédrale_Saint-Étienne_de_Toulouse_-_Saint_Paul_ressuscitant_Eutyque_par_Jacques_François_Courtin_PM31001406.jpg

Fig 4.2.13 Paul's Third Missionary Voyage

From *The Complete Sunday School Atlas*, published by the New York Sunday School Commission, 1910-1911

Fig 4.2.14 Paul Shipwrecked at Malta

Artist: Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

Colored by Otto Adolph Stemler (1872-1953)

Illustration used in Lillie A. Faris, *Standard Bible Story Readers*, Book Five, 1928, p. 162

Fig 4.2.15 The Beheading of Saint Paul

Artist: Enrique Simonet (1866-1927)

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Decapitación_de_San_Pablo_-_Simonet_-_1887.jpg

Fig 4.2.16 The Crucifixion of Saint Peter

Artist: Guido Reni (1575-1642)

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/guido-reni/crucifixion-of-st-peter-1605>