

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO MARK 9

Ver. 1. *And he said unto them*, etc..] Both to his disciples, and the multitude,

verily I say unto you, there be some of them that stand here; that were then living, and upon the spot,

which shall not taste of death, or die,

till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. When Jesus was declared both Lord and Christ, by the wonderful effusion of the Holy Spirit; the Gospel spread in the world both among Jews and Gentiles, in spite of all opposition, under the power and influence of the grace of God, to the conversion of thousands of souls; and that branch of Christ's regal power exerted in the destruction of the Jewish nation; (see Gill on ^{“<small>4163</small>”}Matthew 16:28”). This verse properly belongs to the foregoing chapter, to which it is placed in the Vulgate Latin version; and so it concludes one in Matthew, and ought not to begin a new chapter.

Ver. 2. *And after six days*, etc..] Six days after this discourse with his disciples, in their way to Caesarea Philippi, and after they were come into those parts:

Jesus taketh with him Peter, James, and John; favourite disciples, and a sufficient number, to be witnesses of his transfiguration:

and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves; where he and they were alone. This was not Mount Tabor, as is generally said, but either the mountain which Caesarea was at the foot of, or it may be Mount Lebanon; (see Gill on ^{“<small>4170</small>”}Matthew 17:1”);

and he was transfigured before them; the above three disciples; (see Gill on ^{“<small>4171</small>”}Matthew 17:2”).

Ver. 3. *And his raiment became shining*, etc..] With the rays of glory and brightness which darted from his body through his clothes, and made them as bright as the light of the sun at noon day: and

exceeding white as snow; than which nothing is whiter;

so as no fuller on earth can white them. The Syriac version renders it, “as men cannot white on earth”; and the Persic thus, “so as men could not behold him”. Just as the Israelites could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, because of the glory of his countenance, when he came down from the mount; (see Gill on “^{407B}Matthew 17:2”).

Ver. 4. *And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses*, etc..] Or Moses and Elias, as all the Oriental versions read, as in Mt. 17:3, (see Gill on “^{407B}Matthew 17:3”):

and they were talking with Jesus; concerning his decease, and what he was to do and suffer at Jerusalem, and of which he himself had lately talked with his disciples; so that this might have been a confirmation of these things to them; (see Gill on “^{407B}Matthew 17:3”).

Ver. 5. *And Peter answered and said to Jesus*, etc..] He addressed himself to him, as being more familiar with him; as also because he was the principal person: wherefore he says,

master, it is good for us to be here: the company and conversation were exceeding agreeable to him and his fellow disciples; and the glory that Christ appeared in surpassed every thing they had seen before:

and let us make three tabernacles; or, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read, “and we will make”, etc.. expressing not a petition, but a resolution; to which the Persic version premises, “if thou wilt give us commandment”; submitting it to the will of Christ:

one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias; (see Gill on “^{407B}Matthew 17:4”).

Ver. 6. *For he wist not what to say*, etc..] He did not know what he should say, or what was proper to be said by him, at such a time, in such circumstances, and before such persons;

for they were sore afraid. The Persic version reads, “he was”: and so the Latin translation of the Syriac, though that itself is, “they were”; for all

three were filled with consternation at what they saw and heard; so that they were scarcely themselves, and knew not well what they said or did.

Ver. 7. *And there was a cloud that overshadowed them*, etc..] Jesus, Moses, and Elias, and also the disciples; who, according to Luke, entered into it, and so were covered by it.

And a voice came out the cloud, saying, this is my beloved Son, hear him. This was the voice of God the Father, bearing a testimony to the sonship of Christ; and was directed, not to Moses and Elias, but to the disciples, enjoining them to hear and obey him, who was the end of the law and prophets; was the great prophet Moses had spoken of, and was to be hearkened to, and whom all the prophets had testified of, and in whom they all centred; (see Gill on “^{<4075>}Matthew 17:5”).

Ver. 8. *And suddenly, when they had looked round about*, etc..] Upon hearing the voice, to see if they could observe any other object, by whom it was pronounced, and whether the same they had seen continued:

they saw no man any more; neither Moses, nor Elias, not at that time, nor ever after;

save Jesus only with themselves: the voice only regarded him, and being directed to them; (see Gill on “^{<4078>}Matthew 17:8”).

Ver. 9. *And as they came down from the mountain*, etc..] Christ and his three disciples, Peter, James, and John, whom he led up thither:

he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen; on the mount, as the transfiguration of himself, the persons of Moses and Elias, and the bright cloud from whence the voice came, which bore testimony of Christ's sonship: he ordered to keep the whole of this a secret from every man, even from their fellow disciples,

till the Son of man were risen from the dead; (see Gill on “^{<4079>}Matthew 17:9”).

Ver. 10. *And they kept that saying with themselves*, etc..] “They retained it in their own mind”, as the Persic version renders it; “they kept [it] close”, as Luke says, (^{<4083>}Luke 9:36), among themselves, and acquainted no man with it: and which refers either to the whole of Christ's charge, relating to the vision on the mount; or else only to what he said about his resurrection from the dead; and which they took notice of particularly, and laid hold

upon, as the word will bear to be rendered; and so the Ethiopic version does render it, “and they observed his saying”; what he last said concerning the son of man's rising from the dead;

questioning with one other what the rising from the dead should mean: they inquired, disputed, and reasoned with one another, what should be the meaning of such an expression: not that they were ignorant of the general resurrection of the dead; for this was the hope of Israel, and the general sense of the Jewish nation: but they did not know what he meant by his particular rising from the dead: whether he meant it in a literal sense, which supposed his death; and that though he had lately told them of, they knew not how to reconcile to the notions they had of a long and flourishing temporal kingdom of the Messiah; or whether he meant a and interest, in such manner as they expected.

Ver. 11. *And they asked him, saying,* etc..] Being put in mind of it, by seeing Elias on the mount, or else by what Christ had said concerning his resurrection, or both:

why say the Scribes, the Vulgate Latin adds, “and Pharisees”,

that Elias must first come? before the Messiah comes, or before the setting up his kingdom in greater glory; (see Gill on “^{<4070>}Matthew 17:10”).

Ver. 12. *And he answered, and told them,* etc..] Allowing that their observation was right, and that this was the sense of the Scribes, and that there was something of truth in it, when rightly understood:

Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things: (see Gill on “^{<4071>}Matthew 17:11”);

and how it is written of the son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. The sense of Christ is, that John the Baptist, whom he means by Elias, comes first, and restores all things: and among the rest of the things he sets right, this is one, and not of the least; namely, that he gives the true sense of such passages of the sacred writings, which related to the contemptuous usage, rejection, and sufferings of the Messiah; as that in these he was the Lamb of God typified in the sacrifices of the law, who by his sufferings and death takes away the sin, of the world; and therefore he exhorted and directed those to whom he ministered, to look unto him, and believe in him; (see ^{<4029>}John 1:29 ^{<4194>}Acts 19:4).

Ver. 13. *But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed come*, etc..] Meaning John the Baptist, who in prophecy is designed by him.

And they have done unto him whatsoever they listed; (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁷²Matthew 17:12”); which words should be read in a parenthesis, as they are in the Vulgate Latin version; for what follows, as

it is written of him, respects not what the Scribes and Pharisees, and the people of the Jews did to John at their pleasure; despising his ministry and message, rejecting the counsel of God delivered by him, and remaining impenitent and unbelieving, notwithstanding his powerful and awakening ministry, with many other things, which are no where written of him; but the words regard his coming, and the prophecies concerning him, and particularly, that under the name of Elijah, in (³⁰¹⁵Malachi 4:5) and which had had their accomplishment.

Ver. 14. *And when he came to his disciples*, etc..] The other nine, who were left at the bottom of the mountain, and were waiting for him:

he saw a great multitude about them: there was a multitude that followed him from Bethsaida hither; and which, very likely, was greatly increased upon Christ's arrival in those parts, and the people hearing of it;

and the Scribes questioning with them; disputing and contending with them about their master, his doctrines and miracles, and their mission and authority from him; insulting them, on account of their inability to dispossess a dumb spirit, hereafter related.

Ver. 15. *And straightway all the people, when they beheld him*, etc..] As soon as ever they saw him, to many of whom, especially those that followed him out of Galilee, he was personally known.

Were greatly amazed; either that he should come at that juncture, to assist and relieve his disciples, when the Scribes were triumphing over them, as some think; or rather, as others, on account of that remaining lustre and glory which was on his countenance, through his transfiguration, and not yet wholly gone off; like that which was on the face of Moses, when he came down from Mount Sinai:

and running to him, saluted him; wishing him all peace and prosperity, expressing their great joy at his coming to them; which was very desirable

by them, and exceedingly pleasing to them, and especially at this time, as both their words and gesture showed.

Ver. 16. *And he asked the Scribes*, etc..] The Vulgate Latin renders it, “he asked them”; and the Ethiopic version, he said unto them; meaning either that he asked the disciples when he came to them, or else the people that ran to salute him; but the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions read, “the Scribes”; seeing them about his disciples, in close debate with them, and running hard upon them, he asks them,

what question ye with them? what is it ye seek and require of them? what is your dispute with them? what is your debate about? The Vulgate Latin version reads, “what question ye among you?” among themselves, and one another; and so Beza's most ancient copy.

Ver. 17. *And one of the multitude answered and said*, etc..] The Scribes made no reply, being afraid to engage with him, whom they had often found too hard for them; and the disciples, if they were spoken to, were silent, through shame, because they had not succeeded in the cure of the person brought to them, which gave their enemies an handle against them: wherefore the parent of the afflicted child made answer, saying; the occasion of this debate between the Scribes, and thy disciples, is as follows:

Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; signifying, that he had heard much of him, as a very great man, and he believed him to be a master in Israel, who was famous both for doctrine and miracles, and therefore he brought his son to him, to be cured by him; but Christ not being in the way, he proposed him to his disciples, who attempted it without success. The case of his son was, he had a “dumb spirit”. The Evangelist Matthew says he was “lunatic”, (^{<4075>}Matthew 17:15); and by his account of him it appears, that he had the “epilepsy”, or falling sickness; and which, when upon him, took away the use of his speech. And so the Jews ascribe dumbness to the violence of a disease: thus they ask ^{f176};

“what is “Cordiacus” (καρδιακος)? one that has a disorder which affects the heart, and causes a deliquium (a fainting and swooning away), but a man, **I a hn**, “who is become dumb”, through the force of a disease;”

which was the case of this child: though this disease did not arise from natural causes, but from a diabolical possession; for he had a spirit, a foul spirit, a devil, as he is called: some further account is given of this unhappy case, in the next verse.

Ver. 18. *And wheresoever he taketh him*, etc..] The spirit, or devil, whether it be near fire, or water, whatsoever danger, or dangerous place:

he teareth him; or throws him into it, or dashes him against it; or inwardly racks, tortures, and convulses him:

and he foameth; at the mouth, like one that is mad:

and gnasheth with his teeth; through the excessive pain he is in:

and pineth away; his flesh is withered, dried up, and consumed away. This was the sad deplorable case this child was in, who was his father's only child, and therefore his health and life were very desirable: now he further observes to Christ, saying,

and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not. Christ being absent, he entreated the disciples, who had power against unclean spirits, to cast them out; that they would make use of it, and dispossess this dumb and evil spirit; and who did make trial to cast him out, but were not able to effect it; (see Gill on "~~4176~~ Matthew 17:16").

Ver. 19. *He answereth him*, etc..] The father of the child, and who is included in the reproof afterwards given, for his unbelief, and taking part with the Scribes against his disciples; though the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions, read, "them"; meaning not his disciples, but the Scribes and Pharisees, with the father of the child: and saith,

O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me; (see Gill on "~~4177~~ Matthew 17:17").

Ver. 20. *And they brought him unto him*, etc..] The father of the child, and those that were with him, brought the child to Jesus, into his presence, before him:

and when he saw him, that is, either when Jesus saw the child, or the child saw Jesus; or the evil spirit in him, and by him which were all at once:

straightway the spirit tare him; threw him into a violent fit, shook him, and convulsed him in a dreadful manner; knowing his time was short, and being

filled with indignation and rage, that he should be obliged, as he knew he must, to leave the child very speedily; and was therefore resolved to do all the mischief, and put him to all the pain he could:

and he fell on the ground; at the feet of Jesus, not being able to stand, through the violent motions and convulsions he threw him into:

and wallowed, foaming; rolled about from side to side, foaming at the mouth, and in the most exquisite rack and torture.

Ver. 21. *And he asked his father*, etc..] As he lay rolling about in this miserable condition, that the length and stubbornness of his disorder might be known, and so the cure the more remarkable, and appear the more expressive of his divine power and goodness:

how long is it ago since this came unto him? since this evil spirit entered into him, and these disorders have attended him?

and he said of a child; or “from his infancy”; so that it was not for any actual sin that he had committed, that this sore affliction came upon him; and yet he could not be without sin, since it was not agreeable to the justice, mercy, and goodness of God, to afflict, or suffer to be afflicted, one that is innocent; and therefore must be tainted with original sin, which is the source and spring of all afflictions, calamities and judgments.

Ver. 22. *And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire*, etc..] When he has been near it; so that one part or other of his body has been scorched, or burnt, and his life in danger:

and into the waters to destroy him: when he has been near any brook, or river, it has thrown him into it, in order to drown him, as into the fire to burn him. The Ethiopic version before fire and water reads, “into the deep”; meaning either the sea or some deep pit, or off a precipice. All this is said to aggravate the case, and show the miserable condition the child was in, from the frequency of the fits, and the danger he was exposed to:

but if thou canst do any thing. This man's faith was very weak, and perhaps weaker than when he first came from home with his child. He had brought him to the disciples of Christ, and they could not cure him; the evil spirit was as strong, or stronger in him than ever; he now lay in a violent fit, and in a most miserable condition; so that he was almost ready to despair of healing: some small hopes he had that Christ might be able to relieve in this

case; but he puts an if upon his power, and earnestly entreats him, if he had any, he would put it forth:

have compassion on us, and help us; his child that lay in such a deplorable condition, rolling on the ground at his feet; and himself, who was greatly afflicted for him: he tries, in very moving language, both the power and pity of Christ; and begs that if he had either, he would exert them on this occasion.

Ver. 23. *Jesus said unto him, if thou canst believe*, etc..] As the man put an “if” on the power of Christ, Christ puts an “if” on the faith of the man; and tacitly suggests, that power was not wanting in himself, but faith in him; and should that cure not be performed, it would not be owing to any inability in him, but to his own incredulity. The Arabic version renders it, “what is this thy: saying, if thou canst do any thing?” What dost thou mean by it? Thou oughtest not to doubt of my power; there is no reason for it, after so many miracles wrought; upbraiding the man with his unbelief; and the Ethiopic version renders it thus, “because thou sayest, if thou canst”: wherefore to show that power was not wanting in him, provided he had but faith, it follows,

all things are possible to him that believeth; that is, “to be done” to him, as the Syriac and Ethiopic versions supply: for all things are not possible to be done by the believer himself, but all things are possible to be done for him, by God, or Christ, or the Spirit of God: thus our Lord, as he elsewhere does, ascribes that to faith, which is done by a divine power.

Ver. 24. *And straightway the father of the child cried out*, etc..] As soon as ever he found it was put upon his faith, and that the issue of things would be according to that, he expressed himself with much vehemency, being in great distress; partly with indignation at his unbelief, and partly through fear of missing a cure, by reason of it:

and said with tears; repenting of his unbelief, and grieved at the present weakness of his faith; which he very ingenuously confesses, saying,

Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief; not forward, but out of the way: he found in himself some small degree of faith in the power of Christ, but it was mixed with much unbelief, through the greatness of the child's disorder; and therefore desires it might be removed from him, and he might be helped against it: he saw it was not in his own power to believe; nor had he strength of himself to oppose his unbelief; but that both faith must be

given him, and power against unbelief. The Syriac version renders it, “help”, *ytwnmyh twryl*, “the defect of my faith”: till up that which is lacking in it, it is very deficient, Lord, increase it; and the Arabic and Ethiopic translate thus, “help the weakness of my faith”. He found his faith very weak, he desires it might be strengthened, that he might be strong in faith, and give glory to God; and in this way belief is helped, or men helped against it: every believer, more or less, at one time or another, finds himself in this man's case; and also that it is necessary to make use of the same petition; for faith is but imperfect in this life, and often very weak and defective in its exercise.

Ver. 25. *When Jesus saw that the people came running together*, etc..] *hytwl*, “to him”, as the Syriac version adds, and so the Persic; upon hearing the vehement cry of the father of the child, and the earnest solicitations he made, expecting that something would be done:

he rebuked the foul spirit; that brought this disorder on the child, had continued it so long, and with so much violence. Matthew calls this foul spirit, “the devil”, (see Gill on “~~4078~~Matthew 17:18”):

saying unto him, thou dumb and deaf spirit; so calling him, not because the spirit was dumb and deaf, but because he had been the cause of dumbness and deafness in the child: he had at times taken away both his speech and hearing:

I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him. Christ, in an authoritative way, ordered the unclean spirit to leave his possession, and never attempt to regain it more. This he said, partly with regard to the devil, who would be desirous of repossession; and partly with respect to the disease, which had its intervals, and returned at certain times; and also with respect to the father of the child, to confirm his faith in the cure, and that he might be in no pain about the return of the disorder.

Ver. 26. *And [the spirit] cried, and rent him sore*, etc..] We rightly supply, “the spirit”, as do the Syriac and Persic versions, “the demon”; for it was he, and not the child, that cried, and made an hideous noise, at his ejection; being filled with wrath and rage, that he must be obliged to quit the possession he had so long held; and therefore, in spite and malice, before it left him, shook and tore him, and threw him into dreadful convulsions:

and came out of him; though sore against his will, being obliged to it, by the superior power of Christ:

and he was as one dead: that is, the child, when the devil had left him, lay as still as if he had no breath, nor life in him:

insomuch that many said, he is dead; really dead: that there was no life in him, nor any hopes of his coming to himself again.

Ver. 27. *But Jesus took him by the hand*, etc..] “Took hold of the hand of the child”, as the Persic version renders it;

and lifted him up; from the ground, on which he was cast by the spirit;

and he arose: this is omitted in the Syriac and Arabic versions, though in one edition of the latter, according to Deuteronomy Dieu, it is rendered, “and he stood”; to which is added, “and went into his own house”. The Persic version, instead of this clause, reads, “and the child was healed”; and all the expressions show, that he was perfectly well.

Ver. 28. *And when he was come into the house*, etc..] Perhaps into the man's house whose child he had healed, or into some other in these parts, for the sake both of retirement and refreshment:

his disciples asked him privately, why could not we cast him out? The nine disciples, who were particularly concerned in this matter, fearing they had lost the power of casting out devils, conferred upon them, inquired of Jesus, when he was alone, why they could not cast the demon out of the child, when they had ejected unclean spirits out of many others; (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁷⁹Matthew 17:19”).

Ver. 29. *And he said unto them*, etc..] Matthew, besides the following reason, assigns another, as given by our Lord, why they could not cast out the foul spirit, which was their unbelief; of which they were guilty in some sort, as well as the Jews, and the father of the child; but Mark omits it, and only relates this as the reason;

this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting; which they had not observed; (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁷²Matthew 17:21”).

Ver. 30. *And they departed thence*, etc..] From the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, from that part of the country where the mountain was, on which Christ was transfigured, and at the foot of which the above miracle was

wrought. This is to be understood of Christ and his twelve disciples, though the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read in the singular number, “he went out”; not alone, but with his disciples, as the following account shows:

and passed through Galilee; in order to go to the coasts of Judea, and so to Jerusalem, where he was shortly to suffer: and therefore that his journey might not be retarded, and he be hindered by the conversation of the people in Galilee, and their importunity to stay with them, and teach, and work miracles among them, he passed through the country, in as private a manner as could be:

and he would not that any man should know it; partly for the reason just mentioned, and partly that he might have the opportunity of conversing alone with his disciples, and of reminding, and informing them, of some important things, which it was necessary they should be acquainted with, and observe.

Ver. 31. *For he taught his disciples, and said unto them*, etc..] What he had some little time before suggested to them; (see ^{<408B>}Mark 8:31).

The son of man is delivered into the hands of men: in one of Beza's copies it is read, “sinful men”, as in (^{<4247>}Luke 24:7) and so the Persic version reads here, and adds rebellious. This is represented as if it was already done, because it was determined and agreed upon, that it should be; and because, in a very little time, the son of man would be delivered into the hands of wicked men, according to the will of God, with his own consent, by the means of Judas, the Jews, and Pilate:

and they shall kill him; put him to death, in a violent manner, contrary to all law and justice:

and after that he is killed; this is omitted in the Arabic version, and in the Persic version in the room of it it is read, “and shall put him into a sepulchre”; that being what followed next upon his death:

and he shall rise the third day. This Christ always takes care to mention, for the comfort of his disciples, when he tells them of his death.

Ver. 32. *But they understood not that saying*, etc..] Meaning either the whole of what he had said, concerning his delivery, death, and resurrection: and which then must be interpreted with some limitation; for they must

understand the sense of his words, which were clear and express; especially concerning his death, which affected their minds with trouble and grief; for Matthew says, “they were exceeding sorry upon it”, (see Gill on ⁽⁴¹⁷²⁾Matthew 17:23”); but they could not understand how it could be, and upon what account, and for what end, so holy and good, and innocent a man as he was, could be put to death; nor how this could consist with his character, as the Son of God, the Messiah, and king of Israel; and with the notions they had of the Messiah's abiding for ever, and setting up a temporal kingdom on earth: or this may regard only his resurrection from the dead; which whether it was to be taken in a literal or mystical sense, they could not tell:

and were afraid to ask him; lest they should be upbraided with their ignorance and stupidity, as they had been lately rebuked by him for their unbelief, and the neglect of their duty; and as Peter had been severely reprimanded for expostulating with him about the selfsame things, delivered by him to them, not before.

Ver. 33. *And he came to Capernaum*, etc..] Where he met with the collectors of the tribute money, and paid it to them, as related by Matthew, (⁽⁴¹⁷³⁾Matthew 17:24), though Mark takes no notice of it. The Vulgate Latin and the Syriac versions, read in the plural number, “they came”; Christ and his twelve apostles; and which is the sense of the words, read in the singular number; for Christ came not alone, but with his disciples:

and being in the house; of Simon and Andrew, very likely where he used to be when at Capernaum:

he asked them, what was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? Whilst in their journey from Caesarea Philippi, to Galilee; or as they travelled through the parts of Galilee to Capernaum. This question Christ put, not as ignorant of what had passed among them, but in order to have the case laid before him; that he might reprove them for their pride and ambition, and have an opportunity of teaching them humility, and of informing them of the nature of his kingdom, and subjects; concerning which, they had entertained very wrong notions. The phrase “among yourselves”, is omitted in the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions, but stands in the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic.

Ver. 34. *But they held their peace*, etc..] Fearing a reprimand, for their vanity and affectation of worldly grandeur:

for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who [should be] the greatest; that is, who should be advanced to the highest post, and have the greatest place of authority, honour, and dignity, in the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, they expected would be in a little time set up; for notwithstanding what Christ had said to them, concerning his being given up to the power of men, and concerning his death and resurrection, they still retained their former principle, to which they knew not how to reconcile his dying; and therefore chose rather to leave his meaning in suspense, and remain ignorant about it, than quit so darling a notion: and doubtless this dispute was occasioned by what Christ had said to them; who afterwards, getting by themselves, talked about it, which led on to a warm contest, about precedence in his kingdom.

Ver. 35. *And he sat down,* etc..] As their master, as one having authority; and in order to examine into this matter, and pass judgment upon it:

and called the twelve; all the disciples, who though they might not be all engaged in this dispute, nor equally criminal, yet were all, possessed of the same notion; and therefore Christ calls them all unto him, what he had to say, being pertinent unto them all:

and saith unto them, if any man desire to be first; to have the pre-eminence, and be in the chief place in the kingdom of the Messiah,

the same shall be last of all, and servant of all: his pride and vanity shall be checked; his ambitious views shall be frustrated; instead of being first, he shall be last; and instead of having superior reverence and respect, he shall be debased, and treated with neglect and contempt; and instead of being the master over others, shall be the servant of all. Some copies read, “let him be”; and so the Persic version, “let him be last, and minister to every one”; and the Ethiopic thus, “let him subject himself to all, and be servant to all”; for the only way to preferment in Christ's kingdom, or in the Gospel dispensation, is humility and meekness, and performing the lowest services to all, with diligence and cheerfulness.

Ver. 36. *And he took a child,* etc..] Which was in the house, and which he called unto him, and set by him, as the other evangelists observe:

and set him in the midst of them; his disciples, that all might see and learn from this instance;

and when he had taken him in his arms; and embraced him, to show his great regard to humility, and humble persons:

he said unto them; the following words.

Ver. 37. *Whosoever shall receive one of such children*, etc..] That is, any believer, who is like to such a child for humility, meekness, and lowliness of mind; and so the Syriac version renders it, *ayl j anh ya*, “one like to this child”: and so the Arabic and Persic versions; for it cannot be thought that Christ's meaning is, that whoever takes up any little child, embraces, and takes notice of it, as he did, does what is after related; but that whoever shows respect, and performs the least office of love and kindness to the meanest believer, comparable to a little child, for the above excellent qualities, and he does this, says Christ,

in my name; on account that he belongs to Christ, is one of his, bears his image, partakes of his grace, is loved by him, and shall be glorified with, him: such is Christ's great regard to his humble followers, that he takes it all one as if done to himself:

he receiveth me; this humble believer, being a member of his, and like unto him, and respected by him;

and whosoever shall receive me; Christ, in any of his members:

receiveth not me; that is, not him only; for he does receive him, otherwise there would be a contradiction in the words; but his meaning is, that he does not hereby receive him, by receiving one of his, nor him so much, as his Father:

but him that sent me; for as showing respect to one of Christ's members, is showing respect to him; so showing respect to Christ, is showing respect to his Father, from whence he came, by whom he was sent, in whose name he acted, and whose work and service he was concerned in.

Ver. 38. *And John answered him, saying*, etc..] Taking notice of what Christ just now said, and observing how well pleasing it was to him, to receive in a meek and humble manner, the least believer in his name; and reflecting upon an action, in which he and some of his fellow disciples were concerned, and which he perceived was not so agreeable to this rule of Christ, thought proper to relate it to him; that he might have his sense of it,

and give him an opportunity of enlarging on a subject, so suitable to the temper and disposition of this beloved disciple.

Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name: very likely he called him Rabbi, as the Syriac version renders it, or Rabboni, as in (~~John~~ John 20:16), a title commonly given to Christ, both by his disciples and others: the case related, very probably happened, when the disciples being sent forth by Christ to preach the Gospel and cast out devils, took a tour through Judea and Galilee, where they saw this man. John was not alone; there were others with him, at least another, who was an eyewitness with him; for the apostles were sent out, by two and two: who this man was, is not said, his name is not mentioned, perhaps was unknown to the apostles; though Beza says, in one ancient exemplar it is read, “we knew one”. This person not only attempted to cast out devils, but really did; and that more than one; but in which of Christ's names he did it, is not expressed; if in the name of the Messiah, Dr. Lightfoot's conjecture may be right, that he was one of John's disciples; who had been baptized in the name of the Messiah, that was just expected to come; to whom, as to others of his disciples, was given a power of casting out devils, to make the way of the Messiah more plain; wherefore the reason why he did not cast out devils in the name of Jesus, but in the name of the Messiah, and did not follow him, nor his disciples, was not out of contempt, but ignorance, not knowing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah: or if he cast out devils in the name of Jesus, which seems most likely, he might be, as others think, a disciple of John's, who really did believe in Jesus, though he did not associate with, his disciples, but continued with the disciples of John: wherefore it is said,

and he followeth not us; was neither one of the twelve apostles; nor one of the seventy disciples; nor even one of the lower class of the professed disciples of Jesus. This clause is omitted in the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions:

and we forbad him; going on in this way, casting out any more devils:

because he followeth, not us; was not one of their company, nor any of Christ's disciples; who had received no authority and commission from Christ, to do what he did: wherefore they feared, that by such an irregular way of proceeding, the dignity of Christ would be lessened, and some dishonour and reproach reflected on him: and besides the honour of Christ, they might consult their own; and their case be too much like that of

Joshua, when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp. This clause is left out in the Vulgate Latin, but stands in all the eastern versions.

Ver. 39. *But Jesus said, forbid him not*, etc..] Neither him, nor any other they should hereafter meet with, who might be casting out devils in his name, giving this as a reason for it;

for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name; or “miracles”, as the Syriac version, as to cast out devils, or heal any sickness and disease,

that can lightly speak evil of me: such a man can never reproach and blaspheme that name, which he makes use of in doing, and by which he does wonderful works; no man can call Jesus accursed, who casts out devils in his name; (see ^{411B}1 Corinthians 12:3), if he has spoken evil of him before, he cannot do it “again”, as the Persic version renders it, with any face; or he cannot do it “quickly, immediately”, as the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions interpret it: there must be some time before such an one apostatizes, if he ever does; he cannot very easily and readily go into a way of blaspheming that name, by which he does his mighty works: his conscience will not admit of it; and besides, it would be contrary to his interest; it must sink his credit, and he lose the esteem and applause of men, he had gained by his miracles; for to dishonour that name, would be to reproach himself.

Ver. 40. *For he that is not against us, is on our part*.] Many copies read, “he that is not against you, is for you”; as this man; he was not against either Christ, or his disciples; he was doing the same work, promoting the same interest, and destroying the kingdom of Satan: and therefore, though he did not follow them, and had not his commission immediately from Christ; yet, inasmuch as he was opposing the same common enemy, and did nothing against them, he ought to be reckoned as one for them, and on their side. It is a proverbial expression, signifying that all that are not against a man, and take not the part of his enemy, are to be accounted his friends.

Ver. 41. *For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink*, etc..] Not only one that does a miracle in the name of Christ, but he that shows the least respect, or does the least kindness to any one of his; (see Gill on ^{410D}Matthew 10:42”); is to be reckoned a friend, and is so accounted by Christ; and will be sooner or later taken notice of by him, especially, if what he does, be it ever so little, is done on his account:

in my name, because ye belong to Christ; or as the Syriac version renders it, “on account that ye are Christ’s”; are his disciples, are called by his name, are partakers of his grace, bear his image and likeness, are loved by him, interested in him, given to him, redeemed by him called by his grace, and shall be with him:

verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward; (see Gill on “⁴¹⁰⁰Matthew 10:42”).

Ver. 42. *And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me*, etc..] Whosoever shall do the, least injury to the meanest person that believes in Christ, who are mean both in their own eyes, and the eyes of others; for Christ is not speaking of little children in age, who are neither capable of believing in Christ, nor are they ready to take offence; but of such as belong to him; his disciples and followers, of whom he is speaking in the preceding verse:

it is better for him that a mill stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea; and drowned there: the allusion is to the drowning of malefactors, by tying a stone, or any heavy thing about their necks, and casting them into the sea. Casaubon, and others, have shown out of Heathen writers, that this has been a practice of some nations, particularly the Grecians: Jerom says, Christ speaks according to the custom of the country; this being a punishment of the greatest crimes among the Jews; but I have no where met with it in their writings: Christ’s sense is, that such who give offence to any of his ministers or people, how mean soever they may appear, shall undergo the severest punishment; (see Gill on “⁴¹⁸⁶Matthew 18:6”).

Ver. 43. *And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off*, etc..] I have observed on (⁴¹⁵⁰Matthew 5:30) that by the Jewish canons, cutting off of the hand was ordered in some cases there mentioned; which, though literally enjoined, must not be understood, as though the Jewish sanhedrim had a power of inflicting such a punishment, on persons found guilty of the things instanced in; or that it was required they should do this to themselves; but such rules were delivered in such language, to show the heinousness of the crimes committed, to express an abhorrence of them ^{f177}, and to deter persons from them; and to show, as the gloss ^{f178} on one place observes, that it is better that the hand be cut off; or it should be more eligible to the person himself, to have it cut off, than to be guilty of such evil: and in like manner, Christ there and here, directs to what is most proper and fit to be

done; even to part with what is ever so near and dear, rather than be drawn into evil by it: and his sense in this place is, that the dearest friends and acquaintance, or be they what they will, though ever so near and dear, like a right hand, the instrument of action, that obstruct the spiritual welfare of men, are to be renounced and parted with, and treated as real enemies, and of the most pernicious consequence; (see Gill on “~~4179~~ Matthew 5:29-30”).

It is better for thee to enter into life maimed: not that there will be any such thing, as upon the resurrection, going into heaven without a limb; for the words are to be understood, not literally, but figuratively; and the sense is, it is better to part with every thing here, that is detrimental to a man's doing, or enjoying, what is spiritually good, and enter into eternal life,

than having two hands, to go into hell; than by enjoying such persons and things, agreeable to the flesh, to the ruin of the soul, and be cast into hell;

into the fire that never shall be quenched. This is a periphrasis of hell, and is an allusion to the valley of Hinnom, from whence hell has its name, here and elsewhere; where a constant fire was kept, for the burning of polluted things: one of the Jewish writers says ^{f179}, that it

“was a place in the land near to Jerusalem, and was a place contemptible: where they cast things defiled, and carcasses; and there was there, **dymt a**, “a continual fire”, to burn polluted things and bones; and therefore the condemnation of the wicked, in a parabolical way, is called “Gehinnom”.”

And says another of them ^{f180},

“Gehinnom is a place known, near to Jerusalem, and a valley, **tybkn ah ya**, “whose fire is never quenched”; and in which they burn bones of defilement, and carcasses, and other polluted things.”

This whole clause is left out in the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions; and the phrase, “that never shall be quenched”, is not in the Arabic version.

Ver. 44. *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*] The passage referred to, is in (²³⁶³ Isaiah 66:24), and as there, the words are spoken of such, as transgressed against the Lord; so here, of such as offended any of Christ's little ones, or were offended by an hand, a foot, or eye, and retained them: by their worm is meant, their conscience; for as a worm that is continually gnawing upon the entrails of a man, gives him

exquisite pain; so the consciences of sinners, will be continually flying in their faces, bringing their sins to remembrance, accusing them of them, upbraiding them with them, aggravating them, tormenting them for them, filling them with dreadful anguish and misery, with twinging remorse, and severe reflections, and which will never have an end. This will be always the case; conscience will be ever distressing, racking, and torturing them; it will never cease, nor cease doing this office, and so the Chaldee paraphrase of (~~264~~ Isaiah 66:24) renders this phrase, *wṭwmy al wḥtmn*, “their souls shall not die”; but shall ever continue in the dreadful torments and unspeakable horrors of a corroding conscience; and by “the fire” may be meant the fire of divine wrath let into their souls, which will never be extinguished; and so Jarchi interprets the phrase in (~~264~~ Isaiah 66:24), “their fire”, *nhygb*, “in hell”. It is a tradition of the Jews ^{f181}, that the light, fire, which God created on the second day, “there is no quenching it for ever”; as it is said, “for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched”, (~~264~~ Isaiah 66:24), the passage which is here referred to; the reason they give is, because it is the fire of hell; the sense of which is sometimes given by the Jewish doctors thus ^{f182}; “their worm shall not die” from the body, “and the fire shall not be quenched” from the soul.

Ver. 45. *And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off*, etc..] Such who are that to men, as the foot is to the body, the support of them through whom they have their maintenance and subsistence; and yet these, if they are a means of causing them to stumble and fall, or of leading out of the ways of Christ, and off from him, their company is to be shunned and abstained from;

it is better for thee to enter halt into life. The Vulgate Latin version reads, “eternal life”, which is undoubtedly intended by “life”; and so reads the Cambridge copy of Beza's; and the meaning is, that it is better to go alone without such company into heaven,

than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; (see Gill on “~~404~~ Mark 9:44”).

Ver. 46. *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*] The Persic version renders it, “because from thence there can be no deliverance”: which is rather an interpretation of these figurative expressions, and is a good one; since they design the eternity of hell torments, as well as point at the anguish and misery of them.

Ver. 47. *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out,* etc..] Than which, nothing is dearer to man, it being very tender, and exceeding useful: this metaphor the Lord sometimes makes use of, to show how dear his people are unto him, and what a tender concern he has for them, (^{4520}Deuteronomy 32:10 ^{4978}Psalms 17:8 ^{3118}Zechariah 2:8). And here it may design such, as are most beloved by men, and are their most intimate acquaintance, and bosom friends; and yet these are to be parted with, when they prove snares and stumbling blocks, or give offence, by endeavouring to draw into sin, and from Christ:

it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye; that kingdom, which God has prepared for his people, from the foundation of the world, and of his rich grace, gives unto them, and in which they will enjoy him to all eternity;

than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire. In the two instances before it is added, “that never shall be quenched”.

Ver. 48. *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*] This is repeated again, not only to assure the truth of the thing, but to raise the attention of the mind unto it, and fix an awful impression upon it: the Persic version renders it, “from whence thou shall never find redemption”: there is no redemption from hell, as Origen and others have thought.

Ver. 49. *For every one shall be salted with fire,* etc..] That is every one of those that transgress the law of God, offend any that, believe in Christ, retain their sins, and sinful companions; every one of them that are cast into hell, where the worm of conscience is always gnawing, and the fire of divine wrath is always burning, with that fire every one of them shall be salted: that fire shall be to them, what salt is to flesh; as that keeps flesh from putrefaction and corruption, so the fire of hell, as it will burn, torture, and distress rebellious sinners, it will preserve them in their beings; they shall not be consumed by it, but continued in it: so that these words are a reason of the former, showing and proving, that the soul in torment shall never die, or lose any of its powers and faculties; and particularly, not its gnawing, torturing conscience; and that the fire of hell is inextinguishable; for though sinners will be inexpressibly tormented in it, they will not be consumed by it; but the smoke of their torments shall ascend for ever and ever; and that they will be so far from being annihilated by the fire of hell, that they shall be preserved in their beings in it, as flesh is preserved by salt:

and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt; referring to (^(רמב"ם)Leviticus 2:13). “With all thine offerings thou shall offer salt”; not only the meat offerings, but the burnt offerings, and all others, were to be offered with salt^{f183}; of which, the Jews say the following things^{f184}:

“It is an affirmative precept to salt all the sacrifices, before they go up to the altar, as it is said, (^(רמב"ם)Leviticus 2:13). With all thine offerings thou shall offer salt; and there is nothing brought to the altar without salt, except the wine of drink offerings, and blood, and wood; and this thing is a tradition, and there is no Scripture to support it; and the commandment is to salt the flesh very well, as one salts flesh for roasting, who turns the part, and salts it; though if he salts the whole, with even one grain of salt, it is right; he that offers without any salt at all, is to be beaten; as it is said, “thou shall not suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking”: and though he is to be beaten, the offering is right, and acceptable, except the meat offering. — The salt, with which they salt all the sacrifices, is from the congregation, as the wood; and a private person does not bring salt, or wood, for his offering, from his own house: and in three places^{f185} they put on salt, in the chamber of salt, and upon the ascent of the altar, and upon the top of the altar: in the chamber of salt they salt the skins of the holy things; and upon the ascent of the altar they salt the parts (of the sacrifice); and upon the top of the altar they salt the handful, and the frankincense and the meat offerings, that are burnt, and the burnt offerings of fowls.”

Something of this kind also obtained among the Heathens, who thought their sacrifices were not rightly offered, nor acceptable to God, unless salt was used with them^{f186}. Now our Lord in this has either respect to the same persons, as before; and signifies hereby, that the wicked in hell shall be victims to divine justice, and sacrifices to his wrath and vengeance; and that as the sacrifices under the law were salted with salt, these shall be salted with the fire of hell, and shall never be utterly destroyed; but shall ever remain the objects of God's sore displeasure; and fiery indignation: or he may have respect to a different sort of persons, even to the saints and people of God, who are an holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice to him; and in the prophecy referred to in the context, (^(צפני)Isaiah 66:20), they are said to be brought for “an offering to the Lord — as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord”: and so as the

sacrifices of the Jews were salted with salt, and became acceptable to God; such who are seasoned with the grace of God, are preserved from the corruptions of the world, are acceptable in the sight of God, and are kept safe to his kingdom and glory.

Ver. 50. *Salt is good*, etc..] To make meat savoury, and keep flesh from corrupting; and so is the grace of God, to season men's hearts, make their discourse savoury, and preserve them from the corruption of sin: and so men made partakers of the grace of God; they are good and useful to others, both by their words and actions, and especially ministers of the Gospel, who are “the salt of the earth”, (see Gill on “~~4163~~Matthew 5:13”); and here Christ may chiefly intend his apostles:

but if the salt hath lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? there is no recovering it, it becomes good for nothing; (see Gill on “~~4163~~Matthew 5:13”);

have salt in yourselves; the doctrine of grace, and word of Christ, prudence in talk and conversation, and holiness of heart and life, so as to behave wisely towards them that are without;

and have peace one with another; which the God of peace calls unto, the Gospel of peace requires, and the grace of God teaches. Salt is an emblem of firm union, concord, and agreement: hence the covenant of peace is called a covenant of salt, (~~04889~~Numbers 18:19), compared with (~~04252~~Numbers 25:12). This exhortation, very appropriately follows upon the making mention of salt in different senses; especially, this exhortation was the more necessary to the disciples at this time, since they had been very lately warmly disputing the point among themselves, who should be greatest in the kingdom of the Messiah; and which had occasioned this discourse of Christ's.