

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 12

Ver. 1. *At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn,* etc.] That is, the corn fields, as the other evangelists express it. It being on a sabbath day, it is very probable, that Christ and his disciples were going to some public place of worship, the way to which lay through some fields of corn, which were now ripe: for Luke says, it was on the “second sabbath after the first”, or rather “the first sabbath after the second”; that is, the first sabbath after the second day of the passover, when the sheaf of the first fruit was offered, and harvest was begun.

And his disciples were an hungered; it being in the morning before they had broke their fast; and this circumstance is mentioned to show the reason of the following action, and to excuse it: at which the Pharisees were so much offended, and of which they accused them, as having done what was very criminal:

and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat; Luke adds, “rubbing them in their hands”; and so here in the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, it is rendered, “they began to rub”: as they passed along, they plucked off the ears of corn, either barley or wheat, and rubbed them in their hands, to get the grain clear of the husk, or beard, and eat them; contenting themselves with such mean and unprepared food, when the Jews on that day fed on the best of dainties^{f706}.

Ver. 2. *But when the Pharisees saw it,* etc.] Who went along with him, or followed him, being employed to make observation on his words and actions,

they said unto him; Luke says, “unto them”, the disciples: it seems, they took notice of this action both to Christ and his disciples, and first spoke of it to the one, and then to the other, or to both together:

behold thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day! they mention it with astonishment, and indignation. What they refer to, is not their walking on the sabbath day: this they might do, according to

their canons, provided they did not exceed two thousand cubits, which were a sabbath day's journey ^{f707} nor was it their passing through the corn fields; though, according to them ^{f708},

“it was not lawful for a man to visit his gardens, *wytwdçw*, “or his fields”, on the sabbath day, to see what they want, or how the fruits grow; for such walking is to do his own pleasure.”

But this they knew was not the case of Christ, and his disciples, who were not proprietors of these fields: nor was it merely their plucking the ears of corn, and rubbing and eating them, which were not their own, but another man's; for this, according to the law, in (^{<1825>}Deuteronomy 23:25) was lawful to be done: but what offended the Pharisees was, that it was done on a sabbath day, it being, as they interpret it, a servile work, and all one as reaping; though, in the law just mentioned, it is manifestly distinguished from it. Their rule is ^{f709}

“he that reaps (on the sabbath day) ever so little, is guilty (of stoning), *awh rxwq hdl wt çl wtw*, and “plucking of ears of corn is a derivative of reaping”;

and is all one as its primitive, and punishable with the same kind of death, if done presumptuously: so Philo the Jew observes ^{f710}, that the rest of the sabbath not only reached to men, bond and free, and to beasts, but even to trees, and plants; and that *ου ερνος ου κλαδον, αλλ ουδε πεταλον εφειται τεμειν*, “it was not lawful to cut a plant, or branch, or so much as a leaf”, on a sabbath day: and it may be what might make this offence of the disciples the more heinous was, that they plucked these ears, and ate them, and so broke their fast before morning prayer; for a man might not eat any thing on a sabbath day until morning prayers were ended in the synagogue, nor indeed on any other day; for they used not to eat bread till after they had offered the daily sacrifice, which was about the third hour of the day, or nine o'clock in the morning; nor did they eat till the fourth hour, or ten o'clock ^{f711}.

Ver. 3. *But he said unto them, have ye not read*, etc.] If they had not read the Scriptures, they were very unfit persons either to be teachers, or censurers of others, and must have been very slothful and negligent; and if they had, they could not but have observed the case of David, which Christ produces in vindication of his disciples:

what David did when he was an hungred; which was the case of the disciples, and is therefore mentioned; it being also the circumstance which could, and did excuse what was done by David and his men: and the Jews themselves own, that in case of hunger the showbread might be eaten, by those that were not priests; not only that which was removed from the table, but that which was upon it; yea, even when there was none to put in its room ^{f712}; and that David was in the utmost distress, and therefore desired it, and it was granted him on that account. They represent him as thus saying to the priest ^{f713},

“when he found there was none but showbread, give it me, that we may not die with hunger; **tbç hj wd twçpn qpsç**, “for danger of life drives away the sabbath”;

which perfectly agrees with our Lord’s argument, and justifies the apostles conduct: and this was not a single fact of David’s, but of others also;

and they that were with him; for though in (^{<0200>}1 Samuel 21:1) he is said to be “alone, and no man with him”; yet this must be understood either comparatively, having but very few with him, and which were as none, considering his dignity; or thus, though none came with him to Ahimelech, pretending to the priest he had a secret affair of the king’s to transact; and therefore had left his servants in a certain place, and desires bread for himself and them; concerning whom the priest and he discourses, as may be seen in the place referred to: so that though no man was with him at the priest’s house, yet there were some with him, and who partook with him in eating of the showbread.

Ver. 4. *How he entered into the house of God*, etc.] Not the temple, which was not then built; but the tabernacle, which was then at Nob, the city of the priests, and which probably adjoined to Abimelech’s house:

and did eat the shewbread; for that this is meant by the hallowed bread, in (^{<0206>}1 Samuel 21:6) is certain; though R. Joseph Kimchi ^{f714} thinks it was the bread of the thank offering; to which R. Levi ben Getsom ^{f715} seems to incline: but the general sense of the Jewish doctors ^{f716} is, that it was the showbread; and which is very clear from that text, and is rightly affirmed by Christ;

which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests: (see ^{<0345>}Leviticus 24:5,9) and so the Jews say that

this bread *pyrzi rwsa*, “is forbidden to strangers”^{f717}; that is, to any but the priests, which, after the burning of the frankincense, was divided equally among them: that course of priests that came into the service had six cakes, and that which went out six; though the high priest had a right to half himself, but he did not use to take it, it being judged not to his honour to do so^{f718}. No hint is here given, nor in the history, in (~~0200~~-1 Samuel 21:1) that it was on the sabbath day that David came to Ahimelech, and ate the showbread; but this is observed, and disputed, by the Jewish writers. Some indeed are in a doubt about it; but others^{f719} readily give into it, that it was on the sabbath day, which he chose to flee in, for the greater safety and preservation of his life: and indeed it seems reasonable it should be on that day; since on that day only the showbread was removed from the table, and other loaves put in the room. One of their writers^{f720} says,

“that showbread was not to be eaten, but on the day, and night of the sabbath day; and on the going out of the sabbath day; and on the going out of the sabbath David came there.”

Now our Lord’s argument stands thus, that if David, a holy, good man, and, the men that were with him, who were men of religion and conscience, when in great distress, through hunger, ate of the showbread, which was unlawful for any to eat of but priests, the high priest himself assenting to it; then it could not be criminal in his disciples, when an hungred, to pluck, rub, and eat a few ears of corn, which were lawful for any man to eat, even though it was on the sabbath day: and for the further vindication of them, he adds,

Ver. 5. *Or have ye not read in the law*, etc.] (~~0420~~ Numbers 28:9) by which law the priests were obliged, every sabbath day, to offer up two lambs for a burnt offering; to which were annexed many servile works, as killing the sacrifice, flaying it, cutting it in pieces, and laying it on the altar, cutting of wood, and putting that in order, and kindling the fire: from all which, it might be observed,

how that on the sabbath days, the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless. There were many things, which, according to the Jewish canons, the priests might do on the sabbath day; particularly they might slay the sacrifice: it was a rule with them, *tbç ta hj wj ç htj d*, “that slaying drives away the sabbath”^{f721}. They might also knead, make, and bake the showbread on the sabbath day: their general rule was,

as R. Akiba says, that what was possible to be done on the evening of the sabbath, did not drive away the sabbath; but what was not possible to be done on the sabbath eve, did drive away the sabbath ^{f722}: so they might kill the passover, sprinkle its blood, wipe its inwards, and burn the fat on the sabbath day ^{f723}, with many other things. What exculpated these men was, that what they did was done in the temple, and for the service of it, upon which an emphasis is put; and agrees with their canons, which say, that there is no prohibition in the sanctuary; *awh rth çdqmb twbç rwsya*, “that which is forbidden to be done on the sabbath, is lawful to be done in the sanctuary” ^{f724}: and whereas, it might be objected to the disciples of Christ, that they were not priests; and what they did was not in the temple, but in the fields; to this it is replied, in the following words:

Ver. 6. *But I say unto you*, etc.] Who Christ knew would be ready to object, as above, and therefore prevents them, by saying,

that in this place is one greater than the temple; meaning himself, who was the Lord and Proprietor of the temple, and in his human nature the antitype of it; (see ~~<B1B>~~ John 2:19) and was infinitely more sacred than that. Some copies read *μειζον*, “something greater”; referring either to the human nature of Christ, in which the Godhead dwells bodily, and so infinitely greater than the temple; or to the health of his disciples, which was in danger, through hunger: or to the ministry of the apostles, which, by satisfying nature, they were more capable of performing; either of which was of more moment than the sacrifices and service of the temple. Christ’s argument is, that if the temple, and the service of it, excused the priests from blame, in doing things in it on the sabbath day, which otherwise might not be done; then much more might his presence, who was greater than the temple, excuse his disciples from blame in this action of rubbing and eating the ears of corn; which was done to satisfy hunger, and to render them the more capable of performing their ministerial function; and which was of more importance than the service of the priests.

Ver. 7. *But if ye had known what this meaneth*, etc.,] The passage of Scripture in (Hos 6:6)

I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; of the sense of which, *see Gill* “~~<B1B>~~ Matthew 9:13”

ye would not have condemned the guiltless. Our Lord taxes the Pharisees both with ignorance of the Scriptures, in which they pretended to be very

knowing, and took upon them to be the interpreters of; and with inhumanity, for condemning innocent persons, the apostles, for rubbing a few ears of corn, for the refreshment of nature; which they would never have done, had they understood the word, and will of God; who prefers acts of humanity, compassion, and mercy, to the observance of rites and ceremonies; or had they the common affections of human nature, and those bowels of compassion which one man ought to show to another.

Ver. 8. *For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.*] By “the Son of man” is meant, not any man, as some have thought; for no mere man is lord of any law, moral or ritual, natural or positive; or has a power of disposing of it, and dispensing with it at pleasure; but Christ himself; which is the constant sense of this phrase in the New Testament, and is a character of the Messiah in the old, (^{<2073>}Daniel 7:13) who, as he was the institutor of the sabbath among the Jews, that being a ritual, and of mere positive institution, could dispense with it, and even abrogate it at his pleasure. The Jews so far agree to this, that he that commanded the law of the sabbath, could dispense with it; they say ^{f725}, that

“the day on which Jericho was taken was the sabbath day; and that though they slew and burnt on the sabbath day, **tbç | | j | hwx**
tbçh | [hwxç ym, “he that commanded the observation of the sabbath, commanded the profanation of it.”

And since Christ is greater than the temple, and has all the perfections of the divine nature in him, is equal to the Father in power and glory; and even as mediator, has all power in heaven and earth given him; so as he is Lord of all other things, he is of the sabbath, and has a power of dispensing with it, and even of abolishing it; (see ^{<3026>}Colossians 2:16,17) and since the Lord of the sabbath had a power of dispensing with it, and made use of it in the cases of David and his men, and of the priests in the temple formerly; the Pharisees ought not to think it strange, that the Son of man, who is equally Lord of the sabbath, dispensed with it in his disciples now.

Ver. 9. *And when he was departed thence*, etc.] From the corn fields, where the disciples had plucked the ears of corn, and this conversation passed between Christ and the Pharisees about the violation of the sabbath, he went into their synagogue; not on the same sabbath day, as one might be led to conclude from the account of this evangelist, but on another sabbath, as Luke expresses it, (^{<3066>}Luke 6:6). He might indeed directly go into one

of their synagogues the same day, where he and his disciples seem to have been going, and stay in the city the week following; and then, as it is said in (~~Mark~~ Mark 3:1) he entered again into the synagogue; not being afraid of the Pharisees, who sought an advantage against him; nor deterred by them from doing good to men; and willing to take another opportunity of exposing their ignorance and malice.

Ver. 10. *And behold, there was a man which had his hand withered*, etc.] Or dry; the juices were dried up, the nerves and sinews contracted, so that it was of no manner of use to him: Luke says, it was his right hand, which was so much the worse; and means not only his hand, but the whole arm. Such a case is mentioned in the Talmud ^{f726}, “it happened to one, “w[wrz hçbyç, that his arm was dry, or withered. Jerom says ^{f727}, in the Gospel which the Nazarenes and Hebronites used, this man is said to be a plasterer, and so might possibly come by his misfortune through his business; and being a man that got his bread by his hand labour, the case was the more affecting. This account is introduced with a “behold!” it being remarkable that such a case should offer so opportunely, of showing his divine power in healing such a disorder; and of his authority, as the Son of man, over the sabbath; and of putting to silence his enemies, the Pharisees: and who, upon seeing such an object, put the following question to him;

and they asked him, saying, is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? and which was put, not for information sake, as willing to be instructed in this point; for their determinations were, that healing was not lawful on such a day; nor were any means to be made use of for that purpose: if a man received a cure accidentally, it was very well; but no methods were to be taken with intention: as for instance ^{f728};

“if a man had an ailment in his throat, he might not gargle it with oil, but he might swallow a large quantity of oil, aprtn aprtn µaw “and “if he was healed, he was healed” (i.e. it was very well, it was no breach of the sabbath); they may not chew mastic, nor rub the teeth with spice, on the sabbath day, hawprl ^ywktmç ^mzb, “when it is intended “for healing”; but if it is intended for the savour of his mouth, it is free.”

There are several things they allowed might be done on the sabbath; but then they did not reckon them to come under the notion of healing.

“Three ^{f729} things R. Ishmael bar Jose said he had heard from R. Matthia ben Charash; they might let blood for the stranguary on the sabbath day; one that was bit by a mad dog, they might give him hog’s liver to eat; and he that had an ailment in his mouth, they might put spice to it on the sabbath day: but the wise men say of these, that there is not in them *hawpr mwçm*, anything of medicine.”

Indeed, in case of extreme danger of life they did admit of the use of medicine, by the prescription of a physician ^{f730}.

“Danger of life drives away the sabbath; wherefore, if there is any danger in a sick person, it is lawful to kindle a fire for him, etc. and they may kill, and bake, and boil: and though there may be no apparent danger, only a doubt of danger; as when one physician says there is a necessity, and another physician says there is none, they may profane the sabbath for him.”

Hence it is very clear with what view the Pharisees asked Christ this question; and that it was, as the evangelist says, that they might accuse him: either of cruelty and weakness, should he answer in the negative, that either he was not able to heal the poor man before him, or wanted compassion; or should he answer in the affirmative, as they expected, and act upon it, then they might have wherewith to charge him before the sanhedrim as a violator of the sabbath, and of their canons concerning it.

Ver. 11. *And he said unto them*, etc.] Well knowing their intentions, and also their usages and customs, which he was able to produce and object to them; in which, through covetousness, they showed more regard to their beasts, than they did humanity to their fellow creatures:

what man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

Christ appeals to them in a case which was usually done among them, and which, without delay, no man would scruple to do; though their present rule of direction, in such a case, is this ^{f731}:

“if a beast fall into a ditch, or a pool of water, if food can be given it, where it is, they feed it till the going out of the sabbath; but if not, bolsters and pillows may be brought, and put under it, and if it can come out: it may come out:”

and which is elsewhere ^{f732} a little differently expressed;

“if a beast fall into a ditch, or pool of water, it is forbidden a man to bring it out with his hand; but if he can give it food where it is, it may be fed till the going out of the sabbath:”

which seems to have been made since the times of Christ, and in opposition to this observation of his.

Ver. 12. *How much then is a man better than a sheep?* etc.] As a rational creature must be better, and more excellent, than an irrational one, more care is to be taken of, and more mercy shown unto, the one, than the other: even the health of a man is preferable to the life of a beast; and if it is lawful to give food to a beast, and make use of means for its relief, and for the lifting it up out of a ditch, when fallen into it on the sabbath day, “wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days”, to men; to do acts of beneficence and humanity to them, among which must be reckoned healing of diseases and infirmities: and particularly, if it is lawful to take a sheep out of a ditch on the sabbath day, it must be right to restore to a man the use of his hand on such a day; and especially to one that gets his bread by his hand labour, as it is very likely this man did. This was such a strong way of arguing, that the Jews could not well object to it; and it appears, that they were confounded and put to silence; for, as Mark observes, “they held their peace”: and indeed they allow of everything to be done where life is in danger, though not otherwise: they say ^{f733},

“they may take care of the preservation of life on the sabbath; and if he is prepared for it, lo! this is praiseworthy, and there is no need to take a licence from the sanhedrim: as when a man sees a child fallen into the sea, he may spread a net, and bring him out; and if he is prepared for it, lo! this is praiseworthy, and there is no need to take a licence from the sanhedrim, though he was fishing: if he sees a child fallen into a ditch, he may rake into the mud and bring him out; and if he is prepared for it, lo! this is praiseworthy, and there is no need to take a licence from the sanhedrim, though he had set a ladder ready.”

It is said of Hillell ^{f734}, that

“he sat by a window to hear the words of the living God, from the mouth of Shemaia and Abtalion; and they say that that day was the evening of the sabbath, and the winter solstice, and the snow

descended from heaven; and when the pillar of the morning ascended, (when it was daylight,) Shemaia said to Abtalion, brother Abtalion, all other days the house is light, but today it is dark, perhaps it is a cloudy day: they lift up their eyes, and saw the form of a man at the window; they went up, and found upon him snow the height of three cubits; they broke through and delivered him; and they washed him, and anointed him, and set him over against his dwelling, and said, very worthy is this man *tbç ta wyl [I I hl* , “to profane the sabbath for him”.”

And if it was lawful to dig a man out of the snow, and do these several things for him on the sabbath day, why not cure a man of a withered hand, and especially when done by a word speaking, and without any labour?

Ver. 13. *Then saith he to the man*, etc.] That is, after he had looked round about upon them, to observe their countenances; and what answer they would make to his arguments; and with anger for their inhumanity and cruelty; being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, i.e. their unmercifulness to their fellow creatures, and the stupidity and blindness of their minds, being ignorant of the Scriptures, and of the sabbath, the nature, use, and Lord of it; which things are observed by the Evangelist Mark; then, in a commanding authoritative way, almighty power going along with his word, he says to the man who stood forth before him, and the Pharisees,

stretch forth thine hand, which was before contracted and shrivelled up;

and he stretched it forth with all the ease imaginable, and was, not only able to do this, but to make use of it any way;

for it was restored whole like as the other; his left hand, which had never been damaged. This was an instance of Christ’s power; a proof of the lawfulness of healing on the sabbath day; and a rebuke to the Pharisees for their cruelty and uncharitableness. This man was an emblem of the inability of men to do anything that is spiritually good, and of the power and efficacy of divine grace to enable persons to stretch out their hands, and do things which they of themselves are not equal to.

Ver. 14. *Then the Pharisees went out*, etc.] Of the synagogue, being, as Luke says, filled with madness, at the unanswerableness of his arguments; and because of the violation of the sabbath, as they thought; and most of

all, because of the miracle wrought by him; and which was so glaringly a proof of his being Lord of the sabbath, and could not fail of creating him esteem among the people: and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. Mark says, the council was held by them with the Herodians; of whom, (see Gill on "⁴²¹⁶Matthew 22:16") who, though they differed from them both in religion and politics, yet might be thought very proper persons to advise with about this matter; and especially, as they might have a greater interest at court, than they had. Nor did they scruple to enter into such a consultation, though on the sabbath day, and about the taking away of the life of an innocent person; which shows what scared consciences, and hard hearts they had, and how full of hypocrisy they were.

Ver. 15. *But when Jesus knew it,* etc.] Their consultation against him, as he did, not by any discovery made to him by men, but as the omniscient God; he withdrew himself from thence; from the synagogue and city, where he was, to the sea of Galilee, and his disciples with him, as Mark observes; not through fear, but because his time was not yet come, that he must suffer and die for his people; he had some other work to do first, and therefore rightly and wisely provides for his safety. And great multitudes followed him; from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and were joined by another multitude of people, who came from about Tyre and Sidon, as Mark relates: so that his departure was not so very private; nor was he forsaken by the common people, though the Pharisees were so offended with him. And he healed them all; that stood in need of healing, as many as had plagues and unclean spirits; practising agreeably to his doctrine, that it was lawful to do good on the sabbath day, and to heal the bodies as well as the souls of men.

Ver. 16. *And charged them that they should not make him known.*] This charge was given, either to the multitude that followed him, and were healed by him, that when they returned to the respective places from whence they came, they would not make it known to his enemies where he was, and what he had done to them; being neither desirous of popular applause and glory, nor willing to provoke them more, nor to fall into their hands as yet; or else, as Mark seems to intimate, to the unclean spirits, that they would not declare who he was, the Son of God, they confessed him to be: and very likely it was given to both, and that they should neither tell where he was, nor who he was; and this charge was a very severe one; for the word signifies a charge with threatenings, should they not observe his orders.

Ver. 17. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying.*] (^{234B}Isaiah 42:1-4) not that Christ gave the above charge with this view, that this passage in Isaiah might have its accomplishment: but this is an observation of the evangelist, that what was now done by Christ, by his private departure from the Pharisees, being unwilling to irritate them more; by his preaching to the Idumeans, Tyrians, and Sidonians; by healing their diseases, and shunning all ostentation and popular applause; and prohibiting to tell who and where he was, was a fulfilling of this prophecy; in which the Holy Spirit foreknowing the disposition and actions of Christ, predicted them: which, when considered, must be looked upon as a very large proof of the truth of his being the Messiah. For that this prophecy belongs to the Messiah, is owned by the Jews themselves ^{f735}.

Ver. 18. *Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,* etc.] These are the words of God the Father, speaking to the church, concerning Christ, as mediator; who, as such, is God's servant, employed by him, and obedient to him, in the work of man's salvation; and is a righteous, faithful, prudent, and diligent one; whom he, from all eternity, had chosen to this service, and in the fulness of time sent him to do it, and supported and upheld him in it; for it is whom I uphold, in the Hebrew text. My beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; who always was the object of his love, not only as his own and only begotten Son, but as in his office capacity, as mediator; in regard to which he was his elect, as it is in Isaiah; and, as such, he was always delighted in his person, well pleased with his office, and the discharge of it, and which he declared more than once by a voice from heaven, as at his baptism, and at his transfiguration on the mount: I will put my Spirit upon him; as he did without measure, whereby he was abundantly qualified for his whole work, and particularly for preaching the Gospel, being richly anointed with gifts and graces, above his fellows; of which the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him, as a dove at his baptism, which immediately preceded his public ministry, was a symbol. And he shall show judgment unto the Gentiles; meaning, not the general judgment, at the last day, which is committed to him; nor the laws of Justice and equity; but the Gospel, which is the produce of the God of judgment; best informs the judgment of men about the business of salvation; gives an account of the righteous procedure of God in justifying sinners, by the righteousness of his Son; and teaches men to live soberly, righteously, and godly: this Christ brought forth, and showed, at this time, to the Heathens, the Idumeans,

Tyrians, and Sidonians; who flocked unto him; whereby this part of the prophecy had its fulfilment: in the Hebrew it is, “he shall bring forth”; that is, out of his heart and mouth, and is the same as “show” here.

Ver. 19. *He shall not strive*, etc.] Or contend in a wrangling way, as the disputers of this world do about words to no profit, and for the sake of victory only, and popular applause, but shall choose rather to withdraw, than to carry on a controversy to a great length, to little purpose; or, as men litigate a point in a court of judicature, where one is plaintiff, and the other defendant. In the Hebrew text it is, “he shall not cry”; he shall not act the part of a plaintiff; he shall not complain, or bring in any charge, or accusation against any, but choose rather to suffer wrong, than to contend: thus **hq**[**x**] signifies such a cry, as is a complaint of injustice, (^{צִיָּה} Isaiah 5:7) and **q**[**wx**] a plaintiff, one that brings an action against another^{f736}: but Christ did not so, he would not accuse to the Father, nor complain against his most implacable enemies, but left that to Moses, in whom they trusted; “nor cry”, or, as in the Hebrew text, lift up; that is, his voice, in a clamorous way, using reviling and opprobrious language, or menaces and threatenings; but, on the contrary, he silently put up all abuses, and patiently bore every affront, and behaved peaceably, quietly, committing himself and cause to a righteous God.

Neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets; or, as in the Hebrew text, “nor cause his voice to be heard in the street”: the sense is the same, and the meaning is, that he sought not worldly honour, popular applause, and to be seen of men; he did nothing in an ostentatious way, said nothing in his own commendation, was never heard to praise himself, and chose that others should be silent concerning him: for this does not so much regard the lowness of his voice, as if that was not so sonorous as to be heard without doors, when he preached within, as his modest mein and suitable deportment; nor the places where he usually ministered, which was sometimes in the street, as well as in an house, or on a mountain, or by the sea side, or in the temple, and the synagogues. The Ethiopic version here is very wrong, “no man shall hear his voice in the synagogues”; for his voice was often heard there.

Ver. 20. *A bruised reed shall he not break*, etc.] Various are the thoughts of interpreters, about what is meant by this, and by

the smoking flax shall he not quench. Some think the Scribes and Pharisees are designed, whose power Christ could easily crush, and their wrath and fury restrain, but would not, till the time of his vengeance was come. Others that the publicans and sinners are intended, of whose conversion and salvation there were more hope than of the Scribes and Pharisees; and which Christ greatly sought after, and therefore cherished and encouraged them in his ministry and conversation. Some are of opinion, that such who have fallen into sin, and are under great decays of grace, are meant, whom Christ has compassion on, succours, and restores: but rather young converts, such as are under first awakenings, are here pointed at; who, like to a “bruised reed”, or “broken” one, one that is in some measure broke, near being broken to pieces, are wounded in their spirits, have their hearts broken and contrite, under a sense of their sinfulness, vileness, weakness, and unworthiness; whom Christ is so far from breaking and destroying, that he binds up their broken hearts, heals their wounds, and restores comforts to them: and who are like to “smoking flax”, or, as the Syriac reads it, **Pj pj md agrç**, “a smoking lamp”; to which the Arabic and Persic versions agree; meaning the wick of the lamp, which being just lighted, seems ready to go out, having scarce any light, only a little fire in it, which makes it smoke: so these have but little light of knowledge, faith, and comfort, and a great deal of darkness and infirmity; only there is some warmth in their affections, which go upwards “like pillars of smoke, perfumed with frankincense”; and such Christ is so far from neglecting, and putting out, that he blows up the sparks of grace into a flame, and never utterly leaves the work,

till he sends forth judgment into victory; that is, till he sends forth the Gospel into their hearts, accompanied with his mighty power, in the light and comfort of it; which informs their judgments, enlightens their understandings, bows their wills, raises their affections, sanctifies their souls, works effectually in them, under the influence of his Spirit and grace, to the carrying on of the work of grace in them to the end; and making them victorious over all their enemies, and more than conquerors, through him that has loved them. The Targum of Jonathan paraphrases the words thus;

“the meek, who are as a bruised reed, he will not break; and the poor, who are as an obscure lamp, he will not quench.”

Ver. 21. *And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.*] The former part of the text is omitted, “he shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth”; but is inserted in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; and which some understand of the bruised reed, and smoking flax, and others of Christ; the latter sense is to be preferred. The passage, here cited, is somewhat different in Isaiah: for there it is, “and the isles shall wait for his law”; but the difference, at least, in sense, is not so great as it may appear at first sight: for, **μῦα**, as Grotius observes, does not always signify “islands”, but nations, and countries, that are upon the continent, (^{<0105>}Genesis 10:5) and so might be rightly rendered here, the Gentiles, or “nations”; and by “the name” of Christ is meant his Gospel: (see ^{<0105>}Acts 9:15) which Isaiah calls his “law”: that is, his doctrine, the doctrine of righteousness, life, and salvation by him, which is the ground and foundation of hope, and trust in him; and they that wait for it, may be truly said to hope, or trust in it. This began to have its accomplishment in the Idumeans, Tyrians, and Sidonians, now attending on the ministry of Christ; and has had a greater accomplishment since: the Gospel having been preached in the Gentile world, both upon the main land, and in the isles afar off; whereby multitudes have been brought to hope, and believe in Christ, as their Saviour and Redeemer.

Ver. 22. *Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil,* etc.] About this time, or some little time after, when he was returned from the sea of Galilee, and was come into a certain house; (see ^{<0105>}Mark 3:19 ^{<0106>}Matthew 12:46,13:1) some persons brought him a demoniac, in compassion to the possessed man, and being persuaded of the power of Christ to heal him by the late cures he had performed. A like instance we have in (^{<0102>}Matthew 9:32,33,34; ^{<0114>}Luke 11:14,15), which had a like effect upon the people, and cavilled at by the Pharisees in much the same way; and which cavils were answered in much the same words; and yet the case is not the same; for that man was only dumb, but this both

blind and dumb; not by birth, or through the defect of nature, or by any natural distemper that had attended him, but through the malice of Satan, by divine permission; his blindness, and dumbness, were the effects of his being possessed with a devil, who had deprived him of his sight, and speech. The word rendered “dumb”, signifies both deaf and dumb, and answers to the Hebrew word **çrj**, which sometimes ^{f737} is used of a deaf man only, who can speak, but not hear; and often of one that can neither

speak, nor hear; which is the case of such as are born deaf: it seems as if this man could hear, though he could not speak; since no mention is made of his want of hearing, or of Christ's restoring it to him; for it follows,

and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb, both spake and saw. This he did, not by making use of medicines, but by a word speaking, dispossessing Satan; so that the cause of blindness and dumbness being removed, the effects ceased, and the man was restored to his sight, and speech, as before. He had his sight to behold his Saviour, and a tongue to praise his name: so when men are turned from Satan unto God, and are delivered from his thralldom and bondage, they are brought into marvellous light, and put into a capacity of showing forth the praises of God.

Ver. 23. *And all the people were amazed,* etc.] At the cure; it was such an instance of divine power, and so glaring a proof, that the person who wrought it was more than a man, and must be the Messiah. This is to be understood of the greater part of the people, not of every individual, and of the common people only; for it had a different effect upon the Pharisees, as hereafter appears; but in these it not only produced admiration, but conviction, faith, and confession:

and said, is not this the son of David? or the Messiah; for $\text{dwd } \hat{\text{b}}$, “the son of David”, is a character of the Messiah, well known among the Jews; *See Gill “~~<400>~~Matthew 1:1”* because he was promised to David, was to be raised up of his seed, and to spring from his loins. This question they put, not as doubting of it, but as inclining, at least, to believe it, if not as expressing their certainty of it: and is, as if they had said, who can this person be but the true Messiah, that has wrought such a miracle as this? for from his miracles they rightly concluded who he was; though the Jews since, in order to deprive Jesus of this true characteristic of the Messiah, deny that miracles are to be performed by him ^{f738}.

Ver. 24. *But when the Pharisees heard it,* etc.] Very probably not the same that went out, and held a council against Christ to destroy him, (~~<4024>~~Matthew 12:14) but others that were come from Judea and Jerusalem, and were with him in the house, and saw the miracle: these, when they heard what the people said, and how ready they were to believe, and own Jesus to be the Messiah, in order to prevent it, being filled with envy and malice,

they said, this fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. They could not deny the miracle, or that it was one; but to deprive him of the glory of it, and even reproach him for it, and to bring him into contempt with the people, they not only speak of him in a scornful manner, οὗτος, “this” sorry man, “this” vile fellow; but ascribe the miracle he wrought to familiarity with the devil, to diabolical influence and skill in magic art: they pretended he was in confederacy with Satan, and was carrying on his interest: and therefore, that he might gain credit and reputation, the prince of devils suffered the inferior ones to remove at his word: and of these their ancestors, the Jews have learnt to fix this vile imputation, and blasphemous piece of slander upon Christ; who, they say ^{f739}, brought enchantments, or witchcrafts, out of Egypt, in the cuttings of his flesh, whereby he performed the things he did. Concerning Beelzebub, *See Gill* “^{<4025>}Matthew 10:25” here called “the prince of devils”; it being a prevailing notion among the Jews, that there is one devil who is the head of all the rest, and who is by them sometimes called Asmodeus: they say ^{f740}, when Solomon sinned against the Lord, he sent to him **ydyçd akI m yadmça**, “Asmodeus the king of the devils”, and drove him from his throne, and so elsewhere ^{f741}: and sometimes Samael, who is styled ^{f742} Samael the prince, **pydçd akI m**, “the king of devils”; and the angel Samael, the wicked, **pynj çh I k çar**, “the head of all the Satans”, or devils ^{f743}: and we often read ^{f744} of **pyhygh rç**, “the prince of hell”; by whom the same is meant, as here, by Beelzebub; for if anyone devil is more wicked, odious, and execrable than the rest, the chief of them may be thought to be so; for which reason he is here mentioned.

Ver. 25. *And Jesus knew their thoughts*, etc.] He not only heard their blasphemous words, but was privy to their secret thoughts; he knew their vile malicious intentions and designs, with what view they expressed themselves in this manner, on purpose to reproach him, and set the people against him, contrary to the inward light of their minds, and dictates of their consciences; who must, and did know the contrary of what they said: and regarding the inward frame of their minds, as well as their words, and which is a proof of his omniscience, and so of his deity, and consequently of his Messiahship,

said unto them the following parables, as Mark calls them, (^{<4023>}Mark 3:23) or proverbial expressions:

every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; a government, in which there is a disagreement between the chiefs of it, and the body of the people, or where one part is opposed to the other, or in which a civil and intestine war is begun and prosecuted, cannot continue in any comfortable situation, and flourishing state, but must come to nothing: this is a maxim that has been so often fatally verified, that no one will doubt the truth of it; and the same holds true of lesser communities, of cities, and families:

and every city, or house, divided against itself, shall not stand. If citizens fall out with their magistrates, or one with another, and turn out, and disfranchise each other; and if the heads of families, and the respective branches thereof, quarrel with, and divide from one another, a dissolution of the whole must ensue; and the same may be said of the kingdom and government of Satan. These, it is very likely, were common sayings among the Jews, and they might be very easily understood by them; and are very appropriately produced by Christ to illustrate the present case, and confute the vile and blasphemous suggestions of the Pharisees: a proverbial expression, much like to these, is to be read in the writings of the Jews, *brj yl wpws tqwl j m wb çyç tyb l k*, “every house, in which there is a division, at the end shall come to desolation”^{f745}.

Ver. 26. *And if Satan cast out Satan*, etc.] That is, if Satan, the same with Beelzebub, casts out the rest of the Satans, or other devils, of which he is the prince and head,

he is divided against himself; he acts contrary to his own interest, which is to keep possession of the bodies and souls of men; and consequently it must, in course, be subversive of his power and dominion:

how shall then his kingdom stand? he will never be able to maintain his authority, and keep up the show of a government, as he does: for these words suggest, that there is a form of government among the devils, who are united in one body, under one head; and whose unity and concord are their greatest strength, as in all other governments. Our Lord’s argument, and which is his first, for others follow, is, that since Satan, who is so cunning and crafty, can never be thought to act such an opposite part to himself, subversive of his kingdom and government; and which would give so much credit to Christ, and serve so much to strengthen his interest, as to

assist him in the casting out of devils; the weakness, and maliciousness of such a suggestion, must be clear and evident to all.

Ver. 27. *And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils*, etc.] As the Pharisees asserted, and would have the people believe; for this is not allowed, only for argument sake supposed:

by whom do your children cast them out? meaning not the apostles and disciples of Christ, the children of the Jews, to whom Christ gave power of casting out devils, and who had exercised it in his name; and therefore argues, if they in his name cast out devils, why could he not do it himself, without the help of Satan? wherefore these would be judges against them: but, no doubt, the Pharisees had no better opinion of the disciples, and of their ejection of devils, than of Christ; wherefore, it is not likely, that our Lord should argue with them from hence: but rather, he means, some among themselves, who pretended to have a power of exorcising and ejecting of devils, either in the name of Jesus, as some of them did, (~~419B~~ Mark 9:38; ~~419B~~ Acts 19:13,14) or in the name of their kings, righteous men, prophets and patriarchs, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ^{f746}; and which practice, perhaps, they took up and made pretensions to, in imitation of Christ and his apostles; so as Christ healed men possessed of devils, they also affected to do the same. A story is reported ^{f747},

“concerning Ben Talmion, that a miracle was wrought by R. Eleazar bar Jose, who healed a king’s daughter at Rome, in whose body the devil entered, whose name was Ben Talmion; and they brought him (the Jew) to the king’s treasury, to take what he would, but he would take nothing from thence, but letters, in which were written the decrees they had decreed against Israel; and when he found them, he tore them to pieces, and there he saw the vessels of the house of the sanctuary, in the treasury.”

Now since the Jews pretended to do these things, Christ asks them, by whom they cast out devils? Whether by the Spirit of God, or by Beelzebub? They would doubtless say by the former, and not the latter, which would show their great partiality; for admitting that the like actions were done by them, as by him, why not by the same power? Why should their ejection of devils be ascribed to God, and his to Beelzebub?

Therefore they shall be your judges; who will rise up against you, and condemn you one day, for this unequal judgment you now pass; and which

was just the reverse of the true state of the case: for he cast out devils by the Spirit of God, which they imputed to the assistance of Beelzebub; their children cast out devils, or pretended to do so, and it was by the help of Satan; and yet they ascribed it to a divine power, even though they made use of the name of Satan, under that of Beelzebub, or Asmodeus, their exorcising, of which take the following form ^{f748}.

“By the authority of the glorious and fearful name, I adjure thee Asmodeus, “king of the devils”, and all thy company, etc. that ye hurt not, nor put in fear, nor trouble such an one, the son of such an one, but that ye help him, and sustain him (or deliver him) out of every distress and anguish, and from every evil thing, and from all diseases, that enter into the two hundred and forty eight members, etc.”

Ver. 28. *But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God*, etc.] As it was certain he did, from the nature, use, and design of such miracles; and it could not be reasonably thought, that Satan would assist in what was so very opposite to his kingdom and interest, and was so serviceable to the cause and glory of Christ. All the three persons had an hand in the miracles of the Messiah; they were done by Christ, in his Father’s name, and by the power of the Spirit of God; from which the following inference may be justly deduced,

then the kingdom of God is come unto you: meaning, either the Messiah himself; or rather, his kingdom, the Gospel dispensation, which both Christ and John had declared to be at hand; of which the performing of miracles, particularly the casting out of devils, whereby the kingdom of Satan was so much weakened, was a clear proof.

Ver. 29. *Or else, how can anyone enter into a strong man’s house*, etc.] This is another argument of Christ’s proving that his casting out of devils could not be by Satan, but by the Spirit of God; for if he did not act by any superior power to Satan’s, and such by which he was able to master, overcome, and bind him, he could never

spoil his goods, as he did; or dispossess devils out of the bodies or souls of men: just as if a man should enter into another man’s house, who is strong and robust, with a design to spoil his goods, who would never make use of the man himself to do it, and can never be thought to effect it, unless he has a power superior to his, and uses it;

except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house: by the “strong man”, is meant the devil, (see ~~2342~~ Isaiah 49:24,25) who is powerful and mighty, as appears from his nature, being an angel, though a fallen one, excelling in strength human creatures; from his names, such as the roaring lion, the great red dragon, leviathan, etc. from the extent of his dominion, here called “his house”; which reaches to the whole posse of devils, and world of men; whence he is called the prince of the power of the air, and the prince of this world, and the god of it; and from his works and actions, in and over the bodies and estates of men, by divine permission; which might be exemplified in the case of Job, and the demoniacs in the time of Christ; and in and over the souls of men, not only over wicked men, but men under a show of religion, as antichrist and his followers; yea, saints themselves, and even over Adam in a state of innocence; but Christ is stronger than he, and attacked him, and dispossessed him of the bodies of men; and restraining him from doing them any hurt, enters into the souls of men, dethrone him, and leads him captive, who led others; and keeps him from doing them any damage; as he will in the latter day “bind” him and shut him up in prison a thousand years; and also “spoils his goods”, or “vessels”, and “his house”; the palace of Satan, by taking bodies and souls out of his possession; by awakening the conscience, enlightening the mind, working upon the affections, subduing the will, and implanting principles of grace and holiness in the heart; and so making it a fit habitation for God, which spoils it for the devil: in all which, Satan can never be thought to have any hand; and therefore the suggestion that Christ casts out devils by his assistance, even out of the bodies of men, has no show of reason in it.

Ver. 30. *He that is not with me, is against me*, etc.] These words chiefly refer to Satan, and are a further proof, that Christ did not cast out devils by him; since they two are as much opposites, as can possibly be; Satan is not on the side of Christ, but an adversary to him; there is an original, and implacable enmity, between the serpent and the seed of the woman; there is an open war between them, and therefore one cannot be thought to lend assistance to the other. They were concerned in different things, had different views and interests, and so took different methods;

and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth: Christ is the good shepherd, that gathers his sheep to himself, and into his fold, by the external ministry of the word, and internal efficacy of his grace; Satan is the wolf, that catches and scatters the sheep, and seeks to kill and destroy them: and

since there is such an open war proclaimed and carried on between Christ and the devil, none ought to be neutral; whoever is not on the side of Christ, is reckoned as an enemy; and whoever is not concerned by prayer or preaching, or other means to gather souls to his word and ordinances, and to his church, and to himself, is deemed by him a scatterer of them.

Ver. 31. *Wherefore I say unto you*, etc.] This shows, that what follows is occasioned by what the Pharisees had said, concerning the miracles of Christ; imputing them to diabolical influence and assistance, when they were done by the Spirit of God, of which they themselves were conscious;

all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: not unto all men, for there are some, who, as they are never truly convinced of sin, and brought to repentance for it, so they never have the remission of it; but to such to whom God of his free grace has promised, and for whom he has provided this blessing, in the covenant of his grace; for whom the blood of Christ was shed, for the remission of their sins; and who, by the Spirit of God, are made sensible of them, and have repentance unto life given them, and faith in Christ, by which they receive the forgiveness of them: the sense is, that all kind of sin, whether committed more immediately against God, or man, the first or second table of the law, or against any of the divine precepts; be they sins small or great, secret or open, sins of heart, lip, or life, or attended with whatsoever aggravating circumstances; and all kind of blasphemy, or evil speaking of men, or of angels, or of the name of God, but what is hereafter excepted, there is forgiveness of in the grace of God, through the blood of Christ, even for all sorts of men and sinners whatever. The Jews have a saying^{f749}, that God pardons all sins,

“*hmzh ^m tuj*, “except lasciviousness”.”

But this is not excepted by Christ, only what follows,

but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men: by which is meant, not every ignorant denial of, and opposition to his deity and personality; nor all resistance of him in the external ministry of the word; nor every sin that is knowingly and wilfully committed; but it is a despiteful usage of the Spirit of grace, an opposing, contradicting, and denying the operations wrought, or doctrines revealed by him, against a man’s own light and conscience, out of wilful and obstinate malice, on purpose to lessen the glory of God, and gratify his own lusts: such was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees; who, though they knew the miracles of

Christ were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet maliciously and obstinately imputed them to the devil, with a view to obscure the glory of Christ, and indulge their own wicked passions and resentments against him; which sin was unpardonable at that present time, as well as under that dispensation then to come, when the Spirit of God was poured down in a more plenteous manner.

Ver. 32. *And whosoever speaketh a word against the son of man*, etc.] By whom is meant, not any man, as Grotius thought, but the Lord Jesus Christ, so often called “the son of man”, on account of his human nature, in which he appeared in great meanness and obscurity. Now many might, through ignorance of him, thinking him to be a mere man, and taking up with common fame, speak evil of him, deny him to be the Messiah, reproach him for the meanness of his parentage and education, and for the freedom of his conversation with publicans and sinners; and do many things contrary to his name, as Saul, whilst a Pharisee did, and thought he ought to do; and yet be afterwards convinced of their mistakes, and be brought to a sense and acknowledgment of them, and obtain pardoning grace and mercy, as Saul did, though a blasphemer; and who is an instance of what is here promised,

it shall be forgiven him through the grace of God, the blood and mediation of Christ, under the application of the blessed Spirit.

But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, in the sense before declared,

it shall not be forgiven him: not because the Holy Ghost is greater than Christ; or for want of efficacy in the blood of Christ; or because God cannot pardon it; but because such persons wilfully, maliciously, and obstinately oppose the Spirit of God, without whom there can be no application of pardon made; and remain in hardness of heart, are given up to a reprobate mind, and die in impenitence and unbelief, and so there is no forgiveness for them,

neither in this world, nor in the world to come; that is; they shall never be forgiven, (see ⁴⁰³²Mark 3:29). The distinction here used, does not refer to a common one among the Jews, of the Jewish state and the times of the Messiah; but to the present state of life, and that which will be after, or upon death: and it does not suppose there may be forgiveness of other sins, though not of this, in the other world; but strikes at a notion the Jews had,

that there are some sins, which repentance and the day of atonement expiate in this life; but there are others, which repentance and the day of atonement do not expiate; and these a man's death expiates, or makes atonement for^{f750}. The form of confession used by sick persons is the following^{f751};

“I confess before thee, O Lord our God, and the God of our fathers, that my cure is in thy hands, and my death is in thy hands; if it be thy good pleasure, heal me with a perfect healing: but if I die, *h j y l s y t t y m a h t*, “let my death be for the pardon”, forgiveness, and atonement of all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions, which I have sinned, acted perversely in, and transgressed before thee; and give me my portion in paradise, and justify me “in the world to come”, which is hidden for the righteous.”

But the sin against the Holy Ghost is such, as is not forgiven, neither before, nor at, nor after death, nor by it: all sins that are forgiven, are forgiven in this world, and that perfectly and at once; and all that are forgiven in this world, there will be a manifestation and declaration of the pardon of them in another; but such sins as are not forgiven here, there will be no declaration of the pardon of them hereafter. In short, the sense is, that the sin against the Holy Ghost never has forgiveness; it is not pardoned now, and consequently there will be no declaration of the pardon of it hereafter. The Jews use the phrase in the same sense^{f752}; a certain sick man said to his son,

“give me water, and such certain food; but if not, I will not “forgive thee, neither in this world, nor in the world to come”.”

That is, I will never forgive thee.

Ver. 33. *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good*, etc.] That is, either assert them both good, or

else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: say they are both evil, for the contrary cannot be affirmed with any consistency and propriety: the matter is easy to be determined,

for the tree is known by his fruit; fruit will discover what a tree is, and accordingly judgment may be made. No man will say a tree is good, and its fruit corrupt; or say, that a tree is corrupt, and its fruit good: these are

glaring contradictions, and can never be reconciled. The case Christ here puts, is a very easy and familiar one, and is obvious to common sense: the application of it may be made, either to the foregoing instance of Christ's casting out devils, which the Jews ascribed to the help of Satan; and then the sense is, either say I am a good man, and do good works, or that I am an evil man, and do evil works: to say that I do good works, as the casting out of devils must be allowed to be, and yet am an evil man, and do this under satanical influence, is as great an inconsistency, as to say that a corrupt tree brings forth good fruit; either therefore condemn these miracles as evil actions, done by confederacy with Satan; or if you will allow them to be good ones, as you do, ascribe them to the Spirit of God; for these things may as easily be determined, as the cause by its effect, or as a tree is known by its fruit: or else this may be applied unto the Pharisees, who, though wicked men, pretended to do good works; and though they set up for men of religion and holiness, yet did evil things, as their words and actions testified; particularly the blasphemy just now uttered by them, charging the miracles of Christ as done by the assistance of the devil, which discovered the malignity and rottenness of their hearts: and the meaning of Christ is, that they would either both say, and do, that which is right and good; or relinquish their pretensions to the character of good and religious men: nothing can be concluded from hence in favour of free will, or a power in the creature to make himself good; for the word "make", here signifies to "say, affirm, assert", and the like; (see ^{415B}John 5:18 8:53 10:33). Though it may be fairly inferred from hence, that a man must first be a good man, ever he can perform good works, truly and properly so called; and that these are fruits and evidences of the inward real goodness of a man; which must be understood not of a few single actions, but of the common, constant series and course of life.

Ver. 34. *O generation of vipers*, etc.] Though they boasted of their being the seed of Abraham, yet their immediate ancestors were no other than vipers, deceitful, hurtful, poisonous creatures; and they were exactly like them: for though they made a fair show in the flesh, and outwardly appeared righteous, yet were inwardly full of the poison of wickedness, envy and malice; and which their pestilential breath, their blasphemy against the Spirit, fully discovered; and gave just cause and reason for so severe a reproof, and such resentment, as here made by Christ.

How can ye, being evil, speak good things? This is not to be expected, nor is it commonly and constantly done; an evil man may sometimes speak

good things, or which seem to be so; but these are not his common talk; as he is, so, for the most part, is his language; his speech betrays him: and since these men were by nature evil, were destitute of the Spirit and grace of God, had no good thing in them, how should any good thing come out of them? And since they were so full of wickedness, spite and malice, it is no wonder that they belched out such blasphemous expressions concerning the miracles of Christ;

for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh: a phrase much like this is used by the Septuagint, in (²¹⁰¹⁵Ecclesiastes 2:15). “I spoke abundance”, or “much in my heart”; **διοτο ο αφρων εκ περισσευματος λαλει**, “for the fool out of his abundance speaketh”: as there is abundance of folly in him, there is much delivered out by him; and where there is abundance of wickedness in the heart, if the grace of God is wanting to restrain it, much of it will come out by the lips; as is a man’s heart, ordinarily is his language.

Ver. 35. *A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart*, etc.] “A good man”, is a regenerated man, one that is renewed by the Spirit of God, a believer in Christ, a sincere lover of him, and one that follows him, wheresoever he goes, and who has the grace of God implanted in him: for “the good treasure the heart”, is not what he is naturally possessed of, but what is put into him: and is no other than the superabundant grace of God, or that grace for grace, which he has received out of Christ’s fulness, and the rich experience of it he is blessed with: and may well be called a “treasure”; for as a treasure is a collection of riches, so this consists of various graces, each of which is more precious than gold, silver, and precious stones; a “good” one, both from the quality and quantity of it; and “of the heart”, though this is left out in many copies, from the seat and subject of it; and out of this the gracious man

bringeth forth good things; tells his experience, speaks of what God has done for his soul; says many things to the glory of the grace of God; of the person, offices, blood, righteousness, and fulness of Christ; and of the operations and influences of the blessed Spirit; and which are pleasant, profitable, useful, and edifying to the saints:

and an evil man, out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. The “evil man”, is a man as he was born; who is wholly flesh, carnal, and in a state of nature; destitute of the Spirit, and having no principle of grace in him: “the evil treasure”, is the corruption of his nature, the desperate

wickedness of his heart; and those swarms of lusts, and all manner of sin that dwell there; from whence are continually proceeding evil and corrupt communications, which not only defile himself, but others; and among the rest, not only vain words and unprofitable talk, but blasphemies against God, Christ, and the blessed Spirit; all which men will be accountable for another day.

Ver. 36. *But I say unto you*, etc.] This form of speaking is used, the more strongly to asseverate the truth of what is after said; and the rather, because men are apt to indulge a liberty with their tongues; fancying no great crime is committed, when only words are spoken, and no facts done;

that every idle word that a man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. By an “idle word” is meant, what the Jews call, **hl q hj yç**, “light conversation”, and **l j b rbd**, “vain discourse”, as the Hebrew Gospel of Munster reads it here; frothy language, unprofitable talk, which, though it does not directly hurt God or man, yet is of no use to speaker or hearer; and yet even this, in the last general and awful judgment, if not forgiven, and repented of, must be accounted for; and much more such horrid blasphemies the Pharisees had vented against Christ, and the Spirit of Christ. The Jews ^{f753} have a saying pretty much like this,

“That even **hl q hj yç l** [, “for any light conversation”, which passes between a man and his wife, he shall “be brought to judgment”.”

Ver. 37. *For by thy words thou shalt be justified*, etc.] Theophylact seems to take these words to be a passage of Scripture cited by Christ, in proof of what he had said, but does not point to any; nor is any such Scripture to be found. They are rather proverbial expressions, in common use among the Jews; or refer to the usual methods of proceeding in courts of judicature, upon the acknowledgments and confessions of persons.

“Says Resh Lakish ^{f754}, such an one and such an one, they justify; and such an one and such an one, they condemn. R. Eliezer replies, **ynwl p hkdzg ^hyrbdm**, “by their words such an one and such an one are justified”.”

The gloss upon it is,

“upon hearing the difference there is between them, and between their words, they are justified.”

Our Lord’s meaning is, that not only works and actions, but words of all sorts, will come into account in the day of judgment, and will be evidences for, or against a man, to acquit or condemn him:

and by thy words thou shalt be condemned: according to these, the sentence of justification, or of condemnation, will be pronounced; as these will appear to be evidences for, or against a man’s being in a state of grace and righteousness: thus for instance, a man that has spoken for Christ, and has freely confessed that all his hope of justification before God, and acceptance with him, is solely upon the account of the righteousness of Christ imputed; such a man will be declared a justified man according to the tenor of his own words: on the other hand, a man that has spoken hard speeches against Christ, and his righteousness; declaring he has no dependence on it, expects no justification by it; he will be convinced of these ungodly sayings, and out of his own mouth will be condemned. Some have thought, that Christ here strikes at a notion which obtained among the Jews, that little or no account would be taken of a man’s words in the day of judgment; provided his life and actions were good, and regular; but whatever were the sentiments of the Pharisees, or of any of Christ’s present hearers, it is certain, that it is the opinion of Jewish writers, that words, as well as actions, will be accounted for hereafter: they say ^{f755},

“When a man dies, he lifts up his eyes and sees two come to him, and write before him all that he has done in this world, *hymwp ˆm qypad hm l kw*, “and all that has proceeded out of his mouth”, *al k l [anyd byhyw*, “and he gives an account for all”; and a little after, *ˆyl m ˆwnya l k*, “all the words” of a man in this world, are prepared before him, and not one of them lost; and in the hour he goes to his grave, they are all set before him.”

Ver. 38. *Then certain of the Scribes and Pharisees answered,* etc.] Not the same that charged him with casting out devils, by the prince of devils; but others, that were present, as appears from (^{<2116>}Luke 11:16) and who do not take upon them to make a proper reply to what he had said, or return an answer to that, but address him on another account; being willing to divert the discourse, and try what they could do with him in another, and more gentle and crafty way; saying, master, not fellow, magician,

Samaritan, thou that hast a devil, and casts out devils by Beelzebub, and art a devil, and Beelzebub himself; but doctor, teacher, allowing him, at least, in a flattering way, that he was an instructor of mankind, though they would not own him to be a prophet, unless he would give such signs, as would make it appear he was one; hence they say,

we would see a sign from thee: that is, a sign from heaven, as they desired at another time, (^{<406>}Matthew 16:1) and, as Luke says, they did now, (^{<2116>}Luke 11:16) they had seen a sign from him on earth, in the cure of the man that had a withered hand; and another, in dispossessing the devil out of the man, that was blind and dumb; but these they looked upon rather as signs from hell, and done by confederacy with the devil; and therefore desire, or rather, in an imperious way, demand one from heaven, where they thought Satan had not such power, as on earth; and where there could not be such collusion and deception, as they wickedly imagined were in this last action: they seem to require some such things to be done, as were on Mount Sinai, at the giving of the law, when there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud, and the voice of a trumpet, and some visible appearances of the divine majesty; and intimate, that if something of this kind was done, if there was any visible and miraculous appearance in the heavens, produced by him, they should believe him to be the prophet that was spoken of, and the true Messiah; but if not, should give no credit to him: however, this is to be learned from hence, that the Jews, in Christ's time, expected signs and wonders to be wrought by the Messiah, in proof of his being so, though now they reject them as needless ^{f756}.

Ver. 39. *But he answered and said unto them*, etc.] Not to the Pharisees, who were unworthy of an answer from him; having, in such an imperious manner, and with a sole view to tempt him, and after such miracles were wrought by him, required of him a sign from heaven; but to the multitude, the throng of people gathered thick together on this occasion, (see ^{<1025>}Matthew 12:45; ^{<2129>}Luke 11:29) he turns himself from the Scribes and Pharisees, to the common people, and says to them concerning the former,

an evil and adulterous generation; not only in a spiritual sense, being degenerated from the faith, religion, and piety of their ancestors; but literally, which appeared not only in their polygamy, and frequent divorces on trivial occasions, but by criminal conversation with other women; (see ^{<389>}John 8:9) and this, with the Jews themselves, is a character of the generation in which the Messiah comes: for they say ^{f757},

“that just when the Messiah comes, or in the age the son of David comes, “impudence shall be increased”, corn and wine shall be dear, the government shall be heretics, *twnzl hyhy d[ww tyb*, “and the synagogue shall become a brothel house”.”

Their meaning is, that the chief magistrates should be Sadducees, and those that pretended to religion and holiness would be adulterers, which was now the case. Their writings^{f758} frequently speak of the increase and abounding of adulteries, under the second temple, and about this time; which obliged Jochanan ben Zaccai and the sanhedrim, to leave off the use of the bitter waters.

Seeketh after a sign; this is perfectly Talmudic language, the language of the Jews^{f759}.

“The disciples of R. Jose ben Kismai, asked him, when the Son of David came? He replied, I am afraid, lest *twa ynmm wçqbt*, “ye should seek of me a sign”; they say unto him, we will not “seek of thee a sign”.”

This the Jews sought of Christ, time after time; not content with one, sought another, though such wonderful ones were wrought, which most fully demonstrated him to be the Messiah; and therefore he would not indulge this temper in them; but declared, that

there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. Not that no miracles should afterwards be wrought amongst them; for, after this, many wondrous works were done by Christ; but no such signs should be given they desired, not one from heaven; but one particularly should be given them, out of the earth, and should be, not for their conviction, but condemnation; and would seem very much like that which was done to the prophet Jonas, or Jonah; for so is his name in the Hebrew language, the other being the Greek termination of it.

Ver. 40. *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly*, etc.] Or “in the belly of a great fish”, as is said, (Jon 1:17) for that it was a whale, is not there said, nor is it certain it was; nor from the smallness of its swallow, is it thought probable it should; nor does the word here used, necessarily imply one, but some large fish; nor are there whales in the Phoenician Sea: it might be a kind of a sea dog, called Carcharias, and sometimes Lamia, or Lamina, from its vast swallow; in which whole

men; even in coats of mail, have been found. However, be it what it will, Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of it; which agrees with the account in the above mentioned place, and is the sign Christ speaks of in the foregoing verse; and a very great sign and miracle it was, that being swallowed down by such a fish, he should remain in the belly of it three days and three nights, as one dead; for, without a miracle, he could not have lived an hour; and on the third day, as one raised from the dead, be cast out of it upon the dry land; which was a very eminent type of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, as appears by what follows. The Jews reckon up several wonders or miracles in this case of Jonah's; as that a fish was prepared to swallow him up, and he not drowned in the sea; and that this was prepared for him from the creation of the world; that he should be three days and three nights in the fish's belly, and be alive; and that he should retain his senses and his understanding, so as to be able to pray: they represent him also as if he was in the state of the dead^{f760}, and that the fish itself was dead, and was quickened again. According to Josephus, after he had been carried 250 miles in the Hellespont of the Euxine Sea, he was cast ashore^{f761}.

So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. That Christ means himself by the "son of man", there is no reason to doubt; and his being laid in a tomb, dug out of a rock, is sufficient to answer this phrase, "the heart of the earth", in distinction from the surface of it; but some difficulty arises about the time of his continuing there, and the prediction here made agreeable to the type: for it was on the sixth day of the week, we commonly call "Friday", towards the close, on the day of the preparation for the sabbath, and when the sabbath drew on, that the body of Christ was laid in the sepulchre; where it lay all the next day, which was the sabbath of the Jews, and what we commonly call "Saturday"; and early on the first of the week, usually called "Sunday", or the Lord's day, he rose from the dead; so that he was but one whole day, and part of two, in the grave. To solve this difficulty, and set the matter in a clear light, let it be observed, that the three days and three nights, mean three natural days, consisting of day and night, or twenty four hours, and are what the Greeks call *νυχθημερα*, "night days"; but the Jews have no other way of expressing them, but as here; and with them it is a well known rule, and used on all occasions, as in the computation of their feasts and times of mourning, in the observance of the passover, circumcision, and divers purifications, that *wl wkk μwyh txqm*, "a part of a day is as the

whole”^{f762}: and so, whatever was done before sun setting, or after, if but an hour, or ever so small a time, before or after it, it was reckoned as the whole preceding, or following day; and whether this was in the night part, or day part of the night day, or natural day, it mattered not, it was accounted as the whole night day: by this rule, the case here is easily adjusted; Christ was laid in the grave towards the close of the sixth day, a little before sun setting, and this being a part of the night day preceding, is reckoned as the whole; he continued there the whole night day following, being the seventh day; and rose again early on the first day, which being after sun setting, though it might be even before sun rising, yet being a part of the night day following, is to be esteemed as the whole; and thus the son of man was to be, and was three days and three nights in the grave; and which was very easy to be understood by the Jews; and it is a question whether Jonas was longer in the belly of the fish.

Ver. 41. *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment*, etc.] Alluding either to the custom and practice of witnesses, who rise up from their seats, and stand, when they give in their testimonies in a court of judicature; or else, referring to the time of the general resurrection from the dead, at the last day, when these men shall rise from the dead, and stand in judgment

with this generation; shall rise when they do, and stand before the judgment seat together, and be against them,

and shall condemn them; not as judges of them, but by their example and practices, which will be brought above board, and observed as an aggravation of the guilt and condemnation of the Jews: so the lives and conversations of the saints condemn the wicked now, and will do hereafter: in this sense the word is used in the Talmud^{f763}; where having related how Hillell, though a poor man, and R. Eleazar, though a rich man, studied in the law, and Joseph, though youthful, gay, and beautiful, withstood the importunities of his mistress, it is observed, that Hillell *byyj m*, “condemned” the poor; and R. Eleazar ben Harsum condemned the rich; and Joseph condemned the wicked: in like manner, the Ninevites will condemn the Jews,

because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; a mere man, a single prophet, a stranger to these men, who only preached, and wrought no miracle among them, and his stay with them was very short; whereas the men of this generation had the Son of God “sent” to them, had the ministry

of his apostles, and of John the Baptist, and a variety of miracles wrought among them; and all this for a series and course of years, and yet remained impenitent: the chief aggravation of their impenitence, and what made it the more astonishing was, that so great a person was in the midst of them;

and behold, a greater than Jonas is here; meaning himself, who was greater in person, office, doctrine, miracles, life, obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection from the dead. The Ninevites, though a Heathenish people, having but forty days allowed them to repent in, upon Jonas's preaching, repented immediately; whereas the Jews, though God's: professing people, and having forty years, from Christ's resurrection, allowed them to repent in, yet did not at all; and though the repentance of the Ninevites was but an external one, in dust and ashes, yet it was what secured them from temporal ruin; as the Jews would have been saved from the destruction that came upon their temple, city, and nation, had they repented but as they did.

Ver. 42. *The queen of the south,* etc.] Called the queen of Sheba, (^{<100>}1 Kings 10:1). Sheba was one of the sons of Joktan, a grandchild of Arphaxad, who settled in the southern parts of Arabia: hence this queen is called the queen of the south. Sheba is by the Targumist ^{f764} called Zemargad: and this queen the queen of Zemargad: she goes by different names. According to some, her name was Maqueda ^{f765}, and, as others say, Balkis ^{f766}: a Jewish chronologer ^{f767} tells us, that the queen of Sheba, who is called Nicolaa, of the kingdom of Jaman, or the south, came to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, and gave him much riches: and Josephus ^{f768} calls her Nicaulis, queen of Egypt and Ethiopia; of whom it is here said, that she

shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: the meaning is, as before; that she shall rise from the dead, and stand as a witness against that generation at the day of judgment, and, by her example and practices, which will then be produced, condemn them, or aggravate their condemnation:

for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth; an hyperbolic expression, meaning a great way off from a far country, a very distant part of the world from Jerusalem, *hml ç tmkj [wmçl* , “to hear the wisdom of Solomon”; the very phrase used by the above Jewish ^{f769} writer.

And behold, a greater than Solomon is here; one that was infinitely greater than Solomon was, in everything; so particularly in that, in which he

excelled others, and on the account of which the queen of the south came unto him, namely, wisdom: for he is the wisdom of God, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Jews themselves ^{f770} own, that the king, meaning the Messiah, that shall be raised up of the seed of David, **hml çm r ty hyhy hmkj I [b**, “shall be a greater master of wisdom”, or “wiser than Solomon”. Now what an aggravation of the condemnation of the Jews will this be another day, that a Gentile woman, living in a foreign and distant land, should, upon the fame of the wisdom of Solomon, leave her own kingdom and country, and come to Jerusalem, to hear his wise discourses about things natural, civil, and moral; and yet the Jews, who had a greater than Solomon in the midst of them, and had no need to take much pains to come to the sight and hearing of him, yet rejected him as the Messiah, blasphemed his miracles, and despised his ministry; though it was concerned about things of a spiritual and evangelic nature, and the eternal welfare of immortal souls.

Ver. 43. *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man*, etc.] By “the unclean” spirit, is meant Satan, the old serpent, the devil; who by the Jews, is wont to be called as here, **abasm j wr**, “the unclean spirit” ^{f771}; and that, because he is by sin become so, though he was not so originally; is the cause of uncleanness in men, and delights in unclean persons, places, and things: his “going out of a man”, is not to be understood of his being dispossessed of the bodies of men; nor of the ejection of him, and his going by force, through the power of divine grace, out of the souls of men; but either of his leaving the Jews for a while, in some sort, whilst Christ and the Gospel continued among them; and of his going out of the Scribes and Pharisees; not really, but putting on another form, appearing as an angel of light, and under the guise of holiness and righteousness: and so he may be said to go out of men, when any outward reformation is made in them; and they take up a profession of religion, though destitute of the grace of God:

he walketh through dry places; referring to a prevailing notion, that unclean spirits walk in, and haunt, desert and desolate places; and may have regard to the Gentiles, among whom Satan might go, seeking rest and satisfaction among them, in their idolatries and other wickedness, till he was there also disturbed by the Gospel sent among them: or by these “dry places” may be meant the saints, whom he takes his walks among, in order, by tempting, to distress them, being secure of pharisaical persons: and these may be so called, not for what they are in themselves; not because the

sun of righteousness shines upon them: or because thirsty and desirous of divine and spiritual things; much less as if they had no moisture, since they have a well of living water in them, and are watered by the Lord; or were unfruitful, as dry places usually are; but for what they were to the unclean spirit, there being nothing in their grace, and the exercise of it, and in their spiritual performances, grateful to him; nothing to quench his thirst, and satisfy his sinful appetite; nor were there in them the mire and dirt of iniquity to roll in, as in unregenerate persons: wherefore he is represented as

seeking rest, and findeth none: his view in walking in these places, or among such persons, is rest; not the rest of the saints, he seeks their disturbance, but his own rest; which is to do all the mischief he can, by stirring up corruption, tempting to sin, and discouraging the exercise of grace; but is not able to do so much mischief as he would, and so cannot find the rest he seeks for, nor satisfy his envious, spiteful, and malicious temper: and this being the case, it follows,

Ver. 44. *Then he said, I will return into my house*, etc.] Into the land of Judea, particularly into the Scribes and Pharisees, outward professors of religion; who, notwithstanding their outward reformation, and great pretensions to holiness, are Satan's house still: he has a property in them, a claim upon them; and though he says,

from whence I came out, yet he never really and properly quitted it, only seemingly, and in appearance; and therefore his returning is only throwing off the guise, and reassuming his former character, as a vicious and unclean spirit.

And when he is come, he findeth it empty: not empty of sin: this puts me in mind of a passage in the Misna^{f772}, where it is said, that on a fast day,

“when they stand in prayer, they cause to descend, or go before the ark, an old man, who is used (to prayer,) whose children, מִקְרָא וְתַיְבוֹ, “and his house, are empty”, so that his heart is perfect in prayer,”

or entirely at leisure for it. The commentators^{f773} on that phrase, “his house is empty”, note, that he was empty of sin, and free from it, and one concerning whom an evil report had not gone forth from his youth: but such was not this house; it was empty of God, of the true knowledge of

him, of the fear of him, and love to him; of Christ, of faith in him, affection for him, and hope on him; of the Spirit of God, and of his graces, and of spiritual, internal religion, and powerful godliness.

Swept; not with the Spirit of grace convincing of sin, righteousness, and judgment; but with the besom of an outward reformation:

and garnished; not with internal grace, which makes saints all glorious within; but with secret lusts and corruptions, which rendered it an agreeable habitation for this unclean spirit; and at most, with some show of morality, a little negative holiness, or abstinence from outward acts of sin, an observance of some external rites and ceremonies, and a few hypocritical performances of fasting and prayer; which Satan can very well bear with, so long as the heart is empty of spiritual grace, and till an opportunity offers of throwing off all appearance of good.

Ver. 45. *Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits*, etc.] This is said in allusion to, and in imitation of the seven spirits before the throne; or may denote a large number of devils, seven being a number of perfection; or else the various corruptions of a man's heart, the swarms of internal lusts which are there stirred up by Satan;

more wicked than himself, as these are more pernicious to man, than the devil himself:

and they enter in and dwell there; that is, though they were there before, now they exert and show themselves, and such men appear to be under the power and government of them; when leaving their seeming religion and holiness, they return like the dog to the vomit, and the swine to the wallowing in the mire.

And the last state of that man is worse than the first: he becomes more wicked than ever he was, before he made pretensions to religion; as such apostates generally are more extravagant in sinning, and are seldom or ever recovered by repentance, and their last end is eternal damnation; (see [1 Peter 2:20,21,22](#))

even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. This parable fitly suited them, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the men of that generation, from whom in some measure the unclean spirit might be said to depart through the doctrine, and miracles of Christ, to go into the Gentile world; but being followed there with the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles,

returns to the Jews, and fills them with more malice, blasphemy, and blindness, than ever, which issued in their utter ruin and destruction; of which this parable may be justly thought to be prophetic.

Ver. 46. *While he yet talked to the people*, etc.] Upon these subjects, which so nearly concerned the Scribes and Pharisees, and which could not fail of drawing upon him their resentment and ill will.

Behold his mother and his brethren: by “his mother” is meant Mary; but who are “his brethren”, is not so easy to say: some are of opinion, that Joseph had children by Mary, who are here meant; but it is more generally believed, that these were either the sons of Joseph by a former wife, whose name is said to be Escha; or rather, Mary’s sister’s sons, the wife of Cleophas, the cousin-germans of Christ, it being usual with the Jews to call such kindred brethren; and so they might be James, Joses, Simon, and Judas: these

stood without: for Christ was within doors, not in a synagogue, as Piscator thought, but in an house; (see ~~4131~~ Matthew 13:1) and his mother and brethren stood without doors, either because they could not get in for the throng of the people; or because they would not, it not being proper to make all within acquainted with what they had to say to him:

desiring to speak with him; not with a pure view to interrupt him in his work, or to divert him from it, lest he should overspend himself; nor from a principle of ambition and vain glory, to show that they were related to him, and that he was at their beck and command; but rather, to observe unto him the danger he exposed himself to, by the freedom he took with the Pharisees in his discourses, and probably to acquaint him with some conspiracies formed against him.

Ver. 47. *Then one said unto him*, etc.] Either one of his auditors, or, as the Ethiopic version has it, one “of his disciples”: the other evangelists intimate, that more than one acquainted him with it; which is easily reconciled: for, upon his mother and brethren calling to him, as Mark says they did; first one and then another, and more, might apprise him of it, and especially as he did not immediately go out unto them.

Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee: whether this message was carried at the request of the mother and brethren of Christ, and delivered in a simple manner, and with an honest intention; or whether it was officiously done, and with a design to interrupt

him, and to try him, whether he would prefer his natural relations, and their society and conversation, to the spiritual work in which he was engaged, in doing good to the souls of men, is not certain; the latter seems probable, from the following words, and conduct of Christ. Some copies read, “desiring to see thee”.

Ver. 48. *But he answered and said unto him that told him,* etc.] Of his mother and brethren being without doors, desiring, and waiting to speak to him,

Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? These questions are put, not as if he himself was ignorant who were his mother or his brethren; or as suggesting as if he had none; or as denying that these were in such a relation to him; or as casting any slight upon them; or as intending to teach men disrespect to parents and kindred, according to the flesh; but as displeased with the man, or men, for interrupting him in his work; and to let them know, that the business of his heavenly Father was preferred by him to any his natural relations could have with him; and that he might have an opportunity of pointing out who were his relations in a spiritual sense.

Ver. 49. *And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples,* etc.] By whom are meant, not only the twelve, but all others present, who truly believed in him, both men and women; and who might sit near him and together, and whom, by this motion of his hand, he pointed out as his spiritual relations, to the multitude that sat round him:

and said, behold my mother, and my brethren; in whose hearts he was formed, and who were the children of God by adopting grace, and so his brethren; and were as dear to him as his mother and brethren. It is reasonable to suppose, that when he said, “behold my mother”, and, as in the following verse, “sister”; he might stretch forth his hand particularly, toward the pious and religious women that believed in him, and ministered to him of their substance, who might be now present; such as Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and others; since these are mentioned by Luke in the same chapter in which this passage stands in his Gospel; and when he said “behold my brethren”, he might point directly to the twelve, and the rest of the men that believed in him, and followed him.

Ver. 50. *For whosoever shall do the will of my Father*, etc.] This is not to be understood of a perfect obedience to the will of God, revealed in his righteous law; for since this cannot be performed by any mere man, no one could be in such a spiritual relation to Christ: but of the obedience of faith to the will of God, revealed in the Gospel; which is to believe in Christ, and have everlasting life; (see ^{<B160>}John 6:40). This is the will of Christ's Father,

which is in heaven, and which is good news from heaven, to sinners on earth; and which Christ came down from heaven to do, and to declare to the children of men: such as "hear the word of God and do it", as Luke says, (^{<B121>}Luke 8:21) that is, hear the Gospel, understand and believe it, and become obedient to the faith of it; these are in this near manner related to Christ, evidentially and openly, as well as those who were now present:

the same is my brother, and sister, and mother; as dear to me, as such are to those, to whom they stood thus related in the flesh: and these natural relations serve to convey some ideas of that relation, union, nearness, and communion, there are between Christ and his people; all these relative characters may be observed in the book of Solomon's Song, to which our Lord may be reasonably thought to have respect; (see ^{<B111>}Song of Solomon 3:11 4:9,10,12 5:1,2 8:1).