

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 15

Ver. 1. *Then came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees,* etc.] After he had wrought so many miracles, particularly that of feeding five thousand men; besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes: the fame of which had reached Jerusalem, and occasioned much talk there about him: the Scribes and Pharisees, who were his inveterate enemies, hearing thereof, came to him, where he was, in Galilee: to know the truth of these things, to converse with him, and to watch, and observe, what he said and did;

which were of Jerusalem, saying. There were Scribes and Pharisees throughout the land, but those of Jerusalem were the chief; they were men of the greatest learning and abilities, and were more expert in their religion and customs: these were either sent by the sanhedrim at Jerusalem, or came of themselves; taking upon them a greater power, and authority of examining, correcting, directing, and advising.

Ver. 2. *Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?* etc.] Having observed, for some little time, the conduct of Christ and his disciples, they thought proper to take no notice of him as yet, but of them; and of them, not as transgressing any command of God, but of men; not being able to charge them with any breach of the law of God: and could they have done this with any show of truth, yet they might choose rather to accuse them of breaking the rules of the elders; by whom they mean, not the elders of the present sanhedrim, but Hillell and Shammai; the two heads of their famous schools, and other ancient doctors; from whom were delivered by one to another, certain rules and laws of their own devising, which had no foundation in the word of God; and of these the Scribes and Pharisees were more tenacious, than of the Scriptures; and indeed they preferred them before them: most extravagant are their praises and commendations of these unwritten traditions; thus they say ^{f873},

“Know then, that “the words of the Scribes” are more lovely than the words of the law: for, says R. Tarphon, if a man does not read,

he only transgresses an affirmative; but if he transgresses the words of the school of Hillell, he is guilty of death, because he hath broke down a hedge, and a serpent shall bite him. It is a tradition of R. Ishmael, the words of the law have in them both prohibition and permission; some of them are light, and some heavy, but “the words of the Scribes” are all of them heavy — **μynqz yrbd μyrwmh**, “weightier are the words of the elders”, than the words of the prophets.”

And elsewhere ^{f874}, this advice is given;

“My son, attend to “the words of the Scribes”, more than to the words of the law; for in the words of the law, are affirmatives and negatives; but the words of the Scribes **μyrpws yrbd l [rbw[h l k**, “everyone that transgresses the words of the Scribes”, is guilty of death.”

This is what they charge the disciples with here, and could they have had their wills, would have put them to death for it: the particular tradition, they accuse them with the breach of, follows,

for they wash not their hands when they eat bread; common bread, an ordinary meal; for, for eating of holy things, more than bare washing was required, even an immersion of them in water; but the hands were to be washed before eating common food, whether they were known to be defiled or not: “bread” is particularly mentioned, as including all sorts of food, and as distinct from fruit; for, for eating of common fruit, there was no need of washing of hands; he that washed his hands for eating fruit, was reckoned an ostentatious man ^{f875}, who were the first authors of this tradition, it is not certain; it is said ^{f876}, that

“Hillell and Shammai decreed **μydy twrhj l [**, “concerning the purification of the hands”; R. Jose ben R. Bon, in the name of R. Levi, says, so was the tradition before, but they forgot it; and these two stood up, and agreed with the minds of the former ones.”

“However, it is a certain point, that the washing of the hands, and the dipping of them, are **μyrpws yrbdm**, “from the words of the Scribes” ^{f877}.”

The breach of this rule was reckoned equal to the most flagitious crimes ^{f878}: R. Jose says,

“whoever eats bread without washing of hands, is as if he lay with a whore: and, says R. Eleazer, whoever despiseth washing of hands, shall be rooted out of the world.”

And elsewhere it is said by them ^{f879}, that

“he that blesseth (food) with defiled hands, is guilty of death.”

And again ^{f880},

“whoever does not wash his hands as is fitting, although he is punished above, he shall be punished below.”

And to fright people into an observance of this tradition, they talk of Shibta, a sort of an evil spirit, that hurts such as eat without washing their hands: they say, he sits upon their hands, and upon their bread, and leaves something behind, which is very dangerous ^{f881}; and it is recorded ^{f882}, to the praise of R. Akiba, that he chose rather to die, than to transgress this tradition; for being in prison, and in want of water, what little he had, he washed his hands with it, instead of drinking it. Eleazar ben Chanac was excommunicated for despising the tradition concerning washing of hands; and when he died, the sanhedrim sent and put a great stone upon his coffin, to show, that he that died in his excommunication, the sanhedrim stoned his coffin ^{f883}: but of this, *See Gill* “~~MARK~~ *Mark 7:3*”.

Ver. 3. *But he answered and said unto them*, etc.] Taking no notice of the tradition about eating bread without washing the hands, whether it was right or wrong; it being at most but an human tradition, of no moment and importance, whether it was broke or kept; he makes a very just recrimination, by putting another question to them,

why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? suggesting, that, if his disciples were guilty, they were not so guilty as they themselves were; that his disciples, at most, were but guilty of the breach of an human precept, whereas they were guilty of the breach of a divine command; and that it was strange, that men who were so scrupulous of breaking, and bore so hard on such as did transgress the traditions of the elders, could allow themselves to transgress the commandments of God; yea, to do this by, and while they were observing their own traditions: and

which observation carries a full acquittance of the disciples from blame; for, if by keeping the traditions of the elders, they broke the commands of God, it was a very good reason why they should not observe them.

Ver. 4. *For God commanded, saying,* etc.] That he might not be thought to suggest this without any foundation, he gives them an instance, wherein a command of God was transgressed, by the observance of their tradition: the command he refers to, stands in (^{<0212>}Exodus 20:12) and is this;

Honour thy father and mother. This was a plain command of God, written with his own hand, and delivered by Moses to them; it was of a moral nature, and of eternal obligation: and to be understood, not merely of that high esteem parents are to be had in by their children, and of the respectful language and gesture to be used towards them, and of the cheerful obedience to be yielded to them; but also of honouring them with their substance, feeding, clothing, and supplying them with the necessaries of life, when they stand in need thereof; which is but their reasonable service, for all the care, expense, and trouble they have been at, in bringing them up in the world: nor did the Jews deny this to be the duty of children to their parents, and own it to be the sense of the commandment: they say ^{f884}, that this is the weightiest commandment among the weighty ones, even this, the honouring of father and mother; and ask,

“What is this honour? To which is replied, he must give him food, drink, and clothing; buckle his shoes, and lead him in, and bring him out.”

They indeed laid down this as a rule, and it seems a very equitable one ^{f885}; that,

“when a man’s father has any money, or substance, he must be supported out of that; but if he has none, he must support him out of his own.”

But then, as will be seen hereafter, they made void this command of God, and their own explications of it, by some other tradition. Moreover, Christ observes, that it is said, (^{<0217>}Exodus 21:17)

And he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death; temporal and eternal: and which is a positive command of God, made as a fence for the former; and is to be understood, not only of giving abusive language to parents, but of slighting, as the Hebrew word signifies, and neglecting

them, taking no notice of them, when needy and in distress, to supply their wants. Now these commands of God, Christ shows the Jews transgressed by their tradition, as appears from the following verses.

Ver. 5-6. *But ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or mother, etc.]* That is, it was a tradition of their's, that if a man should say to his father and mother, when poor and in distress, and made application to him for sustenance,

it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father, or his mother, he shall be free: or, as Mark expresses it, "it is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall be free, and ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or mother". For the understanding of this tradition, let it be observed, that the word "Corban" signifies a gift, or offering, which was devoted to sacred use; and was unalienable, and could not be converted to any other use; and that this word was used among the Jews, from hence, as the form of an oath, or vow; and therefore, when anyone said "Corban", it was all one, as if he swore by "Corban"; or as if he had said, let it be as "Corban", as unalienable as "Corban": by which oath, or vow, the use of that which was spoken of, whether it respected a man's self, or others, was restrained and prohibited: the rule was ^{f886} this *rwsa awh `brqk rmwak `brq*, "if a man said Corban, it was as if he said as Corban, and it was forbidden": and if he used the words "Conem", "Conach", and "Conas", which they call ^{f887} the surnames of Corban, and were no other than corruptions of it, it was all one as if he had said "Corban" itself. There are many instances of this kind of vows, and the form of them in their oral law ^{f888}, or book of traditions;

"If anyone should say, *hnhn ynaç µnwq*, "Conem (or "Corban") whatsoever I might be profited by the" sons of Noah, it is free of an Israelite, and forbidden of a Gentile; if he should say, "whatsoever I might be profited" by the seed of Abraham, it is forbidden of an Israelite, and is free of a Gentile — if anyone should say, *µyl r [l hnhn ynaç µnwq*, "Conem (or "Corban") whatsoever I might be profited by the uncircumcised", it is free of the uncircumcised of Israel, and forbidden of the circumcised of the Gentiles; if he says "Conem (or "Corban") whatsoever I might be profited by the circumcised", it is forbidden of the circumcised of Israel, and free of the circumcised, of the Gentiles."

Again ^{f889},

“if anyone says to his friend, **Æl hnhn ynaç μnwq**, “Conem (or “Corban”) whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me”, etc.”

which is exactly the same form as here, unless it should be rather rendered, “whatsoever I might be profited by thee”: once more ^{f890},

“if a married woman should say to her husband, **Æybal w abal tynhn ynaç μnwq** “Conem (or Corban) whatsoever I might be profited by my father, or thy father, etc.”.”

Let these instances suffice: the plain and evident sense of the tradition before us, is this; that when, upon application being made to a man by his parents, for support and sustenance, he makes a vow in such form as this, “Corban, whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me”; that is, whatsoever profit or advantage thou mightest have, or expect to have from me, let it be as “Corban”, as a gift devoted to God, that can never be revoked and converted to another use; or, in other words, I vow and protest thou shalt never have any profit from me, not a penny, nor a pennyworth of mine. Now, when a man had made such an impious vow as this, according to this tradition, it was to stand firm and good, and he was not to honour his father or mother, or do anything for them, by way of relief: so that our Lord might justly observe upon it as he does;

thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect, by your tradition: for if such a vow was valid, and a man was obliged to abide by it, according to the tradition of the elders, and not honour his father and mother, as the law of God requires; it is a plain case, that the command of God was made void by this tradition: nay they expressly say ^{f891} that **hwxm yrbd l [twl j μyrdn**, “vows fall upon things of a (divine) commandment”, as well as upon things in a man’s power, and that he is bound by them; so that without sin he cannot do what the law commands; insomuch, that if a man vows a vow, and that it may be ratified, a command must be made void, his vow must stand, and the command be abrogated. So truly and justly does Christ charge them with making the command of God of none effect, by their tradition. It is indeed disputed by the doctors, and at last allowed, that such a vow might be dissolved by a wise man, for the honour of parents ^{f892}.

“R. Eliezer says, they open to a man, (i.e. the door of repentance, and dissolve his vow,) for the honour of his father and his mother, but the wise men forbid “it”. Says R. Tzadok, if they open to him for the honour of his father and mother, they will open to him for the honour of God, and if so, there will be no vows: however, the wise men agreed with R. Eliezer in the affair between a man and his parents, that they should open to him for the honour of them.”

And this could be done only by a wise man; and very probably this last decree was made on account of this just reproof of Christ’s, being ashamed any longer to countenance so vile a practice; and even, according to this determination, the vow stood firm till dissolved by of their doctors: so that notwithstanding, Christ’s argument is good, and the instance full to prove that for which he brought it: for the above reason it may be, it is, that this tradition Christ refers to is not now extant; but that there was such an one in Christ’s time, is certain; he would never have asserted it else; and had it not been true, the Pharisees would have been able to have retired him, and forward enough to have done it: and that such vows were sometimes made, and which were not to be rescinded, is clear from the following fact

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“It happened to one in Bethhoron, **hanh wnmyh rdwm wyba hyhç**, “whose father was excluded, by a vow, from receiving any profit from him”: and he married his son, and said to his friend, a court and a dinner are given to thee by gift; but they are not to be made use of by thee, but with this condition, that my father may come and eat with us at dinner;”

which was a device to have his father at dinner, and yet secure his vow. Upon the whole, the sense of this passage is, not that a man excused himself to his parents, according to this tradition, by saying, that his substance, either in whole, or in part, was “Corban”, or devoted to the service of God, and therefore they could expect no profit, or relief, from him; but that he vowed that what he had should be as “Corban”, and they should be never the better for it: so that a man so vowing might give nothing to the service of God, but keep his whole substance to himself; which he might make use of for his own benefit, and for the benefit of others, but not for his father and mother; who, after such a vow made, were to receive no benefit by it, unless rescinded by a wise man; and which seems to be an explanation of it, made after the times of Christ.

See note on ^{<1515>}Matthew 15:5

Ver. 7. *Ye hypocrites*, etc.] After our Lord had given so full a proof of their making void the commandments of God by their traditions, he might very justly, as he does, call them hypocrites; who pretended to so much religion and holiness, and yet scrupled not, upon occasion, to set aside a divine command; who affected so much sanctity, as to be displeased with the disciples, for not complying with an order of their elders, when they themselves made no account of a divine precept; and plainly showed they had more regard to men than God, and to the precepts of men, than to the commands of God, and to approve themselves to men more than to God; and that they sought the praise and applause of men, and not the honour which comes from God; and that their religion lay in mere rituals and externals, and those of men's devising, and not in the spiritual worship and service of God. Nor can it be thought that Christ, in calling them hypocrites, bears too hard upon them; when one of their own doctors, who lived not very distant from this age, says ^{f894} of the men of Jerusalem, that

“if the hypocrites of the world were divided into ten parts, nine of them would belong to Jerusalem, and one to the rest of the world.”

Well did Esaias prophecy of you, saying, in (^{<2313>}Isaiah 29:13) which prophecy, though it was directed to, and suited with many in that generation in which the prophet lived, yet had a further view to the Jews in after times: their own writers ^{f895} acknowledge, that the whole prophecy is spoken of that nation; for by Ariel they understand the altar at Jerusalem, the city in which David dwelt,

Ver. 8. *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth*, etc.] The preface to these words, or the form in which they are introduced by the prophet; “wherefore the Lord said”, is left out in this citation, being unnecessary here, though of the greatest importance there; partly to show, that what was about to be said, was not the prophet's own words, but the words of the Lord, of which the Jews in Christ's time made no doubt; and partly to give a reason why that judicial blindness, threatened in the context, should be inflicted on them, which is no part of Christ's design here; but which is only to show, that the description here given exactly agrees with them, and so proves, and confirms the character he gives of them as hypocrites. They approached the ordinances of God, and drew nigh to him, and attended him in outward worship; they prayed unto him

publicly, and constantly, in the streets, in the synagogues, and temple, and with much seeming devotion and sanctity:

and honoureth me with their lips: they owned him to be their creator and preserver; they made their boast of him, and of their knowledge of him, as the one only living, and true God, and as the God of Israel; they brought their sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, even the fruit of their lips, unto him, for their many peculiar mercies, privileges, and favours, as a nation, church, and people, and with much seeming sincerity and affection.

But their heart is far from me; they had no true love to God, nor faith in him, nor fear of him; they were not at all concerned for his presence with them, or for communion with him, or for his honour and glory; their hearts were in the world, and after their covetousness; they made religion a tool to their secular purposes, supposing gain to be godliness; sought the applause of men, and contented themselves with bodily exercise; having no regard to internal religion, powerful godliness, or where their hearts were, so be it, their bodies were presented to God in public worship; and what they did it was to be seen and approved of men, not caring what the searcher of hearts knew concerning them, or what he required of them.

Ver. 9. *But in vain do they worship me*, etc.] In the Hebrew text it is, “their fear towards me”: which is rightly expressed here by “worship”; for the fear of God often intends the whole worship of God, both external and internal: here it only signifies external worship, which these men only attended to. They prayed in the synagogues, read, and, in their way, expounded the books of Moses, and the prophets, to the people, diligently observed the rituals of the ceremonial law, brought their offerings and sacrifices to the temple, and neglected nothing appertaining to the outward service of it; and yet it was all “in vain”, and to no purpose; since the heart was wanting, no grace there, they acted from wrong principles, and with wrong views; their worship was merely outward, formal, and customary; and besides, they added doctrines and traditions of their own inventing and devising. The phrase, “in vain”, is not in the text in Isaiah: some have thought that it was not originally in Matthew, but inserted by some other hand, to make the sense more complete. Grotius thinks there was a various reading, which is followed by the Septuagint, and the evangelist; and that instead of *yhtw*, “and is”, it was *whtw*, the same with *whtl*, “in vain”: but there is no need to suppose either of these: Christ, who made this citation, either added it himself for the clearer illustration of the passage, and as

being entirely agreeable to the sense of it, and which it required, for the true understanding of it; or he might have in his view another passage of the same prophet, speaking of the same people, and upon the same subject, (²⁰¹¹Isaiah 1:11,13) and from thence take the phrase, and, for explanation sake, join it to the passage here. It follows,

teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; that is, teaching the people to observe the traditions of the elders, the decrees and determinations of the doctors, as if they were doctrines delivered by God himself; or, instead of the doctrines contained in the Bible, which lay neglected by them, they obtruded on them the orders, and injunctions of men. In the text in Isaiah, are only these words, “taught by the precept of men”: and which relate to their fear and worship of God; and which is here interpreted of their teachers teaching them it, and that explained of the commandments of men; as if, instead of **hdml m**, “taught”, it had been read, **mydml m**, “teaching”. The Jews have no reason to quarrel with this construction and sense, since their Targum paraphrases it thus; “and their fear before me is, **ʿypl m ʿyrbg tdyqptk**, according to the commandment of men that teach”: and a noted commentator ^{f896} of their’s has this remark on the text, “their fear towards me is” not with a perfect heart, but “by the commandment **ptwa mydml mh myḥnah**, of the men that teach them”.

Ver. 10. *And he called the multitude*, etc.] Having silenced the Scribes and Pharisees, and judging it not worth his while to say any more to men so obstinate and perverse; who were not open to conviction, nor would attend to any argument or reason, though ever so clear and strong, against their darling notions; he leaves them, as both disliking them, and despairing of them, and calls to the common people; who, through their great veneration for these men, upon their coming withdrew, and stood at a distance; nor indeed would they admit them very near unto them, lest they should be polluted by them: Christ, I say, calls to these to come nearer to him, hoping better of them, and knowing that they were more tractable, and teachable; and that there were some among them, that were to be brought off of their former principles and prejudices, to embrace him, and the truths delivered by him:

and said unto them, hear and understand; this he said, partly, by way of reflection upon the learned Scribes and Pharisees, who, with all their

learning, could not hear him so as to understand him; and partly to excite the attention of the multitude to what he had to say; as also to show, that barely to hear with the outward hearing of the ear, will be of no service, unless what is heard is understood; and that the way to understand, is to hear.

Ver. 11. *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man,* etc.] No sorts of meats, or drinks, or whatever is proper food for men, or manner of eating and drinking them, when moderately used, defile a man, or render him loathsome and odious in the sight God. This is directly opposite to the notions of the Jews, who say¹⁸⁹⁷, that

“forbidden meats are unclean themselves, ḡpnhw Pwgh ^yamj mw,
“and defile both body and soul”.”

The first food of man was herbs; after the flood he had an allowance of the flesh of beasts, without distinction; under the Levitical dispensation, a difference of meats was enjoined to be observed; the laws respecting that distinction are now abolished, and not binding on us under the Gospel dispensation. Some scruples, about some of these things, did arise among the first Christians; but in process of time these difficulties were got over: nor is there any religion in abstinence from any sort of food; men, indeed, on a “physical” account, ought to be careful what they eat and drink, but not on a religious one; moderation in all ought to be used; and whatever is ate or drank, should be received with thankfulness, and done to the glory of God, and then no defilement can arise from hence:

but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. It is sin, and that only, which takes its rise from the heart, lies in thought, and is either expressed by the mouth, or performed by some outward action, which defiles the man, and renders him loathsome, abominable, and odious in the sight of God. The heart is the source of all evil; the pollution of it is very early, and very general, reaching to all the powers and faculties of the soul; which shows the ignorance of some, and folly of others, that talk of, and trust to the goodness of their hearts; and also the necessity of new hearts and right spirits being formed and created; and that the sinful thoughts of the heart, and the lusts thereof, are defiling to men; and that they are sinful in God’s account, and abominable in his sight; that they are loathsome to sensible sinners, and are to be repented of, and forsaken by them; and need the pardoning grace of God or otherwise will be brought into judgment.

Sinful words, which, through the abundance of wickedness in the heart, come out of the mouth, have the same influence and effect: words are of a defiling nature; with these men pollute both themselves and others: the tongue, though a little member, defiles the whole body; and evil and corrupt communication proceeding out of the mouth, corrupts the best of manners, and renders men loathsome to God, and liable to his awful judgment. And this is the nature of all sinful actions; they are what God can take no pleasure in; they are disagreeable, to a sensible mind; they leave a stain, which can never be removed by any thing the creature can do; nothing short of the blood of Christ can cleanse from it; and inasmuch as they are frequently committed, there is need of continual application to it. These are now the things men should be concerned about, as of a defiling nature; and not about meats and drinks, and the manner of using them, whether with hands washed, or unwashed.

Ver. 12. *Then came his disciples, and said unto him,* etc.] That is, after he had dismissed the people, and was come into a private house; (see ~~4072~~ Mark 7:17) his disciples came to him, being alone, full of concern, for what he had said to the Pharisees, and before all the people; and not so well understanding it themselves.

Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?, that they set aside the commandments of God, by observing the traditions of the elders; or that they were hypocrites; and that the prophecy of Isaiah, which describes such persons, belonging to them; or that not what goes into, but what comes out of a man, defiles him: whichever it was they have respect unto, or it may be to the whole, they seem to wish Christ had not said it; because the Pharisees were, as they thought, grieved and troubled at it, as being contrary to true religion and piety; and lest they should be so stumbled, as no more to attend, and so all hopes of bringing them over to the faith of Christ be lost; and chiefly, because they perceived they were made exceeding angry, and were highly provoked; so that they might fear that both Christ, and they themselves, would feel the effects of their wrath and rage; and perhaps it was with some such view, that he would take some prudential step that he might not fall into their hands, that they acquaint him with it.

Ver. 13. *But he answered, and said,* etc.] As being unconcerned at their rage, and having nothing to fear from them; and being well satisfied, that

what he had said was right, and would produce proper effects, he gave his disciples this for answer:

every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up; which may be understood either of things, or of persons: it may have regard to doctrines and ordinances; and the meaning be, that whatever doctrine is not delivered by God, or whatever ordinance is not instituted by him; whatever is not of heaven, but of man, of man's devising, and of human imposition, as the traditions of the elders, must be opposed and rejected; and sooner or later will be utterly rooted up, and destroyed; as will all the false notions, corrupt worship, and errors, and heresies of men, in God's own time: or it may respect persons. There are some plants, which are planted by Christ's Father, which is in heaven; these are the elect of God, who are trees of righteousness; the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. These are planted by the river of God's love, in the person of Christ, in the likeness of his death and resurrection; they are transplanted out of a state of nature, are ingrafted into Christ, have the graces of the Spirit implanted in their souls, and are themselves planted in the courts of the Lord, in a Gospel church state; and being watered with the dews of grace, appear to be choice plants, plants of renown, pleasant ones, very fruitful, and which shall never perish, or be rooted, and plucked up, but there are others, like these Pharisees, hypocrites, formal professors, and heretics, who pretend to much religion and holiness, make a show of the leaves of profession, but have not the fruit of grace; these get into churches, and are outwardly and ministerially planted there; but being never rooted in Christ, nor partake of his grace, in time they wither, and die away; or persecution arising because of the Word, or truth being dispensed in so clear and glaring a light, that they cannot bear it; they are offended with it, and so are detected, discovered, and rooted up and it is necessary that truth should be freely spoken, as it was here by Christ, that such plants might be rooted out; for these words are said by Christ in justification of his conduct. So the Jews speak of God, as a planter, and of rooting up what he does not like.

“The holy, blessed God (say they ^{f898}), “plants” trees in this world; if they prosper, it is well; if they do not prosper, ^{^wl rqla}, “he roots them up”, and plants them even many times.”

And elsewhere it is said ^{f899},

“let the master of the vineyard come, and consume its thorns: the gloss on it is, the holy, blessed God; for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, is the house of Israel, and he will consume, and take away the thorns of the vineyard.”

Ver. 14. *Let them alone*, etc.] Have nothing to say, or do with them; do not mind their anger and resentment, their reproaches and reflections, nor trouble yourselves at the offence they have taken; if they will go, let them go; they are a worthless generation of men, who are not to be regarded, hearkened to, nor to be pleased; it matters not what they say of me, and of my doctrine:

they be blind leaders of the blind; the people that hearken to them, and are followers of them, are “blind”, as to any true sense of themselves, their state, and condition by nature; as to any spiritual, saving knowledge of God; as to any acquaintance with the Messiah, and the method of salvation by him; as to the Spirit of God, and the work of grace, regeneration, and sanctification upon the soul; as to the Scriptures of truth, and doctrines of the Gospel; and the “leaders” of them were as “blind” as they: by whom are meant the Scribes and Pharisees, the learned doctors and rabbins of the Jewish nation; who thought themselves very wise and knowing, yet they were blind also; and none more than they. It was an old tradition ¹⁹⁰⁰ among the Jews,

“that there should be “blind teachers” at the time when God should have his tabernacle among them.”

This was predicted, in (~~23219~~ Isaiah 42:19) and all such leaders and teachers are blind, who, notwithstanding their natural abilities, and acquired parts, are in a state of unregeneracy; and have nothing more than what they have from nature, or have attained to at school; and as apparently all such are, who lead men from Christ, to mere morality, and to a dependence upon their own righteousness for justification, which was the darling principle of the blind leaders in the text.

And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch; of ignorance and error, immorality and profaneness, distress, if not despair, temporal ruin and destruction; which was notoriously verified in the Jewish people, and their guides: and of eternal damnation, the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; what else can be expected?

Ver. 15. *Then answered Peter*, etc.] Mark says, “his disciples asked him concerning the parable”; which might be by the mouth of Peter; who, probably, being the eldest man, and very forward to speak, was generally their spokesman: and who, at this time, might be requested, by the rest, to ask the meaning of the parable, which had given offence to the Pharisees, and was not clearly understood by them; which he accordingly did:

and said unto him, declare unto us this parable; that not what goes into the mouth, but what comes out of it, defiles the man; which, though expressed in very plain words, and easy to be understood, yet did not appear clear to their understandings; and seemed to be contrary, not only to the traditions of the elders, but to the laws of God, respecting the difference of clean and unclean meats; and therefore call it a “parable”, and desire an explanation of it.

Ver. 16. *And Jesus said*, etc.] As wondering at, and as being displeased with, and as reproving them for their dulness and ignorance:

are ye also yet without understanding? you, my disciples, as well as the Scribes and Pharisees; you, who have been with me so long, who have heard so many discourses from me, who for so long a time have been instructed by me, both in private, and in public; and yet do not understand what is so plain and easy, that has nothing of difficulty in it, but what might easily be accounted for.

Ver. 17. *Do not ye understand*, etc.] You must understand, you cannot be so ignorant,

that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? that is, that whatsoever food a man takes in at his mouth, he swallows down, and it is received into his stomach; which, having performed its office, the grosser parts go down into the belly, and passing through the bowels, are evacuated into the vault, or privy, “purging all meats”, as Mark says; for that only receives the filth and excrementitious matter; so that what is left in the body is pure, wholesome, and nourishing: nor can any part of what goes into a man defile him, because it only enters into the body, and passes through it; and, as Mark says, “entereth not into the heart”, which is the seat of moral impurity; so that no moral pollution can be contracted by eating any sort of food, even though it should not be clean itself, nor be eaten with clean hands.

Ver. 18. *But those things which proceed out of the mouth*, etc.] Meaning not material things, as spittle, vomit, etc. but, as it follows, which

come forth from the heart: are first conceived and formed there, and then come forth from thence, and are expressed by the mouth; as all idle words, foolish talking, filthy jesting, unsavoury communication, and every word that is rotten and corrupt, or which is done in the life and conversation;

and they defile the man: the heart is the corrupt fountain from whence all moral defilement flows; and sinful words and actions are the impure streams, which spring from thence, and increase the moral pollution of human nature.

Ver. 19. *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts*, etc.] Of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of fellow creatures, and of all sorts of wickedness. The thoughts of sin are evil, are to be hated, forsaken, and for which men are accountable to God. All wicked imaginations, carnal reasonings, lustful desires, and malicious contrivances, are here included; which take their rise from, and are devised, and forged, in the corrupt heart of man.

Murders; inveterate hatred of men's persons, malice prepense, schemes to take away life, all angry and wrathful words, and actual effusion of man's blood.

Adulteries; uncleanness committed between married persons, both in thought, and deed:

fornications; unlawful copulations of persons in a single state:

thefts; taking away from others by force or fraud, what is their right and property:

false witness: swearing falsely, or exhibiting a false testimony to the hurt of his neighbour, either his name, person, or estate:

blasphemies; evil speakings of God or men. To which Mark adds "covetousness"; a greedy and insatiable desire after the things of the world, or the neighbour's goods: "wickedness"; doing hurt and mischief to fellow creatures: "deceit"; in words and actions, in trade and conversation: "lasciviousness"; all manner of uncleanness, and unnatural lusts: "an evil eye"; of envy and covetousness: the vitiosity, or corruption of nature, is, by the Jews^{f901}, called $\gamma[\text{r}]$, "the evil eye": "pride"; in heart and life, in dress and gesture; and "foolishness"; expressed in talk and conduct.

Ver. 20. *These are the things which defile a man*, etc.] These are filthy in themselves, and must pollute all in whom they are; they bring a defilement on the whole man, both body and soul, fasten guilt upon him, and expose him to everlasting punishment:

but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man: should a man neglect to wash his hands before eating a common meal, this need give him no uneasiness; he contracts no filth to his soul hereby, nor any guilt to his conscience; nor does he break any law of God; nor is he liable to any penalty for such an omission. This is a trifling matter, and merits no regard; but the things before mentioned are in their nature evil: they are contrary to the law of God; they are abominable in his sight; they render men loathsome and odious to the divine being; and expose them to shame and ruin; and it is only the blood of Christ can cleanse them from the pollution and guilt of them, and secure them from that punishment they deserve.

Ver. 21. *Then Jesus went thence*, etc.] From the land of Gennesaret, after he had silenced the Pharisees, as to the charge brought by them against his disciples; and when he had reproved them for their hypocrisy and wickedness, in making void the commands of God by their traditions; and had explained some difficult and parabolical sayings he had made use of to his disciples, he then left that country, and departed very privately: either to shun the multitude, for the sake of retirement; or to avoid any snares the Scribes and Pharisees might be laying for him, who must be greatly galled with his free discourse, and strong arguments:

and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; two principal cities of Phoenicia: not that he went into these places themselves, but into some places that bordered upon them; for as he ordered his disciples not to go in the way of the Gentiles, so neither did he himself.

Ver. 22. *And behold a woman of Canaan*, etc.] That is, of Phoenicia, which was called Canaan; so Shaul, the son of a Canaanitish woman, is, by the Septuagint in (^{<ms>}Exodus 6:15) called the son of a Phoenician; and the kings of Canaan are, by the same interpreters in (^{<ms>}Joshua 5:1) called kings of Phoenicia: hence this woman is by Mark said to be a Greek, that is, a Gentile, as the Jews used to call all of another nation, and a Syrophenician, being a native of Phoenicia, called Syrophenician; because it bordered upon Syria, and had been formerly a part of it, by conquest: so Cadmus, who is reported to have first brought letters from Phoenicia to Greece, is called ^{f902} a Syrophenician merchant.

Came out of the same coasts; being an inhabitant, it is very likely, either of Tyre or Sidon: this shows that Christ did not go into these places, but only to the borders of them, since she is said to come out of them to him; who, having heard of him, and the miraculous cures wrought by him, and being informed that he was near, at such a place, as the Persic version says, “suddenly came forth out of a corner”; and the Ethiopic reads it, “out of the mountains thereof”; and made to the house where he was privately retired, and would have hid himself, as Mark suggests,

and cried unto him; with a loud voice, with much vehemency, being in great distress,

saying, have mercy on me; meaning, by curing her daughter, with whose case she was so much affected, that she made it, as it were, her own:

O Lord, thou son of David. The first of these characters expresses her faith in his power, dominion, and government, that all persons and things, and so all diseases were at his command, and control; and that being Lord of all, he could remove them at his pleasure: the other shows her knowledge and belief of him, as the Messiah, that being a name by which he was usually known by the Jews; *See Gill* “^{<4000>}*Matthew 1:1*” and which she, though a Gentile, might come at the knowledge of, either through being a proselyte to the Jewish religion, or through a general report which might reach, especially the neighbouring nations, that the Jews expected a wonderful deliverer to arise among them, under this character of the son of David; and from what she had heard of him, she concluded he must be the person.

My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil, which had took possession of her, and most grievously afflicted her: and her request to him was, that he would cast him out of her: believing he had power so to do, without seeing or touching her, only by a word speaking: her faith was like that of the centurion’s.

Ver. 23. *But he answered her not a word*, etc.] Not that he did not hear her, or that he despised either her person or petition, or that he was not moved with it; but to continue her importunity, and try her faith, and make it manifest: for like reasons the Lord does not always, and immediately, answer the requests of his people. This giving her no answer, either that he would, or would not help her, carried in it a tacit repulse of her, and a denial of assistance to her; and it seems as if she did for a while desist from

her application to him, and betook herself to his disciples to plead with him for her:

and his disciples came; to the house where he was; who, it seems by this, had been elsewhere;

and besought him, saying, send her away; not in any shape, with any sort of answer, without curing her daughter, or without a promise of a cure; no, they desired she might be dismissed, with a grant of her request, to her entire satisfaction, as appears from Christ's answer: the reason they give is,

for she crieth after us; not only because she was troublesome to them, was importunate with them, and would take no denial from them: she followed them wherever they went; there was no getting rid of her: but also, because her case was so moving, was delivered in such an affecting manner, and her cries were piercing, that they could not bear them; and therefore entreat him, that he would relieve, and dismiss her.

Ver. 24. *But he answered, and said*, etc.] To his disciples, who knew how limited their commission was, that they were not to go into the way of the Gentiles, not to preach to them, nor perform miracles among them; and therefore could not reasonably expect that either the woman, or they, on her behalf, should succeed in this matter.

I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; as a priest, or as a Saviour and Redeemer, he was sent to make satisfaction and atonement for the sins of all God's elect, and to obtain eternal redemption and salvation for all of them, whether Jews or Gentiles; but as a prophet, in the discharge of his own personal ministry, he was sent by his Father only to the Jews; he was the "minister of the circumcision", (~~618~~ Romans 15:8) that is, a minister to the circumcised Jews; he was sent only to preach the Gospel to them, and work miracles among them, in proof of his Messiahship; and upon their rejection of him, then his apostles were to be sent among the Gentiles; but he himself was sent only to the Jews, here styled "the lost sheep of the house of Israel": by "the house of Israel", is meant the whole body of the Jewish nation, so called from Israel, the name of Jacob their father, from whom they sprung; and by the "lost sheep" of that house, are more especially designed the elect of God among them: for though all the individuals of that house were "lost" persons, considered in Adam, and in themselves, as the rest of mankind, and Christ, in the external ministry of the word, was sent to preach to them all; yet the elect of God

are only “sheep”: they are the sheep of Christ, of his pasture, and of his hand, whom he has the particular care and charge of; and who, in their natural state, are lost and straying, and could never find their way, or recover themselves from their lost state in Adam, and by their own transgressions; but he came to seek, and to save them, and to these his ministry was powerful and efficacious.

Ver. 25. *Then came she and worshipped him*, etc.] She followed the disciples into the house; and perceiving another repulse by Christ’s answer to them, she pushes on, through all discouragements; her faith grows stronger, and her importunity greater: she had called Christ Lord, and the son of David before, but now she worships him as God:

Saying, Lord help me; a short petition, but what fully and fitly expressed her case: the object she prays unto is the Lord, by which she owns his sovereignty, dominion, and power: the request she makes is for “help”, signifying that her case required it; that it was such, that she could not help herself, nor any creature help her, only he, which she firmly believed; and though it was her daughter, and not she herself, that was so miserably afflicted; yet such was her sympathy, love, and affection to her, that she makes the case her own, and calls helping her daughter, helping herself; for her daughter being relieved, she would be made easy.

Ver. 26. *But he answered, and said*, etc.] To the woman, as the Persic version reads it, and the sense requires:

it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs; which he said, to try her faith the more, and make it the more illustrious; and that not so much from his own sense of things, as in the language of the Jewish people, and which she might not be a stranger to. By “the children”, are meant the Jews, to whom the adoption belonged; who, as a nation and people, were the children of God in a large sense; being distinguished by many blessings and favours, which others had not, and being under the more peculiar care and notice of God; not that all of them were the children of God by special grace: by “the bread”; which belonged to them, is meant the external ministry of the word, and the miracles of Christ wrought among them: and particularly such outward favours which related to the good of the bodies of men, by healing their diseases, and dispossessing them of devils: and by “the dogs” are designed the Gentiles, so called by the Jews in a way of contempt, because of their ignorance, idolatry, and impurity. Christ here speaks not his own mind, as if he

reproached the Gentiles, and held them in scorn and contempt, but uses the common dialect of the people; and which, this woman, living upon the borders of the Israelitish nation, was acquainted with; so that it was not so shocking and surprising, or quite so discouraging, as it would otherwise have been. The Jewish doctors say ^{f903}, that the idolatrous Gentiles are not called men, that they are comparable to the beasts or the field ^{f904}, to oxen, rams, goats ^{f905}, and asses ^{f906}: the foetus in the bowels of a Canaanitish servant, they say ^{f907},

“ymd hmhb y[mb dl wk, “is like the foetus in the bowels of a beast”.”

Take the following passage, as an illustration of this, and as a further proof of the Jews calling the Gentiles dogs ^{f908}.

“A king provides a dinner for the children of his house; whilst they do his will they eat their meat with the king, and he gives to the dogs the part of bones to gnaw; but when the children of the house do not do the king’s pleasure, he gives the dogs the dinner, and the bones to them: even so: while the Israelites do the will of their Lord, they eat at the king’s table, and the feast is provided for them, and they of their own will give the bones to the Gentiles; but when they do not do the will of their Lord, lo! the feast is ybl kl , “for the dogs”, and the bones are their’s.”

And a little after,

““thou preparest a table before me”; this is the feast of the king; “in the presence of mine enemies”; ybl k ^wnya, “these are the dogs” that sit before the table, looking for their part of the bones.”

In which may be clearly discerned the distinction between children and dogs, and the application of the one to the Jews, and the other to the Gentiles, and the different food that belongs to each: and hence it is easy to see from whom Christ borrowed this expression, and with what view he made use of it.

Ver. 27. *And she saith, truth, Lord,* etc.] She owns all that he had said to be true, that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: that she was indeed but a dog, a poor sinful creature, and unworthy of any

favour; and that it was not right and fitting that all the children's bread should be taken from them and given to dogs:

yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. The Syriac and Persic versions add "and live": thus she wisely lays hold upon and improves in a very beautiful manner, in her own favour, what seemed to be so much against her. It is observed^{f909} of the Syrophoenicians in general, that they have all, in their common talk, something *ἡδύ και κεχαρισμενον* "pleasant and graceful", as there is indeed in this smart reply of her's, who was one of that people. She suggests that though the Gentiles were but dogs, and she one of them; yet their common Lord and Master had a propriety in them, and they in him; and were to be maintained and fed, and ought to live, though not in such fulness of favours and blessings, as the Jews, the children of God: nor did she desire their affluence, only that a crumb of mercy might be given her, that her poor daughter might be healed; which was but a small favour, in comparison of the numerous ones he heaped upon the children, the Jews: nor would this be any more detrimental to them, than it is to the children, for the dogs, under the table, to eat of the crumbs that fall.

Ver. 28. *Then Jesus answered, and said unto her,* etc.] As one surprised at the strength of her faith, and the clearness and justness of her pious reasoning; and not concealing himself, and the designs of grace, any longer from her, breaks out in great admiration of her, saying,

O woman, great is thy faith! He seems surprised, that she, a woman, and a poor Gentile, should express such strong faith in him; calling him Lord, owning him to be the Messiah, worshipping him as God, believing him able to do what could not be done by human art; and though she met with such repulses, and even called a dog, yet still continued importunate with him, believing she should succeed:

be it unto thee even as thou wilt; let thy daughter be healed, as thou desirest, and in the way, and at the very time thou wouldst have it:

and her daughter was made whole from that very hour: power went forth from Christ, and dispossessed the devil; so that when she came home, as Mark observes, she found her daughter lying on the bed, quiet, and easy, and perfectly well. The conduct of our Lord towards this woman, and her behaviour under it, do, in a very lively manner, represent the methods which God sometimes takes with his people, when they apply to him in

their distress; and the nature and actings of their faith upon him: as she, when she first applied to Christ for mercy and help, had not sword of answer given her; so sometimes they cry, and the Lord turns a deaf ear, or seems not to hear, and, in their apprehension of things, has covered himself with a cloud, that their prayer should not pass through; however, an immediate answer is not returned; yea, when others interpose on their behalf, and entreat for them, yet no favourable answer is returned, as was not by Christ to his disciples, when they besought him on this woman's account: and yet, notwithstanding all this, as she, they are not discouraged, but ply the throne of grace with fresh suits, acknowledge that the worst of names and characters belong to them: that they are unworthy of the least of mercies, and should be content with the crumbs of divine favour, but cannot go away without a blessing; they lay hold on every word of God, and hastily catch at it, and improve everything in their own favour, that faith can come at, and so, in the issue, succeed in their requests: effectual, fervent, and importunate prayer, the prayer of faith availeth much with God.

Ver. 29. *And Jesus departed from thence*, etc.] From the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, where he would have been private and retired; but being discovered, and knowing that the fame of this last miracle would make him more public in those parts, he removed, and passed through the midst of the coast of Decapolis, as Mark says, “and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee”: the same with the sea of Tiberias. (~~ERR~~ John 6:1 21:1), that is, he came to those parts of Galilee, which lay near the sea side,

and went into a mountain: which was very usual with him, either for solitude, or for prayer, and sometimes, for better conveniency, to preach to the people:

and sat down there: to take some rest, being weary with his journey, and as waiting for the multitude to come to him, both for instruction and healing.

Ver. 30. *And great multitudes came unto him*, etc.] From the adjacent places; having heard of his being where he was; and who had either attended on him before, or, however, the fame of him, and his miracles, had reached their ears: these flocked to him, having with them, in their hands, or arms, or upon their backs, or shoulders, leading some, and carrying others, in some form or another,

those that were lame; either in their legs, or arms:

blind; in one eye, or both, and that either from their birth, or since:

dumb: the word signifies both deaf and dumb: these often meet in the same person: and if a man is born deaf, he is always dumb:

maimed: having lost a limb, an arm, or a leg, or so enfeebled by some disease or another, as the palsy, that their limbs were useless to them. The Persic version reads it “leprous”:

and many others; who were afflicted with various other diseases, too many to be mentioned particularly:

and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; to ease themselves of their burdens, and with a view to move his compassion, believing he was able to cure them: nor do they say a word to him, or desire him to relieve these miserable objects; thinking it was enough to present them to him, and not doubting at all, but he would show favour to them:

and he healed them; immediately, either by a word speaking, or by touching them, or by putting his hands on them, or without any such outward sign, through a divine power proceeding from him, which, at once, removed all their disorders and complaints.

Ver. 31. *Insomuch that the multitude wondered*, etc.] The multitude of the spectators, who, though they came in expectation of seeing miracles wrought, yet these were so much beyond what they could have imagined, that they were amazed and surprised to see cures so instantly performed, in such a miraculous manner: these were such glaring proofs and evidences of the wonderful power of God, that they were astonished

when they saw the dumb to speak; that is, such who before were dumb, now spoke; and the same is to be observed in the other following instances: some copies have also, “the deaf to hear”, and so the Arabic version: “the maimed to be whole”. This is left out in some copies; nor is it in the Arabic, Ethiopic, and Vulgate Latin versions, nor in Munster’s Hebrew Gospel; but the Syriac has it, and most Greek copies, and seems necessary; since these are particularly mentioned among the persons brought to be cured; and a wonderful cure this was, that persons who had not only lost the use of their limbs, but such who had lost the limbs themselves, should have them restored perfect; for doubtless, the power of our Lord was able to do this, and which was amazing to behold:

the lame to walk, and the blind to see; as was prophesied of the times of the Messiah, and as things to be effected by him, (²³¹⁶Isaiah 35:5,6)

and they glorified the God of Israel. The Ethiopic version adds, “which had given such power to the son of man”, or “unto men”, which seems to be taken out of (⁴⁰⁰⁸Matthew 9:8). This must be understood both of the multitude that saw these miraculous operations, and the persons on whom they were wrought; who were both affected with them, and gave God the praise and glory of them, by whose power alone such things could be done, who is the one only and true God: and therefore, to distinguish him from the fictitious deities of the Gentiles, he is here styled the God of Israel, of the people of Israel, so called from Jacob their ancestor, whose name was Israel; by whom God was known, and worshipped, and was their Covenant God, and Father.

Ver. 32. *Then Jesus called his disciples unto him*, etc.] Who were at some little distance from him, to impart his mind unto them, whom he had made, and used, as his familiar friends; and to try their faith, and raise their attention, and prepare them for the following miracle; as well as to teach them by his example, and accustom them to show bowels of mercy and compassion to persons in any kind of want and distress:

and said, I have compassion on the multitude; which must be understood of him as man, whose bowels yearned towards them, having been so long without any food for their bodies, or very little; as he had compassion on the sick, and diseased, and healed them, so on the sound and whole, and was willing to feed them. Christ, our high priest, is a merciful one, and is touched with the feeling of the infirmities of men, of every sort, both of soul and body:

because they continue now with me three days; which time had been spent in healing their bodily disorders, and in preaching to them for the good of their souls; which shows the diligence and indefatigableness of Christ, as well as the attachment of the people to him; who were so struck with his miracles and ministry, that though they had been so long from their habitations and families, knew not how to leave him; nor did they talk, or show any signs of departing from him, and returning to their houses, and business of life;

and have nothing to eat; not that they had been so long without eating anything, though very likely it was but little, and what they brought with

them, and was now expended; nor could they provide themselves in a desert place, and many of them were a great way off from home:

and I will not send them away fasting; he might have done it, nor did the multitude ask any food of him; but he could not bear the thoughts of dismissing them in such a condition; having had but very little sustenance all this while, and so might be said to be in a manner fasting during this time, at least now:

lest they faint by the way; to their own houses, not having strength and spirit enough to travel, and get home: for “divers of them”, as Mark says, “came from far”.

Ver. 33. *And his disciples said unto him*, etc.] The former miracle of feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, being quite out of their thoughts, they reply,

whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? The question is big with objections, and is put with some vehemency and astonishment: the people to be led were a multitude, a great multitude, a very great multitude, and these too had had but little, or no food, for a great while; and therefore would require the more to fill and satisfy them; and besides, it was a wilderness where they were, and where no provisions were to be had; and if they could have been got for money, they had not stock enough to purchase such a large number of loaves, as were necessary to feed so great a company with.

Ver. 34. *And Jesus saith unto them*, etc.] In a very mild and gentle manner, taking no notice of their stupidity, nor upbraiding them with their forgetfulness of the late miracle, and willing to exercise their patience, and try their faith, asks,

how many loaves have ye? meaning in the common stock, and which they brought along with them, for their own supply:

and they said seven, and a few little fishes; which they mention as so small a provision, that it was as nothing for such multitudes; their loaves of bread were but seven, and their fishes, which were ready dressed, dried, or boiled, etc. were few in number, and small, as to quantity and size.

Ver. 35. *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.*] Not regarding the smallness of the provisions, nor any further consulting with

his disciples; but knowing his own power to increase this food, and determining to feed the multitude before he dismissed them, in an authoritative way ordered them to sit down upon the ground in rows, that they might be the better seen, and served.

Ver. 36. *And he took the seven loaves and the fishes*, etc.] Into his hands, and lifted them up, that it might be seen, and observed, that there were no other food than these, that so the miracle might appear in its true light:

and gave thanks; to God for the provision, though it was so small, in the name of the whole company, according to the usage of the Jewish nation; who, if there were ten thousand^{f910}, one for the rest used to say,

“let us bless the Lord our God, the God of Israel, the God of hosts, that sitteth between the cherubim:”

teaching us to do so likewise, and to be thankful for, and content with our portion, be it more or less:

and brake them; which also was the custom of the master of the family to do:

and gave to his disciples: as a fresh trial of their faith, to reprove their unbelief, to put them in mind of the former miracle, and that they might be witnesses of this, and, in order to distribute to the people, which they accordingly did:

and the disciples to the multitude; in doing which they obeyed their master’s orders, though before they could not persuade themselves, that such a multitude of people could be filled with so small a quantity.

Ver. 37. *And they did all eat, and were filled*, etc.] Every one had a share of the provision, and that to full satisfaction; no one was overlooked and neglected, and everyone had as much as he could eat:

and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets full. The disciples, after they had distributed to everyone his portion, went round, and collected the remaining fragments, and filled seven baskets therewith, according to the number of the loaves which were broken; and so had a full return for the loaves and fishes they spared on this occasion.

Ver. 38. *And they that did eat, were four thousand men*, etc.] This number of men, as well as of the baskets of fragments, clearly shows this to be a

distinct miracle from the former of this kind, recorded in (⁴¹⁴⁵Matthew 14:15-21). There the number of men were five thousand, here four thousand; there the quantity of food was five loaves and two fishes, here seven loaves and a few fishes; there the number of the baskets of fragments was twelve, here seven; though the quantity might be as large; since the word here used for a basket is not the same as there, and designs one of a larger size:

besides women and children; who were not taken into the account, though they ate as well as the men, and whose number might be very large.

Ver. 39. *And he sent away the multitude*, etc.] Dismissing them, either with a prayer for them, or with a suitable word of exhortation, to be thankful for the mercies, both spiritual and temporal, they had received, and behave agreeably in their lives and conversations:

and took ship; being near the sea side, the sea of Galilee,

and came into the coasts of Magdala: not far from Tiberias; for often mention is made of Magdala in the Talmud^{f911}, along with Tiberias, and Chammath, another place in the same neighbourhood; and was famous for some Rabbins, as R. Joden and R. Isaac^{f912}, who are said to be *hal dgm*, “of Magdala”. Thus the Syriac version reads it Magedo, and the Vulgate Latin Magedan; and Beza says, in one Greek exemplar it is read Magadan; and some have thought it to be the same with Megiddo, where Josiah was slain by Pharaohnecho, and which Herodotus calls Magdolos^{f913}. The Evangelist Mark says, that he came into the parts of Dalmanutha, which was a place within the coasts of Magdala. This was not the place, but another of the same name near Jerusalem, from whence Mary Magdalene may be thought to have her name. The Ethiopic version renders it, “they went into a ship, and departed into the mountains of Magdala”; that is, Christ, and his disciples.