

CRITICAL NOTES.

The Perean ministry of Jesus was to prove a no less timely and valuable training-school for the disciples than had that in Galilee. Despite the constant thronging of the crowds, the Master found opportunities for giving these disciples private instruction in matters related to his kingdom, as is clear, for example, from our last lesson, in which, when he was alone with them, he taught them how Christians should pray.

And even when in the midst of a crowd Jesus found it still possible to utilize many a transient incident to impress religious truth upon the disciples, nay, even to make interruptions and opposition minister to their illumination. Thus the episodes recorded between the last and the present lesson (11, 14-12, 12) had served to show the twelve how to meet the calumny and suspicion which were still industriously sown among the people by the Pharisees; how to boldly rebuke those blind religious leaders themselves (comp. Acts 4, 19-20; 5, 29, to see how well they learned this lesson); and how to awaken, both in themselves and others, a holy confidence in divine truth and a holy courage in its defense.

We shall see in our present lesson how a sudden and strident inquiry from the crowd is skillfully made the occasion for an address, first, to the people, and then (see next week's lesson) to the disciples.

Verse 13. Multitude. It was, perhaps, the immense throng of verse 1. **Master.** The Jewish rabbi combined certain civil functions with his religious duties. The man had doubtless been impressed with the tone of authority in the utterances of Jesus, which he hoped now to enlist in his own interest. **Bid my brother divide.** Whether it was a case of real or of pretended injustice the narrative does not indicate. The single point to be made is that it was a case in which anxiety about property usurped the place of interest in spiritual things. The cares and riches of this life had choked the word. 8, 14. The request was in some respects not unlike Martha's touching her sister, "Bid her that she help me." 10, 40.

14. Man. As in English so in Greek, the word indicates a slight reproach. **Who made me a Judge?** The question denies in a strong way that he has any thing to do with civil authority. Neither Sanhedrin nor procurator has invested him with judicial functions. In spiritual matters, however, the Father has "given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." John 5, 27. **Divide.** An arbitrator. **You.** Plural; you and your brother.

15. Unto them. The multitude of verse 13. **Take heed.** Understand the real nature and the many forms of the evil against which I warn you. **Keep yourselves.** The word suggests the watchfulness of a sentinel, ready to raise the alarm at the first appearance of the foe. **All covetousness.** The Greek word means "greed for more," and refers in this instance to the desire for larger earthly possessions. It is the "desire to be rich" of 1 Tim. 6, 9. The word "all" suggests the various disguises which this sin may assume. In this case it took the aspect of justice. **For.** The reason why covetousness is to be guarded against is now given. **A man's life.** The normal well-being of body, soul, and spirit do not depend upon the amount of property the individual holds in his own legal right. An ideal life is possible in conditions of poverty. Jesus himself was the best illustration of this truth. Though the Son of man had not where to lay his head, he had life, and had it abundantly. On the other hand, the young man who had great possessions found himself unable to enter upon real life. Mark 10, 22. **Abundance.** The

Greek order emphasizes this word. "Having food and covering, we shall be therewith content." 1 Tim. 6, 8; Heb. 13, 5, 6.

16. Parable. The incomparable Teacher will not content himself with the abstract statement of the general principle as given in the last verse, but will embody the truth in a tale, to make his meaning still more transparent. **Rich man.** As a rule, the richer a man is the better opportunities he has for increasing his wealth. Moreover, the richer a man gets the keener does his desire grow to become yet richer. The man who is worth ten thousand dollars desires a hundred thousand more than a poor man desires one thousand. **Brought forth plentifully.** The increase of wealth came about in no unjust or unlawful way. He had not devoured widows' houses, nor taken any thing by false accusation. Hence the greater need of the caution spoken of in the preceding verse. Ananias and Sapphira sinned not in the acquisition, but in the use they made of their property. Acts 5, 4.

17. Reasoned. The Greek suggests protracted reasoning. **What shall I do?** He had no anxiety about his spiritual condition, as had the Philippian jailer who asked the same question. His only solicitude was how to secure of greater wealth than he already had.

19. My soul. The inner self as the subject of worldly pleasure and pain. The spirit, by which God and higher truth are apprehended, was ignored; and its security and peace not thought of. **Much goods.** The man commands his heart to feel, in the ample resources of the larger store-house that is to be built, abundant security for a long time to come from hunger, nakedness, and the humiliation of poverty. **Many years.** See James 4, 13-15. **Take thine ease.** More briefly, rest. Jesus, in Matt. 11, 28, uses the same word in speaking of the rest of soul which he will give to the weary who will come to him. **Eat, drink.** See ver. 23; Luke 4, 4; John 4, 31, 32. **Be merry.** Have a good time; enjoy life.

20. God said unto him. The God whom he had ignored in all his reasonings and thoughts. God may be thought of as speaking to him by a prophetic messenger, as he did to Hezekiah (Isa. 38, 1); or through his own suddenly awakened conscience. **Thou foolish one.** In making provision for the future the poor man has left his own mortality out of account. **This night.** And not many years hence, as he vainly supposed. **Is...required of thee.** The soul is separated by death from the body, and no longer permitted to occupy itself with the material things which have been so carefully hoarded. **Hast prepared.** The man had had thought for the future, but it was the thought of a fool. **Whose shall they be?** He had said, "My fruits; my barns; my corn; my goods." Whosoever they might be henceforth, they would not be his. Psa. 39, 6, "Knoweth not who shall gather them."

21. So. So short-sighted; so little prepared for death. **Treasure for himself.** Looks on life as worth living only as it ministers to his carnal appetites. Giving to the poor and thus lending to the Lord, and laying up treasure in heaven, are the Christian antitheses. **Rich toward God.** Rich in his relations with God. The Christian having his soul suddenly required of him is not to be deprived of the things he has prepared, but to depart and be with his Lord, which is very far better. Phil. 1, 23. He has no sign to make over unbuilt barns when he hears the voice of God summoning him to "the inheritance prepared for him from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25, 34.

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