

Christ and his Disciples.

FEBRUARY 5.

MARK III: 6-19.

Golden Text, John 15: 16.

COMPARE Matt. 12: 14 and 10: 1-4. Luke 6: 11-19. V. 6. Each miracle wrought by Jesus increased his popularity with the common people. But the cure, in v. 5, had exasperated the Pharisees who, having before countenanced John's disciples, now joined the *Herodians*—a political party in pronounced opposition to Jesus. *How destroy Him*—Hitherto they had plotted secretly, but now they ceased to disguise their malicious intentions. Vs. 7, 8. *Withdrew Himself*—It was no part of his plan to assume the rôle of a public agitator. *A great multitude followed*—Jews from all parts of Palestine as well as Gentiles, or heathen, from *Idumea*—Edom, to the south of Moab, and from *Tyre* and *Sidon*—in the extreme north. V. 9. It seemed as though the populace were ready to form a new political party and make Him king, Jn. 6: 15. But that was not his mission, Jn. 18: 36. *A small ship*—a fishing-boat. Vs. 10-12. *Healed many*—Matthew says, *all*. Many were relieved by even touching his clothes. *"The son of God"*—an involuntary tribute to his divinity which at this time he did not wish. The words of Isaiah were more fitting just then, Matt. 12: 17. Vs. 13, 14. *Into a mountain*—see Luke 6: 12. *Calleft unto him*—From a large number of disciples he selected twelve whom he *ordained*—as *Apostles*, i. e. messengers to be sent before him to the places he should afterwards visit. They were instructed, qualified, and authorized as his ambassadors, Matt. ch. 10. All were laymen belonging to the humbler classes, 1 Cor. 1: 27. They were to *preach*, but not yet in Samaria, nor to the Gentiles, lest they should stir up animosity and defeat the purpose of their mission. Theirs was to be a quiet house-to-house mission, confined to Galilee. *To heal sickness*—as proof that they were commissioned by Him. Vs. 16-19. The names are not given by the three evangelists in the same order, but in all Peter stands first, and Judas last. Though John does not name them, collectively, he refers to them, chs. 6; 70 and 20: 24. **SIMON**—son of Jonas of Bethsaida, named by Christ Cephas, or Peter—"a rock," Jn. 1: 42. He was the most prominent of the twelve and the first to confess the divinity of our Lord, Matt. 16: 16-18. **James** and **John**—full cousins of Jesus if, as many suppose, their mother Salome was Mary's sister. **Sons of Thunder**—in reference, perhaps, to their abrupt and fiery spirit which found utterance sometimes in strong language, Luke 9: 54. James was the first martyr, Acts 12: 2. Jn. outlived all the others, **PHILIP**—of Bethsaida, Jn. 1: 44 and 12: 21, 22; not the evangelist, Acts 6: 3-5. **BARTHOLOMEW**—supposed to be the same as Nathanael, John 1: 45 and 21: 2. **MATTHEW**—the publican. **THOMAS**—called Didymus, "the twin"—the honest doubter. **JAMES**—son of Alphaeus, probably same as Cleophas, Jn. 19: 25; Mark 15: 40. **THADDEUS**—or Jude—possibly a brother of Jesus, Gal. 1: 19, Jude 1. **The Canaanite**—does not refer to locality, but to the party—called *Zelots*, "*Zelotos*, the Conservative," to whom he belonged. **Iscariot**—Ish kerioth, "the man of Kerioth," a town of Judah, Jos. 15: 25.

Christ's foes and friends.

FEBRUARY 12.

MARK III: 20-35.

Golden Text, Matthew 12: 30.

COMPARE Matt. 12: 23-32 and 46-50. Luke 11: 14-22 and 12: 10 and 8: 19-21. Vs. 20, 21. The strain of mind and body which our Saviour experienced from his unceasing ministrations amid the excitement of a great religious movement must have told upon his strength and affected his whole nervous system. *His friends*—relations—did not believe in his divine mission, John 7: 5. They regarded him as a religious enthusiast; *Beside himself*—not meaning, like the Pharisees, that he was in league with demons—*insane*—but rather intimating their fear that he would become so if he continued his work much longer. The same thing was said of Paul, Acts 26: 24; and this they said in an apologetic tone, as a pretext for withdrawing him from publicity and danger. V. 22. The Scribes and Pharisees, who had come from Jerusalem to oppose him, contemptuously ascribed all he said and did to the agency of evil spirits. Matt. 9: 34. So long as Jesus had only a few disciples they had no fear, but the commission given to the twelve suggested organization and looked formidable. It endangered their authority. The populace were beginning to hint that this might be the Messias after all, Jn. 7: 31. **Beelzebub**—Satan, Matt. 10: 25. By some thought to be a corruption of Baalzebub, 2 Kings 1: 3, the patron deity of medicine; and hence the taunt of the Pharisees that Jesus was playing a part under him in pretending to drive out devils in order to gain converts. V. 23-27. *How can Satan, &c.?* He could not do so without lessening his own influence. Christ's aim was to destroy the works of the devil. By casting out demons he injured Satan, who was not likely to aid Him to his own destruction. But, if they could not see that, he would condescend to reason with them, which he does in varied parabolical form. Vs. 28-30. He shows them how aggravated was their sin of unbelief. *All sins shall be forgiven*—He came into the world to save even his enemies, Rom. 5: 8-10. Luke 23: 34. To speak against Himself was bad enough, but that was not the unpardonable sin, Matt. 12: 32: they might experience a change of mind respecting Him. But when they dared to speak thus of the Holy Spirit, the agency by which he wrought his miracles, they wilfully closed their hearts against testimony that ought to have convinced them, uttered the worst kind of *blasphemy*, and exposed themselves to the danger of eternal damnation, or, as in the N. V. they became "guilty of an eternal sin." There is an unpardonable sin, Heb. 6: 4, 6 and 10: 26, 27. Vs. 31, 32. *His brethren and his mother sent*—us they could not get near him for the crowd—*Calling him*—as already explained, to extricate him from a position becoming momentarily more perilous. His calm answer was designed to teach them, and us, that natural ties are to be subordinated to the higher relationship to God which he claimed for himself when yet a youth, Luke 2: 49. The same answer he gave in effect upon another occasion, Luke 11: 27, 28. The only condition on which he can truly own his kindred is, that they honour His Father in heaven. Heb. 2: 11.