JESUS SET AT NOUGHT.

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

"And Herod, with his men of war, set him at nought."—Luke xxiii: 11.

It is your Lord whom Herod set at nought! Once worshipped of angels and all the heavenly host, He is made nothing of by a rabald regiment. In Himself "the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person"; but now set at nought by men not worthy of the name. Soon to reassume all His former glory with the Father, and to descend in infinite splendor to judge the earth in righteousness, and reign as King of kings; and yet here He is set at nought! It is a sight of horror and of shame. How could angels bear to see it? This paltry prince and his rough retinue made nothing of Him who is All in all; they treated Him as beneath their contempt. The veriest abjects flouted Him. The meanest soldier in the petty army of a petty prince let made unholy mirth of heaven's high Lord and earth's Redeemer. What a sorrowful and shameless business! May we be helped to sorrow over it!

Herod himself set Him at nought. In this loathsome being I see the most likely person to think nothing of the Lord Jesus. I will give you enough concerning him to help you answer the question, Are you like him? Have you set Christ at nought?

I. This shall be our first inquiry: Who is the most likely person to set our Lord at nought? Herod was a man who had once heard the Word of God; yes, he heard it with a measure of attention and apparent benefit. But we often find that the greatest despisers of Christ are those who formerly were hearers and readers of His Word, but have turned from it. Am I talking to any here who, not so many years ago, were regular attendants upon a faithful ministry, but who have grown weary of it and given it up? It troubles your conscience that you have done so, and now you try to conceal your uneasiness by picking holes in your former minister, and finding fault with the truths which he preached to you. Herod heard John, but he ridiculed Jesus. See to what unconverted hearers may come!

If I look at Herod again, I see in him a man who, after hearing the Word faithfully preached, had distinctly done violence to his conscience. He heard John until John came home to him about the woman with whom he was living in an incestuous union. Herodias would have killed John at once; and though Herod did not dare to go so far as that, yet he shut him up in prison. A filthy lust must not be rebuked; Herod imprisons his reprover. The man who could do this was in training for the more daring act of setting the Lord Jesus at nought. First despise the man, and then the Master.

My friend, do you remember that night when you distinctly decided for the devil? Do you recollect when, after having the evil set before you, and seeing it, and counting the cost, you decided to continue in it? Then you turned with bitterness upon the honest reprover whose rebuke you had aforetime endured. You gave conscience an awful wrench; and therefore you put yourself into a passion, and talked like an injured man. By all this you have prepared yourself to set the Lord at nought; and we cannot wonder that you do so.

Herod also had yielded to sinful compliances, and had committed a gross sin as the result of it. This is the man that thinks nothing of Christ—the man who thinks so much of drinking and dancing, and of the companions which such things have brought around him. Of course, he does not think anything of Christ, for His ways would take from him these idle associates. Jesus cannot be valued by a man of Herod's sort, who puts so high a value upon the opinion of those who sit at his banquets.

Once more: the man who thinks nothing of Christ is the man that means to go on in sin, even as Herod did. The die was cast; his mind was made up for evil. He would be very glad to hear Christ; he has no objection still to go to a place of worship and listen to a preacher. He would be very pleased to see a miracle; he would join in a revival, for he would be glad to enjoy something sensational, but he does not mean to give up the sin in which he lives, nor the company which egges him on it.

This, then, is the man who sets Jesus at nought. I wonder whether he is here now! Possibly it is a woman who is doing this. Women fall into precisely the same evils as men from their own side of the house, and the same remarks apply to both sexes. You who once were hearers, you who once were impressed, you who did wilful violence to conscience, you who persist in sin, you who are the slaves of evil company, and dare not do right for the life of you, for fear of ridicule—you are the kind of people of whom Herod was a sad specimen: you set Jesus at nought.

II. Having tried to find out Herod, let us now answer a second question—On what ground did he set our Lord at nought? Herod sets Him up as the butt of his ridicule, and makes nothing of Him. I suppose that part of the reason why he and his men of war made nothing of our Lord was because of His gentleness and patience. All unarmed He stood before them, and when He was reviled He reviled not again. The Christian religion teaches us to be meek and gentle, to forgive injuries, and even to give up our own rights rather than to inflict wrong. Such precepts savor of cowardice to the blustering world. Non-resistance they cannot hear of. The sweet savor of gentle forbearance, which the Spirit of Jesus breathes into the hearts of His people, is by many held in contempt. They call it cant and hypocrisy, because it is so inconsistent with their ideas of manly conduct.

III. Now, dear friends, let us consider, How do men now set our Lord at nought? Herod is dead and buried, and there is no sort of reason why we should not let him rot into oblivion. I therefore speak to you, and try to discover whether you are setting Christ at nought. I fear there are such. Who are they?

Some set Him at nought, for they will not even consider His claims. "Oh," say they, "we have plenty else to think about besides religion! What is there in it which will fill our pockets? There is nothing at all in it worth a moment's attention." How do they know? They do not know. Nothing in it? God gives His own son to die for guilty men, and there is nothing in it? The highest thoughts of God are set forth in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you do not think it worth while even to consider what God has therein revealed? Who is to save the man who will not listen when salvation is put before him? Yet the great mass of our fellow citizens are of this kind.

There are many others who prefer their business to Jesus. They would not mind giving some little attention to the Lord Jesus, but, then, they are too busy just now. They say that they really cannot afford the time. Oh, my busy hearer! you will have to find time to die before long; why not think of that solemn certainty? You are very busy, and yet you find time to eat. Have you no time to feed your soul? You will find time to put on your dress; have you no time to dress your soul? You seek out the surgeon when you are ill; have you no time to seek out a Saviour for your soul? Ah: it is not that; you have the time, but you have not the heart. Others prefer amusements to the Lord Jesus. "Well," say one, "we must have recreation. In my spare time I like a game." I know that. I am not for denying you healthy recreation, but everything should be in order, and I claim first place for Jesus Christ and His salvation. Can you suffer the paltry amusements of the world to stand before the Lord Jesus? Yet it is so with some of you. You will know better one day.

Another sort of persons make nothing of Christ, because they profess to see nothing profound and philosophical in the faith which He has revealed.

Others make nothing of the Lord because *they confide in themselves*. They think themselves quite good enough without a Saviour. If they are not quite perfect they believe that they can make themselves so, and be saved without an atoning sacrifice or a new heart, or union to Christ. They are doing their best, and they make no doubt whatever that they will find their way to heaven as well as others. Do you thus think? You are in grave error.

Many have no fears concerning the day of His appearing. Whether you believe it or not, Jesus, as your judge, is at the door. He said, years ago, "Behold I am coming quickly." He is still coming, and must soon arrive to commence the last dread session of justice. What matters it how many more years may elapse? They will fly like the wind. The hour will come when the earth and sky will rock and reel and pass away, rolled up like a worn-out vesture. Then shall the trumpet ring out exceeding loud and long—"Awake ye dead, and come to judgment!" How will you endure that voice which shall disturb the stillness of the sepulchre? "Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment!" How it will peal forth! None of you will be able to resist the call. From your beds of dust you will start up, amazed, to a terrible awakening. From the sea, from the land, from the teeming cemetery, from the lonely grave, men will rise, and all of them stand before Christ! In that day you will see nothing but the great white throne, and Him that sits upon it. You will be unable to close your eyes, or turn your gaze elsewhere.

IV. But I close with this: What do believers say about their Lord? Herod made nothing of Him: what do we make of Him? Well, we say, first, that we mourn and lament that there ever was a time when we ourselves made nothing of the glorious one. It is many years ago with some of us; but we cannot forget it, nor cease to bewail it. There were a certain number of years in our lives in which it was nothing to us that Jesus should die. Oh, my dear hearers, perhaps some of you have been lately converted after forty or fifty or sixty years of sin. Repent with all your hearts that you were Herods so long. Christ has forgiven you; but can you forgive yourselves? No: I think that you still smite on your breast and say, "Lord, I grieve that I ever lived a moment without acknowledging my Lord—that I ever ate a meal or drew in a breath without bowing before Him." Lord, bury those years in forgetfulness which we spent in forgetfulness of thee.

But then, dear friends, what do we make of Christ now? Well, that I cannot tell you, except it be in one word. Christ is all. Herod made nothing of Him: we make everything of Him. Could any of you who love my Lord tell me what you think of Him? I am sure you would break down in the attempt. For my own part, I always fail in the glad endeavor. If we could give every drop of our blood for Jesus; if we could be burnt at a slow fire for a century for Him, He deserves all our suffering and all our life. Could our zeal no respite know, a whole eternity of service would not adequately set forth what we think of Him.

I close with this practical thought: Sometimes believers show their love and their appreciation of their Master by special acts of homage. Let us resolve that for His sake we will speak well of His name to somebody to whom we have not yet spoken. Herod set Him at nought, but let us set Him on high in our best manner. Set Him at the highest figure that your thought and your imagination can reach. Oh, how would I honor Him! But what am I? What can one person do? Therefore do I summon all things that are to praise the Lord, without whom was not anything made. I charge all living things to adore Him who is the resurrection and the life. Let space become one great mouth for song. Let time unceasingly flow with hallelujahs. Let eternity become an orchestra to the praise of Jesus, who was mocked of Herod and his men of war. Glory be to his name! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

Praying to the Point.

BY REV THEODORE L. CUYLER.

Preaching to the point is essential to effectiveness in the pulpit. But it is still more important that we should all *pray to the point*. Many smoothly worded "addresses at the throne of grace" are mere addresses, without definite aim or purpose. They embody no deeply felt want; they are not burning with desire. However orthodox and Scriptural in phraseology, they are pointless prayers. *Cui Bono?*

A good test to be applied to ourselves at the close of every prayer, would be this: "What have we been saying to God? What have we been asking for? Was there any definite sin we confessed, or any definite mercy we thanked God for, or any definite desire that we laid before God?" A genuine petition is the asking for some appreciated, desired, and needed thing. When we enter a neighbor's house to borrow a certain book, we have no difficulty in making him understand what is the particular book we are after. We want *that*, and not anything at random out of his library. If our child is dangerously ill, we know just where to go for the physician, and just what to tell him; nor do we leave him until we have ascertained whether he can come to us. Here is both precision of point, and also pertinacity of purpose. Faith in the doctor and his medicines, sends us to his office; directness of request leaves him in no doubt as to our errand. Now in every rightly-conceived and rightly-presented prayer to the King of heaven, there ought to be the same confidence when approaching Him, and the same definite statement of the heart's desire when we have come there. In homely phrase, we ought to "pray at a mark," and not at random.

If prayer is born of our inmost heart, and has a clearly defined object to plead for, it never will be a pointless drudgery or a dreary formality. We would say to ourselves, How shall we best bring our burden of desire before our loving Father? How shall we present our request with as little of *self* in it as possible, and with a sincere submissiveness to the divine will? O that we might come near enough to touch the hem of Christ's garment! Then would we entreat Him to intercede for us; then would we pray as blind Bartimeus cried out for recovery of sight, as the heart-wrung Jairus begged for the restoration of his dying daughter, and as the conscience-smitten publican implored mercy on him, *the* sinner. Then we would not so often be guilty of falsehoods told in pious language to the heart-searching and truth-loving God. Then we should not so often starve our souls by a hollow, pointless mockery of prayer. Peter's cry to his Master when he felt himself sinking in the boisterous waves, is a model for us, The disciple put his eye on his Master and cried "Lord, save me!" Here was faith, brevity, earnestness, and praying to the point. There must have been a great deal of such praying in that "upper room" at Jerusalem when the mighty blessing came. If there were more such in all our prayer-meetings, there would be no lack of spiritual power; the drought would be followed by abundance of rain.

— One secret of health, comfort and efficiency in the ministry is found in beginning sermons early in the week. Many pastors trifle during the early part of the week; much time is also lost in the effort to decide upon texts and upon the method of their treatment. When a general course of sermons, expository or topical, has been decided on, little time is lost in beginning the work of special preparation. It would help very much also, when a general course is pursued for the morning sermons, to adopt some regular order for the evening sermons. For example, the first Sunday morning of each month would naturally be given, in our Baptist churches, to the discussion of a purely devotional topic in connection with the observance of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; the second Sunday's subject might be something adapted to growth in the Christian life. The third, some form of missionary labor; and the fourth might be along some doctrinal line; not, of course, excluding practical duties. This is a rough outline of a general thought which would help in the selection of special topics and texts. The evening sermons might be devoted to the exposition of the Sunday-school lesson for the next Sunday, or some other form of expository, historical or practical discourse. When the subject is decided upon, the mind should be held strongly to it; much time is often lost in changing from subject to subject. Dilatory mental habits are thus encouraged; work sufficiently hard will get water out of every kind of rock, and honey from any sort of flower. It is bad to neglect preparation until the latter part of the week. Such a course results in debilitating anxiety and undue labors. Some men in sheer desperation work far into the night on Saturday. Body and mind are thus overtaxed; and the extra duties of Sunday make Monday one of depression and sometimes of wretchedness. Such a course is all wrong. After a little experience it will become possible for any pastor to be practically through with the work for both sermons on Wednesday evening. There will then be time for reading on a variety of topics, for pastoral duties, for mental repose, for physical relaxation and for spiritual invigoration. Preaching is healthy. Sickness in ministers is often a reflection on their good sense; we will not say on their moral character. Overwork, like charity, often covers a multitude of sins. Bad habits of work, late hours and spasmodic efforts, these rather than work itself, wear men out. If work be wise it can scarcely be too great.—*R. S. MacArthur, in Christian Inquirer.*

The Jews of the World.

Mr. J. F. Mocotta, in his recent interesting lecture on Judaism, estimated the total number of Jews throughout the world as between 8,000,000 and 10,000,000. In the United Kingdom there are about 100,000, of whom seven tenths are in London, the great part of the remainder being in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, and Birmingham. Scotland reckons only 1,500, Ireland only 1,000. In the British colonies there are something less than 20,000. In France there are 70,000, of whom 40,000 are in Paris. About 40,000 were transferred upon the annexation of the provinces to the German Empire, among whose 50,000,000 of inhabitants 600,000 belong to this remarkable race. Jews are found in large numbers along the northern coast of Africa as well as in Abyssinia.

In America there are half a million, and Jews dwell in Mexico and almost every State of South America. There are supposed to be from 40,000 to 50,000 in Persia, 10,000 to 15,000 in the Khanates, and about the same number each in the countries of India. Switzerland, Belgium and Holland have also considerable Jewish population. The influx of Jews into Palestine from other parts of the Turkish dominions and also from Poland Russia and Central Europe, which has been going on from the early part of the present century, is a noteworthy fact. The Turkish Government is described as showing an entire toleration, but it is not now favorable to an immigration into Palestine, a circumstance attributed to fear of the inroad of European ideas. The state of the Jews in the Holy Land is, according to this authority, not a happy one. There is but little outlet for their energies. A large number give themselves entirely up to Hebrew studies, while the bulk of them eke out a miserable livelihood by small industries, apparently aided, but in reality intensified in pauperism, by the pernicious system of "halukin" for the distribution of alms sent from various countries, which are doled out among the Jewish population in small sums.

How the Bakers Went Early to Meeting.

BY HARRIETTE REA.

The new minister who was called bore not a resemblance to the former incumbent, unless it might be in a similar impression that he made of honest purpose and purity of thought. The old pastor had been gentle and meek in all his ways, studying hard to give his people most excellent sermons, coming back, sometimes, from a four weeks' vacation in summer with aching head and half-rested nerves, never dreaming of asking for another two weeks, that should have been voluntarily offered. If the congregation dropped into careless habits, he deeply regretted them, but offered no reproof.

The new minister remarked to himself—for his wife was not with him—that it was high time to bring this church to a knowledge of its delinquencies. The time for opening the services on Sunday morning was nominally at half-past ten, but not more than half the congregation was present at that hour. A number came in during the first hymn. The reading of Scripture was a favorable time for the entrance of the Smiths, Browns, and Plummers. A group waited near the door until the long prayer was over, and if the grown-up daughters of Peter James did not rustle up the aisle near the close of the anthem, the congregation knew that they were out of town.

The young clergyman waited a few weeks, until he had called upon a large portion of the people. He began at first to visit the sick, and this plan became a stepping-stone to the confidence of those who were well. One Lord's Day, after reading the notices, he said: "I am sure you will kindly receive the suggestion that I make this morning, but I want to call your attention to the hour for opening our worship. It is announced at half-past ten. This does not mean twenty, twenty-five, or fifteen minutes of eleven. It means *precisely half-past ten*, and the organ prelude is as much a part of our service as the hymns or the sermon."

No one could remember a similar reproof from that pulpit, much as it had been needed. The congregation, recovering from the first shock, rather liked the new sensation. Smiles rippled over sober faces, and glances at each other told the spirit with which it had been received. A general straightening up of the audience was, apparently, the result of a stern mental resolve.

The Bakers lived upon a farm about a mile from the village. The head of the house, a most worthy man in every respect, and prompt enough in business relations, was yet persistently and uniformly late at church on Sabbath morning. The horse was brought to the door fully three-quarters of an hour before its owner was ready, and Mrs. Baker, a grown-up daughter, Susie, little Tim, and a bachelor brother passed that time in nervous irritability or hopeless patience. "I like to have 'em get pretty well along," was the good-natured reply to all suggestions of haste.

So three members of this family were highly pleased with the new minister's reproof, and inwardly hoped that "Pa" would appropriate the whole of it. He had no idea of taking more than his own share, and only observed to his pastor, "Well, you hit the heel of Achilles a hard blow to-day."

But a fixed determination to be on time the next week, by force of strategy, took possession of a majority of the Baker household.

"I *will* get to meeting early for once," resolved the house-mother when Saturday night came, and she stood winding up the old clock, whose place was in the west entry. "I'll put this clock along twenty minutes. It's the first time in my life I every did such a thing, but I *will* not have the deacon's folks laughing to see us come in late. There's no earthly reason why we should, either."

It actually seemed as if the clock ticked faster out of pure astonishment at being hurried along, and she was glad to shut the door and lose the sound.

Just as the sun looked in through the east window on Sunday morning, David, the bachelor brother, aroused from sleep, and reflected that it was meeting day. "And I know what I'm going to do. I'll put that clock along half an hour before I let the cows out. I'll see if my bald head must go up that aisle after everybody's there. Wonder I never thought of doing it before!"

He went into the kitchen and threw up the windows. The fragrance of sweetbrier and honeysuckle floated in, and the slow ticking of the tall old timepiece sounded clear and distinct as the strokes of a hammer through the stillness of the farmhouse. When David left the outside door open, the sunbeams danced upon the brown floor with a wide-awake alertness, suggesting to him that it was high time anyway that the family were up, and half an hour would be no loss. He patted the heads of the cattle, as he turned them down the river road, with an approving sense of his own foresight.

Susie woke up two hours earlier than usual, for her young head was burdened with a scheme for taking her father to meeting on time. "I shan't dare to tell ma," ran the line of her thought, "for she never deceives pa in anyway, but I do believe I'll put that clock along just a little way. Then we shall gain a few minutes without any fuss. Everybody will look us and smile if we go in late to-day. Uncle Dave must have gone out. I don't want a soul to know." So stealing down stairs on tiptoe, through the kitchen, a pretty figure, and fresh herself as the early morning, she opened the glass door that covered the face of the clock, once more speeded the long hand twenty minutes on its course and then rushed back to her bed.

The next one to disturb the silence of the long room was Mr. Baker himself. He glanced out into the entry. "Who'd have thought that it was so late! Well, I've a good mind to put that clock along, and hurry 'em up a little this morning. Believe I'll try and start off twenty minutes earlier. It'll be a good joke to have them think I'm late as usual—a pretty good joke, and I'll do it." By the time he had turned the minute hand forward it was seven o'clock. Calling to his wife that she must hurry up or she'd be late, he went out to the barn in a state of inward delight.

An interested observer would have noticed that little Tim was the only one entirely at his ease through breakfast. When the family started off in the carryall, each one, except the child, began to have a secret misgiving that by some mistake the clock was turned too far ahead. It seemed surprisingly early. There was altogether a lack of directness in the sun's rays, not usually noticeable on their weekly ride. No sign of churchgoing was visible at any of the neighbor's houses. One of the Maynard boys, standing in the open barn, threw up his cap as they passed. At the Walkers' David caught a glimpse through the window, of the old gentleman standing before a small looking-glass and just beginning to shave. Actually at Deacon Smith's they were studying their Sunday-school lesson in the sitting-room. He hoped no one but himself had made these observations.

They drove to their usual hitching post under a rock-maple tree, and alighted. Tim hurried to open the gate.

It was locked. No trace of the sexton even; only the cool, sweet air rustled through the trees. Above, the white clouds rolled up in great fleecy masses, as if they were trying to afford a deeper look into the blue sky, and the Sabbath morning stillness rested upon the sacred place like the peace of God. Four people looked inquiringly at each other, "We are making up for past offenses," said David, with a faint smile.

"Perhaps there isn't any meeting today," suggested Susie, and immediately felt as if deception was driving her deeper and deeper.

"It's the strangest thing I ever knew," remarked Mrs. Baker, and then wondered if she hadn't told a lie.

They found a window that was unfastened. The boy crept in and opened a side door. He proposed that they take a ride, but this plan was promptly vetoed by his mother. When the family entered the building and looked at the clock, it was five minutes past nine.

The young minister, who had been writing a new sermon through the week, had not succeeded in rounding off the closing period. It had occurred to him that a few minutes alone in the church might furnish the needed inspiration. Living close by, he walked over; but what was his amazement to be met near the entrance by Mr. Baker, and after him by the whole family.

"What is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Baker had by this time returned to his usual sense of humor.

"Why, you see, brother, you made such an impression upon us last Sunday that we thought we wouldn't go home at all, so we stayed through the week, and here we are."

"No," interposed Uncle David, "that is stretching the story; we came here last night so as to be up in good season this morning."

"But what is it, friends? You are giving me an awful sense of responsibility."

"Well," answered Mr. Baker, "I'll own up. I thought I'd be on time and please my wife and daughter this morning, so I gave the clock a little push, and I suppose sent it too far ahead—that is all."

"Oh, pa!" cried Susie, with burning cheeks, "it is all my fault. I got up and put the clock ahead twenty minutes, so we could come early to day."

This was too much for Uncle David's generosity.

"Oh, come, I put it along this morning myself half an hour when I first went out."

"Well," burst in Mrs. Baker, "I did better than any of you, for I put it along twenty minutes last night when I locked up the house.

By this time the minister had dropped upon a seat, while the family, after staring at each other for a moment, followed him in a paroxysm of laughter. Then the clergyman wiped his eyes, shook hands all round, and hastened home just as the sexton appeared in the yard. The minister entered his pulpit at the usual time in some trepidation, for fear that a glimpse of the Baker family would overcome his gravity.

But no such result followed. The hearty laugh had only roused quickness of thought and energy of speech, and he preached with unusual power. The family clock was never made to swerve from its faithful time keeping again, but a steady improvement of Mr. Baker's punctuality in church-going was apparent from that date.—*Christian Union.*

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