

is not Satan's work, but God's, then it is an evidence of the advent of the kingdom of God, the Messianic dispensation."

27. The strong man—By the "strong man" Christ means Satan. His house, or palace, is the place where he holds power, either this world generally, or the persons of the "possessed." Christ, by casting out the "strong man," and rescuing men from him, shews that he has conquered and bound Satan, and is therefore not in alliance with him, but his mortal foe. Isa. 49: 24; 61: 1. Christ conquered Satan at His temptation. **Spoil**—plunder, carry off.

28. All sins shall be forgiven—There is no limit to God's forgiving love except the one which wicked hearts make for themselves. While men continue in sin they cannot be forgiven.

29. Blaspheme against the Holy Ghost—(Matt. 12: 31; Luke 12: 10; 1 John 5: 16.) "The sin against which these words are a terrible but merciful warning, is not so much an *act* as a *state* of sin on the part of one who, in defiance of light, and of *set purpose*, rejects, and not only rejects but *perseveres* in rejecting, the warnings of conscience and the grace of the Holy Spirit." (Maclean.) "Our Lord intimates that his slanderers were on the brink of that sin from which there was no redemption. There is a limit to divine mercy and forgiveness." (Lindsay) (Eph. 4: 30; 1 Thess. 5: 19; Gen. 6: 3.) There is such a thing as a sin which is never forgiven. But those who are troubled about it are most unlikely to have committed it." (Ryle.) "All wilful, wanton, determined opposition to the work of the Holy Spirit, either in others' hearts or our own, especially when engaged in by those who profess allegiance to the Holy Ghost, approximates this sin. To a certain extent the sin appears to have been left purposely undefined, the note of warning is indefinite, that it may caution all against transgressing the bounds beyond which forgiveness never reclaims." (Abbott.) **Hath never forgiveness**—Not because even this was in itself and in the nature of the thing absolutely unpardonable (for no reason can be given why speaking against the person of the Holy Ghost should be in itself of greater malignity than speaking against Christ, or against God the Father himself), but because it was an obstinate rejection of the last means of conviction, and an evident token of incorrigible malice." (Clarke.) It is not a sin of ignorance or presumption, but of *defiance*. (Heb. 10: 26-29.) Matthew's account adds, "neither in this world, neither in the world to come." "He meant simply to say there were no possible circumstances in which the offender could find forgiveness. He certainly did *not* say that any sin unpardoned here would be pardoned hereafter." (Barnes.) **Is guilty of an eternal sin** (R. V.)—(John 3: 19.) The punishment is perpetual because the sin is perpetual. The

sin excludes pardon because it excludes repentance." (Schaff.) "Forgiven sins are sins that are taken up by God from the burdened conscience of the sinner, and, as it were, 'cast behind his back,' or 'into the depths of the sea,' but unforgiven sins abide forever on the souls that committed them. The language is, of course, strongly pictorial, but most solemnly significant." (Morison.) In Matthew's narrative Jesus adds in effect, "Be consistent. If the fruit is good the tree must be good. If my doctrine and works are contrary to those of Satan then they cannot spring from him—the tree is known by its fruit." (Matt. 12: 33.)

II. CHRIST'S BRETHREN. 31. His brethren—(Matt. 12: 46; Luke 8: 19.) Their names are given in Matt. 13: 55 and Mark 6: 3. They thought that he had gone out of his mind, and wished to persuade him to come home with them and be taken care of (verse 21). "To the world there has ever been a tendency to confuse the fervor of enthusiasm with the eccentricity of disordered genius. 'Paul thou art mad,' was the only comment which the apostle's passion of exalted eloquence produced on the cynical intellect of the Roman procurator. 'He hath a devil,' was the inference suggested to many dull and worldly hearers after some of the tenderest and divinest sayings of our Lord. 'Brother Martin has a fine genius,' was the sneering allusion of Pope Leo X. to Luther. 'What crack-brained fanatics,' observed the fine gentlemen of the eighteenth century when they spoke of Wesley and Whitfield. Similar, though not so coarse, was the thought which filled the minds of Christ's wondering relatives, when they heard of this sudden and amazing activity, after the calm seclusion of thirty unknown and unnoticed years. As yet they were out of sympathy with Him; they knew Him not, did not fully believe in Him; they said, 'He is beside Himself.'" (Farrar.) **Standing without**—Probably they could not get into the house for the crowd, and passed the word in that they wished to see him.

33. Who is my mother?—He implies that there is a relationship to him as the Son of God which is holier than even that of mother. "It is remarkable that in the only two instances, until the crucifixion, where Mary figures in the gospel, she appears in order to be reproved by the Saviour, and to be placed, as far as the mere maternal relation is concerned, below obedient servants of God. These passages must be regarded as protests laid up in store against the heathenish eminence which the Roman Church assigns to Mary, and especially against that newly-established dogma, of her being without sin from her birth, which they so signally contradict." (Woolsey.)

34. He looked round about—Notice how often the *look* of Jesus is referred to (Luke 6: 10; 22: 61). Them which sat about him—his disciples. Matthew says, "he