

WHEN CHRIST SAT DOWN!

WHEN CHRIST SAT DOWN! (MARK 11:7)

It is significant that some of the most ordinary texts in the Bible are the most suggestive. The Lord was the busiest of all men, but there were occasions when He remained motionless, and each time this happened, something unusual followed. It was often recorded that "Jesus sat down," but five of the references indicated that when He seemed to be doing nothing, He was exceedingly active. The Savior sat down (1) to weep; (2) to welcome; (3) to watch; (4) to work; (5) and to wait. These verses, studied together, become extremely instructive.

To Weep Over Suffering... How Great His Pain (Luke 19:35 and 41)

Hundreds of years before the birth of the Savior, the prophet Zechariah wrote: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zech. 9:9). That remarkable prediction was fulfilled when, on the eve of the Jewish pass-over, Christ entered Jerusalem. It was truly astonishing that He should ride upon an unbroken colt, and the animal never tried to unseat its Rider.

Possibly, that donkey recognized the Lord of creation, and humbly submitted when Jesus sat upon its back. That display of power was a strange contrast to the tears which later ran down the Lord's face. It was thought-provoking that He should shed tears when confronted by the overthrow of the city. His words were ominous when He said: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:42-44). It was sad that even He could do nothing when judgment threatened His people. As He sat upon the donkey, it was evident the approaching tragedy

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could only have been prevented by the repentance of the nation. Christ remained motionless, because there was nothing He could do to remove the condemnation of the people who rejected Him.

To Welcome a Sinner How Great His Purpose (John 4:6)

Jesus had traveled through the oppressive heat of an Eastern midday, and was evidently glad to reach the well at Sychar. John recognized His Master was tired, and when he wrote his Gospel, he reported: "Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well, and it was about the sixth hour." He had arrived ahead of time and sat patiently awaiting an unpopular woman. He could have proceeded into the city of Sychar, or paused outside. That He sat on the well awaiting the coming of the sinful woman suggested three simple facts. (1) A special visit. (2) A serious vice. (3) A supreme victory.

That notorious sinner became the first female evangelist mentioned in the New Testament. This was evident when, having heard the woman's testimony, the citizens went out to see the Savior, and later exclaimed: "... Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." Other details

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invite attention.

(1) How great His foreknowledge. As far as is known, Christ had never been to that area, and had not met the woman. Nevertheless, He was acquainted with all her circumstances, and knew she was obliged to draw water at the well when other people were absent.

(2) How gracious His favor. It was thrilling that, although the neighbors refrained from associating with her, Jesus made special plans to reach that guilty soul. It might have been argued that He could have influenced more people in other places. That may have been true, but since He came into the world to save sinners, it was necessary He would at least attempt to reach individuals whose compelling need was obvious. Had she not come to the well that day, her loss would have been immeasurable.

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(3) How glorious His forgiveness. Jesus did not scold the woman, nor criticize her behavior. Probably, she had been condemned throughout her life; her reputation for lustful associations was widespread. Had the Lord spontaneously criticized her conduct, she would have been unimpressed, and arguments would have closed the entrance to her soul. His pardoning grace overcame her persistent guilt.

Many years have passed since that memorable day in Sychar, but the Savior never changed. It was far more satisfying to speak to one repentant sinner than to address many arrogant Pharisees. He is still seated at His well of salvation hoping other people may follow the woman's example.

To Watch a Sacrifice.. . How Great His Perception
(Mark 12:41)

Jesus had left the crowded streets of Jerusalem, and had secluded Himself within the temple where He could see without being seen. He was fascinated as He watched people placing their gifts into the temple treasury. The Pharisees, in their flowing robes, were a sight to behold. They never gave anything secretly; they made sure the onlookers knew how much money was being given to God's work. Businessmen, anxious to attract customers, brought gifts, but their faces betrayed the greed in their souls. They gave in obedience to the law, but their money was not gladly offered. They begrudged every shekel placed into the treasury.

The priests, who appealed for increasing generosity, were more interested in finances than in glorifying God. There were occasions when the temple precincts resembled a market, or a financier's office. Then, suddenly, the Lord saw a woman clothed in black garments. Slowly, she approached the treasury and carefully opening her purse, produced two small and insignificant coins. She was an impoverished widow. The Lord knew that when she offered two mites, she had nothing left.

When Mark recalled the incident, he wrote: "And Jesus sat over against the treasury: and beheld how people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites,

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which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want, did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:41-44). His assessment of her contribution was astonishing,

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and yet, His reasoning was easy to understand. Even Samuel had heard God saying: the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man booketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord booketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). The widow's gift was sanctified and multiplied by her love. Christ still assesses the gifts of His people. Since He gave His all for us, we should never offer anything less than the best to Him.

To Work for the Sick. . . How Great His Power (Matt. 15:29)

The Lord had returned from His memorable visit to Tyre and Sidon, and, reaching Capernaum, had climbed into the mountains overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Someone recognized Him, and soon the news of His arrival spread throughout the nearby cities. Within a short time, crowds followed Him into the hill, taking with them sick relatives and friends. It was remarkable that Jesus was able to heal many people, and the diversity of patients suggested many possibilities.

There were lame people who were limited in their movements. Something had interfered with their capabilities; it was difficult to do what once they did easily. Within the Christian church these might be identified as backsliders! Others had never seen; they lived in the dark, listening to information related by other folk. They resembled unconverted people who had never seen the Savior. They heard His message but had no knowledge of His ability to open blind eyes.

Some who could see and walk had difficulty speaking; they were dumb, like secret disciples! Matthew mentioned the maimed—people who had been hurt by the unkind circumstances of life. The term was indefinite, and probably covered many kinds of injuries. Yet, no task was too hard for the Savior, His ability was without limitation.

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Furthermore, there is no record that any of the people healed ever became sick again. Frequently Christ commanded people to "go and sin no more," but in every instance there was nothing misleading about His miracles. Unfortunately, modern faith-healers can attend the funerals of people supposedly healed a few weeks before their decease. Matthew was wise when he spoke of the "many others" healed by the Savior.

To Wait for Supremacy... How Great His Patience (Heb. 12:10)

The Savior had reached Journey's End! Calvary and the resurrection were memories. He had ascended into heaven; been welcomed by innumerable angels; crowned with glory and honor, and installed as the High Priest of His people. Serenity was upon His face; expectancy shone in His eyes; God had promised that even His enemies would become His footstool. Christ would become the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and He was destined to inherit the kingdoms of the entire world. Confidently, and patiently, He sat on the right hand of the Majesty on High.

Yet, it was significant that He stood to welcome home the first martyr. Describing the death of Stephen, Luke wrote: "But he (Stephen), being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55-56). Evidently, God desired to draw attention to the fact that although the High-Priestly ministry of the Savior was important, it could not deprive Christ of the privilege of wel-

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coming to heaven the brave Christian who laid down his life for the Master.

When Paul was nearing the end of his life, he wrote remarkable words to Timothy. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim.

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4:6-8). It would be interesting if we could know the kind of reception which awaits us when we also reach our Homeland.

Dr. Egerton Young, who ministered to Indian tribes, told an interesting story of what happened one day when he had, apparently, failed to influence the people. He said: "I visited a band of Indians in the far north, and found them to be utterly unresponsive to the Gospel, until I shouted: 'I know where all your children are -- your dead children.' Quickly, they manifested intense interest. I continued: 'They have gone from your wigwams and your campfires. Your hearts are sad, and you mourn for the children you hear not. But there is only one way to the beautiful land, where the Son of God has gone, and into which He takes the children, and you must come this way, if you would be happy and enter in.' As I spoke, a stalwart Indian sprang up and rushed toward me. He said: 'Missionary, my heart is empty, and I mourn much, for none of my children are left among the living. I am very lonely in my wigwam; I long to see them again, and hold them in my arms. Tell me, what must I do to enter that beautiful land, and see my children?' Others quickly followed him, seeking instruction" (quoted from One Hundred Great Texts and Their Treatment, pg. 279). There was placed on Dean Alford's tombstone a beautiful inscription. "The inn of a traveler on his way to Jerusalem."

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