

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE XXII. 1-13.

1 Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.	8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.
2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.	9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?
3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.	10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.
4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.	11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples.
5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.	12 And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.
6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.	13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.
7 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.	

THE chapter which opens with these verses begins St. Luke's account of our Lord's sufferings and death. No part of the Gospels is so important as this: the death of Christ was the life of the world.—No part of our Lord's history is so fully given by all the Gospel writers as this: only two of them describe the circumstances of Christ's birth, all four dwell minutely on Christ's death; and of all the four, no one supplies us with such full and interesting details as St. Luke.

We see, firstly, in these verses, that *high offices in the Church do not preserve the holders of them from great blindness and sin*. We read that "the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill" Jesus.

The first step in putting Christ to death was taken by the religious teachers of the Jewish nation. The very men who ought to have welcomed the Messiah, were the men who conspired to kill Him; the very pastors who ought to have rejoiced at the appearing of the Lamb of God, had the chief hand in slaying Him. They sat in Moses' seat: they claimed to be "guides of the blind," and "lights of them which were in darkness." (Rom. ii. 19.) They belonged to the tribe of Levi. They were, most of them, in direct succession and descent from Aaron; yet they were the very men who crucified the Lord of glory! With all their boasted knowledge, they were far more ignorant than the few Galilean fishermen who followed Christ.

Let us beware of attaching an excessive importance to ministers of religion because of their office. Orders and rank confer no exemption from error. The greatest heresies have been sown, and the greatest practical abuses introduced into the Church by ordained men. Respect is undoubtedly due to high official position; order and discipline ought not to be forgotten; the teaching and counsel of regularly appointed teachers ought not to be lightly refused: but there are limits beyond which we must not go. We must never

suffer the blind to lead us into the ditch; we must never allow modern chief priests and scribes to make us crucify Christ afresh; we must try all teachers by the unerring rule of the Word of God. It matters little *who* says a thing in religion; but it matters greatly *what* it is that is said. Is it scriptural? Is it true? This is the only question.—“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isaiah viii. 20.)

We see, secondly, in these verses, *how far men may fall after making a high profession*. We read that the second step towards our Lord’s crucifixion was the treachery of one of the twelve apostles: “Then entered Satan into Judas Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.” These words are peculiarly awful. To be tempted by Satan is bad enough; to be sifted, buffeted, led captive by him is truly terrible: but when Satan “enters into a man,” and dwells in him, the man becomes indeed a child of hell.

Judas Iscariot ought to be a standing beacon to the Church of Christ. This man, be it remembered, was one of our Lord’s chosen apostles. He followed our Lord during the whole course of His ministry; he forsook all for Christ’s sake; he heard Christ preach, and saw Christ’s miracles; he preached himself; he spoke like the other apostles; there was nothing about him to distinguish him from Peter, James, and John; he was never suspected of being unsound at heart,—and yet this man turns out at length a hypocrite, betrays his Master, helps his enemies to deliver Him up to death, and dies himself a “son of perdition.” (John xvii. 12.) These are fearful things. But they are true.

Let the recollection of Judas Iscariot constrain every professing Christian to pray much for humility. Let us often say, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.” (Psa. cxxxix. 23.) At best we have but a faint conception of the deceitfulness of our hearts. The length to which men may go in religion, and yet be without grace, is far greater than we suppose.

We see, thirdly, in these verses, *the enormous power of the love of money*. We are told that when Judas went to the chief priests and offered to betray his Master, they “covenanted to give him money.” That little sentence reveals the secret of this wretched man’s fall: he was fond of money. He had doubtless heard our Lord’s solemn warning, “Take heed and beware of covetousness” (Luke xii. 15); but he had either forgotten it, or given it no heed. Covetousness was the rock on which he made shipwreck; covetousness was the ruin of his soul.

We need not wonder that St. Paul called the love of money “the root of all evil.” (1 Tim. vi. 10.) The history of the Church is full of mournful proofs that it is one of the choicest weapons of Satan for corrupting and spoiling professors of religion. Gehazi, Ananias and Sapphira are names

which naturally occur to our minds. But of all proofs, there is none so melancholy as the one before us. For money a chosen apostle sold the best and most loving of Masters! For money Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ!

Let us watch and pray against the love of money: it is a subtle disease, and often far nearer to us than we suppose. A poor man is just as liable to it as a rich man: it is possible to love money without having it, and it is possible to have it without loving it. Let us be “content with such things as we have.” (Heb. xiii. 5.) We never know what we might do if we became suddenly rich. It is a striking fact, that there is only one prayer in all the Book of Proverbs, and that one of the three petitions in that prayer is the wise request,—“Give me neither poverty nor riches.” (Prov. xxx. 8.)

We see, lastly, in these verses, *the close connection between our Lord Jesus Christ’s death and the Feast of the Passover*. Four times we are reminded here that the evening before His crucifixion was the time of the great Jewish feast. It was “the day when the Passover must be killed.”

We cannot doubt that the time of our Lord’s crucifixion was overruled by God. His perfect wisdom and controlling power arranged that the Lamb of God should die at the very time when the passover-lamb was being slain. The death of Christ was the fulfilment of the Passover: He was the true sacrifice to which every passover-lamb had been pointing for 1500 years. What the death of the lamb had been to Israel in Egypt, His death was to be to sinners all over the world. The safety which the blood of the passover-lamb had provided for Israel, His blood was to provide far more abundantly for all that believed in Him.

Let us never forget the sacrificial character of Christ’s death; let us reject with abhorrence the modern notion that it was nothing more than a mighty instance of self-sacrifice and self-denial. It was this no doubt: but it was something far higher, deeper, and more important than this. It was a propitiation for the sins of the world; it was an atonement for man’s transgression; it was the killing of the true Passover, through whose death destruction is warded off from sinners believing on Him. “Christ our Passover,” says St. Paul, “is sacrificed for us.” (1 Cor. v. 7.) Let us grasp that truth firmly, and never let it go.

NOTES. LUKE XXII. 1–13.

- 1.—[*Which is called the passover.*] Let it be noted that this expression shows that St. Luke wrote his Gospel specially for the benefit of the Gentiles. Such an explanatory phrase as this would not have been used if it had been written for the Jews.
- 2.—[*Chief priests and scribes sought how, &c.*] Burkitt remarks on this verse, “As general councils have erred, and may err fundamentally, both in matter of doctrine and practice, so did this general council at Jerusalem, consisting of chief priests, doctors and elders, with the high priest for their president.”

[*Feared the people.*] The dread of public opinion is curiously shown here, as well as in the famous case of Herod desiring to kill John the Baptist, and yet afraid. Well-directed public opinion is one of God's most powerful instruments for controlling tyrants and oppressors, and keeping the world in order.

- 3.—[*Then entered Satan into Judas.*] Calvin remarks on this expression, "Though Satan drives us every day to crime, and reigns in us when he hurries us into a course of extraordinary wickedness; yet he is said to enter into the reprobate when he takes possession of all their senses, overthrows the fear of God, extinguishes the light of reason, and destroys every feeling of shame."
- 4.—[*The captains.*] These were not Roman officers. They were commanders of the Jewish guard of the temple.
- 5.—[*To give him money.*] Quesnel remarks, "It is avarice and the desire of earthly riches, which generally lays open the hearts of ecclesiastical persons to the devil, as it did that of the apostle. They deliver up the key of their hearts when they deliver up themselves to this passion."
- 6.—[*He promised.*] The Greek word so rendered, is translated in every other place where it is used in the New Testament, "thank," or "confess." Hammond thinks that it indicates "promising with great professions of thankfulness and gratitude."
- 7.—[*The day ...when the passover must be killed.*] There is a difficulty here which has occasioned much speculation among commentators.

The difficulty is this. Our Lord appears to have eaten the passover one day in the week, and the Jews, his enemies, to have eaten it on another. He ate the passover on Thursday evening, while we are distinctly told that the next morning early "they went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover." (John xviii. 28.) The law was distinct that the passover was to be killed the evening of the fourteenth day, and eaten that night. Why then did our Lord and the chief priests and scribes not eat the passover at the same time? How is this to be explained?

1. Some think that our Lord kept the passover on the right and lawful day, but the Jews on the wrong one. They think that the Jews kept it on the wrong day, because of some tradition they had adopted, or because their time, on the lawful night, was entirely occupied with taking Christ prisoner, and preparing for His trial. This last view is that of Chrysostom and Eusebius.

2. Pearce says, that "in the days of Jesus, the number of Jews assembled to eat the passover was exceedingly great, and that from necessity they took the liberty of eating the passover on any hour before the second evening, or fifteenth day."

I offer no opinion on the difficulty beyond the two following remarks.

For one thing, I think it noteworthy that at the original appointment of the passover, the command is distinct to kill the lamb in the evening, but not equally distinct to *eat* it immediately; on the contrary, it is only said "they shall eat the flesh in that night." (Exodus xii. 8.) May it not therefore be possible, that when the chief priests would not go into the judgment hall at the "early hour," mentioned by St. John, they seized the opportunity to eat the passover before the day broke, and so kept within the letter of the law?—Our Lord would then, in that case, have eaten the passover at the beginning of the night, and his enemies at the end of it.

For another thing, I venture to suggest that in the passover, as well as in other things, it is highly probable that great irregularities had crept in among the Jews, and that the letter of the law was not strictly observed, but infringed in many things, on the authority of rabbinical traditions. That our Lord kept the passover at the right day and hour, I feel no doubt. I

see much force in the Greek word, “when the passover *must* be killed.” But that His enemies may have been less strict in their time of keeping it, I think highly probable.

- 10.—[*There shall a man meet you, &c.*] There is difference of opinion among commentators about this man. Some think that he was a friend and disciple of our Lord, and that he knew well what Peter and John meant, when they spoke of the “Master.” Others think that he was an entire stranger, and that the ease with which he received the disciples and made all the arrangements, may be accounted for by the fact that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were accustomed to receive strange Jews, and accommodate them at the time of the passover feast. The latter view seems perhaps the more probable of the two.

Here, as in other places, we ought to note our Lord’s perfect knowledge. He mentions a number of circumstances in this and the following verses, with as much minuteness and precision as if the whole transaction had been previously arranged. And yet the disciples found things exactly as He had said to them.

[*Bearing a pitcher of water.*] Some writers see much significance in this pitcher of water, and remind us of the many occasions where mercies are described in Scripture as having befallen some in connection with water, and hint that there is here an allusion to the water of baptism introducing us to the Lord’s supper! I cannot see anything in the circumstance, beyond a simple fact designating the man and marking him out to the disciples.

- 13.—[*They made ready the passover.*] We may suppose that the following things were required, in order to make ready,—the lamb, the wine, the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread. These things being procured and placed in order, the upper room was ready.