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Edwin Mortimer Standing

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CHAPTER THREE

THE PHARISEES SET A TRAP FOR JESUS

The little group of Pharisees who had openly criticised Jesus before the people for having caused the healed beggar to break the Sabbath by causing him to "take up his bed and walk" was ~~xxxxxxx~~ went away discomfited, as we saw in the last chapter. To their surprise Jesus had turned the tables on them and they had gone away having had the worst of the encounter.

But instead of admitting that the truth was on the side of the Prophet from Galilee and admitting the force of his argument ~~xxxxxxx~~ the incident had rendered them all the more bitter against him. Their pride had been mortally wounded ~~xxx~~ for he had made them "lose face" before the common people, for it was on the admiration of the common people that they ^{Without that they would be like punctured balloons} fed their own pride and self esteem.

Having left the scene of their defeat with as much dignity as they could muster they discussed the situation together in one of the corners of the Court of the Women. Their common defeat had in a sort of way bound them together into a self appointed committee. It was their duty they all agreed to put this upstart Carpenter preacher in his place and in particular to bring him into disrepute amongst the people crowds that followed him.

Their last attempt to confound him had, after all depended only on the word of a single person, and he an ignorant beggar. No one else had heard Jesus command the man to break the Sabbath. They must in some way try and get Jesus himself to break the Sabbath and that not in a corner but in some place for the whole world to see.

So called because it was the last of the courts
Open to women - the next court being the court of the men.
~~was~~ Aug Sherry one for men.

(2)

I think said Ebenezer - a Pharisee from Galilee - that our best plan would be to wait until this Jesus goes back to Galilee. He is probably only in Jerusalem for a few days on account of the feast; but I am confident he will soon return to Capernaum from where he has come.

But I thought he came from Nazareth interposed Nathan a Pharisee from Jerusalem.

So he does but he has been living in Capernaum for the past two or three months: he has made it his centre of operations I know for that is where he came from. He prefers it to Nazareth.

I am not surprised put in a third member of the group. Did you hear what happened two weeks ago in Nazareth.

No, said several tell us.

Well after an absence of some 12 weeks he returned to the village of N. where he had been brought up. I happened to be there at the time staying with a cousin of mine.

And what happened?

The people of Nazareth of course had heard rumours of all the unusual things that Jesus had been doing in C and all around that district - the many miracles he had performed and so on; and they wondered ~~what~~ if he would do anything unusual for their benefit. But no in their wildest imaginations could they have dreamed of what he actually did do.

When it came to the Sabbath the Synagogue in Nazareth was filled to overflowing. For everyone knew that Jesus would attend the Synagogue that day - as had always been his wont when he lived there. He did not disappoint them, and as they thronged in to find places they could see Jesus sitting not far from the raised dais where the speakers were asked to stand. The first places in the synagogues were always occupied by Pharisees who loved to occupy places of priority.

It was the custom at that time for anyone who wished to contribute to the exposition of the Scriptures ; and it was arranged by the synagogues authorities that Jesus should be given a chance to speak . It would be interesting to see what their former fellow citizen would say .

It happened that day that the book for the reading of the Scriptures was the book of the prophet Isaiah . The attendant handed it to Jesus and he unrolled the scroll (for there were no printed books of course at that time nor for 14 centuries later)

He began to read from the sixty fourth chapter . It was a passage in which the Prophet foretells the coming of the long wished for Messiah , who was to set up a Jewish Kingdom and rule the whole world .

The spirit of the Lord is upon me
 Because the Lord has anointed me
 He has sent me to preach to the meek
 To heal the contrite of heart
 To preach a release to the captives
 And deliverance to those who are shut up -
 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord .

When he had finished reading the passage he rolled up the book and returned it to the assistant and sat down - as was the custom for speakers in the East .

Then quietly and in a clear voice but a voice of calm authority he said " This day is this prophecy fulfilled in your ears " .

It took the audience some time for the immense import of these words to sink into their minds . For what it meant was no less than this that He - Jesus - whom they all knew and had known for some thirty years - he their village carpenter was there and then before them claiming to be the Great Messiah that all the world had been waiting for for a thousand years or more

A hubbub of conversation broke out all over the synagogue every one talking to his neighbours at once . " Is not this man the son of Mary and Joseph ?