

Paper 166 — Last Visit to Northern Perea

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Most endnotes and Urantia Book cross-references have been deleted to enhance readability.

Sources for Paper 166, in the order in which they appear

- (1) Wm. Arnold Stevens and Ernest Dewitt Burton, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Historical Study: An Analytical Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904, 1932)
- (2) George A. Barton, Ph.D., LL.D., *Jesus of Nazareth: A Biography* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1922)
- (3) Rev. Alfred Edersheim, M.A.Oxon, D.D., Ph.D., *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Volume Two) (New York: Longman, Green, & Co., Eighth Edition, Revised, 1899)
- (4) David Smith, M.A., D.D., *The Days of His Flesh: The Earthly Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, Eighth Edition, Revised (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1910)

Note: This source is coded **Smith1.**

- (5) David Smith, M.A., D.D., *Our Lord's Earthly Life* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925)

Note: This source is coded **Smith2.**

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the UB writer pointedly differ from each other.

- (e) **Blue** indicates original (or “revealed”) information, or UB-specific terminology and concepts. (What to highlight in this regard is debatable. The highlights are tentative.)

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PAPER 166 — LAST VISIT TO NORTHERN PEREA

166:0.1 From February 11 to 20, Jesus and the twelve made a tour of all the cities and villages of northern Perea where the associates of Abner and the members of the women's corps were working. They found these messengers of the gospel meeting with success, and Jesus repeatedly called the attention of his apostles to the fact that the gospel of the kingdom could spread without the accompaniment of miracles and wonders.

166:0.2 This entire mission of three months in Perea was successfully carried on with little help from the twelve apostles, and the gospel from this time on reflected, not so much Jesus' personality, as his *teachings*. But his followers did not long follow his instructions, for soon after Jesus' death and resurrection they departed from his teachings and began to build the early church around the miraculous concepts and the glorified memories of his divine-human personality.

1. THE PHARISEES AT RAGABA

XXVI: FROM THE FEAST OF DEDICATION UNTIL AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL TO EPHRAIM. (4 *Harmony of the Gospels* 138)

§94. DISCOURSES AGAINST THE PHARISEES. Luke 11:14-54.

37 Now as he spake, a Pharisee asketh him to dine [ERV mg.: Gr. *breakfast*] with him:

and he went in, and sat down to meat.

[In order to be perfectly sure of ceremonial purity, two washings before eating were required, and one afterwards was customary (Barton 243-44).]

166:1.1 On Sabbath, February 18, Jesus was at Ragaba, where there lived a wealthy Pharisee named Nathaniel; and since quite a number of his fellow Pharisees were following Jesus and the twelve around the country, he made a breakfast on this Sabbath morning¹ for all of them, about twenty in number,

and invited Jesus as the guest of honor.

166:1.2 By the time Jesus arrived at this breakfast, most of the Pharisees, with two or three lawyers, were already there and seated at the table.

The Master immediately took his seat

at the left of Nathaniel² without going to the water basins to wash his hands.

Many of the Pharisees, especially those favorable to Jesus' teachings, knew that he washed his hands only for purposes of cleanliness, that he abhorred these purely ceremonial performances; so they were not surprised at his coming directly to the table without having

twice washed his hands.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

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38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner [ERV mg.: Gr. *breakfast*.]

[Some Pharisees also washed their hands **between the courses** (Barton 244).]

39 And the Lord said unto him,

Now ye Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter;

But Nathaniel was shocked by this failure of the Master to comply with the strict requirements of Pharisaic practice.

Neither did Jesus wash his hands, as did the Pharisees, **after each course** of food

nor **at the end** of the meal.

166:1.3 After considerable whispering between Nathaniel and an unfriendly Pharisee on his right and after much lifting of eyebrows and sneering curling of lips by those who sat opposite the Master,

Jesus finally said:

“I had thought that you invited me to this house to break bread with you and perchance to inquire of me concerning the proclamation of the new gospel of the kingdom of God; but I perceive that you have brought me here to witness an exhibition of ceremonial devotion to your own self-righteousness. That service you have now done me; what next will you honor me with as your guest on this occasion?”

166:1.4 When the Master had thus spoken, they cast their eyes upon the table and remained silent. And since no one spoke, Jesus continued: “Many of you Pharisees are here with me as friends, some are even my disciples, but the majority of the Pharisees are persistent in their refusal to see the light and acknowledge the truth, even when the work of the gospel is brought before them in great power.

How carefully you cleanse the outside of the cups and the platters

	while the spiritual-food vessels are filthy and polluted!
	You make sure to present a pious and holy appearance to the people,
but your inward part is full of	but your inner souls are filled with
	self-righteousness, covetousness,
extortion and wickedness.	extortion, and all manner of spiritual wickedness.
	Your leaders even dare to plot and plan the murder of the Son of Man.
40 Ye foolish ones, did not he that made the outside make the inside also?	Do not you foolish men understand that the God of heaven looks at the inner motives of the soul as well as on your outer pretenses and your pious professions?
	Think not that
41 But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, all things are clean unto you.	the giving of alms
	and the paying of tithes will cleanse you from unrighteousness and enable you to stand clean in the presence of the Judge of all men.
42 But woe unto you Pharisees!	Woe upon you Pharisees
	who have persisted in rejecting the light of life!
for ye tithe mint and rue and every herb,	You are meticulous in tithing
	and ostentatious in almsgiving,
and pass over judgement and the love of God:	but you knowingly spurn the visitation of God and reject the revelation of his love.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

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but these ought ye to have done,

Though it is all right for you to give attention to these minor duties,

and not to leave the other undone.

you should not have left these weightier requirements undone.

43 Woe unto you Pharisees!

Woe upon all who shun justice, spurn mercy, and reject truth!

Woe upon all those who despise the revelation of the Father

for ye love the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces.

while they seek the chief seats in the synagogue and crave flattering salutations in the market places!”

44 Woe unto you! for ye are as the tombs which appear not, and the men that walk over *them* know it not.

166:1.5 When Jesus would have risen to depart,

45 And one of the lawyers answering saith unto him,

one of the lawyers who was at the table, addressing him, said:

Master, in saying this thou reproachest us also.

“But, Master, in some of your statements you reproach us also.

Is there nothing good in the scribes, the Pharisees, or the lawyers?”

46 And he said,

And Jesus, standing, replied to the lawyer:

Woe unto you lawyers also!

[Footnote: Mark 12:38,39. Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and *to have* salutations in the marketplaces, 39 and chief seats in the synagogues, and chief places at feasts. (§127)]

“You, like the Pharisees, delight in the first places at the feasts and in wearing long robes

For ye load men with burdens grievous to be borne,

while you put heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, on men’s shoulders.

and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.

47 Woe unto you! for ye build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.

48 So ye are witnesses and consent unto the works of your fathers: for they killed them, and ye build *their tombs*.

49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send unto them prophets and apostles; and *some* of them they shall kill and persecute; 50 that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world,

may be required between the altar and the sanctuary: yea I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation;

51 from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary: yea, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.

52 Woe unto you lawyers! for ye took away the key of knowledge:

ye entered not in yourselves,

And when the souls of men stagger under these heavy burdens,

you will not so much as lift with one of your fingers.

Woe upon you who take your greatest delight in building tombs for the prophets your fathers killed!

And that you consent to what your fathers did

is made manifest when you now plan to kill those who come in this day doing what the prophets did in their day—proclaiming the righteousness of God and revealing the mercy of the heavenly Father.

But of all the generations that are past,

the blood of the prophets and the apostles

shall be required of this perverse and self-righteous generation.

Woe upon all of you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge

from the common people!

You yourselves refuse to enter into the way of truth,

and them that were entering in ye hindered.

and at the same time you would hinder all others who seek to enter therein.

But you cannot thus shut up the doors of the kingdom of heaven; these we have opened to all who have the faith to enter, and these portals of mercy shall not be closed by the prejudice and arrogance of false teachers and untrue shepherds who

[Footnote: Matt. 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful,

are like whited sepulchres which, while outwardly they appear beautiful,

but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. (§127)]

are inwardly full of dead men's bones and all manner of spiritual uncleanness."

53 And when he was come out from thence,

166:1.6 And when Jesus had finished speaking at Nathaniel's table, he went out of the house without partaking of food.

And of the Pharisees who heard these words, some became believers in his teaching and entered into the kingdom, but the larger number persisted in the way of darkness, becoming all the more determined to

the scribes and the Pharisees began to press upon *him* vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; 54 laying wait for him, to catch something out of his mouth.

lie in wait for him that they might catch some of his words

which could be used to bring him to trial and judgment before the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem.

IV, XII: THE MORNING-MEAL IN THE PHARISEE'S HOUSE—MEALS AND FEASTS AMONG THE JEWS—CHRIST'S LAST PERÆAN WARNING TO PHARISAISM. (Edersheim2 204)

Indeed, the **three** distinctions of a Pharisee were:

166:1.7 There were just **three** things to which the Pharisees paid particular attention:

not to make use nor partake of anything that had not been **tithed**;

to observe the **laws of purification**;

and, as a consequence of these two, to abstain from familiar intercourse with **all non-Pharisees** (E2 212).

It will be noticed that it is exactly to these three things our Lord adverts: so that these sayings of His are not, as might seem, unconnected, but in the strictest internal relationship (E2 212).

[See 167:1-2.]

XXVII: FROM THE WITHDRAWAL TO EPHRAIM UNTIL THE FINAL ARRIVAL IN JERUSALEM. (*A Harmony of the Gospels* 155)

§107. THE TEN LEPERS. Luke 17:11-19.

11 And it came to pass, as they were on their way to Jerusalem, that he was passing along the border of Samaria and Galilee.

[12] And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers,

1. The practice of strict **tithing**.

2. Scrupulous observance of the **laws of purification**.

3. Avoidance of association with **all non-Pharisees**.

166:1.8 At this time Jesus sought to expose the spiritual barrenness of the first two practices,

while he reserved his remarks designed to rebuke the Pharisees' refusal to engage in social intercourse with non-Pharisees for another and subsequent occasion when he would again be dining with many of these same men.

2. THE TEN LEPERS

166:2.1 The next day Jesus went with the twelve over to Amathus,

near the border of Samaria,

and as they approached the city, they encountered a group of ten lepers

who sojourned near this place.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

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[[O]f the ten lepers whom, at the outset of His journey, He met when entering into a village, one was a Samaritan (Edersheim2 329).]

Nine of this group were Jews, one a Samaritan.

XXXVI: THE JOURNEY THROUGH SAMARIA (Smith1 320)

In ordinary circumstances “Jews had no dealings with Samaritans”;

Ordinarily these Jews would have refrained from all association or contact with this Samaritan,

but in that company there was at least one Samaritan. Partners in affliction, Jew and Samaritan herded together in a brotherhood of misery (S1 320).

but their common affliction was more than enough to overcome all religious prejudice.

His coming was expected, since the Seventy had gone two by two before Him, preparing His way ... (S1 320).

They had heard much of Jesus and his earlier miracles of healing,

and since the seventy made a practice of announcing the time of Jesus’ expected arrival when the Master was out with the twelve on these tours,

They knew that He would pass that way,

the ten lepers had been made aware that he was expected to appear in this vicinity at about this time;

and had stationed themselves there in the hope that He would heal them (S1 320).

and they were, accordingly, posted here on the outskirts of the city where they hoped to attract his attention and ask for healing.

[[I]n strict accordance with Jewish Law, that these lepers remained both outside the village and far from Him to Whom they now cried for mercy (Edersheim2 329).]

§107. THE TEN LEPERS. Luke 17:11-19.

When the lepers saw Jesus drawing near them, not daring to approach him,

[12] who stood afar off: 13 and they lifted up their voices, saying,

they stood afar off and cried to him:

Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

“Master, have mercy on us;

cleanse us from our affliction. Heal us as you have healed others.”

166:2.2 Jesus had just been explaining to the twelve why the gentiles of Perea, together with the less orthodox Jews, were more willing to believe the gospel preached by the seventy than were the more orthodox and tradition-bound Jews of Judea. He had called their attention to the fact that their message had likewise been more readily received by the Galileans, and even by the Samaritans. But the twelve apostles were hardly yet willing to entertain kind feelings for the long-despised Samaritans.

166:2.3 Accordingly, when Simon Zelotes observed the Samaritan among the lepers, he sought to induce the Master to pass on into the city without even hesitating to exchange greetings with them. Said Jesus to Simon: “But what if the Samaritan loves God as well as the Jews? Should we sit in judgment on our fellow men? Who can tell? if we make these ten men whole, perhaps the Samaritan will prove more grateful even than the Jews. Do you feel certain about your opinions, Simon?” And Simon quickly replied, “If you cleanse them, you will soon find out.” And Jesus replied: “So shall it be, Simon, and you will soon know the truth regarding the gratitude of men and the loving mercy of God.”

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them,

Go and shew yourselves unto the priests.

[... and offer for their cleansing the sacrifices demanded in the Pentateuchal law (Barton 266).]

166:2.4 Jesus, going near the lepers, said:

“If you would be made whole,

go forthwith and show yourselves to the priests

as required by the law of Moses.”

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

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And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed.

And as they went, they were made whole.

15 And one of them, when he saw he was healed, turned back,

But when the Samaritan saw that he was being healed, he turned back

and, going in quest of Jesus,

with a loud voice glorifying God;

began to glorify God with a loud voice.

And when he had found the Master,

16 and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

he fell on his knees at his feet and gave thanks for his cleansing.

The nine others, the Jews, had also discovered their healing, and while they also were grateful for their cleansing, they continued on their way to show themselves to the priests.

166:2.5 As the Samaritan remained kneeling at Jesus' feet,

17 And Jesus answered,

the Master, looking about at the twelve, especially at Simon Zelotes, said:

Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

“Were not ten cleansed? Where, then, are the other nine, the Jews?”

18 Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger [ERV mg.: Or, *alien*]?

Only one, this *alien*, has returned to give glory to God.”

19 And he said unto him,

And then he said to the Samaritan,

Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

“Arise and go your way; your faith has made you whole.”

166:2.6 Jesus looked again at his apostles as the stranger departed. And the apostles all looked at Jesus, save Simon Zelotes, whose eyes were downcast. The twelve said not a word. Neither did Jesus speak; it was not necessary that he should.

166:2.7 Though all ten of these men really believed they had leprosy, only four were thus afflicted.

[It will be remembered that all sorts of skin diseases were classed as leprosy (Barton 266-67).]

The other six were cured of a skin disease which had been mistaken for leprosy.

But the Samaritan really had leprosy.

IV, XXII: ON THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM—DEPARTURE FROM EPHRAIM BY WAY OF SAMARIA AND GALILEE—HEALING OF TEN LEPERS ... (Edersheim 2327)

166:2.8 Jesus enjoined the twelve to say nothing about the cleansing of the lepers, and as they went on into Amathus, he remarked:

Certain it is, that the Lord emphasised the terrible contrast in this between the children of the household

“You see how it is that the children of the house, even when they are insubordinate to their Father’s will, take their blessings for granted.

They think it a small matter if they neglect to give thanks when the Father bestows healing upon them,

and ‘this stranger’ (E2 330).

but the strangers, when they receive gifts from the head of the house, are filled with wonder and are constrained to give thanks in recognition of the good things bestowed upon them.”

And still the apostles said nothing in reply to the Master’s words.

3. THE SERMON AT GERASA

XXVI: FROM THE FEAST OF DEDICATION UNTIL AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL TO EPHRAIM. (4 *Harmony of the Gospels* 138)

§98. THE QUESTION WHETHER FEW ARE SAVED. Luke 13:22-30.

22 And he went on his way through cities and villages, teaching, and journeying on unto Jerusalem. 23 And one said unto him,

[The words of our Lord ... are in reply to a question addressed to Him by some one—we can scarcely doubt, a representative of the Pharisees ... (*Edersheim* 298).] [*See also Barton 249.*]

Lord, are they few that are saved?

And he said unto them,

JOURNEYING TO JERUSALEM (*Smith* 238)

[A]ll agreed that since there was no salvation outside the pale of the chosen race, the myriads of heathendom were doomed to perdition (S2 238).

[B]ut some argued that even as **only two** of the multitude that left Egypt inherited the Promised Land,

166:3.1 As Jesus and the twelve visited with the messengers of the kingdom at Gerasa,

one of the **Pharisees** who believed in him asked this question:

“Lord, will there be few or many really saved?”

And Jesus, answering, said:

166:3.2 “You have been taught that only the children of Abraham will be saved;

that only the gentiles of adoption can hope for salvation.

Some of you have reasoned that, since the Scriptures record that **only Caleb and Joshua**³ from among all the hosts that went out of Egypt lived to enter the promised land,

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

so it would be in the days of the Messiah ... (S2 238).

The Lord answered by quoting a fancy of the ancient moralists which had passed into a common **proverb**.

There are two paths, they said—the path of virtue and the path of vice, the former entered by a **narrow** gate and winding steep and difficult up rugged heights,

and the latter entered by a **wide** gate and running **broad** and smooth.

The easy path ended in ruin, but, said the moralists, because it was easy **most men choose it**;

the difficult path **led to life**, but **few** had the courage to pursue it (S2 238-39).

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only a comparatively few of those who seek the kingdom of heaven shall find entrance thereto.

166:3.3 “You also have another saying among you,

and one that contains much truth:

That the way which **leads to eternal life** is straight and narrow, that the door which leads thereto is likewise **narrow**

so that, of those who seek salvation, **few** can find entrance through this door.

You also have a teaching that

the way which leads to destruction is **broad**, that the entrance thereto is **wide**,

and that there are **many who choose to go this way**.

And this **proverb** is not without its meaning.

But I declare that salvation is first a matter of your personal choosing. Even if the door to the way of life is narrow, it is wide enough to admit all who sincerely seek to enter, for I am that door. And the Son will never refuse entrance to any child of the universe who, by faith, seeks to find the Father through the Son.

166:3.4 “But herein is the danger to all who would postpone their entrance into the kingdom while they continue to pursue the pleasures of immaturity and indulge the satisfactions of selfishness: Having refused to enter the kingdom as a spiritual experience, they may subsequently seek entrance thereto when the glory of the better way becomes revealed in the age to come.

[Compare:] 24 Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in,

And when, therefore, those who spurned the kingdom when I came in the likeness of humanity seek to find an entrance when it is revealed in the likeness of divinity,

and shall not be able.

then will I say to all such selfish ones: **I know not whence you are.**

[Compare Barton 250.]

You had your chance to prepare for this heavenly citizenship, but you refused all such proffers of mercy; you rejected all invitations to come while the door was open. Now, to you who have refused salvation, the door is shut. This door is not open to those who would enter the kingdom for selfish glory. Salvation is not for those who are unwilling to pay the price of wholehearted dedication to doing my Father’s will.

When in spirit and soul you have turned your backs upon the Father’s kingdom, it is useless in mind and body to

25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying,

stand before this door and knock, saying,

Lord, open to us;

‘Lord, open to us;

we would also be great in the kingdom.’

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

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and he shall answer and say to you, **I know not whence ye are;**

Then will I declare that you are not of my fold.

I will not receive you to be among those who have fought the good fight of faith and won the reward of unselfish service in the kingdom on earth.

26 then shall ye begin to say,

And when you say,

We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou did teach in our streets;

‘Did we not eat and drink with you, and did you not teach in our streets?’

27 and he shall say,

then shall I again declare

that you are spiritual strangers; that we were not fellow servants in the Father’s ministry of mercy on earth;

I tell you, I know not whence ye are;

that I do not know you;

and then shall the Judge of all the earth say to you:

depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

‘Depart from us, all you who have taken delight in the works of iniquity.’

166:3.5 “But fear not; every one who sincerely desires to find eternal life by entrance into the kingdom of God shall certainly find such everlasting salvation.

28 There shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets,

But you who refuse this salvation will some day see the prophets of the seed of Abraham

sit down with the believers of the gentile nations

in the kingdom of God,

in this glorified kingdom

to partake of the bread of life and to refresh themselves with the water thereof.

and yourselves cast forth without.

29 And they

[See next pg.]

shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 And behold, there are last who shall be first,

and there are first who shall be last.

[*Compare:*] Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Rev. 3:20).

And they

who shall thus **take the kingdom** in spiritual power and by the persistent assaults of living faith

will come from the north and the south and from the east and the west.

And, behold, many who are first will be last,

and those who are last will many times be first.”

166:3.6 This was indeed a new and strange version of the old and familiar proverb of the straight and narrow way.

166:3.7 Slowly the apostles and many of the disciples were learning the meaning of Jesus’ early declaration:

“Unless you are born again, born of the spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

Nevertheless, to all who are honest of heart and sincere in faith, it remains eternally true:

“Behold, I stand at the doors of men’s hearts and knock, and if any man will open to me, I will come in and sup with him

and will feed him with the bread of life; we shall be one in spirit and purpose, and so shall we ever be brethren in the long and fruitful service of the search for the Paradise Father.”

[Compare:] I am the door:

by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture (John 10:9).

IV, XX: CHRIST'S DISCOURSES IN PERÆA—CLOSE OF THE PERÆAN MINISTRY. (Edersheim2 298)

When we remember, that in 'the Sermon on the Mount' the call was only to 'enter in,' we feel that we have now reached a period, when the access to 'the narrow door' was obstructed by the enmity of so many, and when it needed 'violence' to break through, and 'take the Kingdom' 'by force' (E2 299).

[The week-day family-meal was simple enough, whether breakfast or dinner—the latter towards evening, although sometimes in the middle of the day, but always before actual darkness ... (E2 205).]

And so, whether few or many are to be saved altogether depends on whether few or many will heed the invitation:

"I am the door,

I am the new and living way,

and whosoever wills may enter to embark upon the endless truth-search for eternal life."

166:3.8 Even the apostles were unable fully to comprehend his teaching as to

the necessity for using spiritual force for the purpose of breaking through all material resistance and for surmounting every earthly obstacle which might chance to stand in the way of grasping the all-important spiritual values of the new life in the spirit as the liberated sons of God.

4. TEACHING ABOUT ACCIDENTS

166:4.1 While most Palestinians ate only two meals a day,

it was the custom of Jesus and the apostles, when on a journey, to pause at midday for rest and refreshment.

And it was at such a noontide stop on the way to Philadelphia that Thomas asked Jesus: “Master, from hearing your remarks as we journeyed this morning, I would like to inquire whether spiritual beings are concerned in the production of strange and extraordinary events in the material world and, further, to ask whether the angels and other spirit beings are able to prevent accidents.”

[See 123:4.6-7, re midwayers being able to prevent accidents in certain situations.]

166:4.2 In answer to Thomas’s inquiry, Jesus said: “Have I been so long with you, and yet you continue to ask me such questions? Have you failed to observe how the Son of Man lives as one with you and consistently refuses to employ the forces of heaven for his personal sustenance? Do we not all live by the same means whereby all men exist? Do you see the power of the spiritual world manifested in the material life of this world, save for the revelation of the Father and the sometime healing of his afflicted children?

166:4.3 “All too long have your fathers believed that prosperity was the token of divine approval; that adversity was the proof of God’s displeasure. I declare that such beliefs are superstitions. Do you not observe that far greater numbers of the poor joyfully receive the gospel and immediately enter the kingdom? If riches evidence divine favor, why do the rich so many times refuse to believe this good news from heaven?

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust (Matt. 5:45).

166:4.4 “The Father causes his rain to fall on the just and the unjust; the sun likewise shines on the righteous and the unrighteous.

§96. THE GALILEANS SLAIN BY PILATE.
Luke 13:1-9.

1 Now there were some present at that very season who told him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

2 And he answered and said unto them, Think ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they have suffered these things? 3 I tell you, Nay:

but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them,

think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, Nay:

but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

You know about those Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with the sacrifices,

but I tell you these Galileans were not in any manner sinners above all their fellows just because this happened to them.

You also know about the eighteen men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, killing them.

Think not that these men who were thus destroyed were offenders above all their brethren in Jerusalem.

These folks were simply innocent victims of one of the accidents of time.

166:4.5 “There are three groups of events which may occur in your lives:

166:4.6 “1. You may share in those normal happenings which are a part of the life you and your fellows live on the face of the earth.

166:4.7 “2. You may chance to fall victim to one of the accidents of nature, one of the mischances of men, knowing full well that such occurrences are in no way prearranged or otherwise produced by the spiritual forces of the realm.

166:4.8 “3. You may reap the harvest of your direct efforts to comply with the natural laws governing the world.

6 And he spake this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard;

and he came seeking fruit thereon, and found none.

7 And he said unto the vinedresser,

Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none:

cut it down; why doth it also cumber the ground?

8 And he answering saith unto him,

Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

9 and if it bear fruit thenceforth, *well*; but if not, thou shalt cut it down.

166:4.9 “There was a certain man who planted a fig tree in his yard,

and when he had many times sought fruit thereon and found none,

he called the vinedressers before him and said:

‘Here have I come these three seasons looking for fruit on this fig tree and have found none.

Cut down this barren tree; why should it encumber the ground?’

But the head gardener answered his master:

‘Let it alone for one more year so that I may dig around it and put on fertilizer,

and then, next year, if it bears no fruit, it shall be cut down.’

And when they had thus complied with the laws of fruitfulness, since the tree was living and good, they were rewarded with an abundant yield.

166:4.10 “In the matter of sickness and health, you should know that these bodily states are the result of material causes; health is not the smile of heaven, neither is affliction the frown of God.

166:4.11 “The Father’s human children have equal capacity for the reception of material blessings; therefore does he bestow things physical upon the children of men without discrimination. When it comes to the bestowal of spiritual gifts, the Father is limited by man’s capacity for receiving these divine endowments. Although the Father is no respecter of persons, in the bestowal of spiritual gifts he is limited by man’s faith and by his willingness always to abide by the Father’s will.”

166:4.12 As they journeyed on toward Philadelphia, Jesus continued to teach them and to answer their questions having to do with accidents, sickness, and miracles, but they were not able fully to comprehend this instruction. One hour of teaching will not wholly change the beliefs of a lifetime, and so Jesus found it necessary to reiterate his message, to tell again and again that which he wished them to understand; and even then they failed to grasp the meaning of his earth mission until after his death and resurrection.

[Source?]

5. THE CONGREGATION AT PHILADELPHIA

166:5.1 Jesus and the twelve were on their way to visit Abner and his associates, who were preaching and teaching in Philadelphia. Of all the cities of Perea, in Philadelphia the largest group of Jews and gentiles, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, embraced the teachings of the seventy, thereby entering into the kingdom of heaven.

The synagogue of Philadelphia had never been subject to the supervision of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem and therefore had never been closed to the teachings of Jesus and his associates. At this very time, Abner was teaching three times a day in the Philadelphia synagogue.

166:5.2 This very synagogue later on became a Christian church and was the missionary headquarters for the promulgation of the gospel through the regions to the east. It was long a stronghold of the Master's teachings and stood alone in this region as a center of Christian learning for centuries.

166:5.3 The Jews at Jerusalem had always had trouble with the Jews of Philadelphia. And after the death and resurrection of Jesus the Jerusalem church, of which James the Lord's brother was head, began to have serious difficulties with the Philadelphia congregation of believers. Abner became the head of the Philadelphia church, continuing as such until his death. And this estrangement with Jerusalem explains why nothing is heard of Abner and his work in the Gospel records of the New Testament. This feud between Jerusalem and Philadelphia lasted throughout the lifetimes of James and Abner and continued for some time after the destruction of Jerusalem. Philadelphia was really the headquarters of the early church in the south and east as Antioch was in the north and west.

166:5.4 It was the apparent misfortune of Abner to be at variance with all of the leaders of the early Christian church. He fell out with Peter and James (Jesus' brother) over questions of administration and the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem church; he parted company with Paul over differences of philosophy and theology. Abner was more Babylonian than Hellenic in his philosophy, and he stubbornly resisted all attempts of Paul to remake the teachings of Jesus so as to present less that was objectionable, first to the Jews, then to the Greco-Roman believers in the mysteries.

166:5.5 Thus was Abner compelled to live a life of isolation. He was head of a church which was without standing at Jerusalem. He had dared to defy James the Lord's brother, who was subsequently supported by Peter. Such conduct effectively separated him from all his former associates. Then he dared to withstand Paul. Although he was wholly sympathetic with Paul in his mission to the gentiles, and though he supported him in his contentions with the church at Jerusalem, he bitterly opposed the version of Jesus' teachings which Paul elected to preach. In his last years Abner denounced Paul as the "clever corrupter of the life teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God."

166:5.6 During the later years of Abner and for some time thereafter, the believers at Philadelphia held more strictly to the religion of Jesus, as he lived and taught, than any other group on earth.

166:5.7 Abner lived to be 89 years old, dying at Philadelphia on the 21st day of November, A.D. 74. And to the very end he was a faithful believer in, and teacher of, the gospel of the heavenly kingdom.

1. We know that [the 'morning-meal'] took place early, immediately after the return from morning-prayers in the Synagogue.... [W]hat passed at the Pharisee's table may have some connection with something that had occurred just before in the Synagogue, for we conjecture that it was the Sabbath-day. We infer this from the circumstance that the invitation was not to the principal meal, which on a Sabbath 'the Lawyers' (and, indeed, all householders) would, at least ordinarily, have in their own homes (Edersheim2 205).
2. Compare Edersheim2 207, re the position of the worthiest guest on the left of the host.
3. The question, whether 'few' were to be saved, could not have been put from the Pharisaic point of view, if understood of personal salvation; while, if taken as applying to part in the near-expected Messianic Kingdom, it has its distinct parallel in the Rabbinic statement, that, as regarded the days of the Messiah (His Kingdom), it would be similar to what it had been at the entrance into the land of promise, when only two (Joshua and Caleb), out of all that generation, were allowed to have part in it (Edersheim2 298-99).