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THE JERUSALEM VISITS OF JESUS
(*in St. John*).

IN the present article an attempt is made to explain why the Judæan ministries of Jesus narrated in the Fourth Gospel are unrecorded in the Synoptic writings. This paper is compiled from notes that were made by the writer in the spring of 1906 when he was studying the four Gospels. In it he seeks to give a reason why the four Jerusalem visits described in the Gospel According to St. John are not referred to in the other Gospels—the reason being, namely, that St. Peter was not with Our Lord on each of these four occasions—as the article attempts to show—and St. Mark who, according to Papias, was the interpreter of St. Peter, not being able to get a detailed account of them from that disciple, or, at any rate, thinking that another would treat this part of the history more adequately, resolved to allow some other writer (probably St. John) more conversant with the facts (owing, perhaps, to his connexion with Jerusalem) to deal with them. St. Matthew and St. Luke, basing their Gospels on that of St. Mark, decided also to leave that portion of the history to the same—another and more competent—writer.

1. Perhaps the best thing he can do at the outset is to describe simply how the matter was suggested to him at all. He was reading one day the passage in St. Mark i. 14 which says, "Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God." From it he turned casually to the account of Our Lord's first visit to Jerusalem (St. John ii. 13-iv. 54), which, to judge from its position in the narrative, one may consider to have taken place shortly after the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee (St. John ii. 11), that is to say, about Passover,

A.D. 27. As John the Baptist was still a free man at the time of the first Jerusalem visit (St. John iii. 22, 23, 24, especially verse 24), during which excursions into the surrounding country district were made (St. John iii. 23), it seems to be quite evident that this first visit took place at an early date—prior to John's imprisonment—prior to the time when Jesus "called" the Twelve and attached them to Himself as disciples.

If this be so, and if one accept the idea that St. Peter was not yet, at this early period, permanently attached to Jesus, it is quite possible that he was not in Judaea at the time when the events narrated in St. John ii. occurred; and, consequently, would not have any definite facts to give regarding what took place. *The early date of the period, then, at which this first visit was made is itself quite sufficient to explain St. Peter's absence from Jerusalem.* Another small point, however, occurred to the writer's mind which might also help to explain St. Peter's absence; but he has no desire to press this point, especially as there is no necessity for it, in view of what has been already set forth. It occurred to him that the illness of St. Peter's mother-in-law (St. Mark i. 30) might have contributed to his detention at home in Galilee, even if he had been otherwise free and wished to accompany Jesus on the first journey to Jerusalem. This, though perhaps a nice point, is not one of any great importance, seeing that St. Mark i. 14 is itself sufficient to enable one to determine approximately the time of the first Jerusalem visit (St. John ii. 13). If one regards the winter of A.D. 26 as the time of the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, it would seem as if the first visit to Jerusalem occurred just shortly before Passover, A.D. 27 (St. John ii. 13); *and St. Peter was not there.*

2. Having got thus far the writer turned, more out of curiosity than anything else, to read the account of the

second visit of Jesus to Jerusalem which is given in St. John v. 1. This journey seems to have been made about the time of Purim (?) (“ ‘ a ’ feast ”), that is, in February A.D. 28. *Was St. Peter with Jesus on this occasion, or was he not?* One observes that, in St. John, the narrative of this visit immediately precedes the account of the Miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (St. John vi. 5). Turning, however, to St. Mark one finds that the Synoptic writer gives, immediately prior to the story of the same miracle, an interesting sketch of the commission to, and Mission of, the Twelve (St. Mark vi. 7–13). Putting these two *facts* together—and, in this connexion, it is surely not necessary to discuss questions, or to seek to establish the accuracy, of chronological order in the Gospel narrative—one quite legitimately concludes that St. Peter was again unable to accompany Jesus to Jerusalem *because he was absent, as one of the Twelve, on an evangelical mission of teaching and healing.*¹

3. By this time the writer was beginning to be quite interested. His attention was next directed to St. John’s narrative of the *third* visit to Jerusalem (St. John vii. 10). One learns from the account (1) that the visit was during the Feast of Tabernacles (vii. 2), (2) it was—the writer is emphatic about this point—a *strictly private visit* (“because the Jews sought to kill him”—St. John vii. 1). The probability is that the disciples, including St. Peter, knew nothing about this visit. Therefore, for the third time, St. Peter’s absence from his Master’s side is satisfactorily accounted for, the reason being that *Our Lord’s visit was of a private character.*² St. John would, in this instance, get the information easily from his friends in the city with whom, perhaps, he was staying (St. John xviii. 15, 16).

¹ One notes that, after Purim, Jesus apparently returned to Galilee; for, about the time for the Passover to be held, one reads of His being there once again (St. John vi. § 4, vii. 1).

² See footnote, p. 350.

In each of these three instances, therefore, the writer thought he had found good reasons for supposing that St. Peter, being absent every time, was unfitted to supply St. Mark with such detailed information as that writer would need in order to give an account of the three visits to Jerusalem. Knowing that he could not get the information at first hand from St. Peter, but that another (namely, St. John) had it, St. Mark omitted the account of these Jerusalem visits from his Gospel.

4. It was with a certain amount of excitement that the writer now turned to consider the *fourth* visit. It took place at the time of the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple during the winter (St. John x. 22). After the third visit Jesus appears not to have resumed His ministry in Galilee because of popular ferment and Pharisaic opposition which was reaching its climax (St. John vii. 30a and x. 19). Still, He must have returned to the northern province. One is inclined to believe that the *détours* to Tyre and Sidon, or, at least, to Caesarea Philippi, occurred during this closing period, namely, between the Feast of Tabernacles (St. John vii. 2) and that of the Dedication of the Temple (St. John x. 22). Such a retreat at this time, for purposes of rest and closer fellowship with "His own," and, at the same time, to avoid the hostile 'Herodians,' is suggested by St. Mark ix. 30 ("and they departed thence and passed *through* Galilee"). The route taken from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem on His final journey seems to be indicated in St. Mark x. 1 ("cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the *farther* side of Jordan"), and St. Luke ix. 51, 52, xvii. 11. Professor Burkitt's *The Gospel History and its Transmission*¹ contains some illuminating remarks on this journey of Our Lord. The probability is that Jesus, owing to the fierce Samaritan opposition, preferred, rather than take the western road to Jerusalem, to turn off

¹ See footnote, p. 350.

eastwards across Jordan, *going by Himself*, after arranging to meet St. Peter or the rest—or, perhaps, the Seventy—at a point agreed on beforehand, probably near Jericho. *Where, then, was St. Peter at the time of the fourth visit?*¹ Was he with Jesus, or was he not? In the hope of getting some clear light upon this point the writer turned to St. Luke x. 1 which reads: “After these things”—that is, apparently, after the final journey to Jerusalem had begun, and after the hostile reception at a Samaritan village (St. Luke ix. 53)—“the Lord appointed *other* seventy also and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place.” At a first glance the matter looked pretty hopeless.

This fourth visit appeared to coincide with the Mission of the Seventy, as the second visit had coincided with the Mission of the Twelve. We have seen that, in the latter case, the absence of St. Peter is easily explained; he was away on a mission. But, in the former case, there was nothing to show that he was away. *If it could be proved that he was away with the Seventy!* Then the problem would be greatly simplified!! It would then be clearly seen that, Jesus having visited Jerusalem during the absence of St. Peter on the Mission, that disciple would again be able to give an authentic story of what transpired in the Holy City. It was at this point that a most interesting discovery was made which gave the very light that had been so earnestly sought after. St. Luke x. 1 reads: “After these things the Lord appointed other Seventy *also* (καὶ ἑτέροισ ἐβδομήκοντα). This is the reading of Ν Α C L Δ Ξ al. b, f, q (Tisch.). BD a, c, e, l, g vulg. syrr. cur. sin., however, have a *varia lectio*, namely, ἐβδομήκοντα δύο (W. H. in brackets). *Seventy-Two!* Like a flash the thought came—*Peter and, perhaps, Andrew were the other “two” (δύο)!* During *their* absence with the Seventy Jesus paid,

¹ See footnote, p. 350.

what might be termed, a flying visit to Jerusalem, returning speedily with *ten* of His disciples who had previously joined Him to meet the *Seventy-Two* on their return (St. Luke x. 17) at the appointed place. Would not the sending of St. Peter and another old, tried campaigner along with the Seventy—men somewhat inexperienced in mission work, with their spurs still to be won—be the most natural thing in the world for Jesus to do? How the Seventy would profit by the help and counsel of the two better trained men! The principle, be it said, would be very similar to one in actual practice to-day. Something very like this is done at the Glasgow U.F. College, where the Professors are said to accompany their students to churches in the city, in order the more effectually to help and encourage them in the great work of preaching.

The writer's contention is that St. Peter was one of the two (*δύο*) mentioned in connexion with this Mission of the Seventy-Two, and was absent from Jerusalem when Jesus visited the city for the *fourth* time¹; and, if what he has tried to prove be correct, that disciple was absent on the occasion of each of the three previous visits.

Such is his humble attempt to explain a difficult problem, and, so doing, to establish the historicity of large sections of the Fourth Gospel which state facts that are recorded nowhere else. He leaves it to scholars, among whose number he does not pretend to be, for their consideration and—should it be deserving—criticism. His own feeling about the authorship of these important sections is that St. John, who seems to have had relatives in Jerusalem and acquaintances in official and priestly circles, was the only one of the disciples fitted to deal with this side of the Gospel history. In view of (*a*) St. John's connexions and, above all, (*b*) St. Peter's *four-fold* absence, the latter disciple would consider it best for all references to the Jerusalem visits

¹ See footnote, p. 350.

to come from St. John, and so to St. John the work was deputed accordingly.¹

J. A. S. WILSON.

*THE FREER (WASHINGTON) MS. OF THE
GOSPELS.*

WHEN the news reached this country some six years ago that C. L. Freer, Esq., of Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A., had acquired from a dealer in Cairo various very ancient MSS., including one of the Gospels in Greek, great interest was aroused. It transpired that the British Museum had been outbidden by Mr. Freer. The United States has a quite pardonable ambition to rival older countries in the possession of rare and valuable MSS. As most of those known to exist

¹ Since writing the above I have refreshed my memory with regard to Professor Burkitt's suggested itinerary of our Lord's fourth journey. His conjecture, after considering "general historical probabilities," is (p. 97) that Jesus did *not* approach Jerusalem *via* the E. of Jordan (Herod Antipas's Tetrarchy). "It is noteworthy," he writes, "that in this story; of the Samaritan village that would not receive our Lord (St. Luke ix. 51-56) *Peter does not appear*, only James and John. I venture to suggest that the historical reason for this was that Peter and most of the other disciples went round by Peraea, that when they arrived at the passage of the river they found Jesus waiting for them in 'the borders of Judea beyond Jordan,' i.e. on the W. side, and finally that one reason why nothing is said about the events of the previous journey is that *our Lord and S. Peter had travelled to the spot from Capernaum by different routes and not together.*" (The italics are mine.) Should this conjecture ultimately commend itself in preference to the older idea regarding Our Lord's route (*Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. i. p. 244), my theory in this article, so far from being destroyed, would be appreciably strengthened. For the fourth visit to Jerusalem would then appear to have taken place during St. Peter's absence for the reason given by Professor Burkitt and not because of that disciple's being called away to direct the Seventy. Nor, if this ever prove to be the truth, would my theory suffer, so far as the explanation (given above) of the third visit goes. For I would then be inclined to accept Hahn's suggestion (*Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. i. p. 538) that the Seventy were appointed *at Jerusalem* (the italics are mine), and about *the Time of the Feast of Tabernacles* (St. John vii. 2). So that St. Peter's absence would be still more easily accounted for in that case than it is by the reason alleged in my article, to wit, that the third visit of Our Lord was a private one.—J. A. S. W.