

The Gospel of
LUKE

Dr. Brian J. Bailey

Version 1.1

“The Gospel of Luke”

© 1999 Brian J. Bailey

Revised in 2006

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PREFACE

As I consider my purpose for writing this commentary on Luke's Gospel, I find that I can only echo the reasons that the author gave us in his introduction. He was making "a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us." When the Gospel writer (Lk. 1:3) further stated that he had "perfect understanding of all things from the very first," I hasten to add that I would never make such a claim, but only that I am providing another perspective.

This marvellous third Gospel was written by Luke, a man whom Paul affectionately referred to as "the beloved physician" in Colossians 4:14. Being a Spirit-filled medical doctor and apostle of God, Luke's Gospel portrays the *humanity* of God more than all the other authors of New Testament literature.

The four sides of God's nature are seen in Ezekiel. In a heavenly vision, Ezekiel saw the *four faces* of the living creatures that surround the throne of God (Ezek.1:10). These four faces depict the four aspects of God's character revealed in the four Gospels. Ezekiel saw the face of a lion, the face of an ox, the face of an eagle, and the face of a man.

The Gospel of Luke fulfils that aspect of the life of Christ depicted by the face of a man. In fact, Ezekiel himself is a type of Christ since he is called the *son of man* more than 70 times in his book. Consider the four aspects of God's nature in the four Gospels:

Ezekiel's Vision

The face of a lion
the kingly aspect

The face of an ox
the servant aspect

The face of a man
the human aspect

The face of an eagle
the divine aspect

Gospel

Matthew presents Christ as
the Son of Abraham

Mark presents Christ as
the Son of David

Luke presents Christ as
the Son of Man

John presents Christ as
the Son of God

According to tradition, Luke was from Antioch, Syria. He served the Lord without distraction and without blame, having neither wife nor children, and at the age of 84 fell asleep full of the Holy Ghost in Boeotia in east-central Greece.

According to Ernest Renans, a French scholar and philosopher, the Gospel of Luke has been described as the most beautiful book that was ever written. Luke has well earned the commendation that he must by all means have a prominent place among world historians. When reading this Gospel one cannot help but realise the beauty of Luke's character, for it is the character of one whose peerless and loving nature shall grace heaven's portals for all eternity.

Luke is a chronicler par excellence. In both his Gospel and The Acts of the Apostles, he is a meticulous recorder of events. As far as we know, Luke never saw or met Jesus during His earthly ministry. Therefore, Luke must have obtained the material for his writings from the eyewitness accounts of Peter, James, John, and Mark, as well as other Christians who had written concerning those remarkable

days of Christ upon earth. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luke put together this most blessed record of those things that were truly believed by God's people living in the New Testament era.

Luke has been called "the hymnologist of the Church" in that his Gospel records the *Ave Maria* (1:28-31), *The Magnificat* (1:46-55), *The Benedictus* (1:68-79), *The Gloria in Excelsis* (2:14), and *The Nunc Dimittis* (2:29-32).

Luke's Gospel above all the others is filled with joy and rejoicing, praising God, laughter (6:21), and merriment (15:23,32). No doubt Luke was a man filled with the joy of the Lord, who was obviously anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows (cf. Ps. 45:7).

At times, he was a travelling companion of Paul, who wrote "Rejoice, and again I say rejoice." Joy is infectious, and there can be no doubt that to have been around these two apostles would have lifted any man's spirit. Let us also ask the Lord to be anointed with joy and be filled with holy laughter.

Moreover, do not forget that these laughing apostles were two of the intellectual giants of all times and the most prolific of writers. They knew what Nehemiah, the beloved governor of Jerusalem meant in the 5th Century B.C. when he said, "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).

Although Luke never put a brush to canvas, his pictures portrayed through words have inspired to this very day great works of art. Michael Angelo's *Conversion of St. Paul*,

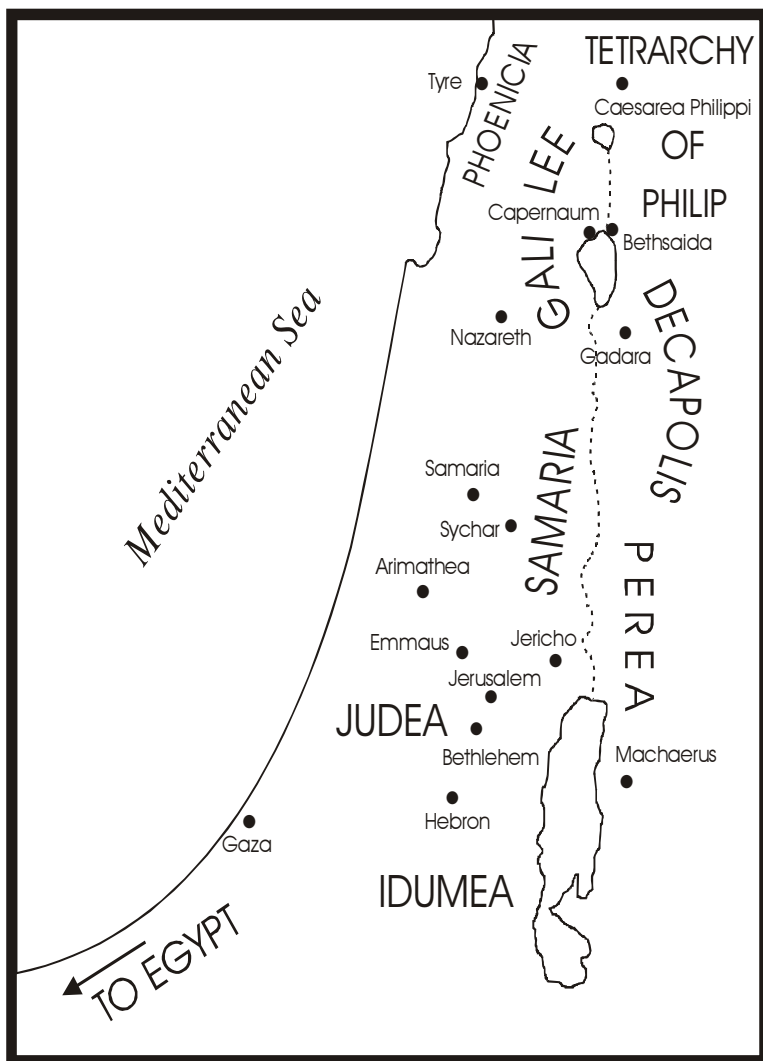
Raphael's *Deliverance of St. Peter*, as well as the painting of the *Two on the Road to Emmaus*, hang in many homes today. In the 13th century, Luke was called the patron saint of painters.

Tradition also tells us that Luke wrote this Gospel while in Greece, well before A.D. 70. Most likely it was written as early as A.D. 60, and preceded the Book of Acts (Acts 1:1). Luke's Gospel is addressed to the Greek society. Matthew was written for the Jewish world, while Mark was written primarily for the Romans.

Luke's Gospel is written in exquisite Greek from the pen of a trained physician who gives highly accurate details of medical accounts, whereas the other Gospel writers tend to generalise when recording events concerning the sick and needy. Some of the best loved of the Gospel stories are only found in Luke, and they are particularly devoted to the human aspect of our Saviour as well as life in general.

This commentary is presented with the prayer that you will come to know our Saviour in all His humanity in a more intimate way, and that you will come to appreciate the life of devotion of this most beloved of all medical doctors.

PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF JESUS



PART ONE

Prologue

(1:1-4)

CHAPTER 1

This Gospel opens with a statement that is worthy of a great historian. Luke declares that he has thoroughly researched his facts and sources for his Gospel. He follows a form adopted by the Greek Herodotus who begins his historical treatise with “These are the researches of Herodotus.”

A much later historian tells us that before beginning to write he gathered information from the lips of learned men and also from histories written by Romans. Thus, Luke starts his account as follows:

1:1-4 – *“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”*

From the manner by which he is addressed, Theophilus must have been a high ranking government official. This would give credence to the fact that Christianity had also penetrated (even in the New Testament era) into the ranks of people of nobility, although “not many” as the Apostle Paul informs us in 1 Corinthians 1:26. However, “the common people heard Him gladly” (Mk. 12:37). Christianity finds its greatest number of adherents among the poor.

It is certain that Luke had very accurate accounts concerning the events leading up to the birth of both John the Baptist and also our Lord Jesus Christ available to him. In some instances, one who is not necessarily an eyewitness but has material available to him from many sources can write with greater accuracy and detail than one who has only his own experience to guide him.

Naturally, all the synoptic writers wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit also draws upon those things that we have known and learned.

I well remember a certain Indian student in the United States who was complimented for a lecture he had given on his own country. Many commented that he must have travelled far and wide through the subcontinent. However, he replied that his knowledge of his country had been relatively shallow and insular to the particular area where he had been born until he came to America and was asked to lecture. His knowledge came, he confessed, from hours spent in study at local libraries.

In like manner was the material from which the Apostle Luke wrote his Gospel. He amassed documents and eyewitness accounts of others who had experienced those things of which he wrote. In effect, that is how we preach. As we research the writings and experiences of others and we include our own limited knowledge, we bring to life a picture in the form of words for others.

PART 2

Birth and Early Years of Jesus and John the Baptist

(1:5 - 2:52)

1:5 - *“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.”* Herod was deemed to have been one of the most wicked and degenerate tyrants ever to have sat upon a throne.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were both of the tribe of Levi. The Levites were the priests of the Old Testament, and Aaron was the first high priest. David later divided the duties of the priests into 24 courses. Each course served in the temple for two weeks and then they returned to their homes where, generally speaking, they were farmers.

Zacharias was a descendant of Abia (or Abijah), a descendant of Aaron who was the ancestral head of the *eighth* of the 24 groups (cf. 1 Chr. 24:10). It is significant in that the number eight is the number meaning new beginnings. Certainly the eighth course prefigured a time of new beginnings because their son John was to be the messenger of the New Testament era.

The name “Zecharias” means “the Lord remembers” (i.e. His covenant), while Elizabeth may be interpreted as “God is faithful to His oath.” Thus, we are given two important facts that help us understand and interpret this verse—God is fulfilling His oath to His people, and it is a time of new beginnings.

1:6 - *“And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”* This is a sterling commendation of the character of both Zacharias and Elizabeth. Their spirituality is even more

highlighted, due to the fact that they lived at a time of deep spiritual, moral, and political darkness in Israel.

Today, there is a tendency to excuse a person's conduct with the phrase—"Well, everyone is doing it." Remember, God always reserves for Himself a remnant in every generation who keep themselves unblemished from the world, much like the 7,000 in the days of Elijah that did not bow their knees to Baal (cf. 1 Ki. 19:18, Rom. 11:4). Let us seek to be one of those "seven thousand" in our generation.

1:7 - *"And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years."* Throughout Scripture when God was about to bring forth a mighty man of faith, the mother He chose was often a barren woman. Such examples are Sarah, who brought forth Isaac, the son of promise; Rebecca, mother of Jacob; Rachel, mother of Joseph; Ruth, the mother of Obed; Hannah, mother of Samuel; the wife of Manoah, who brought forth Samson; and Elizabeth, the mother of John.

This blessing of fruitfulness after barrenness is also a spiritual principle, since the prophet Isaiah declares: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD" (Isa. 54:1). Therefore, when the Lord intends to do some significant work of grace in our lives or in the Church, it is preceded by a time of great spiritual barrenness. Understanding this truth helps us not to despair when everything is so dry.

1:8 - *“And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest’s office before God in the order of his course...”* It is important to notice that when we are doing our God-appointed duties, whatever they may be, it is often at these times that the Lord meets with us. One pastor’s wife told me she always feels the Lord very near when she does her household chores. God met Moses when he was tending sheep (Ex. 3:1-2).

1:9 - *“According to the custom of the priest’s office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.”* This was the incense mentioned by Moses in Exodus 30:34. It was placed upon the altar of incense and it contained the following constituents: Stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense. These spices speak of the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Himself, and the interpretation would be as follows:

- 1. Stacte (or myrrh)**—speaks of His life of meekness.
- 2. Onycha**—represents the giving of His natural life and strength in prayer as was witnessed in the garden of Gethsemane where He sweat great drops of blood from His forehead.
- 3. Galbanum**—symbolises tears. Hebrews 5:7 says, “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from [out of] death, and was heard in that he [was pious].”
- 4. Frankincense**—typifies His faith that permeated His prayers, as it is written in Hebrews 11:6: “...Without faith it

is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

1:10 - *“And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.”* While not wishing to push this verse beyond its original intent, there is a very important truth that we must not neglect. There is throughout the Bible a sense that a leader cannot by himself accomplish his work without the help of others. The Apostle Paul acknowledged this when he penned 2 Corinthians 1:11: “Ye also helping together with us by prayer for us.” We need to have a band of prayer warriors surrounding and upholding us at all times; for no one lives to himself and no one is sufficient of himself for the task to which he is called.

1:11 - *“And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.”* During times of prayer God is present with us. I would like to recount a vision that the Lord gave me which I trust will be a blessing to you. I saw the Lord high and lifted up above the earth. Then upon the earth I saw His dear ones praying. When they mentioned His name in prayer, He came forth from Himself and stood by them (cf. Mt. 18:20). Christ is literally in our midst when we assemble together in His name. Let us be encouraged. Upon this occasion the Lord sent the archangel Gabriel of whom we will write in more detail later.

1:12 - *“And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.”* The prophet Daniel had exactly the same reaction when he saw an angel (Dan. 10:8-12), although this

is not always the effect that a manifestation of an angel has upon us, since the light of their presence is not always as great as these were to the prophet Daniel and to Zacharias.

1:13 - *“But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”* Angels are always so gracious and desirous of allaying our fears and putting us at ease, for they are in reality ministers sent forth from the throne of God to minister unto us who are the heirs of salvation (Heb.1:14).

It is not clear to some whether this prayer referred to by the angel is for the salvation of Israel or for a son. However, we take it as meaning the desire of the couple to have a son. This is also one of the rare occasions when a child is named prior to his birth. Other times are Josiah, king of Judah (1 Ki. 13:2); Cyrus, king of Persia (Isa. 44:28); and of course, the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:21).

1:14 - *“And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.”* Here now we have the promise of the expected messenger mentioned in Malachi 3:1: “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts” (cf. Mk.1:2, Mt. 11:10, Lk. 7:27; 1:76). There are actually two messengers in Malachi 3:1. The messenger who would prepare the way for the Lord Jesus was John the Baptist. The other messenger was the Lord Himself. He is the messenger of the new covenant.

The saying in Proverbs 13:12 is so true: “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.” Throughout their lives, these believers had pined for the manifestation of the power of God and the fulfilment of His promises in the holy Scriptures to visit His people. Now they would rejoice in the birth of this messenger of the Lord who would prepare the way of the Lord.

Think also of the Church universal today who are hoping against hope to see the manifestation of His glory in their midst. We believe it will surely come and we who have waited these many years will yet see the power and glory of our God in His church, for it shall be a glorious Church without spot or blemish manifesting His wisdom and power to the nations of this world.

1:15 - *“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.”* When we consider this phrase “he shall be great in the sight of the Lord,” we should also remember what the Lord Jesus Christ Himself said about John in Luke 7:28: “For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.” Thus, we see the true greatness of John, for he ranks with Moses, Elijah and all the notable prophets throughout that era of time.

We will later consider why John was so great in the eyes of the Lord. One reason for his greatness was that he kept the Nazarite vow throughout his whole life. Unlike Samson, who was unable to keep his vow, John was faithful to the end.

John was also filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. Therefore, he would have been constantly under the control of God, and his character would have been moulded by God all his life.

1:16 - *“And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.”* This verse shows us that John would be among those mentioned in Daniel 12:3: *“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”* Likewise, we also want to be diligent and turn many to the Lord, for he who wins souls is wise (Prov. 11:30).

1:17 - *“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

It is important to understand that the same mantle that was on Elijah was also upon John. However, John expressly denied that he was Elijah. Therefore, Elijah himself must still come in the future to fulfil the prophecy of Malachi 4:5-6: *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”*

John came in the power of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus. Preparation always starts at home—in family relationships. Now Zecharias questions the angel, but it was not with faith.

1:18 - *“And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.”* In his response to the appearance of the angel, the elderly priest did not speak with the faith of Abraham, who himself was old in years but strong in faith, giving glory to God (Rom. 4:19-21). For this reason the angel rebuked him.

1:19-20 - *“And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.”*

Gabriel’s statement that he “stands in the presence of God” indicates the dignity of his rank. One of the truths that the Lord showed me in a vision concerning angels was that He has not created them all equal. There are smaller angels who are responsible for the care of children, while others of greater stature and majesty are responsible for looking after nations.

Gabriel ranks with Michael in the realm of archangels. Lucifer also belonged to this realm, and he was responsible for leading the heavenly choirs in adulation of the Godhead before sin was found in him. Gabriel also was sent to Daniel on a number of occasions, as we read in chapters 8 and 9, when profound revelations were accorded that beloved man of God. Therefore, when Gabriel was sent to Zacharias, it was a singular honour for the priest, and he was rebuked when he did not receive his message with a heart filled with faith.

It is indeed a solemn situation not to have a heart filled with faith when God speaks. For this very reason the children of Israel failed to enter into the Promised Land. May we take heed and ensure that we have a heart like Abraham, who when God spoke to him in very similar circumstances as Zacharias, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God (Rom. 4:20). The judgment of Gabriel was that Zechariah should be dumb until the fulfilment of the words spoken to him.

1:21 - *“And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.”* This encounter with Gabriel must have taken a long period of time. When Zacharias did not appear, the people outside waiting became concerned. Having received this visitation, Zacharias may have been drained of his strength. Like many of us when we receive a heavenly vision, he may have been in awe and oblivious to time.

1:22 - *“And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.”* It was now obvious to all that the priest had received a visitation from God. His own life would have borne witness to the fact that he was worthy of such a visitation, and therefore the people were quick to believe that something supernatural had just taken place.

1:23 - *“And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.”* It is noteworthy that Zacharias did not abandon

his post in spite of the vision. He fulfilled the necessary days at Jerusalem, and then he departed to his own house. This is important for us to remember. When God visits us, we must continue to faithfully fulfil the ministry He has appointed to us.

1:24-25 - *“And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.”* Undoubtedly, the embarrassment of being pregnant at an advanced age would have contributed to her modesty. She “hid herself five months.”

Yet also a sense of thankfulness to God must have pervaded her soul. It is at times like these when God has fulfilled our *long time* desires, that we wish only to be alone with Him and away from the company of others who would not in any way understand our feelings and therefore dilute the sacredness of the event.

From the beginning of time, a woman who had no children was looked upon as being accursed of God. Also, a woman has a natural God-given desire to have children. Therefore, we see numerous Scriptural examples of barren women crying out to be fulfilled in life. Unfortunately, some take steps to have children out of the will of God, even as Sarah encouraged Abraham to take Hagar her maid and have a child by her. This has produced grief for the human race for millennia. Both Leah and Rachel gave Jacob their maids, to bear sons. However, one son in particular, Dan, became a thorn in the lives of his brethren throughout many generations. I have also

known of women who are not married, yet they will have children out of wedlock just to fulfil their desires, never thinking of the consequences.

The Visitation to the Virgin Mary

1:26-27 - *“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.”*

The geographic locality of this visitation needs to be understood. Galilee covers an area in Northern Israel which is roughly part of the inheritance of the tribe of Naphtali. It extends from Mount Carmel on the west to Samaria on the south, and from the river Jordan on the east to what is today the border of Israel and Lebanon. It was populated at the time of Jesus with peoples from many lands due to the exile of the Israelites at the time of the Assyrian conquest of northern Israel.

Also contributing to its population was the compulsory colonization of the area by peoples from other lands, as we read in 2 Kings 17:24: “And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.” The area was termed “Galilee of the nations” in Isaiah 9:1 because the inhabitants were from diverse nations. It was this mixed multitude of people who were in such spiritual darkness that were destined

to see the great Light of the world—the Lord Jesus Himself. It was in Galilee where most of Jesus’ miracles took place. However, the area was not favoured by the Jews because of this mixture. Even Nathanael said: “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (Jn.1:46). In the eyes of the orthodox Jews, this was perhaps one of the most unlikely places God could have chosen to rear the Messiah. Yet, for those whose spiritual eyes were opened, the region is mentioned in Isaiah 9:1-2.

“To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.” This, of course, is a confirmation of the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

1:28 - *“And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”* This greeting simply means that God is going to be gracious unto Mary and that she has been accepted by Him to bear His only begotten Son. It does not mean (as some declare) that she in herself is the source of favour or that she has the power to bestow favour upon others. There is a very distinct difference. She was only an instrument of the Lord. Man must not worship the instrument, but the Lord only.

1:29-30 - *“And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for*

thou hast found favour with God.” We must remember that Mary was only a teenager, and this visitation would certainly be perplexing to her. Yet again God gave gracious reassurance. We see here the repetition that as with Noah, Mary has “found grace in the sight of God” and will be singularly blessed by Him. Now Gabriel specifies the blessing.

1:31 - *“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.”* The reason for the selection of this name is given in Matthew 1:21: “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Jesus means “Saviour,” and in the Old Testament it is equivalent to Joshua, hence, the interchanging of these names in Hebrews 4:8.

1:32 - *“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.”* Gabriel announced that both John and Jesus would be great. In Greek, the word for great is “mega” which we associate with that which is exceedingly large and powerful. Thus, this word was selected to express the greatness of these two prophets.

Then Gabriel makes it clear that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God and that He is King David’s promised greater Son. Solomon was heir to David’s throne in that generation; therefore, Solomon was a type of David’s greatest Son. It is clear in Psalm 72 that David is looking beyond Solomon to his greatest Son—the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 72:1-2, 4-5 says, “Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son. He shall judge thy people

with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment...He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.”

We read in Psalm 72:7,8, 11,17: “In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth...Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him...His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall called him blessed.”

1:33 - *“And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”* Gabriel continues by citing the everlasting nature of Christ’s kingdom. This is the truth that is emphasised by the prophet Daniel: “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him (Dan. 7:27). We should note, however, that this will only happen after Christ’s Second Coming.

1:34-35 - *“Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of*

God.” Mary’s response is not an exclamation of unbelief as was Zacharias’, but rather one of perplexity. Not only was this conception an astounding theological event but, remember, it also involved a physical act that had no precedence in the history of mankind. There was no referral point for Mary upon which to relate. Gabriel now continues.

1:36-37 - *“And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.”* This is said to encourage Mary so she might realise that God was moving in the lives of others and especially one known to her, to whom the epithet “barren” had been given. Obviously, all the neighbours of Elizabeth had lost hope of her ever having a child.

Now comes the triumphant declaration with respect to the power of our God. *“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”* How often do we have to be reminded by the prophets of the wonder and greatness of our God, even as we read in Jeremiah 32:27: “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?” The Lord Himself quoted almost verbatim these words of Gabriel to His disciples: “But with God all things are possible” (Mt. 19:26). Therefore, let this same faith of God be also in our hearts, so that when God chooses to make us a promise we will reply even as Mary did.

1:38 - *“And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”* This was not just a declaration of faith in God’s omnipotent power, but also a holy acceptance of the shame

that she would be required to bear for the rest of her life. Indeed it was one of the jibes thrown tauntingly by the scribes and Pharisees at Jesus some 30 years later: “We be not born of fornication” (Jn. 8:41).

1:39-40 - *“And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.”* Mary now went to the only ones who could understand her for they too had known the visitation of that same archangel. How blessed it is in our spiritual experience to find someone of like mind with whom we can receive comfort and solace along life’s journey from earth to heaven.

This was quite a trip in those days, especially for a young woman in the first stages of pregnancy. She had come from Galilee to the hills of Judah, which were on the east of Jerusalem. After a two to three day journey by foot, she entered the house of her cousin. The age difference must have been considerable. Elizabeth would have been at least 50 years old, while Mary was a mere teenager. Now we see the confirming actions of the Holy Spirit to the state of these two women.

1:41-43 - *“And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. 42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”*

It must have been a glorious moment for the three of them as Elizabeth began to prophesy. The Lord was now speaking prophetically to Mary through her own cousin. God's desire was to encourage Mary that she was truly blessed of God. His purpose was to dispel those fears and doubts that we all are prone to have, even when the Lord has so singularly visited us. We all need to be comforted, and both Elizabeth and Mary were being tremendously strengthened through the gift of prophecy. My, did Elizabeth speak with boldness!

Now for the first time, in verse 43, there is a direct *confirmation* of the fact that in her womb she carries the Son of God. This was something Mary could not have shared with another soul, for who would have believed her? In fact, we are told in Luke 2:19 that Mary "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." She would have faced much ridicule from all her acquaintances and probably she would have been charged with lying, blasphemy and fantasy, and her condition would have been spoken of far and wide. Elizabeth now continues with joy recounting to Mary her own experience.

1:44 - *"For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy."* Even while in the womb, John the Baptist is knitted in the Spirit with Jesus, the One whom he will present to all Israel. In verse 45, we have a dogma that we would all do well to take note of and understand.

1:45 - *"And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the*

Lord.” This truth applies to all of us. It is a principle of the life of faith that even when God has made us a promise, the fulfilment of that promise is based upon our receiving it with a heart of faith (cf. Heb. 4:2).

The Magnificat **1:46-55**

1:46-47 - “*And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*” This is one of the most beautiful of the prophetic songs in the Word of God. It is comparable to the song sung by Hannah upon the birth of her son Samuel as she was dedicating him to the service of the Lord. Let’s have a brief look at introduction of Hannah’s song.

“And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God” (1 Sam. 2:1-2). It is this attitude of magnifying the Lord with our voice that is most pleasing unto our God.

Upon every occasion we should seek to exalt Him and lift Him up on high. In doing so we are acknowledging that there is no God but our Lord.

“*And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*” When we rejoice in the Lord He is glorified. As we rejoice, we are saying that it is such a privilege to be a subject of His kingdom.

1:48 - *“For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”* Now Mary contemplates in song the blessing that the Lord has bestowed upon her. First she considers her position in life as a little maid from the despised town of Nazareth, and yet she realises that all women will one day regard her as the most blessed among their gender. Her name will forever be revered. This is also a promise given prophetically to the Lord in Psalm 45:17: “I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.” It is a promise as well to His choicest servants who wholeheartedly worship Him and are faithful to Him.

1:49 - *“For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.”* Now she contrasts His greatness with her own insignificance, concluding with the declaration that He is holy. This is added because of the fact that He does all things according to the holiness of His will, meaning that there is no partiality or shadow of turning with Him, but that all is done in the light of His countenance. All of His actions and decisions regarding His creatures are absolutely right and with the purest of motives.

1:50 - *“And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.”* Now Mary invokes that aspect of the nature of God that He so delights to manifest—the aspect of *mercy*. God introduced Himself to Moses with these awesome words: “The LORD, The LORD God, *merciful* and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Ex. 34:6). God is a God of mercy. As the Lord Himself said, “I will have

mercy.” But His mercy is selective, “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Rom. 9:15). To whom then does He condescend to show forth His mercy? It is always to those that have a reverential fear and walk softly before Him (cf. Ps. 103:11, 1 Ki. 21:27-29).

Another point is this—that same mercy which we receive from God can be passed on to our offspring, even as it was in the case of King David. God showed mercy unto many of his future generations because David could sing of the mercy of the Lord that God had shown toward him.

Let us also seek to be those who rejoice in his mercy so that our children for many generations might know the mercy of the Lord, as we have been recipients of His mercy in our own lives. It is a wonderful privilege to leave such an inheritance to our children.

1:51 - *“He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.”* Mary is contemplating a truth that is found throughout the whole of Scripture; God resists the proud and shows grace to the humble. He removes the proud who seek to rise up against God and scatters them to the four winds by His mighty arm and outstretched hand.

1:52 - *“He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.”* Those who occupy the lofty positions upon earth and exalt themselves against the plans of God will be removed. We might well think of such giants as Goliath, who withstood the armies of Israel, yet was felled by one stone from

the sling of a shepherd boy. There were women who were demoted too. Hagar was cast out because her son Ishmael mocked Isaac, the son of promise. Jezebel was cast out of a window by her servants, and Vashti lost her throne because of pride.

1:53 - *“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.”* This is a principle of the kingdom of God and it is spelled out for us in Matthew 5:6 when Christ taught: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” This could be contrasted with the lofty attitude of the Laodicean church in Revelation who thought they had reached the apex of spirituality. However, the Lord’s assessment of them was quite different.

While they considered themselves to be “rich, and increased with goods, and having need of nothing”, the Lord saw them as being “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17). This truth can also be illustrated in the lives of the twins, Esau and Jacob. Esau despised his birthright, while Jacob coveted it. Esau had this world’s goods, but Jacob received eternal blessings and became a prince with God.

1:54-55 - *“He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy. As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.”* Thus, Jacob (or Israel) was eternally remembered by God, but of Esau it is written that they are the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever (Mal. 1:4). When the Lord returns at His Second Advent, then He will deliver Jacob but will execute His fierce wrath upon Esau. “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this

that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save” (Isa. 63:1).

We read in Isaiah 63:6, “And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.” Isaiah 34:6 says, “The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.”

Isaiah 34:9-10 continues the description of its destruction: “And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.”

“As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.” Thus, the Lord will honour all His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He will give them all the land of Canaan for their inheritance, and many other blessings, but this will happen at the time of His Second Coming.

1:56 - *“And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.”* In view of the large number of people that would have gathered for the miraculous birth of John, Mary naturally would not have desired to be exposed to ridicule or shame, and she would not have wanted to detract from the blessed event.

The Birth of John the Baptist

1:57 - *“Now Elisabeth’s full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.”* There is such joy when in the fullness of God’s time He brings forth His promises. In this case it was a child, but for us when that which He has promised comes at its appointed time, what joy we experience!

1:58 - *“And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.”* It is a sign of spiritual maturity when people can rejoice in the blessing that others have received from the Lord. It fulfils the commandment of Romans 12:15: “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” This is also the keeping of the golden rule which says: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt. 7:12).

1:59 - *“And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.”* There is a great emphasis upon the fact that the law is jealously guarded and the commandment of Leviticus 12:3 heeded: “And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.”

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The rite of circumcision was instituted in Genesis 17:10-12: “This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.”

The act of circumcision was the physical act of cutting away of the flesh with which one was born. However, it has a more important spiritual connotation. The Apostle Paul writes, “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:28-29).

Therefore the Lord prefigured the *spiritual* meaning of circumcision in the Old Testament, saying: “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deut. 30:6). Physical circumcision represents a spiritual work done in our hearts by the Sword of God, His Word. It is to cut away the flesh, those sinful traits of the fallen nature with which we were born.

Now returning to our text, the neighbours wanted the baby to continue the father’s name, Zacharias. This was a common

practice, as was also the custom of having the neighbours choose the name of the baby.

1:60-61 - *“And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.”* The normal method of choosing names was to honour the relatives of the child by naming him after a relative—hence, the suggestion that he be named after his father. Elizabeth said, “No.” This, of course, was in obedience to the command of the archangel Gabriel to name the child John.

1:62 - *“And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.”* Remembering that the father was unable to speak, they sought to communicate with him the best that they could. But Zacharias, understanding their question, signalled that they should bring him a writing tablet which would have been a flat piece of wood covered with a film of wax whereupon he would have written the words with a sharp pointed instrument.

1:63 - *“And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.”* There is a very firm affirmation of the words of Gabriel here. He did not write, “We have decided to call his name John”, but he wrote a declaration of a fact, “His name *is* John.” This child had already been named of God.

John means “grace.” This messenger of the Lord who was to prepare the way of the Lord was to signify by his name the graciousness of God’s visitation to His people. Also, John was announcing the Gospel of grace.

1:64 - *“And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.”* Obedience brings deliverance, as illustrated in this verse. In unbelief, Zacharias had challenged Gabriel’s message and was struck with dumbness. Now through his obedience his tongue was loosed and his mouth filled with praise.

1:65 - *“And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.”* This was a miracle of God, and all who witnessed it and heard of it were overcome by awe at the manifestation of the power of God. This truly is the effect of God’s visitations to us personally.

1:66 - *“And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.”* These extraordinary signs created much suspense and speculation among all the inhabitants of the area as to who John would be. We should take note that this thing was not done in secret, but *many* witnessed this miracle that had been granted to Zacharias.

1:67-68 - *“And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.”* Here again we see another divine intervention of the Holy Spirit, as with Elizabeth and Mary, to confirm these very notable events that are now taking place in the annals of the history of Israel. As it is written, “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

Then Zacharias begins his prophetic utterance in verse 68, *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people...”* He is referring to the long awaited visitation of God to His people Israel—the coming of the blessed Messiah. Redemption from the yoke of Rome and all other foreign powers was what Israel believed her beloved Messiah would bring them. However, there was something far greater than a national and political freedom that God had in mind by sending His Son—and that is redeeming us from our sins and all of the bondages of the fall.

1:69 - *“And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.”* This “horn of salvation” that was to be the Saviour of mankind, descended from King David.

1:70 - *“As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.”* There are numerous Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, some of which we have already mentioned relative to the coming of Christ to Israel. The Lord Himself referred to these prophetic words in Luke 24:25: *“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”* Luke 24:44 reads, *“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”*

1:71 - *“That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us.”* Undoubtedly, the word oppression or persecution could sum up the history of the

children of Israel, since their enemies were constantly around them and attacking them throughout all generations. The fervent desire of all Israelites is for peace. Even to this very day in which we are living there is turmoil in the land of Israel, and there is also a desire on the part of many to have peace at any price. Yet this salvation, which is military in nature, will only be achieved when the Prince of Peace comes in the clouds of the sky and tramples Israel's enemies under His feet.

1:72 - *“To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant.”* The “holy covenant” is that which the Lord made with Abraham in Genesis 15:18: “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” In the covenant, God gave Abraham the land of Canaan, but it involved much more than land. It involved the eternal redemption that would be accomplished in that land, not only for Abraham's descendants, but for all the nations. This mercy, the promises, and the holy covenant, were then passed on to Isaac and Jacob.

1:73 - *“The oath which he sware to our father Abraham...”* This oath is given in Genesis 22:16 after Abraham was willing to offer his son Isaac upon the altar: “...By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.”

1:74-75 - *“That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.”* The overriding thought that prevails in the Jewish mind and literature is freedom from their enemies, and that thought surfaces once again in this prophecy. King David says in Psalm 120:7, “I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.”

“In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.” The nation of Israel will experience righteousness and holiness when Christ comes again. They will be delivered from all their enemies and serve the Lord their God in righteousness and holiness. This is the stated end purpose of the 70 weeks determined upon Israel as mentioned in Daniel 9:24. After the great tribulation, Israel will be ready to receive her King. His name is *The Lord our Righteousness*.

Since Israel rejected Christ and His new covenant, they have no power to become righteous or holy, although a remnant of Jews are believers (Rom. 11:1-7) and have received all the blessings of the new covenant. Only when Jesus comes the second time will Israel become a godly nation. However, because of Christ, the Church has the power to become righteous and holy. The Lord longs for His people to serve him in righteousness and holiness.

1:76 - *“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.”* In olden times a king had to have one who went before him announcing his coming. This indeed was the

ministry of John, who had the unique privilege of going before the King of kings, preparing the hearts of the people through repentance to receive the King of Israel. John's ministry to prepare the people for the Lord had been prophesied by Isaiah: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isa. 40:3).

1:77 - "*To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.*" Here we have the present purpose of the first coming of the Lord—He was to be the Saviour of mankind. Deliverance from political oppression would wait until His Second Coming.

1:78-79 - "*Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us. To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*" It is in the infinite mercies of God that He has not left us to perish in our sins a punishment which we so richly merit. Instead, He has sent His Son to die for us and to save us from our sins. He has visited us because of His tender mercy.

In this passage Jesus is referred to as "the dayspring," which means *dawn* or *a rising of light*. Zacharias develops this theme by saying: "*To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*" This is a quotation from Isaiah 9:2: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (See Isaiah 9:1-2.) Those in particular who lived in the land

of Galilee would see the Light of the world. It was in Galilee also where Christ performed the majority of His miracles.

1:80 - *“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.”* From an early age John was in the deserts of Judah near where his parents lived. He grew strong in the Lord and was there until the appointed time when he would be manifested unto the nation of Israel. It is noteworthy that both John and Jesus spent the majority of their lives in preparation for their ministry.

Therefore, we should not chafe if God calls us to times of being on the shelf or in His school, hidden from active ministry. We must not think that our lives are being wasted—far from it! These times are of the utmost importance since they will determine whether or not we have properly learned our lessons. It is during the hidden times of preparation that we are being qualified to be used of God and are being enabled to hit His mark for our lives.

CHAPTER 2

2:1 - *“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.”* According to the historian Suetonius, this man called Caesar was, in fact, called Octavius or Octavian until 27 B.C., when he was named Augustus by the senate at Rome. He was born on the 23rd of September 63 B.C. at the country mansion of his grandfather near Veltrae in the Palatine District. He was named heir to the throne by Julius Caesar, and governed

the empire upon the assassination of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March (15th March). He governed first with Anthony for 12 years, and then alone for another 44 years until his death at 3 p.m. on the 19th of August, A.D. 14.

In 35 days he would have attained the age of 76. He was an able administrator who enabled the spread of Christianity through his *Pax Romana* that allowed freedom of travel throughout the Empire. Personally, he was an effeminate homosexual and an inveterate adulterer, as well as a very cruel man who showed no mercy to his captors. It was he who ruled at the time of the birth of Jesus.

2:2 - “*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*” This was the first of two taxations recorded in the New Testament. The other was in A.D. 6, as mentioned in Acts 5:37: “After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.”

Cyrenius was twice governor of Syria. He first held office sometime in the first decade B.C. and the second time from A.D. 6-9. When Caesar announced the taxation, it was when Cyrenius was governor of Syria the first time, approximately in 5 B.C.

2:3 - “*And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.*” The decree that he made concerning the taxation of all in the empire, however, did take note of Jewish sensibilities and permitted them to go to their hometown.

This was in accordance with the manner of Augustus who gave considerations to customs of subjugated nations, especially for the nation of Israel who was directly ruled by Herod.

2:4 - *“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)”* The significant factors surrounding the birth of our Saviour should not be missed. The town of Bethlehem, meaning “the House of Bread,” was a fitting birthplace for the One who is “The Bread of Life.” Furthermore, being the original city where David was born, Bethlehem clearly identified Jesus as the greater Son of David.

2:5 - *“To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.”* Joseph took Mary on this journey because in the Jewish law, although they had not yet come together, espousals (or engagement) meant that they were considered a married couple whose status could only be broken by an act of divorce.

In Jewish custom, a man and woman were called husband and wife even during their engagement. See Matthew 1:18-19 where this truth is verified.

2:6 - *“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.”* The timing of God is always perfect. In this case, the decree of the Roman Emperor fulfilled the purposes of God in the selection of the birthplace of our Saviour. How wonderful it is to realise that everyone in heaven and on earth is utilised to accomplish the

will of the Father, yet some are totally unaware of the part they are playing.

Submission by Joseph and Mary to the decrees of the authorities helped bring forth the perfect will of God in the birth of Jesus. It is a lesson that we do well to take to heart, for the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 13:1: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” In obedience to the decrees of governments, the hand of God guides His people, except of course when those decrees are directly opposite to the Holy Scriptures.

In such cases, Christians are expected to be led by their consciences as was the prophet Daniel. “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Dan. 6:10).

2:7 - *“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”* The birth of Jesus took place in the most humble of places. A manger was a stall coming off a common courtyard. The innkeeper would have provided nothing except perhaps some hay and fodder for the animals.

How different from the ivory palaces of heaven’s glory to which He was accustomed. However, He had emptied Himself of all His divinity and privileges and become a son

of Adam by virtue of the fact that He had taken upon Himself our humanity.

2:8 - *“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.”* It is a fact of life that so many of God’s people have divine appointments with God when they are faithfully performing their everyday duties. So it was in the case with these shepherds who were faithfully watching over their sheep, and so it was with Moses (Ex. 3:1-2).

2:9 - *“And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.”* The reason for the annunciation to the shepherds was because the Lord Himself was the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:11) and “Chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4).

2:10 - *“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”* Notice the typical greeting of those from heaven to us poor creatures here below—“Fear not.” This was the manner in which Gabriel greeted both Zacharias and Mary. After the “fear not”, the angel announces good news. That is exactly what the word “Gospel” means—good news. In fact, it is a message of “great joy.”

The gospel message is always a message of great joy. Men and women have searched for and desired from the beginning of time to have the way of salvation revealed to them. Yet it was not until the fullness of time appointed by the Father that the Christ, born of a virgin, was sent to this earth, even as

King Solomon declared that there is a time to every purpose under heaven (Eccl. 3:1).

2:11 - *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”* So on the very day of His birth, the annunciation was made to these simple shepherds in the field just adjacent to Bethlehem on the east side of the city. By tradition, it is thought to be the field of Boaz. It is also thought that from this field the temple lambs were taken.

How appropriate it was that these who supplied the lambs for the temple sacrifices would be met by the angels. These shepherds were to see the One who was the fulfilment of all the sacrificial types—the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

2:12 - *“And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”* Evidently there were not many mangers attached to an inn in Bethlehem, and obviously only one that would contain a newborn babe.

2:13 - *“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying...”* Now a heavenly choir appears on the scene, singing in unison their praises unto God for His goodness unto the sons of man.

2:14 - *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”* All that is done in heaven and on earth is done with the express purpose of giving glory to God. The result of the birth of the Saviour is to bring peace between

God and Man and to break down that middle wall of partition that our sins have erected between us and God. The word “peace” literally means *unity*.

Religion means “the binding together again of that which was once joined and has been torn asunder.” It is from the goodness of His heart that the Father has given His Son to die for our sins that we by His blood might be reconciled unto the Father again. The plan of salvation originated with the Father and came from His great heart of love.

2:15 - “*And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.*” After the heavenly visitation, the shepherds then went to see that of which the angels had spoken. They did not just stand there and praise God for His message.

They acted upon the message and went into Bethlehem to see what was taking place there. Although this may seem very natural, many do not *act upon* what God has told them to do. Therefore, they miss God’s manifold purposes for their lives.

2:16 - “*And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.*” The shepherds came with haste. It is written that “the king’s business requires haste,” as David said to Ahimelech (1 Sam. 21:8). When the Lord speaks to us to do something, we must be like Abraham who rose up early and attended to it. We cannot be negligent or slow to respond to the work of the Lord. If we are not

diligent, we could lose much of our harvest. When it is harvest time, we have to move swiftly.

2:17 - *“And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.”* As we have previously noted, the birth of John the Baptist was not hidden, but was known by all the neighbours. Likewise, the birth of Jesus was thoroughly broadcast from the housetops for all to hear.

2:18 - *“And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”* Though others were told, only the initiated really understood what was truly happening here. So many people hear the truth, but few really grasp it because they are not in tune with the Holy Spirit. Their hearts are somewhere else.

2:19 - *“But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”* Mary, being at the centre of all these wonderful events, strengthened her faith by meditating upon all these things in her heart. Meditation is an excellent spiritual exercise for all of us to practice. We should constantly remember and rehearse all the things that the Lord has spoken to us, as well as the promises that He has made to us.

2:20 - *“And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”* What a wonder it is to be visited by God like these dear shepherds. It brings forth praise from the deepest parts of our being. As we live our lives in the light of these experiences that God grants us, how refreshing it is when

bringing them to our remembrance. It causes us to give praise unto Him. Praise purifies us from murmuring and unbelief. It increases our faith and opens the way for God to bless us with fresh gifts from above. Let us always be a praising and a rejoicing people. Then, too, we shall become victorious in every aspect of our lives.

2:21 - *“And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.”* It is noteworthy that, as with John, the parents of Jesus were careful to keep the law concerning circumcision, so that Jesus was also physically bearing in His flesh the token of the Abrahamic covenant. A child was officially named at the time of circumcision.

2:22 - *“And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.”* This law was given in Leviticus 12:2-4: *“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.”*

2:23 - *“(As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)* This

is according to Numbers 3:13: "...All the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD."

The firstborn were privileged to receive *a double portion* of all the goods and possessions of the father (cf. Deut. 21:17). The Church is called "the Church of the firstborn" (Heb.12:23). Therefore, the Church will inherit the greater works spoken of by the Lord in John 14:12.

2:24 - "*And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.*" This law is recorded for us in Leviticus 12:6-8: "And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest: Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female. And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean."

The fact that they could only offer turtledoves or pigeons proves that Joseph and Mary were very poor, for they could not afford to offer up a lamb. Thus, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, though coming from heaven's glory, condescended to the abject poverty of the carpenter's family.

This would have been the forty-first day after the birth of our Saviour. Now we have the temple prophecies given by Anna and Simeon.

The Temple Prophecies

2:25 - *“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.”* Isaiah 53:2 declared that Jesus would be “a root out of a dry ground.” Jesus would grow up in a land that was spiritually barren and backslidden. In spite of this fact, there were those Jews who were pious and devout.

Such a one was Simeon, a just man anointed with the Holy Spirit. He was among those whom we call the remnant of the faithful. Simeon waited for the promised Messiah among a generation of scoffers whose attitude was, “where is the promise of His coming?”

2:26 - *“And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”* Unlike many who obtained a good report but died in faith not having received the promise (Heb.11:39), Simeon was among the privileged few who *did* see the Son of God incarnate.

2:27 - *“And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law...”* Three ceremonies were accomplished by now.

1. Circumcision - This was fulfilled on the eighth day of his life and caused Him to enter into the covenant of God which He had made to Abraham.

2. The Redemption of the First Born - This was in accordance with Numbers 3:13; 18:15-16 - “Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.”

3. The Purification After Childbirth - This we have already mentioned. It is recorded in Leviticus 12:6-8 and was required for a woman giving birth to a male child.

2:28 - *“Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said...”* What a privilege for Simeon to hold by the grace and predeterminate will of God, the One whom all heaven adores. However, we have an even greater blessing than this, as Paul says— “Christ in you the hope of glory.” We do not just hold the child, but we have Him living within our very hearts.

Simeon, whose name means “hearing,” was a just, devout and pious man. With the Holy Child in His arms, he delivered what is called the Nunc Dimittis. This comes from the first two words of the Latin Vulgate translation meaning “Now

Dismiss.” The *Nunc Dimittis* is one of the great and precious hymns of the Church.

2:29 - “*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word.*” Because of its implications of fulfilment (peace and rest), the Early Church thought it appropriate to be sung at the end of the day. Therefore, since the 4th century A.D. it has been used in evening worship services as Compline, Vespers, and Evensong.

Realising that now the promises of God for his life were fulfilled, Simeon desires but one thing—to go to his heavenly resting place.

2:30 - “*For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*” What a glorious declaration of faith. Hopefully each us can also look at Christ with the eyes of our understanding and declare that we have seen His “so great salvation.”

2:31 - “*Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.*” Now Simeon begins to prophesy the greater ministry of Christ, which goes far beyond the narrow borders and confines of the nation of Israel unto the ends of the earth. Therefore, Simeon continues ...

2:32 - “*A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*” This is a quotation in part from Isaiah 49:6 and also from Isaiah 46:13: “I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.” Christ, of course, is that salvation that brings glory to Israel.

2:33 - *“And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.”* After the visitations of Gabriel, the angels, and the shepherds, Joseph and Mary stood in wonderment of the whole situation. Is it not the same with us when God speaks to us concerning His plans and purposes for our own lives? Are we not also, in spite of numerous confirmations, almost speechless and in awe by *His goodness* towards us? (cf. 2 Sam. 7:18-22).

2:34 - *“And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.”* In the first instance, Jesus being rejected by Israel would mean that Israel would be diminished and cease to be a nation, a fact that occurred in A.D. 70.

Yet at His second coming, Israel will rise again having passed through the Great Tribulation of Jacob’s trouble wherein they shall have been purified of their ungodliness (Jer. 30:7-9, Rom. 11:26). The Lord Jesus Himself, however, is a sign that shall be spoken against throughout all the generations of the Church Age until His Second Coming. Then all shall bow the knee at the mention of His Wonderful Name.

2:35 - *“(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”* This prophecy refers primarily to the fact that at the crucifixion, the heart of Mary would be pierced as by a sword. Also, at the crucifixion, the real thoughts of many hearts would be revealed as to whether they were true believers or not. Whenever there is a Scriptural experience, however, there is also a corresponding

one for us as individual believers. When my dear wife went through a horrendous heart surgery, I experienced a sword entering my own heart. The pain was phenomenal. After that experience my spiritual eyes were opened and it was as though I could read the hearts of those who came to me. I could see beyond the veneer of people's words. I could see the sorrow of their souls, and I could feel their burdens.

In concluding this account of the prophecy of Simeon, we should mention that the reason for his visit to Jesus was due to the fact that he himself was a just man, and therefore a type of Jesus, whose title is—the Lord Our Righteousness. The shepherds visited the Chief Shepherd. Anna, a prophetess, was also drawn to the Prophet of all prophets.

2:36 - *“And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity.”*

Anna, a prophetess, served as a type of the prophet of whom Moses spoke in Deuteronomy 18:18: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”

Anna was of the tribe of Asher. Moses prophesied of Asher in Deuteronomy 33:24: “Let him dip his foot in oil,” speaking spiritually of the anointing. So here in a sense through Anna there is a fulfilment of that prophecy of Moses for that tribe. It is striking in the Holy Scriptures that when mentioning married couples, sometimes the partner is not named, as was

the case of Manoah's wife and some of the wives of the prophets, while others are noted and named. Samuel's wife is unnamed, but the wife of Isaiah is named, and she is called a prophetess.

This gives us an understanding of eternal judgment. It is not sufficient to be married to a partner of high repute. We ourselves individually have to qualify. I remember a certain godly Canadian pastor who had an experience of appearing before the judgment seat of Christ. He was all alone, and one of the terrifying aspects was that his wife and dear companion was not there with him. This brings out the reality of eternal judgment.

We must give an account of our own lives. We cannot be protected or sheltered by our loved ones. It is as God says through the prophet: "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in [the land], they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezek 14:14).

"Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves" (Ezek 14:18). It is an awesome truth that our eternal position is not dependent upon our wife or husband, father or mother, but only upon our own spiritual standing with God.

Hence, although she herself was a prophetess, Anna's husband is not mentioned by name as being worthy to receive the honour of Psalm 45:17: "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations."

2:37 - *“And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.”* At a great age, this dear saint of God was still faithfully ministering to the Lord.

A point that we must not forget is that saints and ministers do not retire, but rather we remain in the harness until death releases us to higher responsibilities in heaven above.

2:38 - *“And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”* We see again that this thing was not done in secret. God gave many infallible signs to Israel that Jesus was indeed the promised Redeemer.

2:39 - *“And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.”* There is an emphasis in this temple visit on the part of St. Luke that the law was always strictly adhered to by the parents of Jesus. This will be the theme of Jesus Himself as He said in Matthew 5:17: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” After all, the new covenant that Jesus would later usher in through His own blood was for the purpose of writing the law of God upon the fleshly tables of our hearts.

2:40 - *“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.”* These are several pleasant virtues any parent would wish to see in the development of their children:

1. *He grew*—healthy physical growth is a great blessing from the Lord.

2. *Waxed strong in spirit*—signifying a strong and alert mind and a very healthy outlook upon life.

3. *Filled with wisdom*—which is the principal thing in life. Wisdom is that ability to make sound choices and judgments.

4. *The grace of God was upon Him*—which meant that He enjoyed the favour of the Father.

How beautiful it is when parents realise that their child is finding favour with God.

The Passover of Our Saviour's Twelfth Year

2:41 - “*Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.*” Again we see in Joseph and Mary the sense of scrupulous adherence to the law, which required coming to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate the major feasts: “Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty” (Deut. 16:16).

2:42 - “*And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.*” When a boy had attained the age of 12 he became a man and was called a “son

of the law.” He then was obliged to take upon himself all the requirements of the law.

2:43 - *“And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.”* To explain how Jesus was missed by his parents we have to understand that the custom was for the parties to travel in two groups—the women with the younger children, who would travel more slowly, departed first and then the men later on. Thus, Joseph could have well thought that Jesus would have been with Mary and vice versa. It was not until the two companies were united at the end of the day that they realised Jesus was missing.

2:44 - *“But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.”* Since relatives and friends traveled together on this joyous occasion, it would not have been unusual for the children to have been with their childhood friends, as this was a great social occasion as well.

2:45-46 - *“And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.”* It is a point of interest that the future King of Israel would be found in His capital city, instructing His subjects.

If we believe that all Scripture is inspired by God, then even the events in this record of the finding of Jesus must have spiritual significance. “After three days” has poignant truth in

the life of our Lord. He was resurrected after having been in the tomb three days and three nights. It was then that He became the teacher and Light to the world. It is also significant that they found Him in the temple. Christ will also dwell in the temple of Ezekiel, which will be built after His second coming.

2:47 - *“And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.”* The divine order by which the Father formed His beloved Son to become the Saviour of the world is of prime importance to us. This is most clearly revealed in Isaiah 49:1-3:

“Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” In these passages of Isaiah, we see that Christ is likened to an arrow. First, the Father planted His Son as a seed in the womb of Mary. Then, while still in the womb, the Father called Him by Name—Jesus. Coming from heaven, Christ declared to the Father, “A body hast Thou prepared Me” (Heb. 10:5).

As the child Jesus grew, the Father prepared His mouth to be like a sharp sword (Heb. 4:12). He filled His mouth with the Word of God. Revelation 1:16 says, “Out of His mouth went a two-edged sword.” The knowledge and understanding that was imparted to Jesus was so amazing that by the time that He was 12 years of age He confounded the doctors of the law.

However, He had to learn obedience by the things He suffered in order to be that polished shaft in the quiver of God that would hit the mark for His life—that mark was the cross. Therefore, unlike some “child wonder” preachers who are exploited by their parents and thrust too quickly into the fray, Jesus was hidden the next 18 years of His life.

2:48 - *“And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.”* Not only were the parents astonished at the amazing prophecies of Simeon and Anna, they were equally amazed at the extraordinary abilities evidenced in the life of young Jesus. Yet they did not understand His behaviour in not announcing His intentions to them.

2:49 - *“And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.”* Jesus clearly understood at age 12 that He was the Son of God and that His Heavenly Father’s business took priority over that of His earthly parents. The eyes of their understanding not being enlightened, the parents could not comprehend what He was saying. It is so important that we learn something from this. At all times we should ask God to interpret for us what He most graciously is saying to us, either by the spirit of prophecy, the quickened Word, or something He is saying directly to our hearts.

2:51 - *“And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.”* Again Luke focuses upon the

adherence to the law, this time to the fifth commandment: “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee”(Ex. 20:12). In this holy submission, we are told that the Lord learned obedience by the things that He suffered. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:8).

This was the time (as we mentioned in Isaiah 49:2) that the Lord was hid in the shadow of His Heavenly Father’s hand. There is no record of those sufferings He underwent during those formative years in Nazareth to perfect the Captain of our salvation (cf. Heb. 2:10). Our historian simply states:

2:52 - *“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”* How often is wisdom associated with our Saviour! Therefore, we should cry to the Lord for this wonderful virtue, since James 1:5 beckons: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” The word “stature” in this verse has the connotation of growing in years. Thus Jesus would have had the height and physical growth appropriate to His age.

He had “favour with God.” Later His Father would say with such pleasure, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus also grew in favour “with man.” Proverbs 16:7 says: “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

PART 3

Beginning of Christ's Public Ministry

(3:1 - 4:13)

CHAPTER 3

3:1 - *“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene...”* Here Luke in his usual meticulous style and attention to detail delineates for us the precise time at which John commenced his public ministry. It was in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, the Roman Emperor who succeeded Octavius Augustus. This would have been A.D. 26 since Tiberius was co-ruler with Augustus in A.D. 11.

Pontius Pilate was governor A.D. 26-36. Herod Antipas was Tetrarch of Galilee 4 B.C. – A.D. 39. Philip was Tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis 4 B.C. – A.D. 34. Lysanias was Tetrarch of Abilene (sometimes called “the younger” since a more famous one reigned over Abilene about 36 B.C.) However, the exact years of his governorship are not available.

3:2 - *“Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”* The two high priests mentioned here were related, Annas being the father-in-law of Caiaphas. Although Annas was the sole high priest from A.D. 6-15, he was removed from his post by Valerius Gratus, the Roman Governor, and Caiaphas was appointed in his place. However, Annas still exercised some high priestly authority; hence, Luke uses the plural term high priests rather than that of the singular form.

It was one of the darkest times in the history of the world. Tiberius, the emperor, was one of the vilest and cruellest of all men. The Herodian family who governed Palestine were described as “Men who sat upon the thrones of blood” by the Jewish historian Josephus (A.D. 37-100). Annas the high priest was corrupt and impious, and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was a close ally. Together they degraded the temple worship and offerings.

Into this spiritual wilderness of religious and political confusion, the Word of the Lord came to John, who was in the literal wilderness of Judaea. How often historically this has been repeated. In England many years ago there were signs outside taverns that read: “*Get drunk for one penny. Get dead drunk for two pennies.*” However, it was into such a spiritual climate that the Lord called John Wesley and brought about the Methodist Revival that literally swept the world of that time.

3:3 - “*And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*”

The message of John was that of repentance, which needs to be thoroughly understood by each Christian. Repentance literally means to stop, turn around, and go in the opposite direction. Therefore, someone who is walking in sinful ways will turn around and walk in the pathway of righteousness, away from his sins.

To signify their change of heart and willingness to turn from their sins, those listening to John entered into the waters of baptism to cleanse themselves of those wicked ways. Before

we continue, should you ask the Lord if there is anything in your life that may displease Him, anything for which you need to repent?

3:4 - *“As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”* John was the prophet that fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3: John was the voice of the Lord thundering forth out of the wilderness of Judaea by the Jordan River. John baptised in Jordan because there was much water there, and he baptised the repentant ones.

He was the one designated to go before the King of Kings, for no king came unless His messenger had gone ahead of him and prepared the people. Thus, John was sent to prepare the people of the chosen nation, through repentance, for the message of their King.

3:5 - *“Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth.”* Spiritually speaking, valleys signify deficiencies in our characters, while mountains and hills represent those lofty areas in our lives where pride and rebellion dwell. It requires divine revelation in order to recognise these things, and then grace to deal with them.

Crooked areas represent the lack of uprightness in our dealings, either with God or our fellowman. Rough ways speak of the lack of social graces, common courtesies of life, our

manner of speech, as well as the lack of gentleness and kindness in our manner of addressing others.

3:6 - *“And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”* Here in the person of Jesus Himself all people would see the Saviour of mankind.

3:7 - *“Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptised of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”* It was not uncommon to have sudden fires in the wilderness. When these fires would break out, vipers would come out of their hiding places. Thus, John likens this multitude to vipers who were streaming out of the nearby towns and cities to seek the safety of his baptism. They were sinners of every hue and creed—Pharisees, publicans, adulterers, thieves, and backbiters whose venom in their tongue destroyed their fellowmen. So John proceeds to give them this warning in verse 8:

3:8 - *“Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.”* The theme of the teachings of John and then Jesus after him is the theme of fruitbearing. Jesus said, “By your fruits you will know them.” This He taught when speaking in an adverse manner of the bad fruit of the false prophets (Mt. 7:16-20):

“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A

good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

Therefore, John was saying in verse 8 that if a man had repented he would no longer be bringing forth the works of the flesh, but the fruit of righteousness, which is the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Jews said that Abraham was their father, which in a physical sense was true. However, in saying so, they were inferring that because Abraham had found favour with God, all his children were in favour with the Lord as well. Therefore, it did not matter how wicked a man behaved on this earth, still he was assured a place in heaven by virtue of the fact that he was a child of Abraham.

This false assumption is what John seeks to argue against, warning them that God could easily speak to the stones and from them would come forth children unto Abraham. He made it clear that the Jews’ status as children of Abraham was nothing in the eyes of God. Then using another analogy, John gives this solemn warning:

3:9 - *“And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”* Often in holy Scripture, trees are used as types of mankind. Thus, in effect, the prophet

John is saying that those who do not bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in their lives will be cast into the fire of hell. This must be taken very seriously and applied to our lives. It is not to be taken just as a warning to those living in the Old Testament days.

Jesus used very similar language when He addressed His disciples on the way down to Gethsemane, saying in John 15:2, “Every branch *in me* that beareth not fruit he taketh away.” He said in John 15:6, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

I well remember the story told me of a Christian who diligently read his Bible, yet he did not walk according to its statutes. When finally death for him was eminent, he kept crying out on his death bed, “It is getting hotter and hotter; bring me water.” He died in torment, having experienced beforehand the pangs of eternal damnation and the heat of hell a number of days before actually descending into the lake of fire. There he would never again know what it was to enjoy the cool balmy nights of his hometown climate.

3:10 - “*And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?*” Here is the question we should all ask the Lord, even as did Paul on the Damascus road when he was confronted by the Lord Jesus Christ: “What wilt Thou have me to do?” Paul said to the Lord in Acts 9:6.

The Lord’s prayer emphasises that we have not come to do our will, but that we should pray, “Thy will be done, in earth

as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10). Also, the Lord Himself said: "... Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). Paul was paraphrasing the words of King David in Psalm 40:7-8. When the people asked John, "What shall we do?" his response to those who inquired of him falls into the following three categories:

1. Giving
2. Honesty
3. Contentment

1. Giving

3:11 - "*He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.*" To the extent that we are able, we should give of our own substance to provide for the needs of others. Therefore, we need to have a spirit of generosity, even as we read in the law.

"If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother. But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth" (Deut. 15:7-8). King Solomon also teaches us in Proverbs 22:9—"He that hath a bountiful eye *shall be blessed*; for he giveth of his bread to the poor."

2. Honesty

3:12 - "*Then came also publicans to be baptised, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?*" We must consider who

the publicans were. They were Jews who had enlisted in the service of either Caesar or Herod to collect custom duties, and in so doing, lined their own pockets through levying excessive dues. Thus, the publicans were hated by their fellow countrymen. They were classified as sinners by the religious leaders. To them John responded:

3:13 - *“And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.”* John was saying that they should diligently apply themselves to their office and be conscientious in not overcharging the people

3. Contentment

3:14 - *“And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.”* The thought of contentment with one’s wages is a direct contrast to the usual concept of the workmen in whatever trade or occupation they may be engaged. Yet holy contentment should be a spiritual exercise that all Christians practice in whatsoever circumstances they find themselves. This is confirmed in Philippians 4:11: *“... For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”* Avoid getting involved in strikes, boycotts, and such things.

3:15 - *“And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not.”* A certain dear brother in the Lord told me that he had received a vision of John. There was such a tremendous anointing upon John the Baptist that people were literally in

awe of him. Thus, it is not surprising that many would ponder in their hearts whether he may have been the very Christ of God.

3:16 - *“John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptise you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”* However near to God a man might be (as was the blessed forerunner), there is no comparison between mortal man and the Lord of Glory from whom shines the ineffable light and nature of God. The nearer he gets to God, the more conscious a man becomes of his own unworthiness.

Then John compares his ministry of baptising with water to that of Jesus, who would baptise with the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity—the Holy Spirit. This blessed experience was given after the Lord’s ascension into heaven, with speaking in other tongues being the initial sign. Also, there is the fire with which this experience is associated. I well remember that when the Lord graciously baptised me with the Holy Spirit, I was unable to touch my body with my hands because I just burned with fire.

3:17 - *“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.”* Here we see the other side of the Lord’s nature—His severity. “Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God” (Rom .11:22). The fire will burn up not only the chaff in us, but literally will devour the unbelievers in the lake of fire that burns eternally.

3:18 - “*And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.*” A great preacher always *repeats* his message, even as Fenelon states in *Telemaque*, the book he wrote for the education of the Dauphin of France. In his book he used different illustrations to drive home a truth. Thus, John preached many things, of which only the essentials are recorded for us in the Bible. This was also true of the teachings of Jesus, even as the Apostle John notes in John 21:25: “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”

The Imprisonment of John the Baptist

3:19 - “*But Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done...*” John was a fearless reprov'er of poor and great alike, and he did not hesitate to reprimand the governor for his evil ways. Herod had divorced his own wife, the daughter of Aretas IV of Arabia, and had seduced his half-brother Philip's wife to leave Philip, together with her daughter Salome.

3:20 - “*Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.*” Luke is not recording these events in chronological order; so we will look at the imprisonment later in Luke 9:7.

The Baptism of Jesus

3:21 - “*Now when all the people were baptised, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptised, and praying, the heaven was opened.*” This is a very beautiful phrase—“Jesus also

being baptised and praying.” How glorious and what a privilege it must have been to be there to witness this. In our exegesis on the Gospel of John, we have described the vision of the meeting of the two prophets. Luke adds another feature omitted by the other Gospel writers— the fact that they were *praying* at this baptismal of all baptisms.

It is an encouragement for us as ministers to pray as we baptise and also for those undergoing this ordinance to ask for inspiration of the Holy Spirit to pray in the will of God at this so auspicious occasion in our lives. “And as Jesus prayed the heavens were opened.” At this time and for the rest of His earthly life until the cross, Jesus had an open heaven. He could look directly into heaven and see the face of His Father. For three-and-a-half years, Jesus literally had an open heaven. When He was upon the cross, the Father hid His face, and that is why Jesus cried out: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mk.15:34).

3:22 - *“And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.”* Here we have the three Persons of the Holy Trinity flowing manifestly together. First we see the Holy Spirit as a dove. The dove is a symbol of peace and quietness, yet of power. It was through peace that the Lord quelled the storm upon the lake and it is the God of Peace who will bruise Satan under our feet shortly (cf. Rom.16:20).

At this time our Lord was clothed with the seven spirits of the Lord which are listed for us in Isaiah 11:2: “And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and

understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” (Please see our book entitled *The Comforter* for an explanation of these seven spirits and their functions in our lives.)

The Son of God, of course, was in the waters of the river Jordan and it was to Him that the voice of the Father came, saying: “Thou art My Beloved Son.” We should always remember that Jesus is the only begotten of the Father. He came out from the Father. We are created, and are sons of God by adoption, if indeed we have received Jesus as our Saviour.

Also, while we have to believe that we are adopted sons of God, He had to believe from a very early age that He was the Only begotten Son of God—the Messiah—the Christ of God. He had to believe that He had descended from His Father and that He pre-existed with the Father before the foundation of the earth. Therefore, this word from the Father—“Thou art my beloved Son: in thee I am well pleased” was also to establish faith in Jesus of His identity. Furthermore, it was to confirm that He was indeed well pleasing in the sight of the Heavenly Father.

3:23 - *“And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli ...”* The year of the birth of Jesus had to be before 4 B.C. which was the year of the death of Herod in March of that year. It is generally assumed, therefore, that our Saviour was born in 5 B.C.

The earliest (by the reckoning of Luke 3:1) that the river Jordan experience could have taken place was 26 A.D. Jesus,

therefore, must have been a full 30 years of age, which would have corresponded with the age of the Levites. “From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation” (Num. 4:3).

The Genealogy of Jesus

“Being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph.” In actuality, Jesus was the Son of God; therefore, Joseph was but His adopted father. Joseph was the son [in law] of Heli. Heli was Mary’s father, and we are now looking at the genealogy of Mary, while the genealogy of Joseph is given in Matthew’s Gospel chapter one. Joseph’s father was Jacob (Mt.1:16). The purpose of this genealogy is to show that Jesus was descended from David by His bloodline through Mary. This was a very necessary legality since the Messiah was to be a descendant of that great King according to the Holy Scriptures. Also, Luke takes his genealogy past David all the way back to Adam, and then to God. Mankind is the offspring of God (Acts 17:28; Lk. 3:38).

3:24-38 - *“Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph, Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Nagge, Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juda, Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri, Which was the son of Melchi, which was the*

son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er, Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim, Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson, Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda, Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor, Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala, Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech, Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan, Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.”

CHAPTER 4

The Temptations

4:1 - “*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.*” Jesus is

the arrow spoken of in Isaiah 49:2. For many years His shaft (i.e. His humanity) had been polished and prepared. Then He was placed into the Father's quiver waiting to be shot toward the mark. Now the Father has drawn Him from His quiver of obscurity in the carpenter's shop. He is placed in the Father's bow and empowered to begin His flight upon the course that will inevitably lead Him to the mark of the high calling of God for His life—the cross of Calvary. But before He can enter into His ministry, He must first be *proven*, away from all human gazes, in the stillness of the Judean desert.

4:2 - "*Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.*" Often when reading the accounts of the other Gospel writers one is under the impression that the Lord spent 40 tranquil days alone preparing for the final onslaught of the subtleties of the adversary. Luke shows more vividly that Satan was *constantly* at work (perhaps not overtly) with insidious temptations against the One who above all others he hates the most. *Forty days* is found several times in the lives of God's choicest servants. We will point out only a few.

This number is first mentioned in Scripture with the flood: "For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth" (Gen. 7:4). *The number forty* is therefore associated with the destruction of the flesh. Fasting weakens and even destroys some areas of the fleshly appetites. It also considerably weakens the enemy.

4:3 - *“And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.”* During a 40-day fast, hunger subsides after several days (depending upon the individual), and it returns near the fortieth day at its height. It is then at this moment that one is at the lowest point of resistance. Thus, the devil attacked at this moment in two areas.

Jesus was tested in the area of faith. The devil starts these three temptations by seeking to strike doubt in the heart and mind of our Saviour by saying: “If Thou be the Son of God.” It must be understood by the saints that our Lord was severely tempted in the area of faith while here upon earth. While we have to believe through His Word that we are saved, Christ had to believe that all Scriptures spoke of Himself.

Satan realised that the eternal state of all the fallen angels, demons, and his own fate depended upon the defeat of Jesus. Therefore, he hurled his greatest weapons against the Lord here in the wilderness. Let us understand that Satan will also seek to undermine and destroy our faith in God and His purposes for our lives. He will hurl at us all his vicious darts of doubt and despair.

Then Satan tested the Lord where Esau had failed—in the area of His appetite. How many of His saints have been tested in a similar fashion and have triumphed gloriously by His grace! One of my fellow Bible College students had nothing but rice to eat for months on end, while another missionary friend had only bananas from his garden tree to sustain him for a very long period of time. Yet not once did either of these dear ones complain, but joyfully accepted their trial with

gladness and praise to the Lord. When we are so tested, let us likewise call upon His grace in time of need (Heb. 4:16), and so glorify the Lord in the fires of affliction (Isa. 24:15).

4:4 - *“And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”*

In overcoming this temptation, our Lord Jesus responded to the tempter by quoting the Scripture: “And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deut. 8:3).

Matthew 4:4 also includes the phrase *“that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* This little phrase contains an important key to Christian living. The Christian should always be one who has a listening ear. King David declared in Psalm 40:6—“Mine ears hast Thou opened.” This should be a constant prayer for us that the Lord will open our ears to hear. This was the key to the walk of our blessed Lord upon earth.

Isaiah 50:4 says, “The Lord God wakenth morning by morning, He wakenth mine ear to hear as the learned.” As we follow this precept of hearing from God daily, then we shall find walking with Him easier, and certainly more instructive. We shall grow and mature as calves in the stall, as Malachi 4:2 declares.

The devil is obviously not going to give up. His eternity depends upon successfully causing the Lord to miss the mark. But also,

in a sense, he is governed by the Father. In actual fact, it was the Father who orchestrated this temptation. It was to prove first of all that the Lord was ready to be the arrow in the divine bow ready now to be sent upon its course. Also, it was to show the devil that he was already impotent against the Son of the living God. The first trial shows us that Christ triumphed over the fleshly appetites of hunger. Now Jesus comes to another temptation.

4:5 - *“And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.”* In reality, there were three trials, as we read in Matthew’s account. Our Lord was tested in the realm of the body, soul, and spirit. Luke jumps past the trial of the soul and moves from the trial of the flesh to the trial of the spirit. Last of all, he will record the trial of the soul.

Incidentally, in the realm of the spirit it is possible to assimilate knowledge at Pentium speed, if not even quicker. In the realm of the spirit our minds are released from the confines of this earthly tabernacle and we move and understand as they do in heaven above. Therefore, it was possible for the devil (who has still retained his pre-rebellion powers) to show all the kingdoms of the world to Christ in a moment of time.

4:6 - *“And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.”* Satan’s offer to give Christ the kingdoms of this world was predicated upon the fact that they were indeed in his power, seeing that he was the prince and ruler of this world by reason of the fact that he had

conquered the first ruler of this world, Adam. The condition of the offer was now given:

4:7 - *“If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.”* This was truly a lie in that Satan would never have kept his word. However, in another sense, the world means little to Satan compared to heaven above, which would have been his had Jesus accepted the offer.

It was a quick and unlawful road to that which God had already promised Jesus. The Father had already promised the Son all the kingdoms of this world in Psalm 2:8, which says, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Satan was offering Jesus His own inheritance but by means of a shortcut—by avoiding the cross.

In this temptation the real desire also of Satan is revealed in that he desires that which alone is the prerogative of deity—namely *worship*. When speaking to the woman at the well the Lord said: “The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:23-24). Jesus emphasises the demand for purity of worship when He says: “Get behind me Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

4:8 - *“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”* The Lord is quoting

from Deuteronomy 6:13: “Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.” Worship has tremendous power, because we become like the thing we worship. Satan desires that all would become like himself.

Now Luke describes the second trial or temptation. (In Matthew, it is the second temptation; in Luke it is the third). The reason for giving the sequence of trials in the order of Matthew’s Gospel and not that of Luke is that there is an order of body, soul, and spirit in Matthew, concluding with the Lord’s command to “get thee hence,” after Satan desired worship.

4:9 - *“And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:”* In these temptations we see the amazing humility and condescension of the Lord of Glory to allow Himself to be tested by the one who led the rebellion in heaven against the Godhead—one whom they created and gave such a high position immediately under them. We need to have that same humility. Sometimes we are required to be in subjection to those who have greatly wronged us. Yet at the same time we must discern to what degree we must obey them. For example, Christ submitted to being placed upon the pinnacle of the temple, but He did not obey the command of Satan to cast Himself down.

4:10-11 - *“For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee. And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”* Here Satan is quoting directly from Psalm 91:11-12, but he is quoting it out of context. This promise given to Christ was

for His protection, not to encourage Him to tempt God or to satisfy His own emotions or desires. Our Saviour now speaks against tempting the Lord to satisfy one's emotions.

4:12-13 - *“And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.”* We must always take heed not to fall into this error of tempting God, even as the children of Israel did during their wilderness sojourn. Specifically, the Lord charges them with tempting Him ten times from the time that they left Egypt until they reached Kadesh Barnea in Numbers 14:22.

One temptation that Spirit-filled Christians are prone to do is to seek to force God to move on their behalf, either through giving, fasting, or making declarations that are from their own spirit or desire. In effect, they are daring God to come to their rescue. This is what Satan was seeking to tempt Christ to do.

All of this was based upon an incorrect interpretation of the Scriptures. But God is omnipotent and He is never moved by wrong motives. We should only seek to do things for His pleasure and for His glory alone. Now Satan leaves Jesus alone for a time.

PART 4

Galilean Ministry

(4:14 - 9:50)

In Galilee

4:14 - “*And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.*” “Galilee” comes from the Hebrew word “galil,” which means *circle*. The area got this name because it was surrounded by non-Jewish areas. It was an area of some 50 miles in length and 25 miles in breadth. Josephus, who was once governor of the area, wrote that it had some 204 villages with populations of up to 15,000 people.

Therefore, there could have been more than 1,000,000 inhabitants in this relatively small district. Because it was surrounded by non-Jewish settlements, it succumbed to liberal ideas and was the least conservative region of Palestine. The climate was ideal and was renowned for its agriculture—namely olive trees.

The Father had magnified His beloved Son now in the eyes of all Israel, and so here in His home region of Galilee they all knew of Him and the miracles He had performed in Judea. We should pause here by stating that no single Gospel writer includes all the works of Jesus. It is only through means of the harmony of the Gospels (which I have used in my book, *The Life of Christ*) that we have a sequential chronological flow of all the recorded events in His ministry.

4:15 - “*And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.*” It was customary for our Lord to be with the saints during their sabbath day meetings. It is this point that the Apostle Paul alludes to when he writes Hebrews 10:25: “Not

forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” We should follow the example of the Lord and be in the assembly of the saints each Lord’s day and whenever our churches have meetings, when possible.

His First Rejection

4:16 - *“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.”* So important is this need to assemble ourselves together, that the Holy Spirit through Luke re-emphasises it in this very next verse.

A little illustration perhaps will help us here. We are in reality like branches. Branches, when placed together and burned produce a wonderful fire. However, a branch that is all by itself soon goes out. As we are together with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we burn brightly for the Lord. When a hot sizzling coal is removed from the others, it turns black and goes out. We were created to be part of a family. A family that prays together and congregates together stays together and remains on course. Just as it was with Jesus, who was led by the Holy Spirit to return to His native village, we will have to witness to our own relatives.

4:17 - *“And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written...”* The order of service in a synagogue was such that after the prayer session, they had

the reading of the Scriptures, which were translated by an interpreter into the Aramaic of that day.

This was followed by the teaching session, which was not handled by a professional minister but rather by anyone who was thought to be able to expound upon the passage that was read. Thus, for this particular day, it was the scroll of the prophecies of Isaiah. Jesus would have selected the portion that He wished to comment upon.

4:18-19 - *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord,”* This is one of the most remarkable and useful portions of the New Testament in helping us understand the method by which the Old Testament can be interpreted.

The original text of Isaiah 61:1-2 from which Jesus is reading, ends on a comma in our text. *“To preach the acceptable year of the Lord,”* The next phrase continues—*“and the day of vengeance of our God.”* In effect, the Lord was separating “the acceptable year of the Lord” and “the day of vengeance of our God” with a comma. One comma separates 2,000 years. The acceptable year of the Lord is a reference to His first coming. The day of vengeance is the time just prior to His second coming, being fulfilled by the triple judgments recorded in the Book of Revelation.

At Christ's first coming, He did not come to announce judgment. The Church Age is the age of grace. It is a time when forgiveness is preached. It is God's gracious opportunity to mankind to repent before the day of vengeance of our God at the second coming.

4:20 - *“And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.”* The minister in this case was not a pastor as we understand it, but someone appointed to look after the synagogue, including the Scripture rolls. He was someone who was a subordinate to the chief ruler of the synagogue.

4:21-22 - *“And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?”* The popular belief was that Jesus was simply another good man—one whom they had known from His birth. They did not understand His divinity. Thus, they were offended by Him.

4:23 - *“And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.”* This verse is of utmost importance to all of us. We may have been used by the Lord, perhaps in the realm of healing or miracles in one nation, only to find that the same flow is not in another nation. Remember, we are not the source, God is! He does not move in the same manner everywhere.

The reason is not only His sovereignty, but also the condition of the people, as well as the ruling spirits in certain places.

4:24 - *“And he said, Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.”* This theme is repeated in Scripture, for the Lord said to the prophet Ezekiel: “Thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee” (Ezek. 3:5-6). Often, those that know us will not hear the message of the Gospel through us, but when we are sent to strangers, they will listen.

4:25 - *“But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land.”* The Lord is developing the argument that blessing is selective. Does He not also say in the law: “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Ex. 33:19)? So our dear Lord Jesus continues in verse 26:

4:26 - *“But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.”* Unto one widow only was the great prophet Elijah sent. Only one was found worthy of that blessed miracle. Elijah and Moses are the two witnesses of Revelation 11. They are the two candlesticks that stand by the Lord of the whole earth (cf. Rev. 11:4; Zech. 4:2-4).

4:27 - *“And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.”* Elisha, too, only healed one leper—the Syrian general, Naaman.

4:28 - *“And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath...”* It was very clear to those in the congregation at Nazareth. Jesus was saying that they did not qualify to see the goodness of God in their lives. We should surely take note of this passage because it will teach us to walk humbly before the Lord in our own lives and ministries. This passage warns us not to presume that God will answer all our prayers in a blanket manner. God alone determines who will receive His mercy and who does not qualify.

4:29 - *“And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.”* The effect of being rejected is anger and jealousy, and sometimes, even murder. This spirit is seen in people like Cain and King Saul. Cain killed his brother Abel because the sacrifice of Abel was accepted by God, while Cain’s was not. When King Saul was rejected because of his disobedience, he sought to kill David, the one God accepted. Let us cast ourselves down at God’s feet and seek to find grace and mercy in our time of need so that we do not degenerate into people who persecute the blessed of the Lord.

4:30 - *“But he passing through the midst of them went his way.”* There is a time to die, and a time not to die. There is a time for everything. Solomon declared in Ecclesiastes 3:1-2:

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.” It was not our Lord’s time to die, for He was destined to go to the cross three years later. Therefore, God enabled Him to exercise His miraculous power and walk through the crowd of evildoers who were trying to kill Him.

His New Home in Capernaum

4:31 - *“And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.”* Capernaum now became the hub for His ministry. In the natural it was a very fruitful area, and in the spiritual it became the same for the Lord—around 70 percent of His recorded miracles took place during His time in Capernaum and the surrounding areas of the province of Galilee.

His rejection in Nazareth, far from being a defeat, enabled Him to minister much more effectively in the whole region which received Him with joy. Another aspect of the ministry of Jesus was that He taught the people. We must never neglect the two aspects of His life—there is teaching, but also there is the miraculous. We should believe for both ministries to flow in our churches today.

4:32 - *“And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.”* Teaching without the anointing is dry and lifeless. It is the anointed Word that brings conviction and gives an impartation of the life of God to those that hear. The letter of the Word kills (2 Cor. 3:6).

4:33 - *“And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice...”*

We must always remember that devils are persons in the sense that they are veritable beings and not abstract. They have forms, features, and distinct personalities just like we do. Consider what this spirit said through the man.

4:34 - *“Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.”* While only one demon cried out, it is evident that this man was possessed by many more. There are several other important facts to note in this passage. The demons certainly knew that Jesus was the Son of God. They also knew that there was an appointed time for their judgment, and they were horrified at the thought of it.

4:35 - *“And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.”* The casting out of demons was a great feature of the ministry of Jesus, and this ministry was also given to His disciples. The same deliverance ministry is tremendously needed today.

4:36 - *“And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.”* The casting out of devils was something that was obvious to everyone. Those of us who have had the privilege of having that authority understand the tremendous power of some of these demons that possess the poor unfortunates of this world.

4:37 - *“And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.”* Certainly, the Lord uses the miraculous to lift up His chosen ones upon earth. In the early part of the Lord’s ministry, He was very famous and sought after. However, during the last year of His life, however, He was greatly opposed and rejected.

4:38 - *“And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon’s house. And Simon’s wife’s mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.”* Here is a clear-cut statement that Peter was married. Paul warned that some would forbid to marry, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Commandments forbidding marriage are Satanic. The Word of God says expressly, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

4:39 - *“And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.”* This proves that sicknesses can be addressed as spirits and cast out. It also shows that healing can be immediate, evidenced by the fact that strength returned to Peter’s mother-in-law instantly so that she was able to leave her sick bed and resume her duties, which in those days must have been quite arduous for a woman.

4:40 - *“Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.”* Here is an example of the Lord healing everyone who came to Him. This is in contrast to the teaching He gave at Nazareth about Elisha only healing one of many lepers in Israel in his time.

We must see that Jesus was moving under the direction of the Father. Therefore, we cannot stereotype God. “Wisdom is justified by her children.” In other words, wisdom is known to be wisdom by the fruit it produces. God will do whatever seems good to Himself. In humility, we must hear what God is saying at all times.

Another thought to consider here is the fact that the miracles were done at the setting of the sun. There is an important truth here. At the days end of this Church dispensation we should expect to see the power of God unleashed in such a way that at times *all* are healed to the glory of God.

4:41 - *“And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.”* This is yet a further testimony to the fact that “the devils believe and tremble” (Jas. 2:19).

4:42 - *“And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.”* This was the year of His popularity when all men sought Him and desired His presence. This is the way it will be for us as well. There are times when we are appreciated and people desire to hear us, but later on, as in the ministry of Jesus, the message becomes unpalatable.

4:43 - *“And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.”* Another truth that we must learn is this—we cannot stay just in one place

when God has called us to other areas. We see this truth in the life of Philip the evangelist. He was enjoying a great revival in Samaria when the Holy Spirit told him to leave and go toward the south: “And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship. Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet” (Acts 8:27-28).

The result of Philip’s obedience was that this high-ranking official of the queen’s court was converted, and through him Christianity came to Ethiopia. Therefore, we must be open to go wherever the Spirit bids us. We must be like “the branch that goes over the wall” and not remain within the confines of our little field (cf. Gen. 49:22).

4:44 - *“And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.”* May we allow our light to shine so that all of God’s people might receive the message entrusted to us. Please do remember the exhortation and promise of Isaiah 32:20—“Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.”

CHAPTER 5

Jesus by the Sea Shore and the Call of the Four Disciples

5:1 - *“And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret.”* In New Testament times, this vast expanse of

water was some thirteen miles in length, and its width was eight miles. It was 680 feet below sea level, having almost a tropical climate. It was called by *four* different names in Scripture:

- *The Sea of Chinnereth* or *Chinneroth* (Num. 34:11; Josh. 11:2; 12:3) - It is now known as Yam Kinnert because it is harp-shaped. “Kinnor” is the Hebrew word for *harp*.
- *The Sea of Galilee* - It received this name because of the region in which it was located.
- *The Lake of Gennesaret* - It received this name because of the plain on the west side of the lake, which was very fertile and beautiful, named Gennesaret. The name means “prince of gardens.” (Gan means “a garden”; sar means “a prince”). Certainly, Christ “the Prince of Gardens” performed most of His works here in the garden of the hearts of His people.
- *The Sea of Tiberias* (Jn. 6:1) - It was named after the town founded by Herod Antipas, A.D 20. Herod named it in honour of the Roman emperor, Tiberius. It is the only town around the Sea of Galilee from the time of Jesus that remains until this day.

5:2 - “*And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.*” This is a picturesque scene in the daily life of a fisherman. Here beside the empty boats were their owners labouring to clean the seaweed and other refuse off the lines of their nets. All of this hard work was expended for

nothing, for they had caught no fish after a night out on the water.

A successful fisherman is a hard worker who must overcome many disappointments and still continue to persevere. These qualities are also necessary for those who are in the ministry. No wonder several of those apostles of the Lamb of God were fishermen by trade!

5:3 - *“And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.”* Jesus had already met Peter; so this was not an act of presumption but a request of a friend to a friend. This is a lesson for us not to presume as ministers when requesting others to help.

The setting here is a beautiful picture that has been captured on many canvases. Jesus is now sitting in the bow of the boat a few yards from shore. The multitude is held in rapt attention by the priceless words that issue forth from His lips. His words were easily heard by the listeners, as the winds blowing inland from the waters would have carried them to those on the shore.

5:4 - *“Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.”* It is so like our Lord that, having been granted the use of Simon Peter’s boat, He then recompenses Peter. Likewise, we should be no man’s debtor. Perhaps Paul explains this truth best in his words from 1 Corinthians 9:1-14.

In summary, he is saying that those who labor in spiritual things should be recompensed with temporal things by the congregations. Likewise, when we are blessed by someone in the natural, we should recompense them with a spiritual blessing. The Lord Himself said, “The labourer is worthy of his hire” (Lk. 10:7).

5:5 - *“And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.”* For a miracle to be manifested it takes the following steps:

1. The Will of God—Jesus wanted to repay Peter.
2. The Spoken Word—Jesus spoke the Word.
3. The Believing Heart—Peter believed.
4. An Act of Faith—Peter let down the net.

5:6 - *“And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.”* The Lord is the “Lord of the Harvest” and the Lord of abundance, for He said “I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (Jn.10:10).

5:7 - *“And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.”* The Lord does not do things in a corner, nor are His miracles questionable. Certainly, this was something they talked about all of their lives. Remember, Luke was not an eyewitness but obtained this information from the other disciples.

5:8 - *“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”* Such a manifestation of the miraculous power of God was accompanied by a sense of His holy presence, which convicted Peter. May God likewise grant us such power of conviction that men will see their sins and repent.

5:9 - *“For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken.”* These fishermen had never seen such a catch. Miracles certainly can be described as “out of the ordinary.” Hence, the term “miraculous” has entered into the everyday vocabulary of mankind. In the last days, “the abundance of the sea” will be converted (Isa. 60:5).

We are looking for the greatest revival the world has ever seen. It is prefigured by this miraculous draught of fish. Also, it prefigured Peter’s successful ministry at Pentecost, and later the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles.

5:10 - *“And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.”* Thus, the three apostles of the Lamb who were on the Mount of Transfiguration were also witnesses of this miracle of the abundant ingathering of fish.

Jesus then reassured Peter, saying: “Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men.” This denotes not only Peter’s apostolic calling, but also his calling of an evangelist. It is not unusual at all for a person’s secular work to be a preparation for his spiritual ministry.

“Fear not” was also pronounced by the angels to Mary and also to the shepherds. Jesus Himself spoke to the ruler of the synagogue, whose daughter was dead, saying, “Fear not.” He said to the disciples, “Fear not,” because they were of more value than many sparrows.

He said, “Fear not” to his little flock of believers, “Fear not” to the Apostle Paul when he was on the boat coming to Malta, and “Fear not” to the Apostle John on the isle of Patmos in Revelation 1:17. God has to continually tell man not to fear because by nature, we are very fearful.

5:11 - *“And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.”* At the height of their greatest success as fishermen, they left their trade to follow Jesus. This is an important truth. It required a very high degree of consecration for these dedicated tradesman. They were leaving their occupation at a time when all was going well; therefore, this action represents a plunge from the heights of financial attainment to the depths. It is a situation that repeats itself in the lives of many of those who are called of God.

For myself, in order to follow the Lord and prepare for the ministry, I had to leave my job on the verge of a promotion and a fresh business opportunity. I had to leave everything to go to Bible College. It required a great step of faith. In many cases, Satan holds out tempting career opportunities as an inducement for some not to follow their calling. This obviously was not the case with the disciples, as the miracle of fish was performed by the Lord.

The Healing of the Leper

5:12 - *“And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”* Here we have two essentials necessary for releasing the power of God:

1. A humble acknowledgement of the sovereign will of God.
2. A declaration of faith in the ability of Jesus to heal.

5:13 - *“And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.”* Thus, the man was healed as Jesus declared that it was His will to heal. Then, according to the man’s declaration of faith, the power of God was released to cleanse the man from his leprosy.

5:14 - *“And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”* How different are the ways of God from the ways of man. Many ministers are anxious to publicize those things which God has done through their ministries in an attempt to draw the crowds to themselves. In this case, Christ did not want the miracle to be known abroad.

Also, we see the Lord upholding the law. We must never forget the words of our blessed Lord who said: *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil”* (Mt. 5:17).

5:15 - *“But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.”* It seems that the man healed of leprosy could not refrain himself but spoke of the healing power of our Lord everywhere; consequently multitudes sought Him out.

Strength Through Prayer

5:16 - *“And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.”* A preacher can only minister for so long before he has to take a break. He has to stop and drink of the waters of life in prayer. It is so necessary to have continual fresh experiences with the Lord so that we can have something new to give to others.

5:17 - *“And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.”* A select group of the leading religious leaders of Israel gathered together to hear the Lord. These leaders instructed and taught others in the knowledge of the Scriptures. We should pause here and consider that this was perhaps one of the most potentially rewarding seminars that Jesus could have taught. He was instructing the teachers of Israel. The scholars who sat before Him would reproduce themselves in many thousands of lives.

Consider the fruitfulness that is possible by having pastors' and Christian leaders' seminars in other lands! *Teaching the*

teachers is far more likely to bring forth lasting fruit in many hearts than just preaching to the multitudes. I would like to give you an example of this.

In a certain country in West Africa we were having a seminar for about 100 pastors. Because of the truths that we were developing, the chairman remarked that we should have invited all the church members to this seminar as well as the leaders. In the Sunday morning meeting following the seminar, we did indeed speak to about 2,000 of the regular church members. However, the revelation level of truths we presented was much lower than the level of revelation at the seminar. The chairman saw this and realised then the value of selective enrolments. Truly, the Holy Spirit meets us at the level of the majority of those present.

Another important truth is that the presence of the Lord was there to *heal* these leaders. As we have stated now on several occasions, there is always the will of God that overrides all other considerations. If it is not His time or His will to manifest His power, we can do absolutely nothing. This is made clear in Psalm 62:11: “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.”

The Man Stricken With Palsy

5:18 - “*And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.*” Palsy (or atrophy of the muscles) can result in paralysis of the arms or legs. The state of this man’s disease was severe so that he had to be carried upon his bed.

5:19 - *“And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.”* At once we see the faith and perseverance of the friends of this poor man. I always admire those who tend to the sick. Having to care for my own wife who was paralyzed because of a stroke, I know how self-giving one has to be for those who are in that unfortunate state. The act of letting him down through the tiling literally involved the tearing up of the roof of the owner’s home. In itself, this would require much boldness and assurance of the ultimate result. Otherwise, they would never have attempted such an act.

5:20 - *“And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.”* The Lord immediately recognised the faith of the friends of the paralytic. His words are somewhat surprising in that He did not mention his sickness but addressed the question of the man’s sin. Jesus declared him to be forgiven of his sins. In the minds of the superstitious Israelites of that day, sickness and sin were related. We see this attitude in the minds of the friends of Job the patriarch. They accused him of sin because he was covered with boils and had lost everything.

5:21 - *“And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”* In the New Testament era the Lord gives this power to His ministers as we see in John 20:23: *“Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”* Under the anointing of the Spirit, there are times when you can say to someone on behalf of God—*“Your sins are forgiven.”*

5:22 - *“But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?”* One of the features of the Spirit-filled life of our Lord was that He was able to read the thoughts of

**In heaven, all
our thoughts are
made manifest
to others.**

people. In heaven, all our thoughts are made manifest to others. The Lord Jesus now counters the opposition with a question:

5:23 - *“Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?”* Jesus was showing that He had the power, not only to heal but also to forgive sins, and that He Himself was God.

5:24 - *“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.”* In many instances the Lord appeals to the demonstration of the power of God manifested in His ministry to authenticate His message. This was true for the New Testament Church, since Jesus said in Mark 16:17-18:

“These signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mk. 16:17-18). Returning to the account of the paralytic man, we read:

5:25 - *“And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying*

God.” No doubt in sending the afflicted back to His own home it was again a gracious and compassion act on the part of the Lord to bring joy and gladness to his family.

5:26 - *“And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.”* It is noteworthy that when Jesus manifested extraordinary power that the people were filled with a holy fear of the miraculous.

The Call of Levi

5:27 - *“And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.”* The publican or tax collector was a Jew who had enlisted in the service of the Roman government and oppressed his own people.

The Roman system of collecting taxes was to divide the nations into certain areas and then assess that district at a certain amount. Then they would sell the right to collect those taxes to the highest bidder. So long as that tax collector handed over the assessed amount each year there was no problem.

However, the tax collector was able to demand from the inhabitants of his district whatever he determined. Thus, he could become very rich because the populace would have no idea what the assessed amount was for their district. The tax collectors were classified with robbers and thieves and were forbidden entrance into the synagogue because they were considered traitors to their nation.

Thus, when Jesus called Levi, whose other name was Matthew, it caused great animosity amongst the religious leaders. Matthew would later become the author of the first Gospel. Christ's command to Levi to, "Follow me," was in the imperative tense, and Levi obeyed the call.

5:28 - "*And he left all, rose up, and followed him.*" What did he leave? His money! At the moment Christ called him, Levi must have had money on the table. What was the prime reason that Levi had become a tax collector in the first place? It was his quest for money. Therefore, he had to overcome the love of money. May God grant by His grace that we make this same level of consecration for our beloved Master.

5:29 - "*And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.*" In this setting we see Matthew (Levi) giving an open witness to all his friends and associates of his faith in Christ and his call to the full-time ministry of the Lord.

5:30 - "*But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?*" The self-righteous religious leaders taught the doctrine of outward holiness and not circumcision of heart. They criticised the action of Jesus in eating with the tax collectors.

5:31 - "*And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.*" Jesus was not disputing the fact that the tax collectors were

sinners. In fact, He confirms they are sinners. But like those who are physically sick are in need of a doctor, so these were in need of a spiritual doctor. Therefore He says:

5:32 - *“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* In this very forthright response by Jesus, He is declaring that He came to save those who were lost. For this reason, the Apostle Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22: “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

Therefore, let us gird up the loins of our minds so that we might be winners of souls “For he that winneth souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30). In verse 33, the Pharisees put another question to Jesus concerning religious observances:

On Fasting

5:33-34 - *“And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?”*

Jesus is using a Jewish wedding to illustrate a point. In a Jewish wedding, the bridegroom is the central figure. At his appearance there is great joy. Christ Himself is our heavenly Bridegroom. In His presence there is fullness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore. (Ps. 16:11)

While He was on earth, how could His disciples (who are likened to the favoured guests at the wedding) fast and be sad in His presence. However, the Lord warns, the time will come for His departure (a reference to His ascension), and then the disciples will fast.

5:35 - *“But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.”* Fasting, therefore, is the norm in the Christian life, especially when the Holy Spirit is prompting us.

The Parable of the New Wine

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly or spiritual meaning. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we seize the instruction which the Lord is seeking to give his disciples at this time. Let us read this parable prayerfully and ask the Lord for His interpretation.

5:36 - *“And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.”* This is a piece of natural wisdom regarding the patching of old clothes. It is based on an observation in life and was

undoubtedly a word of caution that mothers would give to their daughters. However, this parable is one of two stories given at the same time, both of them having the same general theme. Therefore, in order to have the right interpretation of the first one, we need to compare it with the other. So, before we attempt the interpretation, let us read on.

5:37 - *“And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.”* Bottles in Palestine were made of skins of animals. When the new wine was poured into the wineskin it would ferment and give off carbon dioxide gas. A new bottle had a certain elasticity and would expand with the pressure of the gas; however, an old wineskin would become dry and brittle, lose its elasticity, and would burst. Therefore, the Lord continues with the counsel of that day.

5:38 - *“But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.”* This admonition became a reality to me when I was listening to an elderly evangelist in France. He was an Englishman whom God had used to propagate the message of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in that nation. He had raised up many Pentecostal churches but he had also ministered in a particular main-line denominational church. Because they had opened their hearts to the Holy Spirit, many were filled with the Spirit and spoke in other tongues.

When the evangelist returned to that church several years later, he discovered that they had all dried up and were no longer manifesting the spiritual gifts. When he inquired of the Lord

why this had happened, the Lord replied: “You cannot put new wine into old wineskins.”

Why is this so? Because denominations that do not move on with God are satisfied with the spiritual plateau to which they have attained and they cannot accept any new revelations. They become brittle, inflexible wineskins. The Lord concludes the parable by adding another important truth.

5:39 - *“No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.”* Here is the problem—people are satisfied with the old and the familiar. God’s people require much persuasion to accept new truth or a fresh moving of his Holy Spirit.

This was made very clear to us in Burma when we had a seminar there for pastors. About half the pastors were Pentecostal, whereas the others were Baptists. It took four days of preaching, teaching, and persuasion until the doubts, fears, and attitudes of the dear Baptists were changed so that they would accept prayer to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. On the afternoon of the fourth day, more than 100 received the Holy Spirit, speaking gloriously in other tongues.

In both parables there is one clear theme—the old versus the new. People do not like change. They want to stay with the same old way of doing things. Israel did not want the new covenant. Most were content with the old one. Those who did accept the new still wanted to cling to the old one. They tried to patch the old with the new and have both. They would do anything to hold on to the old.

CHAPTER 6

The Lord of the Sabbath

6:1 - *“And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.”* The “second sabbath” is used to denote the sabbath that follows the feast sabbath. The Passover was on the 14th. From the 15th to 21st were seven days of unleavened bread. The first and last days of unleavened bread were considered feast sabbaths (Lev. 23:6-8). No work could be done during those days.

There were four Passovers in the ministry of Jesus.

1. The First Passover - John 2:13 - A.D. 27
2. The Second Passover - Luke 6:1 - A.D. 28
3. The Third Passover - John 6:4 - A.D. 29
4. The Fourth Passover - John 13:1 - A.D. 30 - when He was crucified.

The picking of the corn was permitted by the law according to Deuteronomy 23:25: “When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour’s standing corn.” However, because it was the sabbath day, the Pharisees objected.

6:2 - *“And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?”*

According to the law it was forbidden to harvest on the sabbaths (Ex. 34:21). Technically, the disciples were in error. This Jewish tradition was stressed in the Mishnah. The response of Jesus was to quote something that took precedence over this commandment.

6:3-4 - *“And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him. How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the showbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?”* Christ is referring to the time in David’s life when he was fleeing from Saul and he found himself hungry in the presence of the high priest (1 Sam. 21:3-6).

“Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the showbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.”

The law is explicit in Leviticus 24:5-9: “And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals

shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute."

But when the Lord referred to this event in the life of David, He was saying that the need of man takes precedent over the law in such a case. Even the rabbis acknowledged in their teachings that the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath. Therefore, man's need took higher priority than the keeping of the ritual law.

6:5 - *"And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."* Therefore, Jesus establishes Himself as being the dispenser of the Sabbath and therefore its Lord.

The Healing of the Man With a Withered Hand

6:6 - *"And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered."* This sabbath was presumably not one of the numbered seven sabbaths between Passover and Pentecost. Leviticus 23:15 says, "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the

day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete:”

6:7 - *“And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.”* It was after the first year of popularity that the Lord encountered opposition from the religious leaders who subjected Him to an ever increasing scrutiny. It is the same for any leaders raised up by God. Their personal lives will necessitate a very circumspect walk under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for their every word and action is noted.

6:8 - *“But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.”* There was no hidden miracle here, it was before their very eyes. In a place of prominence the Lord showed forth His power and glory.

6:9 - *“Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?”* If there was one doctrine above all others that the Lord had to counter in His ministry, it was that of the misguided and erroneous teachings with respect to the sabbath day that had become idolatrous to the rabbis. A doctrine can become an idol.

In the succeeding generations of the Church Age, it is worthy to note that each generation has likewise had its own particular false doctrine to oppose. The Lord appeals again to the spirit of the law, not to the letter of the law, saying: *“Is it lawful on*

the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?"

6:10 - *"And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other."* The Lord wanted to ensure that everyone present would see this miracle. Instead of rejoicing in the miracle, however, they became very angry.

6:11 - *"And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus."* A belief, doctrine, or dogma can be an idol. Now that their idol had been touched and effectively destroyed, the religious leaders sought to kill the Lord. How important it is for each one of us to rid ourselves of our idols and seek the Lord for a pure heart. Otherwise we will end up rejecting and mightily opposing what the Lord will do in the future. Again the Lord seeks for fresh strength in prayer to face the ensuing days of ministry.

The Choosing of the Twelve

6:12 - *"And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."* From this passage we learn an important lesson. A pastor must pray until he has the mind of the Lord before he installs a person into a position of leadership.

Once he has installed a person into a leadership position in the church, it is very difficult to remove him if he is found unsatisfactory and can cause much harm to the church.

Therefore, the example of Jesus should be heeded. He spent much time in prayer before appointing the apostles so that He might have the mind of His Father in this very crucial decision.

6:13 - *“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.”*

The number 12 is found throughout Scripture and is associated with government. The number 12 means government. Consider the following examples:

- 12 patriarchs
- 12 tribes
- 12 apostles
- 12 thrones
- 12 judges
- 12 princes of Ishmael (Gen. 17:20)
- 12 gates
- 12 foundations in New Jerusalem
- 12 years old - the age of Jesus when He taught the doctors of the law

6:14-16 - *“Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.”*

The Plain of the Beatitudes

6:17-19 - *“And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. the whole multitude*

sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.”

Most commentators are agreed that Luke gives a very shortened account here of the Sermon on the Mount. It is given in much more detail by Matthew in chapters 5-7. That being the case, we may give a very brief account of the happenings of the evening (night and day) of this event.

The Lord went up the gentle slope from Capernaum to the top of the mountain. There He prayed. As day dawned He called His disciples to Him and chose the 12 apostles. From there He descended to a level place. Upon descending to this level place, the Lord first healed the sick.

The Sermon on the Mount

Now Jesus sat down, with His 12 disciples around Him. Then there was a larger number of other disciples, and further out were the multitudes. There were three groups in all. This sermon was the most remarkable of all His teachings, for as Matthew 7:28-29 tells us, the people were “astonished at His doctrine for He taught them as one having authority not as the scribes” who would always quote one another to substantiate their teachings.

Here was the promised Prophet “like unto Moses,” who gave the Ten Commandments and the law on Mount Sinai. Yet a “greater than Moses” was present, for this was the Son of God Himself declaring the laws of His Kingdom. With that in mind, we should seek to study these precepts prayerfully and reverentially.

6:20 - *“And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.”*

Scripture interprets Scripture. The best way to understand a verse is by looking at all the other passages of Scripture. Therefore, from the Bible, we can understand the message of our Lord. In references to the rich, He makes it abundantly clear that “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (Mt.19:24).

The Lord’s own brother gives a similar warning when he says: “[Come now], ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days” (Jas. 5:1-3).

The Apostle Paul likewise warns: “...they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

Therefore, it would be wise to hearken to the admonition of King Solomon when he said: “Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make

themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven” (Prov. 23:4-5).

In Luke’s Gospel there are other warnings against being rich—in particular, the story of the rich man and beggar Lazarus. The rich man went to hell while the beggar went to heaven. However, at this point I think it would be wise to qualify some of these statements since one could be led to believe that all the poor go to heaven and all the rich go to hell.

The qualifications for going to heaven are new birth and a life of righteousness. This applies to rich and poor alike. Another point is this—some of God’s choicest saints were very rich—Abraham, Job, and David are good examples. Yet, all of them could say like David: “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple” (Ps. 27:4). Simply giving one’s goods to the poor will never qualify anyone for heaven since the Apostle Paul states: “...though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Cor 13:3).

The key lies in the fact that God is not a respecter of persons. Every man, rich or poor, must continue to obey what the Lord is saying to him. If we are rich, we must not be overly attached to our riches, and we must remember that they are God-given. Those goods that we possess are at the disposal of the Lord at all times. They are not ours.

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why doest thou glory, as if thou hadst no received it?” (1 Cor. 4:7). Even as John the Baptist said, “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven” (Jn. 3:27).

The Apostle Paul likewise said: “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Tim. 6:7). Therefore, with a heart filled with the love of God, let us give of that which the Lord has given to us so that we can bless our neighbours, and let us consider well the sayings of Solomon in Proverbs 13:7—“There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.” Continuing now with our narrative, the Lord says:

6:21 - *“Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.”* Adversities must be the portion of this life, as the patriarch Job declares: “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). Undoubtedly, those who experience the most heartaches for Christ in this life are going to be the most rewarded in the life to come. That these sorrows are remembered by the Lord is brought out by King David in Psalm 56:8: “Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?”

The book David is referring to is the book of which we read in Revelation 20:12: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead

were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” Each of us has a book in heaven wherein all our actions here on earth are recorded.

6:22 - *“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.”* A very dear friend of mine wrote a book entitled “My Beloved Enemy.” The rationale in his book showed that enemies and problems actually were a blessing in disguise and worked for his benefit.

When an adversary attacked him, it provoked hidden needs in his heart to rise to the surface, and this caused him to seek the Lord more diligently. The assaults hurled against him by an enemy actually improved his spiritual life and character, since he would have to cry out to God to get things right in his own life. Beloved, this is true for our lives also. When we put everything right in our own lives, God will deal with our enemies (Prov. 16:7).

This promise is found in 2 Corinthians 10:6: “And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.” Not only is our spiritual life improved by the onslaughts of our enemies, our eternal rewards are increased as well, as we now read in verse 23:

6:23 - *“Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.”* One very important truth that we must not forget is this—our attitude during these

attacks from our enemies must be one of forgiveness and joy (Col.1:11). Forgiveness is made all the easier by receiving grace from God to forget.

Joseph had two sons—Ephraim and Manasseh. Manasseh means “forgetting.” When Joseph named his first son “Manasseh,” it was because God had caused him to forget all the evil that his brothers had done to him. “For God, said he, hath caused me to forget all my toil, and all my father’s house” (Gen. 41:51). Therefore, we must purpose from our hearts to rejoice before the Lord. That is an act of our will.

In so doing, we will be “more than conquerors through Him who has loved us.”(Rom. 8:37). We will come forth from these attacks better, not bitter. Problems will be steppingstones, not stumblingblocks. Our Lord now returns to His former theme by warning those who are rich:

6:24 - *“But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.”* The truth that the Lord is impressing upon us in this sermon is that if we want an easy life down here, then this will be our reward, but in the world to come there will be nothing for us. We should thoroughly meditate upon this awesome truth because so often in our everyday lives we are consistently confronted with choices of this nature—whether to receive a reward immediately or wait until the resurrection of the dead.

6:25 - *“Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and*

weep.” Remember this—if we have chosen to receive full payment and the praise of man for our good deeds now, we have already had our reward and nothing awaits us in eternity. When people rejoice with the world and have been well cared for with the things of this world and of the flesh, in eternity they shall suffer hunger in hell, and eternal misery, and weeping and gnashing of teeth in the depths of despair. Hell is no myth, it is a solemn and eternal reality.

6:26 - *“Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”* Every leader knows that when he does what is right, initially he will be unpopular, heavily criticised, and spoken against everywhere. However, taking right paths is like taking bitter medicine. Though it is at first very unpleasant, in the end it heals the patient.

For example, a minister for righteousness sake, has to tell a couple that it is wrong to remarry if either of them have been divorced before and their first spouses are still living. In doing so, often the minister is called insensitive, without compassion, and similar epithets.

Yet when those teachings of Jesus are adhered to, they bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. On the other hand, the proponents of divorce and remarriage are hailed as being of a merciful, understanding heart. Unfortunately, they will reap the fury of God on judgment day. The false prophets have always had their day, but it is wiser to incur the wrath of man than the wrath of God.

The Golden Rule

We now enter a series of teachings that can bring health to our bones, and to our souls and our spirits. If we apply ourselves to the truths that are contained in the following verses, we shall experience a divine wholesomeness in our beings. We shall feel good. So let us prayerfully consider them and apply them to our hearts.

6:27 - *“But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you.”* We are always going to have enemies in this life. Paul states in 2 Timothy 3:12: “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” The victory over our enemies is obtained through *our attitude toward them.*

The Apostle Paul says in Romans 12:21: “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Love is described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:4 as being longsuffering and sweet to all. Thus, we must not just act out love to our enemy, but ask the Lord to give us His very own feelings of kindness toward our enemy.

There is another Scripture that flows with this truth bringing to mind a wonderful testimony. “By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone” (Prov. 25:15). I am thinking of several ladies who were married to men who were anything but kind toward them or to the Lord. Yet by manifesting tender loving care toward their spouses, these ladies have seen them change into the husbands they were intended to be by God. Now the Lord continues His teaching with respect to our attitudes toward those that hate us:

6:28 - *“Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.”* This is not just a mental exercise, but rather a spiritual exercise whereby we do vocally pronounce a blessing upon our adversaries and energetically pray for their good. As I have been writing this, I myself stopped and blessed several that the Lord brought before me, and I prayed for them. May I recommend at this juncture in our study that you would do likewise so that you too may receive a blessing from the Lord in return.

6:29 - *“And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.”* While the Lord is speaking of a physical blow, such as He Himself received (Mk. 14:65), there is also the sense of spiritual attacks (words, looks, attitudes), which can have a physical impact upon us.

The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 6:17, “From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” The word “marks” is translated from the Greek word *stigmatia* which refers to the wounds in the body of Christ. When we pass through suffering (which is generally caused by the verbal attacks of Christians and others), at times we can actually feel wounds in our bodies. On occasions, I have felt as though hands have literally struck me on my cheeks when they have verbally abused me. However, whether the attacks are physical or spiritual, we must not defend ourselves in retaliation but must allow them to smite us on the other cheek.

Also, when someone takes our possessions we must not resist, but must allow them to take what they will. This requires a

great degree of consecration. All our worldly items must be on the altar. The Lord develops this by saying:

6:30 - *“Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.”* All these teachings are summed up by the Golden Rule in verse 31:

6:31 - *“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.”* As we constantly meditate upon this, so that it becomes a part of our innermost being, we will find that this precept will govern not only our actions towards our neighbours, but even our very *thoughts* toward others will change. It is in reality another way of fulfilling the second commandment—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

6:32 - *“For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.”* One of the facts concerning love is that one does not have to be a Christian to love another. Sinners are very fond of one another, but the difference is simply that theirs is a selective love. They love those that love them, whereas the Christian love flows to one and all.

6:33 - *“And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.”* When we only help others who in turn will “return the favour,” we will not be rewarded by the Lord, for we have our reward by the return of that favour (cf. Lk.14:12-14). To press this point, He continues:

6:34 - *“And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive*

as much again.” Therefore, we should not be like the men of this world who have but one desire and that is to benefit themselves. They give with the motive of receiving. We should give with the idea of blessing another and certainly not with the idea that they will in return give us a gift. Therefore, the Lord emphasises the true Christian character in respect to giving by saying:

6:35 - *“But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.”* Thus the Lord points the way to eternal rewards by loving our enemies and giving without thought of receiving in return. Then Jesus adds four additional virtues that should be the motivation of all Christians:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Showing mercy | 2. Not being Judgmental |
| 3. Not Condemning | 4. Forgiving |

6:36 - *“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”* When the Lord appeared unto Moses on Mount Sinai the second time, He introduced Himself by saying: “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Ex. 34:6). Mercy was the *first* of the attributes by which God desired to be known. This truth is born out by the tabernacle of Moses with its seven pieces of furniture, of which the last was the mercy seat.

Also, the Lord said to the religious leaders: “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mt. 9:13). It is obvious that the Lord

wants us to have a merciful spirit toward one another. Mercy is God-given, and we should ask Him to work out this virtue in our lives.

6:37 - *“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:”* Matthew amplifies this by saying—“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Mt. 7:2). We will be judged by the same measuring rod we use on others. Therefore, we must ask the Lord for an understanding and merciful spirit so that we are not harsh and condemning of others.

The key lies in a deeper relationship with the Lord Himself so that we can see as He sees. The Lord perfectly understands the reasons why people are the way they are, and why they do what they do. As we see with the Lord’s eyes, it works out His compassion in our hearts toward another, for He was tempted in all points like we are, yet without yielding.

Let us remember how many times we ourselves have failed the tests, and then in remembrance of these we shall look upon others more kindly. Forgiveness is rooted in *forgetfulness*; so let us truly be like our Lord—let us be a merciful and forgiving people.

Now to complete this set of instructions, the Lord speaks on giving:

6:38 - *“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”* This verse is

sometimes open to abuse in that there is a tendency of giving to God with a wrong motive. We must balance this with verse 35 where we are instructed to give, hoping for nothing in return. I have known many who give with the sole purpose of receiving from the Lord. Let me illustrate this with a little story.

A certain minister went to a Christian camp when he was young. He had a suit which he thought was not very good; so he gave it to someone else, fully anticipating that the Lord would give him another suit. He did indeed receive another suit, but it was in worse shape than the one he had given away. The Lord read his motives. However, there is a little dictum that I would like to quote: "A giver is never a beggar, and a beggar is never a giver." The one who gives with an open hand never wants, but is amply provided for by the Lord.

Further Rules for Living a Good Life

6:39 - *"And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?"* From Matthew 15:14, we understand that the Lord was speaking here of the Pharisees, the religious leaders of His day. Regretfully, there are many religious leaders of our times that are spiritually blind. While seeking to show others the way of salvation, they themselves fall into the pit of hell, and those that follow them likewise. Their plight in hell will be terrible. They will be surrounded by groanings, mockings, and hatred. They will suffer the bitterness of those for whom they were responsible, having led them to that place of abject misery and torment of eternal damnation.

Let us always be devoted to the truth so that we may set men free and lead them into the pathways of righteousness. On the day of reckoning, we will see those whom we have influenced in heaven with us, and we shall have indescribable joy that no one shall ever take from us. Friends, I personally have seen hell, and I have been there. I would do all within my power to persuade men everywhere to turn from the paths of darkness into His most wondrous light.

6:40 - *“The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.”* This verse contains a goal and also a promise. It is evident that there is only one Lord and only Jesus Himself will ever fully fulfil the will of the Heavenly Father as He did upon earth. However, there is a very precious goal and promise given here which is this—that we *can* attain unto Christian perfection and be conformed to His image. Praise the Lord!

6:41 - *“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”* This is so often the case in life that we can see with great clarity the perceived weaknesses and problems in the lives of our brothers or sisters, yet, we either are completely blind to or dismiss by one excuse or another our own shortcomings.

6:42 - *“Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye.”* To honestly help others, we need to be cleansed

ourselves and then we will be able to see clearly how to bring others into a greater light.

I have noticed in more than 45 years of ministry that those who are so ready to point out the failures of others have far greater problems themselves. So often what they supposedly discern in others is *in themselves* to a far greater degree. Let us, beloved, seek to be generous in our appraisal of others and then we can in counselling really bring true deliverance and not criticism. The Lord illustrates this principle by saying:

6:43 - *“For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”* At first this may seem to have no connection with the previous verses but in actuality those who seek to tell others where they are wrong do in fact have problems in their own hearts.

For example, we had in one church a family whose members were continually telling the pastors about the problems in the lives of certain other people in the congregation. Also, they felt very free to tell the ministers in what areas they considered the church was failing through their ministry.

However, when they made suggestions and we sought to implement them, although we did not feel they were right, this family did not respond to the very changes they themselves had proposed. After a time, they left the church, again with the excuse that the church was not doing one thing or another. When we went to the Lord in prayer, He said that the root of the problems in the church was in the heart of this family, particularly in the mother, who was filled with criticism.

6:44 - *“For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.”* Whatever is growing in our heart will produce its fruit in our thoughts, speech and actions. We cannot expect to receive joy (which is symbolised by grapes) from a bramble bush (the works of the flesh). Nor of thorns (cares, riches, pleasures) can we receive figs which speak of *sweetness*. Continuing in the same vein, the Lord says:

6:45 - *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”* Let us hearken to this teaching, because surely this will not only save us, it will help us to rightly discern the needs in others. The key lies in the heart of man, for as King Solomon said: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

The Sound Foundation

6:46 - *“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* Unfortunately, calling Jesus “Lord” is just something many say; for when He speaks, they do not obey. The price of true discipleship is this—obeying and doing whatsoever He tells us to do, whether it be through the written Word or something He speaks to us in our hearts.

6:47 - *“Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like:”* Now the Lord is going to give one of the most well known illustrations in the New Testament concerning the Christian life.

6:48 - *“He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.”* In the natural life, many beautiful homes have been swept away or have been demolished when high winds or heavy rains have come. Yet those that have been built upon a solid rock have remained when so many others have fallen. The Lord presents this warning:

6:49 - *“But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”* In California, homes that have cost a fortune have fallen after fires have made bare the catchments and then the rains have come and washed them away.

Thus, we must consider that if our lives are founded upon obedience to the Rock, Christ Jesus, we will stand the test when the storms of life come. But if our lives and ministries are mightily blessed and fruitful, yet we personally are not living in obedience to His Word, we shall surely fall when God brings His tests.

CHAPTER 7

Great Faith

Thus, the sermon on the Mount ends. It is recorded in greater detail in Matthew chapters 5-7. However, Luke has provided his own unique details. Then the Lord went down from that level plain and returned to his own city of Capernaum.

7:1 - *“Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.”* Just prior to entering the city Jesus had healed a leper, but now when He was in the city He was faced with another need.

7:2 - *“And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.”* The centurion, as his rank denotes, was over 100 soldiers. Perhaps he would be equivalent to a captain in modern armies.

In this account, the character of this centurion shines forth in many ways. First, it says he loved his servant. This brings up a very important truth because true faith flows from love. Here is a man who has compassion upon those who serve him. This is a rare quality indeed.

7:3 - *“And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.”* The fact that the Jewish elders would come on his behalf also speaks very highly of him as a man known for integrity and spiritual understanding.

7:4 - *“And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:”* The word translated “worthy” means “a person who merits reward for his service.”

7:5 - *“For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.”* In this verse there is a sense of deep religious convictions. The centurion’s hunger for God enabled him to receive the knowledge of the truth, even at a time when

salvation was available basically to the Jews only (cf. Jn. 4:22). Then he even built a synagogue at his own expense. Jesus said, “Where your treasure is there will be your heart also.” What a wonderful tribute to this centurion. This Gentile had come to know the truth in such a way that he had given generously to the work of God’s kingdom.

7:6 - *“Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof.”* As we continue with our observations of the beautiful character of the centurion (which could easily serve as role model for each one of us), we must note here the humility of this officer.

Deep humility is seen in the deferent courtesy that He shows to Jesus in not wishing to take His time. However, there is another aspect of this verse that we should not miss. He has a God-given revelation that Jesus is indeed *the Lord*. “Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof.”

7:7 - *“Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.”* Not only do we see the faith of this dear man of God, but another expression of abject humility—he felt that he was not even worthy to behold the face of the Lord. The centurion now gives the reason for this faith, and it is a lesson and instruction for all of us.

7:8 - *“For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to*

another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” He respected authority! He gave commands to those under him, and he expected his men to obey his words. The centurion himself was under authority, and he obeyed the commands of his superiors. He knew that if Christ would simply give the command, his servant would be healed.

The very lessons of obedience that he had learned as a soldier prepared him in his ability to understand and appreciate spiritual values and precepts. The Lord was so impressed with the centurion’s response of faith (which was rooted in an obedient life) that He used him as an example to one and all as we see in the next verse.

7:9 - *“When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”* Let us rehearse the points that have made this unnamed soldier worthy to be included in Holy Writ.

1. His love for his servant
2. His excellent relationship and testimony among the elders of his Jewish community
3. His love for the people of God, shown in building them a synagogue at his own expense
4. His evident abject humility
5. His great faith rooted in a life of obedience and authority

May we so exemplify these graces in our own lives.

7:10 - *“And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.”* The result of the centurion’s faith was that he received his request—his servant was healed. We shall also receive as we follow these principles.

The Raising of the Widow’s Son

7:11 - *“And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.”* Constantly moving about, our Lord was not content to relax and settle in one place. He was ever about His Father’s business. Nain was approximately one day’s journey from Capernaum. It lay a few miles south of Nazareth in the plain of Jezreel at the edge of little Hermon.

7:12 - *“Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.”* The cemetery was a bare ten minutes walk from the city gate. This funeral cortege with its wailing women followed by this poor widow was enough to cause one and all to grieve, especially when one considers the dire situation into which this woman had now been placed.

A woman is intended to be guarded, protected, and cared for from the cradle by her father and then when married by her husband. Should the husband die first then her son would provide for her. Thus, we are shown the plight of this dear widow who is bereft of her only son and therefore without natural support. Now she is at the mercy of others and

dependent upon their charity. Upon this scene of abject grief Jesus comes with the words of authority, comfort, and power.

7:13 - *“And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.”* The word translated “compassion” is perhaps the strongest Greek word for sympathy. It could well be rendered *bowels of yearning*, or as we might say “pouring out his heart of love” as He said: “Do not cry.” But who could say that to this poor widow except the One who could remedy the situation. This He now does by further invoking the fact that He is the Resurrection and the life.

7:14 - *“And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.”* What love, compassion, concern, and kindness flowed through those lips as He commanded that young man to get up. We must never forget that the miracles and healing that were manifested in the life of Jesus all came from a heart that was filled with desire to alleviate the suffering of His creatures. That same concern and compassion must also flow through us. Then we will become His hand extended to meet the needs of our fellow man by the release of His power that will bring deliverance from all bondages of the spirit, soul, and body.

Note now the sweetness of Jesus as He helped the son off his coffin cart, taking him by the hand and leading him to his mother. It is this kindness and consideration of the Almighty towards the widows that caused Him to think of the care of His own mother, whom He later entrusted to John while He was upon the cross (cf. Jn.19:26-27).

7:15-16 - “*And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.*” Naturally, this evoked deep emotions from those beholding the miracle. Gripped by a reverential fear, the crowd recognised that God was in their midst.

7:17 - “*And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about.*” The fame of Jesus spread far and wide because the miracle became known not just in the region of Galilee but indeed throughout the whole nation, since *Judaea* was to the south.

The Lord’s Commendation of John the Baptist

7:18 - “*And the disciples of John showed him of all these things.*” We now come to the Lord’s emphatic declaration concerning the ministry and purpose of John, his cousin. The declaration was occasioned through a question that John asked of Jesus through his own disciples. At this time, John was in the fortress prison of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea, placed there by Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea.

Herod had been angry with him because John had rebuked Herod for having married his brother Philip’s wife, Herodias. From the confines of his cell, John sends his disciples to Jesus. His imprisonment must have caused his vibrant faith to waver.

7:19 - *“John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?”* So the disciples, who seemed to have had access to his prison cell, journeyed from the other side of Jordan and came to Jesus.

7:20 - *“When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?”* When we consider that the whole mission of John the Baptist was to introduce Jesus as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, it seems strange that John should now query his own mission. Yet we must never forget the effect that prison life, in one of those cramped and unhealthy prison cells, would have upon the morale of a person. They cannot be compared to modern day prisons with all of their modern conveniences and the so-called “prisoners’ rights for humane treatment.”

Although we have no records or accounts of the conditions of that prison in the fortress, we can consider the account of the dungeon into which the prophet Jeremiah was placed. “Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire” (Jer 38:6). Such an experience would be enough to break a man’s spirit and cause doubts to cloud his mind. Jesus responded to the question, “Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?” by continuing to minister to the needy. This He did in front of John’s two disciples.

7:21 - *“And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.”* Extraordinary miracles of healing were taking place before the very eyes of John’s messengers.

7:22 - *“Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached.”* Through the demonstration of the power of God in action, Jesus answered John. This same John had prophesied that Jesus would surely perform the miraculous. Then Jesus added:

7:23 - *“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”* It is an awesome reminder that a *maintained relationship* with the Lord determines our eternal state. In the extreme case, Paul warns us in 2 Timothy 2:12: *“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.”* Let us pray that our faith fail not and that we never be ashamed of the Saviour of the world. Now our Lord, in His characteristic generosity, eulogizes John the Baptist:

7:24 - *“And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?”* In one sense, this illustration of a reed not being shaken with the wind is interesting. John is indeed wavering, but the Lord is praising him. Looking at the weak point the Lord is strengthening it by saying, *“John is remaining steadfast.”*

There is also another example in Scripture where God is far more gracious than man in summing up our lives. Let us look at Moses, whose own recorded reason for leaving Egypt was because he feared Pharaoh (cf. Ex. 2:14-15). However, God numbers him with the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:27: “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” In light of this, should we not be more generous toward one another when we see them fail? Perhaps at times we should be a little less critical of ourselves, too. Coming back to the narrative, the Lord continues by asking:

7:25 - *“But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings’ courts.”* Obviously, the Lord is contrasting the camel hair coat of John and his simple food with the rich garments and sumptuous eating of those who dwell in the royal palaces. John did not live like a king while he was upon earth. He lived a very plain life. Yet consider how heaven viewed this man:

7:26 - *“But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.”* Those in kings’ palaces and the rulers of this world do not enjoy the same status in heaven’s eyes as a prophet of the Lord. Yet John is greater even than the prophets.

7:27 - *“This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.”* John is the one chosen to be the man who fulfils the prophecies of both Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. Malachi 3:1

says, “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”

We read in Isaiah 40:3, “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” In this declaration, the Lord continues to stress the greatness of John:

7:28 - *“For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”* John has a pre-eminent place alongside Moses and Elijah. In fact, he came in the power and spirit of Elijah. Yet those who are in the kingdom of heaven are greater than he.

This verse can be understood only when we realise that John was still living under the Old Covenant and therefore was not born again in the same fashion as we are in the new covenant. This concept may be understood by the comparison of a great field marshal to one who is a son of the king. A prince would rank higher, although his deeds could not be compared to those of the great warrior.

7:29 - *“And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptised with the baptism of John.”* Many who heard John believed his message and submitted themselves to the baptism of John. Therefore, since John’s baptism was one of repentance, they were in right standing with God, having been accorded forgiveness of their sins.

Many of the common people took to heart the message of John and found forgiveness.

7:30 - *“But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of him.”* However, most of the religious leaders were self-righteous and refused to receive God’s forgiveness. Therefore, they were outside of God’s righteousness. It is ever the same today. Many people seek to establish their own righteousness and reject the righteousness which is by faith in Christ (cf. Rom.10:1-4).

The Changing Moods of Mankind

7:31-32 - *“And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.”* In these passages we have an important message, especially to leaders. The message is this—you can never please people no matter what you do!

People often try to direct their leaders and urge them to take certain courses of action. Yet leaders must be careful not to follow their every whim, for in so doing, they become like the proverbial “chicken with his head cut off.”

A family in our local church constantly found fault with the other members of the church. Then they urged the leaders to initiate a new program for the young people. When we created a new program and put them in charge, they would

not move one finger to help. Instead, they started criticizing other aspects of the church. Soon, they left the church in a spirit of bitterness. Since that time, the atmosphere of the church has been much better.

We must remember that the Lord is to be the head of the Church. Christ will direct the church in His wisdom and not by the whims of the people. We cannot please immature, unconsecrated children anyway. In essence, this what the Lord is teaching here.

7:33-35 - *“For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children.”*

John was not social and did not mingle with the people. Thus, the Pharisees found fault with him. They said he was demon-possessed. The lifestyle of Jesus was essentially the opposite. He was social, but the Pharisees found fault with Him for that. No matter what these men of God did, the people found fault with them. The lesson is that we should not live to please people but God.

People will drive you to distraction, and will bring ulcers and severe mental stress if you listen to everything they say. Instead, we should walk in wisdom. Jesus said: “Wisdom is justified of all her children.” This is another way of saying that in the end, wisdom is shown to be true by taking the right course of action. When you see the fruit

of wisdom (i.e. her children), wisdom is vindicated in the end.

The Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36 - *“And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat.”* In a very gracious act on the part of the Master, Jesus condescended to enter the house of this Pharisee by the name of Simon.

7:37 - *“And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment.”* From the description given of this woman, we may assume that she was a well-known city prostitute. The alabaster box was a very costly necessary possession of every woman in those days. Sometimes worn around the neck or kept in the house, the box was broken open on her wedding night. The fact that the woman possessed this alabaster box shows us that within the heart of the deepest sinner there is *a desire for respectability*. We must never forget this. A prison chaplain told me that even the vilest criminals appreciate their pastor dressing in an appropriate manner when making his rounds to see them in their cells.

It was customary in those times that when a Pharisee would give a meal, especially to distinguished guests, the common people could feel free to enter and listen to the pearls of wisdom that might be spoken at such a gathering. The actual meal would have been given in the inner court of the house,

for in those days the houses of the rich were built around an open courtyard in which generally there was a fountain and a garden. Returning to our narrative, we read that this particular woman came.

7:38 - *“And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”* In Bible days they ate in a reclining position, supported by their left hand, while their feet would be away from the table. This accounts for the woman being behind Jesus as she washed his feet with her tears. These tears came from a deep repentance that was being worked out in her heart. So deep was the spirit of repentance that she was willing to completely abandon herself to the Lord.

In those times, all women in public had their hair tied back. To have the hair any other way was deemed immodest. Even to kiss the feet of a man was unacceptable, yet the Lord gave His approval to this as well. However, Simon questioned in his heart the attitude and actions of Jesus.

7:39 - *“Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.”* The Pharisees were very concerned with external holiness. For them, it would have been unthinkable even to be in the company of such a woman, not to mention her ministering to them, or kissing their feet.

7:40 - *“And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.”* Simon addressed Jesus as “Master.” The manner in which Simon addressed Jesus clearly reveals that he acknowledged Jesus as a respected teacher. However, the *manner* in which he received Him was most discourteous, as Jesus will develop shortly.

7:41-42 - *“There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?”* To that question, Simon the Pharisee responds correctly, as Jesus acknowledges.

7:43 - *“Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.”* Now the Lord applies this parable to the current situation and addresses the discourteous way in which Simon had received Him.

7:44 - *“And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.”* The first act that was accorded a guest in those times was to have the lowest of the servants take a bowl of cool water and wash the feet of the one invited. The streets were very dusty.

Therefore, of necessity, upon entering a house (especially when sitting at table) it would be the norm to have clean feet.

This, Jesus points out, the woman had done, but Simon had neglected his obligation to an honoured guest.

7:45 - *“Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.”* Another very important custom that Simon neglected was a proper greeting. Upon receiving a guest, the host should have given a kiss of peace upon his cheek, a mark of respect that would never have been omitted when receiving a rabbi or teacher. Again, the woman had done this to the feet of Jesus.

7:46 - *“My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.”* A guest was normally anointed upon his head with a sweet smelling oil. The omission was again remedied by the woman. Then, after rehearsing the very evident discourtesies of His host, Jesus reverts to the parable.

7:47 - *“Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”* By this illustration, it is clear that Jesus knew all along who the woman was. Not only did she have a far greater appreciation for Him than did Simon, she recognised her need of forgiveness far more than Simon. Simon was too blinded by his self-righteousness to understand his need. Now turning and addressing the woman directly, Jesus said unto her:

7:48-49 - *“Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?”* Those at the table now began to question

his authority. Earlier in His ministry Jesus had forgiven the paralytic his sins. He did indeed prove His authority for so doing. (Please see our comments on Luke 5:20-24.) In this case He is content to repeat Himself.

7:50 - *“And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”* Probably the Lord did not have much respect for those who were sitting at the table with Him. It is an interesting maxim in the Scripture, as well as in life itself, that the Lord will treat us as we treat Him. Therefore, because of Simon’s evident discourtesies, the Lord did not feel bound to answer any further questions. This could be a useful lesson for us in dealing with people.

CHAPTER 8

The Lord’s Ministering Women

8:1 - *“And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him ...”* Again we see that the ministry of the Lord was a very active one. There was no time that was not put to profitable use. Although every day of His ministry is not recorded in detail in the Gospels, this does not suggest that some days were not as noteworthy or fruitful as the others.

Nevertheless, here is a pattern that we would do well to copy. We should at all times be about our Master’s business, sowing beside all waters. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” What

we sow today may not bear fruit until years later. Nonetheless, it is imperative to plant continually.

8:2 - *“And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils.”* This was the same Mary to whom Jesus appeared first after His resurrection (Jn. 20:15-18). Mary provides a very fitting confirmation of the parable of the two debtors of the previous chapter. Truly the Lord had lifted her up from the deep mire of satanic bondage. Thus, she became one of those who were deeply attached to the Saviour. People who are self-righteous feel they have done little wrong, and have little of which to be forgiven. Therefore, they love little. People who understand how much they have been forgiven, love much.

8:3 - *“And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.”* Looking at this list, we see that there were people from the whole spectrum of society who followed the Lord. Joanna was a lady of the court. She was married to one of the most trusted employees of the king, yet she was in the company of the despised Mary. This truth is the key to church living. People of such diverse backgrounds and callings can live together in harmony when Christ is their common bond. This is the miracle of Christianity.

While we are on the subject of women, it is interesting to note that women tend to be more open to the Gospel than men. About 65 percent of the readers of Christian books are women. Another important point that would be appreciated

by ministers is the fact that women are often the best prayer warriors. Therefore, they contribute much to the spreading of the Gospel light. In light of these facts, women should be acknowledged publicly and encouraged.

The Parable of the Sower

8:4 - *“And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:”*

This parable, the first of the seven parables of the Kingdom, is recorded in Matthew 13 and Mark 4. When the sower sows his seed, the seed falls into four different kinds of ground. Let’s look at the *four conditions of soil* into which the seed fell. After that, we will study the interpretation that the Lord gives.

8:5-8 - *“A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* Having heard this parable, the disciples desired Jesus to give the interpretation.

8:9-10 - *“And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they*

might not understand.” In response, the Lord gives the reason for speaking in parables. The Lord is actually quoting Isaiah 6:9: “And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.”

A parable can be defined as “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” The Lord spoke in parables for an important reason—to hide truth from those who were not worthy of the truth. God obscures truth from some, while others are permitted to understand truth. It is an awesome fact that truth and understanding is a blessing that is given only to those who walk uprightly. It is written in Proverbs 9:10: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”

This flows with the admonition of the Lord in Matthew 7:6: “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” The key to understanding the holy Scriptures is to walk in a manner pleasing to God.

I have seen many Christians in my lifetime who have turned from the paths of righteousness and “twisted the Scriptures to their own destruction” as the Apostle Peter says (2 Pet. 3:16). The Lord starts explaining the parable to His disciples in the following verse:

8:11 - “*Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.*” What began as an earthly story of a sower going forth to sow is now being given a spiritual meaning. The sower is obviously

a preacher who is proclaiming the Gospel message. A speaker is a sower of words.

8:12 - *“Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.”* This is the first of the four kinds of human hearts that hear the preaching of the Gospel. The first group are people who certainly hear the preacher but do not understand the message. Just as the fowls of the air snatch away seed that lies on the surface of the soil, so the devils take away the remembrance of the message so that the listeners may not believe and come to the knowledge of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

8:13 - *“They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.”* The second category of hearers are those who initially appreciate the Gospel truths and walk in them with joy for a short time. But the Word is received into very shallow, uncommitted, stony ground.

A stony heart represents hardness and rebellion. These hearers will not permit the Word to enter into the deeper parts of their hearts where sin dwells, and they resist being completely obedient to the teachings of Scripture. Therefore, when the tests of life come, they *quickly* turn away from the Lord and go back into the world.

8:14 - *“And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares*

and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” These people accept the Word of God and might even walk with God for a number of years. The Word sown in their hearts grows to the extent that other “growths” can wind themselves around it and choke it. There are many other pursuits and unresolved issues in their hearts that act as thorns that crowd out the Word of life. They are: cares, riches, and pleasures.

Cares - Worries will ruin our spiritual life. Therefore, the Apostle Paul admonished us: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

Let us not be entangled with the affairs of this life lest we become unable to accomplish God’s purposes for our lives (2 Tim. 2:4). Are we wise in our use of money? Is it necessary to hold down two jobs to pay for things we do not really need? Have we put ourselves under many unnecessary pressures?

Riches - We are warned many times in the Bible of the dangers of riches, but perhaps the most awesome of these warnings is found in 1 Timothy 6:9-10: “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Pleasures - I would like to call to mind an apocryphal story that is attributed to the Apostle John. It goes something like this. A certain disciple found the Apostle playing with fish in a pond. The disciple remarked that for an Apostle of the Lamb, this was a waste of time. To this the Apostle is said to have replied: “A bow that is always taut will lose its resilience.” Even as Jesus said to His disciples, “Come ye apart and rest a while,” certainly it is necessary for us to relax at times.

To find the perfect balance, we should also remember the admonition of King Solomon: “He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich” (Prov. 21:17). Although we need relaxation, we should be careful that it does not consume our time and thinking.

Let us remember what the Lord has warned us of in Luke 8:14: Those men and women who are held captive by cares, riches, and pleasures will never bring to perfection the glorious fruit of the Spirit. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Now let us have a look at the fourth category of believers in the parable of the sower, and that is the “good ground” that brings forth good and abiding fruit.

8:15 - *“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”* Matthew and Mark add something else to this. Those people who represent the “good ground” have varying degrees of fruitfulness.

Some produce one hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold (Mt. 13:23; Mk. 4:8). By God's grace, may we be those who are in the camp of the hundredfold Christians. Let us now review the meaning of the four kinds of ground.

1. Seed that fell by the way side—Those with *no* receptivity at all to the Word. The wayside is a beaten down path. It is hard and totally unprepared to receive seed. The seed did not penetrate the ground of their hearts and never germinated. These people did *not* experience new birth. Satan came and stole the seed, even as the birds snatch away seed that lies on the surface of the ground.

2. Seed in stony places—Those with *a very shallow* receptivity to the Word. The seed fell upon rocks that had little earth. Rocks speak of hardness and rebellion. These people received the Word in a superficial way. They rejoiced in the Word only for a short time, but because of rebellion and hardness (stones), the Word could not find roots in the depths of their hearts where sin dwells. Therefore, when the tests of life came, they *quickly* withered and died and the word brought no fruit.

3. Seed in thorny places—Those with *some receptivity to the Word* and some growth. These received the Word and allowed it to grow in their hearts over a period of time. The Word grew enough for other evil growths to wrap themselves around it, strangling the life of the Word. These had fruit growing in its early stages, but it never came to maturity. Pleasures, lusts, riches, and cares destroyed the fruit. These people had been born again for some time, but then died out later.

4. Seed in good ground—Those with *much receptivity* to the Word who bring forth fruit that remains. They have “a good and honest heart.” Also, they pass the test of time. They “bring forth fruit with patience.” These people bring forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. The people in this fourth category have something the others do not have. They are honest. They love the truth and allow the truth to change them. They also waited! Our love for God is proven by waiting for Him. (Isa. 64:4).

1. Seed by the way side—no new birth. The seed never germinated (no fruit).
2. Seed in stony places —new birth, *quickly died* when difficulties came (no fruit).
3. Seed in thorny places—new birth, some growth in time. Later overcome and die out (no ripe fruit). A plant that is fruitless is worthless.
4. Seed in good ground—new birth. The word thrives in honest, patient hearts (much abiding fruit).

The Secret Things to be Made Manifest

8:16 - “*No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.*” The thought here is that the Lord does not want us to be secret disciples. He said that His followers were the light of the world. This is true since Christ the Light of the World is in us.

We must let His light in us shine brightly for all to see. Then all who behold the good works that we were foreordained to

do before the foundation of the world shall glorify the Father of Lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Now the Lord continues the same theme:

8:17 - *“For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.”* The kingdom of God is a kingdom of Light. Nothing is hidden, but all shall be revealed on that day when the books of our lives shall be opened for all to read. Therefore, we should live our lives in the light of His presence, that we might not be ashamed on that day of reckoning. Therefore, to the wise He says:

8:18 - *“Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.”* We must be doers of the Word as well as hearers. We should also understand this principle of the Kingdom—that those who have shall receive. Perhaps we can explain this by using Daniel’s words. “God gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan. 2:21). If we will walk in the pathway of wisdom, we shall receive more and more wisdom.

Proverbs echoes the same thought: “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels” (Prov. 1:5). But unto those who refuse wisdom, we find this awesome warning: “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ... Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me” (Prov 1:24, 28).

Mary, Mother of Jesus

8:19 - *“Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.”* We are now going to see a very important truth regarding the relationship between Jesus and His mother Mary upon earth.

8:20-21 - *“And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.”* The Lord is showing us that on earth Mary had no special privileges above those of other believers. Therefore, in heaven, she has no special rights as an intercessor for those on earth. We are commanded always to pray to the Father in the Name of Jesus, not in the name of Mary.

The Storm on the Lake

In this account we see that Luke has recorded very briefly this event which the other Gospels give in more detail. Luke focuses upon the vividness of the storm which can cause the lake to be tempestuous in just a moment of time. So let us read and appreciate the fact that Jesus, who was now very tired, having complete confidence in His friends' experience on this lake, curls up on a pillow in the stern of the ship and falls asleep.

8:22-23 - *“Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched*

forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.” Within a very short period of time they were in danger of sinking.

8:24 - *“And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.”*

The scene was one of contrasts. The disciples shook the Master in desperation as the water came in faster than that they could bail it out. But the Lord arose and quietly stretching Himself, He moved to the side of the boat, calmly addressing the storm with the words, “Peace, be still.” With that, the storm immediately subsided and the fearful disciples became awestruck at the command Jesus had over the elements.

8:25 - *“And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.”* Beloved, we also can believe for the Lord to answer our prayers with respect to the weather when the need arises. We can do so by the faith of the Son of God within us (Gal. 2:20). It is not our faith, but the faith of the Son of God within us.

The Man With a Legion of Devils

8:26 - *“And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.”* The region of the Gadarenes was on the east side of the Sea of Galilee, across from Capernaum. It was a very beautiful hill country.

8:27 - *“And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.”*

Demon possession comes in many different and varied forms. This was a very severe form of possession in which the demons had taken over the man’s sensibilities, so much so that he was naked and lived among the dead.

8:28 - *“When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.”* The demons were speaking through the lips of the man they had entered. The encouraging truth from our point of view is that the demons know who Jesus is, and they also know that their end will be eternal torment. James 2:19 confirms this when he says, “The devils believe, and tremble.”

8:29 - *“(For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had [seized] him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)”* We must realise that demons possess a strength that we can only call superhuman. They have the capability of breaking through all forms of human restraints such as chains and fetters.

Demons seek to destroy, even as Jesus declared in John 10:10: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” The “thief,” in the fullness of the sense, is the devil himself.

8:30 - *“And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.”* A “legion” in the Roman army consisted of 6,000 men; so there were a considerable number of demons residing in this poor man. These devils knew only too well who Jesus was.

8:31 - *“And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.”* The “deep” is the abyss of hell, and they begged Christ not to commit them to hell before their appointed time. Since demons generally seek to inhabit a body, and because Jesus was commanding them to come out of the man, the demons looked around for other bodies to inhabit. Therefore, they asked Christ to send them into a herd of swine.

8:32-33 - *“And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.”* Here we must remind ourselves that the demons never win. These foul spirits had hoped to have a safe house in the swine, which are unclean animals. Instead, the panic-driven spirits entered the swine and drove them into the sea of Galilee. As a result, the herd died and the demons were left without a body in which to dwell. The swinekeepers were awestruck.

8:34-35 - *“When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Then*

they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.”

Here we see the transformation that had taken place in the man after the demons were cast out of him. His mind became normal and his sensibilities returned to such a degree that he was now wearing clothes. We must ask the Lord for the gift of discerning of spirits (1 Cor.12:10). We need to know when a person is truly demon possessed, and then we need the faith to deliver.

8:36 - *“They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.”* Now from our point of view the attitude of the owners of the swine was incredible. They wanted Jesus to leave the area, and it seems that they stirred up all the people, too.

8:37 - *“Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.”* As Jesus got into the ship, the delivered man wanted to go with Him.

8:38-39 - *“Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.”*

When we have received something from the Lord, we are to give that blessing to others. Therefore, we are to witness to others of the saving grace of Christ. This he did very effectively, for he did so throughout the ten cities of the region called the Decapolis (see Mk. 5:20).

The Healing of the Woman with an Issue of Blood and the Daughter of Jairus

8:40 - *“And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him.”* The multitude on the western side of the lake were much more appreciative of Christ’s ministry than those of the Gadarenes, who seemed more concerned about the loss of the swine than the fact that the young man had been delivered and restored. Let us now enter the narrative where two very noteworthy healings are performed.

8:41-42 - *“And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went the people thronged him.”* This is an unusual narrative. As Jesus was heeding the request of the ruler of the synagogue to meet the need of his daughter, another miracle took place on the way to his house.

8:43-44 - *“And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd.”*

This was no ordinary touch. It was the touch of one who reached out with divine faith. This is important for us to understand because *how* we touch the Lord in prayer determines whether or not we receive. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). That Jesus had felt that touch of faith is clear from His reaction.

8:45 - “*And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?*” The disciples, not understanding the touch of faith, reverted to their natural understanding. They were amazed that He should ask such a question with the crowds pressing against him from every quarter. The Lord, sensing that someone had touched Him in faith, explains:

8:46 - “*Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.*” When we touch the Lord by faith, then His goodness flows to us in whatever form that we have asked of Him. The lady obviously was still standing close by.

8:47 - “*And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.*” Here is one of the lessons of life that we must not miss—when the Lord has blessed us or answered our prayer, we should return to thank Him and also acknowledge His graciousness to others. For this lady there was an added blessing, as the Lord with his characteristic generosity said to her:

8:48 - “ *Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.*” Comfort and peace came from the One whom Paul calls “the God of all comfort” (2 Cor.1:3) and “the God of peace” (Rom.15:33). Often people lose the additional blessings because they do not return to give thanks. In the future, may we not be amiss in this spiritual virtue so that we can receive all the blessings that He desires to grant us.

8:49 - “*While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.*” It is so often the case that when we expect the Lord to do a miracle in our lives, some further tragedy happens by which a greater miracle is released from the hands of the Master. Such was the situation here for Jairus.

8:50 - “*But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.*” What mighty faith is released in the presence of the Lord! We should dwell in His presence where that fullness of faith can be imparted to us by His Word of comfort and encouragement.

A day or two before writing this, I was the target of a devastating attack. Darts of doubt and unbelief of the enemy were hurled at me from the lips of another pastor. The attack suggested that my life’s work was in ruins. But upon turning to the Lord, what words of encouragement came from His lips as He reminded me of His promises concerning the work He had entrusted to me! It changed my mourning into dancing.

And lest you think those words of the adversary were just *comments*, the spiritual power of those words was so great

that they put my heart out of rhythm and raised my blood pressure to a record high. Then the words of Jesus normalized everything, and I just want to praise Him more and more for His goodness to me.

8:51 - *“And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.”* When faith is needed it is important for all avenues of unbelief, doubt, and ridicule to be closed. Hence, the Lord entered with only true believers.

8:52 - *“And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.”* When the crowd heard those words of encouragement, how different their reaction was to the parents and the three closest disciples:

8:53 - *“And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.”* Those who look with the natural eye are never going to see with the eye of faith. Therefore, He put them all out of the room.

8:54-56 - *“He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.”* When the mockers go, faith in action is manifested. The girl’s past illness had left her weak. Thus, the Lord, who concerns Himself with the needs of us all, makes sure that her body is nourished. The parents had believed for healing and now, to their amazement, a far greater miracle was manifested. She was raised from the dead.

In this case, unlike the one where the demoniac was delivered in the region of the Gadarenes, Jesus did not want the miracle known. The reason is clear. He wanted the eastern side of Galilee evangelized through the man who was delivered. Here He wanted to be spared from the crowds.

CHAPTER 9

The Commissioning of the Twelve

9:1-2 - *“Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.”* In the commissioning of the disciples we have several very important truths to consider. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 10:15, “How shall they preach unless they be sent.” We cannot go unless we are sent by God. Therefore, we have to know our mandate from the Lord. The apostles were given: 1.) Authority to cast out demons, and 2.) The power to heal all manner of sicknesses.

In his companion book, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Luke describes a situation where the apostles had authority to cast out demons: We read in Acts 19:13-17: “Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them,

and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.”

We can see, then, that we should not try casting out demons unless we are empowered and directed by the Lord to do so. The 12 disciples were then given power to heal. We must ask the Lord for that privilege to see signs and wonders done in the name of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Another truth that must not be overlooked is the fact that Judas Iscariot was given the same power. Having a great ministry does not save our souls. Although Judas performed mighty wonders through the laying on of his own hands, he was unlike the other eleven. He delighted not in blessing but loved cursing (Ps. 109:17).

Having the gifts of the Spirit does not change our lives, and preaching does not change our lives—a new heart does. Judas preached and manifested the power of God, but he never had a change of heart. Now the Lord gives further instruction concerning their provisions for the trip:

9:3 - *“And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.”* Matthew 10:10 includes something Luke omitted—that “the workman (or the minister) is worthy of his meat.” Paul confirms this truth when he says: “They that preach the Gospel shall live by the Gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14).

The Lord expected those who received the Gospel and its blessings to take care of its messengers.

9:4 - *“And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.”* From this passage we understand that we should not go from house to house when we go to a town to preach. We should remain in the same house until we leave that town. For evangelists it is best not to stay in a number of homes when you preach in a certain place. Everyone will want to fill your ears with complaints and grievances about church situations and it can hinder your effectiveness.

9:5 - *“And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.”* I have well seen the power and reality of this verse. Fifty years ago a certain town ran an evangelist out of their borders. The evangelist took off his shoes and shook the dust of the town from the soles, and from that time until now, no one has been able to start a church in that town.

9:6 - *“And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the Gospel, and healing every where.”* Now the disciples begin their travels. The narrative is now interrupted because Luke momentarily turns our attention toward the wicked ruler, Herod.

9:7-8 - *“Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; And of some that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets*

was risen again.” A little later when Jesus asks His disciples, “Whom do men say that I am?” there was a variance of opinions in the minds of his contemporaries as to who He was. Herod was no exception, but since Herod is now directly quoted, we are given an insight into his character.

9:9 - *“And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.”* The attitude of Herod toward both John the Baptist and Jesus reveals a man who knows the truth and rejoices in the truth. Mark 6:20 - *“For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”*

However, Herod was a man who was bound and manipulated by the imperious desires of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife whom he had married. An adulterer is reduced, as we are told in Proverbs 6:26, to “a piece of bread.” This is the description of one who has no backbone. Such was Herod Antipas. He had no strength to do what he knew was right, although he really wanted to see Jesus.

The narrative now comes to the return of the disciples from their own preaching tour.

9:10 - *“And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.”* The 12 disciples were full of joy (at least the eleven were) as they recounted to Jesus that even the devils were subject to them. However, Jesus reminded them that it

was more important that their names were written in the Book of Life. No doubt, this was a warning to Judas as well as others like him, who may be used in mighty ministries but whose lives are filled with iniquity.

After a time of intense ministry which the disciples had just experienced, there was need for a time of refreshing. Therefore, Jesus took them aside to the desert over and beyond Bethsaida, on the east coast of the Sea of Galilee.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

9:11 - *“And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.”* Jesus had taken His disciples apart to rest. Both they and He desperately needed to get away from the multitudes. Anyone who is in the ministry will know how wearying it is to be constantly besieged with people.

9:12 - *“But when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.”* At this time the Lord must have been very tired. Yet we are told that He was moved with compassion for the multitudes.

9:13 - *“But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.”* Jesus was

quite undeterred by the questionings of his disciples. He fully knew what He was about to do.

9:14 - *“For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.”* Five thousand is equivalent to 50 x 100, the measurements of the Outer Court of the Tabernacle of Moses. Here was the One of whom Moses prophesied, ministering in the outer court to meet the physical needs of His people.

9:15-16 - *“And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.”* Here was Jehovah Jireh—the Lord Our Provider, caring for the natural necessities of daily life of the multitude so that they fainted not in the way.

9:17 - *“And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.”* El-Shaddai—the all-bountiful Lord, provided more than enough for the multitudes. There were 12 baskets of food left over. The number 12 is significant. It is a divine number which means “government.” The government of the universe is carried by Him. The prophet Isaiah declared that “the government shall be upon His shoulder” (Isa. 9:6).

Therefore, we should not be concerned about what we are going to eat or drink, since our Heavenly Father knows our needs. King David says: “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good

thing” (Psa 34:10). Let us be of good cheer; He will surely look after our wellbeing.

Jesus Starts to Speak of His Crucifixion and Resurrection

9:18 - *“And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?”* This is a prelude to showing Peter that it is only by divine revelation that a person can really know who Jesus is.

9:19 - *“They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.”* The common people of Israel had no idea who Jesus was. Now the Lord narrows the question to His own disciples.

9:20 - *“He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.”* While Luke does not develop this, Matthew does in Matthew 16:17: *“Jesus answered, Blessed art thou Peter because flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.”*

9:21 - *“And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing;”* This revelation was not to be common knowledge at that time. As ever, it is a gift from God to know who the Saviour of the world is. Now Jesus must begin to prepare His disciples for His one real purpose for coming into the world; so He says:

9:22 - *“The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.”*

The Cost of Discipleship

9:23 - *“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”* The cross of which the Lord speaks is the daily dying to self. The key truth of the Christian life is the one expressed by Paul in his epistle wherein he states: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Paul also stated in 1 Corinthians 15:31 that he “died daily.”

9:24 - *“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”* It is by giving our lives wholly to the service and pleasure of the Lord that enables us to be saved eternally. The great choice in this life is to seek either the goods and honours of this world, or those of the one to come. We cannot serve two masters.

9:25 - *“For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?”* This world will last only as long as we live, which at the most would be 100 years—and what is that compared to an eternity in hell? It is our relationship to Jesus that is the important thing as He says in the next verse:

9:26-27 - *“For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.”*

Oh, let us constantly ask for grace that we might always give Him the glory and honour due His matchless name.

While we are on this subject of shame, may I say that “embarrassment” is a spirit from Satan that seeks to cover the saints of God and prevent them from witnessing for the Lord in public. Now Jesus turns the attention of His disciples to the soon-coming transfiguration.

The Mount of Transfiguration

9:28 - *“And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.”* Eight is the number of “new beginnings,” and certainly this was going to be an experience that they would remember for life. Peter describes it 36 years later in his epistle: “For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount” (2 Pet. 1:17-18). Surely there are experiences in God that hold us for life and eternity if we will continue in the way.

9:29 - *“And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.”* Here we

see the purity of the whiteness of Christ's holiness shining forth for the disciples to see. However, these are the robes with which every saint is clothed. At times (although not with the same intensity as on the Mount), I have seen with my spiritual eyes the glorious purity of the white robes of the saints.

9:30 - *“And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:”* These are the two candlesticks of whom we read in Zechariah 4:14: “These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” These two men were sent by God for a very important purpose. Verse 31 explains the reason for their coming.

9:31 - *“Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”* The cross was the purpose for which the Lord had come into the world. He was the Lamb of God who was slain before the foundation of the world to take away the sin of the world. This conversation between Jesus and the two prophets was not heard by the disciples because they were fast asleep.

9:32 - *“But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.”* Although Peter had never seen Moses and Elijah, he instantly knew who they were. In heaven we are perfected in the knowledge, not only of the Lord, but of one another. There we will know the names of everyone and who they are.

9:33 - *“And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here:*

and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.” That Peter would suggest that three tabernacles be built is of spiritual and prophetic interest. There were three major feasts in Israel. The first one was Passover, which represents salvation. Pentecost represents the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But the third major feast was the Feast of Tabernacles, and this was a feast of glory.

Spiritually, the Feast of Tabernacles is yet to be fulfilled in the Church Age. This feast will be highlighted by the glory of God being manifested in the faces of the saints, as we read in Isaiah 60:1-2: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.” Then another marvel happened.

9:34 - *“While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.”* The cloud of great glory (the presence of God) was now covering them as it had Moses on Mount Sinai, as well as the temple of Solomon at its dedication.

9:35 - *“And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.”* This is the second of three times that the audible voice of God was heard in the life and ministry of Jesus. The previous time was at the Jordan River where God said: “This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Yet this second time He gives the

admonition—“Hear Him!” The third time was in answer to the prayer of Jesus in John 12:28: “Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

9:36 - *“And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.”*

These experiences were only for Peter, James, and John at this time. If everyone had known these things it could have hindered Christ from going to the cross. There are experiences in our own lives that are not prudent to share with others.

There are experiences in our own lives that are not prudent to share with others.

The Descent Down the Mountain

9:37 - *“And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.”* There is a sense from this episode that we cannot always remain on the mountain top experiences with God. These glorious times are given to us in order that we may minister more effectively to the needs of those below in the valleys. We must realise that in the crowd that was waiting for Him at the bottom of the mountain was a man with a dire need.

9:38 - *“And behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.”* One of the tragedies in life, especially in those days, was when an only child was afflicted. All the hopes of the

parents were placed in him. This child was not only abnormal, he was obviously demon possessed, and that made the situation even more difficult.

9:39 - *“And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.”* It is heartbreaking to behold parents with children who are retarded. It is so evident to others and it is such a cross for those fathers and mothers. Thus, the father continues to pour out his heart to the Lord.

9:40 - *“And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.”* There is a certain degree of power that is needed in casting out demons. The smaller demons go out by pointing one’s finger at them in the name of Jesus, but others are far more stubborn, like this one.

9:41 - *“And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.”* However, as Matthew further explains: “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:21).

9:42 - *“And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.”* The devil, perceiving that Jesus was coming, sought to torment the child for the last time before having to leave at the command of Jesus, who was filled with power and glory. This is important to understand because the enemy, in whatever form we encounter him, will often put up the greatest fight just before he is defeated. This sometimes confuses the saints, since they

think Satan is stronger than he really is. However, do not be deceived by the devil's antics; persevere until he resists no longer.

Again Jesus Speaks of His Decease

9:43-44 - *“And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.”* The focus of everyone's attention was obviously upon the mighty power of God that had been manifested in the wonderful deliverance of this boy. Yet the mind of Jesus was on the higher goal for His life—the cross.

9:45 - *“But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.”* It appears that the apostles were becoming a little in awe of what He was seeking to communicate to them, for He had already sought to prepare them on the way to the Mount (9:22). It was in actuality a message that they did not fully understand until after His resurrection.

The Greatest in the Kingdom

9:46 - *“Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.”* There is one thing that should be clearly understood by all of us—we shall not all be equal in the Kingdom. Therefore, we would do well, for our own eternal good, to consider and meditate upon the teachings of Jesus concerning true greatness in the kingdom of God.

9:47 - *“And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him,”* In using a child to illustrate Kingdom greatness, the Lord is saying be childlike but not childish.

9:48 - *“And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.”* This can be summed up in one word—humility!

On Those Who Are For Us

9:49-50 - *“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.”* This passage is amplified by Mark 9:38-40: *“But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part”* (Mk. 9:39-40).

These verses should help us in our dealings with other Christians. We should seek to receive them into fellowship to whatever degree they are willing without ostracizing them in the manner of so many churches. After all, by the grace of God, we are all going to live together eternally as brother and sisters.

PART 5

From Galilee to Jerusalem

(9:51 - 19:27)

Toward Jerusalem

9:51 - *“And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,”* We are now entering the special section of Luke’s Gospel when the Lord is passing through Samaria for the last time. It is filled with rich teaching, most of which is recorded only by Luke and not mentioned by the other Gospel writers. In this verse we have the fulfilment of that vision Isaiah had of Christ: “Therefore have I set my face like a flint” (Isa. 50:7).

I once received a vision of the face of Jesus. In the vision I saw His face set with great firmness, and it was pointed toward His destiny. By His grace, we need to have that same strength and holy determination to fulfil the course that He has ordained for our lives. We must finish the race and not be distracted to the right or to the left of the path He has planned for us.

9:52 - *“And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.”* This is the principle that many evangelists and ministers have followed ever since. It is wise to send an advance party to prepare meetings so that when we come the people are expecting us.

9:53 - *“And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.”* Jesus was passing through Samaria en route to Jerusalem. The Samaritans were essentially a Gentile people who had their own place of

worship on Mount Gerizim, and therefore were hostile to those who were intent on worshipping in Jerusalem. The reaction of His hotheaded disciples is now described.

9:54 - *“And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?”*

So often the solution when we are young is to liquidate the opposition by whatever means we feel are available to us. Age tends to mellow the heart. Jesus turned and admonished the young disciples.

9:55 - *“But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.”* Let us remember Proverbs 16:32: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” Jesus continues to remind His disciples why He had come.

9:56 - *“For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”*

This sweet spirit of tolerance is one that we need to cultivate, for in so doing, we may save some who otherwise would be lost.

The Demands of Discipleship

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a beautiful German pastor, made comments on verses 57-62. Just seven days before the allies arrived at the prison camp, Bonhoeffer was martyred on the orders of Heinrich Himmler, head of the Nazi gestapo. I can do no better than to paraphrase his comments.

Three classes of *would-be* disciples are mentioned:

1. The one without the call
2. The one who was bound by legal obligations
3. The one who gave his conditions

1. The One Without the Call

9:57 - *“And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.”* Clearly the Word of God teaches us that we cannot go unless we are sent (Rom.10:15). The demands upon a minister are high. It is impossible to pass through the pressures and trials he is subjected to without the grace of God. This is essentially what Jesus is saying to this man who is offering to follow Him wherever He goes. Paul reminds us that “every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph 4:7).

9:58 - *“Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”* There are tremendous hardships and suffering associated with the call of Christ to the ministry. We can only endure if we receive grace from God. Grace is given to us according to our call. If we are not called into the ministry, there is no grace given to us to be in the ministry.

2. The One Who Was Bound by Legal Obligations

9:59-60 - *“And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Jesus said*

unto him, *Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*” The response of Jesus was very firm. The matters of the Kingdom of heaven must take preeminence over any earthly business. At the early age of 12, Jesus said to His own parents in the temple: “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?”

3. The One Who Gave His Conditions

9:61 - “*And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*” There are a surprising number of people in this category of disciples. They tell God they will serve Him, but then they give Him their conditions.

I have known some who have said that they need a certain salary in order to serve the Lord. Others have said that they will serve Him provided He does not send them to certain countries.

9:62 - “*And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*” After reading these verses, let us realise that it is a tremendous privilege to be saved. The price that Jesus personally paid for our salvation was so great that anything we may be asked to sacrifice in return is *nothing* by comparison. Let us not bargain or haggle with God for our services.

With cheerfulness and wholeheartedness, let us say like the prophet Isaiah, “Here am I, send me.” Whatsoever task He appoints for us, let us be sincerely grateful that He would desire to use us.

CHAPTER 10

The Commissioning of the Seventy

10:1 - *“After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.”* Seventy is the number of “eldership.” Thus, we see a truth here—that the Lord did not just send forth His apostles, but because of the expansion of the work, He needed to send forth these elders.

There are the five ministry gifts of Christ, which are sovereignly given and ordained by the Lord Himself. “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). No one can “claim” these offices by faith. No one can say— “I want to be an apostle, evangelist, or pastor.” These are sovereignly given by God (cf. Heb. 5:4). However, the positions of elder and deacon can be “desired” and sought after.

“This is a true saying, If a man *desire* the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). Thus, it is possible that those who are pious and wish to serve the Lord in their local church will be given an opportunity to do so, provided they fulfil the requirements that are listed by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:2-7. To these in this category, Jesus says in verse 2:

10:2 - *“Jesus said unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.”* As it was in the days of Jesus, so will it be in the end times when

God pours out His Spirit in revival power. Ministers, elders, and deacons will be needed to bring in the harvest. In verse 3, Jesus gives instructions to these 70 elders.

10:3 - *“Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.”* The Lamb of God sends messengers with the Lamb nature. It is a principle of God as we see in Isaiah 16:1: “Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land.” We must ask the Lord to work in us the Lamb-like qualities of Jesus, some of which are seen in Isaiah 53:7: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” The meekness and peace that the Lamb of God exudes overcomes the wolf-like nature of those to whom we are sent.

10:4 - *“Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.”* When the Lord sent forth His Apostles, He expected them to be cared for by those who received them. Therefore, His messengers were to travel light. The thought of “saluting no man on the way” simply meant that one should not become slowed down and distracted by the idle conversation of acquaintances.

10:5 - *“And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.”* This is excellent advice which we all should practice, so that the mantle of peace and the blood of Christ is our spiritual covering wherever we go.

10:6 - *“And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.”* If the inhabitants of

the house are true worshipers of the Lord, the peace of God that covers us will rest upon the house. If not, then that mantle will come again upon us.

10:7 - *“And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.”* Going from house to house produces busybodies. The last thing that Jesus wants is for His messengers to be instruments of gossip. Let us remain in the same house where we are received, and not go “from house to house.” Those who receive us will be blessed by the Lord in return.

10:8 - *“And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:”* One of the hallmarks of maturity is *holy contentment*. Contentment is revealed very clearly in the matter of food and lodging. Paul testifies in Philippians 4:11-13: “... I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Contentment, may I stress, comes through being instructed of the Lord and receiving His grace. It is not learned overnight but through years of experience. Paul said he had “learned” to be content.

10:9 - *“And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”* There is ever in the Gospels the thought of healing. We are to expect, through the laying on of our hands, that the Lord will heal those with

physical problems. Healing is in the atonement, as Peter says: “By whose stripes ye *were* healed” (1 Pet. 2:24).

10:10-11 - *“But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”* There follows an awesome series of judgments that are pronounced upon those who refuse to receive the messengers of Christ. By following the instructions of the Lord in these verses, we open the way for judgment upon a city that has rejected us. Now the Lord gives us an awesome insight into eternal judgment.

10:12 - *“But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.”* Sodom is identified with that horrible sin of homosexuality. Sodom did not receive the opportunity to see the signs and wonders of the Gospel era. If they had, they would have repented and accepted Christ as their Saviour. It would have remained until this day (Mt.11:23). This fact reveals an important truth—not only does God know what we have done, He also knows what we would have done if we had been given greater light. The Lord knows what we would have done if different circumstances had prevailed in our lives. Jesus now continues to chide those cities along the coast of the Sea of Galilee where some of His greatest miracles were performed.

10:13 - *“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago*

repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.” The Jewish people refused the evidence of the miracles, but those heathen towns (Tyre and Sidon) would have repented with many tears. Therefore, the Lord continues by saying,

10:14 - *“But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.”* This does not mean that the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon are in heaven. It means they are in a place of lesser torment in hell than those unbelieving Jews in Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum. We see, then, that hell has varying degrees of judgment.

10:15 - *“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.”* For those who had seen all the miracles in the hometown of Jesus during this period but had not repented, their damnation was sure. Now the Lord concludes this message by placing His servants on a level almost equal with Himself. What is done to us is counted as being done to the Lord and the Holy Father.

10:16 - *“He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.”*

The Return of the Seventy Disciples

10:17 - *“And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.”* These 70 men, as we have mentioned before, do not represent the five-fold ministries, but they represent elders. These brethren were delighted at the manifestation of the power of

God through their lives. Those of us who have experienced in some small way that power streaming through our beings, know the tremendous joy that fills our hearts as we loose, in the name of Jesus, the chains of the devil from those who are bound.

10:18 - *“And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”* These words of the Lord are prophetic of future events. Satan does not fall from heaven until the war between the opposing forces of the angels (cf. Rev.12:7-17). At that time, Satan is cast out of heaven. Then he comes down upon earth for the last three and half years prior to the battle of Armageddon. At Armageddon, the unholy trinity is defeated (Rev. 19:11-21).

10:19 - *“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”* The Lord now gives added power to His followers. We see this also in Mark 16:17-18: “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Now the Lord adds a word of caution.

10:20 - *“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”* This exhortation is so necessary because we are warned in Matthew 7:21-23: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom

of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Having a mighty ministry does not save us. The Apostle John reminds us that walking in the light saves us, not a great ministry. 1 John 1:7 tells us: “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son [continually] cleanseth us from all sin” As we walk in the light (the truth), the blood of Jesus Christ continually cleanses us.

Revealed by the Father

10:21 - *“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father; Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.”* One truth that a Christian must never forget is the fact that our new birth (and every step after that) is by grace and grace alone. If God were to remove His hand from us, we would collapse immediately. Paul illustrates this truth about grace in Romans 9:15,16,18: “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”

The awesomeness of this truth is that we can do nothing without the grace of God. Therefore, we must cry out to God for grace. Many years ago I tried to complete my studies in Greek. I thought that an intimate knowledge of the original language in which the Scriptures were written would give me the answers to theological questions, but then the Lord spoke to me. He caused me to know that understanding the mysteries of God came by grace and revelation, not by an intense study of Greek. Understanding comes by the anointing, and by the grace of God. All the religious scholars of the first century had possession of the original Hebrew and Greek, yet most of them could not recognise the Lord Jesus Christ. Their eyes were veiled from the truth when they read the Scriptures. Many of the greatest Greek scholars of the present day are not in harmony with one another. Truth comes by grace and grace alone, and God does not give grace to everyone.

10:22 - *“All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.”* All power is given to Jesus by the Father, and no one can know who Christ is without a revelation from the Father. Furthermore, we can only know the Father by the will of the Son. In realizing this, we should humble ourselves before the Lord, because God gives grace only to the humble, while He resists the proud (Jas. 4:6, 1 Pet. 5:5, Prov. 3:34). It is the acknowledgment of our abject dependence upon God that alone opens the way for the Lord to bless and manifest His presence to us. Only the humble are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:3).

10:23 - *“And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:”* It is such a privilege to have the eyes of our understanding opened to perceive spiritual truths. This verse applies particularly to the fact that the disciples were hearing and seeing things that even the most pious men during the age of the law had desired to see and hear, yet they were not allowed to in that dispensation.

10:24 - *“For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”* We should realise that we have a far greater responsibility than those who lived in the times of the law. We have the New Testament with all the wonderful sayings of Jesus. Moreover, we have the ability to enter into His very presence, a privilege which was denied them, since the veil into the holy of holies was not yet opened.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

This is one of the most-loved parables in the Bible. It has entered even into the vocabulary of the secular world. The story was given in response to a question posed to the Lord by a lawyer.

10:25 - *“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* As with many lawyers, the question that this particular man asked the Lord was not sincere. Therefore, the Lord, knowing the hearts of all men, replied:

10:26 - *“What is written in the law? how readest thou?”* One of the usual responses of the Lord Jesus when asked a question was to ask His adversaries a question in return, since they were only trying to trap Him. This method of response is worthy to be employed by us as well when we are faced with questions from those whose motives are suspect.

10:27 - *“And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”* Here we see the absolute hypocrisy of the lawyer, for he himself knew the answer to his own question. He was in fact quoting the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18). The Lord Jesus’ response acknowledged the correctness of the answer.

10:28 - *“And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.”* The Lord added “this do.” Regrettably, so many people know what is right, but will not live it. Such was the case with this lawyer. Knowing his own life did not match his knowledge, this man tried to justify himself.

10:29 - *“But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?”* The desire of the natural man to justify himself is ever present. How many people are truly honest and are willing to confess their faults and acknowledge their errors? Very few! To the question “who is my neighbour?” the Lord answered with this parable.

10:30 - *“And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which*

stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.” The Lord’s parables and stories are so vivid that He seems to be recounting actual events. Perhaps they were stories that had been told to Him by His acquaintances. Even more likely these stories had happened in previous times and the Holy Spirit revealed them to Him. Jesus told the lawyer that a certain man actually went down to Jericho and was robbed by thieves in that area. The fact that specific cities are mentioned leads us to believe that this story actually happened.

10:31 - *“And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.”* This is so typical of the religious person who considers the priesthood a profession rather than a vocation that should be lived out in his daily life.

10:32 - *“And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.”* This member of the tribe of Levi, whose privilege it was to teach others the law of God, did not practice what he preached.

10:33 - *“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,”* Here is a man, considered by the Jews to be an outcast and foreigner to the household of God, yet he fulfils the law even though he is unable to quote it. This is the theme of Paul’s teachings in Romans: Romans 2:13-15: *“(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these,*

having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)." Thus, this Samaritan was fulfilling the law, while the teachers were not.

10:34 - *"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."* How we love to sing that little song, "He poured in the oil and the wine." Wine and oil speak of joy and peace. However, the parable is actually instructing *us* to pour in these precious healing virtues to others who are in despair or want.

There are two sides of the Gospel that we must not neglect—the spiritual and the natural. We should heed the words of the Apostle James when he writes: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (Jas. 2:15-16). Spiritual blessings are wonderful, but they are often perfected by proper attitudes and responses to natural things.

10:35 - *"And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."* The Samaritan was giving two days' wages to that innkeeper with the promise of more. This was a not just a shallow gesture, but rather a deep involvement in the healing of this unfortunate man. We should

do likewise when possible. Having recounted this story, the Lord now asks the lawyer:

10:36 - *“Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?”* The lawyer was now going to have to answer, and his answer would condemn him on the Day of Judgment.

10:37 - *“And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”* Again we see that it is not the hearers of the Word but the doers that will be justified. Faith without works is dead!

Martha and Mary

10:38 - *“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.”* This is not the house at Bethany where the Lord had supper with Lazarus, but rather a house that Martha owned in the north of Jerusalem, for Jesus had not as yet arrived at the city.

10:39 - *“And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.”* Mary was the contemplative sister who was transformed to be like the Master by this act of quiet devotion of “sitting at his feet.”

10:40 - *“But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.”* Martha was the sister of “action,” whose idea of serving

and ministry to Jesus was to prepare a most elaborate meal. In so doing, however, she had lost that *saintly disposition* which is the hallmark of a true Christian.

Not only had she become critical of her sister, in effect, she had become critical of the Lord. “Lord, you don’t care!” She actually was accusing Jesus of being insensitive to her needs. “Lord, why didn’t you send Mary to help me. Can’t you see what pressure I am under?” Does this sound like anyone you know?

10:41 - “*And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:*” The Lord admonished Martha because she was consumed with “cares.” Cares are one of the main reasons a Christian cannot bring any fruit to perfection (cf. Lk. 8:14). Martha had lost all her peace and joy. She had lost her perspective of God’s utmost desire, which is to bring forth much fruit, for herein is our Father in heaven glorified. That fruit of which we speak is principally the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Jesus continues:

10:42 - “*But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*” The one thing Mary had chosen was fruitfulness—the inner spiritual life being transformed to be like Jesus. Our time spent in God’s presence brings forth the fruit that abides eternally. Let us be careful not to be entangled with the affairs of this life. Rather, let us permit the Lord by His Spirit to prune us from the superfluous works of this world so that we may be a fruitful branch going over the wall.

CHAPTER 11

The Lord's Prayer

11:1 - *“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”*

Prayer is the lifeblood of a Christian. No one can succeed without paying close attention to its practice. By His grace we should seek to develop a prayer life that will bring forth the will of God in the lives of others as well as our own. Virtually nothing is accomplished in the kingdom of God without prayer. Let us be instructed now by the One “who ever liveth to make intercession for us” (Heb. 7:25).

Our Father

11:2 - *“And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.”* All prayer is to be directed to the Father in the name of Jesus, for He said in John 16:23-24: “In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

First we must develop our relationship with God as our heavenly Father. Many have difficulty with this since they have not had good experiences with their earthly fathers. Some people perceive God either as being afar off and very aloof, or as One

who chastises constantly with anger. Our relationship with the heavenly Father should be one of love and trust. Our desire should be to please Him and glorify Him in everything we do.

Hallowed Be Thy Name

The next admonition is to recognise that the Father is holy. Isaiah heard the holiness of God proclaimed in a vision when he saw the throne of God and the seraphim surrounding the throne: “And one [seraphim] cried unto another, and said, *Holy, holy, holy* is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3).

This was seen again in a vision accorded to the Apostle John in Revelation 4:6-8: “And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, *Holy, holy, holy*, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

Therefore, in approaching the thrice-holy God, we should also remember the admonition of Peter: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear” (1 Pet.1:15-17).

Thy Kingdom Come

Coming back to our text in Luke 11:2, our Lord tells us to pray—“Thy kingdom come.” We understand from Scripture that praying for *the kingdom of God to come* falls into three categories:

The Kingdom of God upon *earth—the Millennium*

The Kingdom of God demonstrated through the *Church*

The Kingdom of God *within each believer* becoming mighty

1.) We are to fervently desire that His Kingdom will literally and tangibly come upon earth. This will happen during the millennial reign of Christ upon earth after His second coming. This blessed hope is *preceded* by several major events, one of which is the appearance of the Antichrist.

2.) The Kingdom message and its virtues are to be revealed here on earth through His Church.

3.) The Kingdom of God that lies resident within each born-again believer is to be brought to perfection (Lk.17:20-21). Jesus taught, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Mt. 5:48).

Thy Will Be Done

“*Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.*” This entails a personal walking in the Spirit so that we fulfil not only the righteousness of the law (Rom. 8:4), but also the good works which God has ordained for us to accomplish (Eph. 2:10).

Let us constantly say as did Paul: “What wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

Our Daily Bread

11:3 - “*Give us day by day our daily bread.*” Here we see not only a prayer for provision, but also we have an understanding that we are to live *day by day* upon the grace of God. This is shown in the wilderness journey where the Lord met the needs of His people by sending *daily* manna from heaven.

This theme of living “one day at a time” was also given by Jesus when He said: “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Mt. 6:34). This is not to say that we should not be prudent and make preparations for the future, but we should realise we do not know what the future holds in store for us, as James says:

“...Ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:13,14).

Forgiveness

11:4 - “*And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.*” One of the greatest hindrances to prayer is either sins that have not been forgiven, or an unforgiving

spirit. We should ensure that before we come to the Father in prayer that our sins have been forgiven and that we have forgiven all those who have done any evil against us.

***Lead Us Not into Temptation,
but Deliver Us from Evil***

Furthermore, we must walk humbly with the Lord, asking that He might not permit us to be tempted beyond our ability to withstand the test. To illustrate this, we should study the case of the godly King Hezekiah. We are told that the Lord was with him whithersoever he went. Thus, he prospered mightily (2 Ki. 18:7). However, “in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart” (2 Chr. 32:31).

Why did the Lord “leave” Hezekiah in this time of temptation? Hezekiah had grown very proud and unthankful! He “rendered not again [unto God] according to the benefit done unto him; for His heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him” (2 Chr. 32:25). From this we learn a lesson of great importance. When we are humble, God will keep and protect us “as the apple of His eye.”

Yet when people become proud and push God out of their lives, then they are standing on their own and they are unprotected by God. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18, 29:23). Without the grace of God, who can stand? Our wisdom is to cry humbly unto the Lord for grace to be forewarned of danger,

for it is written in Proverbs 22:3: “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished. Now the Lord will speak on the necessity of importunity in prayer.

Importunity in Prayer

11:5-8 - *“And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”*

This theme of persistence in prayer is taught throughout the Scriptures. We can illustrate it by the wrestling of Jacob with the Lord at Peniel in Genesis 32:24-30:

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said,

Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”

Certainty That God Will Answer Our Prayers

11:9 - “*And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*” Let us now examine these three areas of prayer.

Asking—is the simple exercise of just telling the Lord what we want. It is important to develop the habit of involving the Lord in every little detail of our lives. The principle of the kingdom is this: as we are faithful in that which is least, then we also will be faithful in much.

Seeking—is also a spiritual exercise and perhaps is best seen in Proverbs 25:2: “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.” Truth must be sought after diligently, but besides diligent search, there is another factor involved here. It is the Godhead who sovereignly determines which people can see the truths pertaining to the kingdom. Only those whom God deems worthy can see His mysteries. Others who do not truly appreciate these pearls of wisdom cannot have them. Therefore, the priests and kings of the kingdom must seek God earnestly in prayer and study so that He would honor them with *the spirit of revelation* and show them the mysteries of the kingdom.

Knocking—is the art of *spiritual violence*, whereby we literally bombard heaven so that doors (either in the heavenly or earthly realms) are opened to us. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Mt.11:12). As we apply ourselves diligently to these matters, the promises of the Lord will be ours. The Lord speaks with such certainty when He says:

11:10 - “*For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*” Paul says in Hebrew 4:16 NIV: “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

The Lord now addresses *the many fears* of His people when they seek for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many are afraid of receiving another spirit, so the Lord seeks to allay their fears by appealing to their natural instincts as parents.

11:11-12 - “*If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?*” Serpents and scorpions speak of evil spirits. When we ask our heavenly Father for the Holy Spirit, He is not going to give us another spirit (i.e. a serpent or scorpion).

11:13 - “*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*” Therefore, we should not be afraid to ask the Lord for spiritual gifts.

Instead, we should ask in confidence and believe that “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (Jas.1:17 NIV).

Casting Out of a Devil

One of the main features of the ministry of Jesus was the casting out of devils that afflicted mankind. We need to take this aspect of His ministry very seriously, especially since in these last days, more and more demons are being released upon earth. They come in all forms. Some demons afflict *the body* and are the cause of all manner of diseases. Some afflict *the soul* and manifest as anger, jealousy, pride, or other evil vices. Other demons get into the area of the *spirit* and exhibit themselves through people with false religious beliefs and observances, spiritual pride, and so forth.

11:14 - *“And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.”* Here is another manifestation of devils. There are dumb and deaf demons that prevent a person from being able to speak or hear correctly. Also, there are devils that can cause blindness or cancer.

11:15-16 - *“But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.” And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.”* This particular deliverance could not be denied. Therefore, some of His enemies said He was casting out demons by a bigger demon. Jesus will now address this argument.

A Divided House

11:17 - *“But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.”* This truth in itself is very applicable to any congregation. It has often been said that the Church is the only army that attacks its own wounded. Schisms, disputes, and divisions are common in the Church. However, some divisions come from the Lord, for at times it is He who brings a sword to divide:

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” (Mt.10:34-36).

Sometimes God purposely allows error to go around in order to try the hearts of His people. Paul said: “For there *must* be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor 11:19, Deut.13:1-3). When error goes around, it shows who is who. Those who are approved of God are manifest and so are those who are not approved of God.

Doctrinal errors are sent to separate the true believers from those who are not walking uprightly (cf. Mal. 3:18). However, there are some Christians who sow discord among the brethren and divide the church. Discord can split congregations into factions and make them fight against one another. Discord

sowers are filled with jealousy, criticism, and pride. “Only by pride cometh contention” (Prov.13:10). Sowers of discord fall into the category of people whom the Lord hates (Prov. 6:16-19). Remember, Lucifer destroyed one-third of the congregation in heaven by his tongue.

Returning now to the text, the Lord continues His rebuttal of the accusation that He has cast out devils by the power and authority of Satan.

11:18 - *“If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.”* Obviously, Satan would not tolerate his kingdom fighting one another. They are all filled with hatred and jealousy against Christ and His Church because they will take their places in heaven that they forfeited through their rebellion before the foundation of the world. Then the Lord challenges His hearers with a question:

11:19 - *“And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.”* The “sons” in this case can refer to the apostles who had already experienced the power of God in their own ministry as they cast out demons. It would also include *the seventy* who had returned from their very successful time in Galilee. Jesus now gives the general method of casting out devils.

11:20 - *“But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.”* Under the anointing and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the minister will simply point at the demon-possessed or afflicted person and

command the devils to leave in the name of Jesus. The demon will leave with or without a struggle, depending upon the nature of the devil. Demons which are lustful often scream.

11:21-22 - *“When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.”* The Lord is saying that we need greater power than the devil to cast him out. Devils are of varying stature, power, and might. Some are so small that they can be disbursed without effort, and these tend to assemble in groups.

I remember one instance in a congregation when I saw a lady bowed down in depression. I felt the Lord telling me to go over to her. When I came to her the Lord opened my eyes to see an actual cloud of demons above her head. These imps were putting all kinds of depressive thoughts into her mind that she thought were real. Under the anointing I simply said, “Go in the name of Jesus”, and that cloud of demons fled rapidly. Afterwards, the lady’s face literally beamed.

However, some deliverances from demons require more power. When the Lord descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, He came in contact with a demon- possessed boy. When the apostles were not able to deliver the boy from the demon, Jesus told them that “this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:21).

11:23 - *“He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.”* If we are not flowing in the

Spirit and in the will of God, if we are not gathering the lost souls to Jesus, then literally we are driving people away from the kingdom. Criticizing the work of God has the tendency of turning people away from the Gospel and causing them to no longer be good church attenders. We need to be *holy encouragers*, holding up the hands of those that hang down.

In so doing, we may preserve many souls from hell. Few Christians are strong in faith, and I think that if we were honest, we would all acknowledge that we ourselves need and appreciate a kind word of encouragement from time to time. Continuing, the Lord says:

11:24-26 - *“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.” And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”*

Here we have further instruction and a warning. It is so important that we have an ongoing program for those whom the Lord delivers. They must be built up in the faith through Bible studies appropriate to their spiritual growth. It is essential to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and speak with other tongues to withstand any counter attacks of the enemy. Unfortunately, the case that the Lord mentions here of *repossession* is not rare.

I am thinking of a certain occasion when I had to pray for the deliverance of a certain woman. She was gloriously delivered

and cleansed. After the deliverance she attended church and received instruction. Then she was filled with the Holy Spirit and had an excellent gift of prophecy which was such a blessing to the church. However, two other women who were also ministered unto and had experienced deliverance went back. They became worse than before, even blaspheming the things of God. One of them even remarried for the fourth time.

Those Who Are Truly Blessed

11:27-28 - *“And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.”* This is a direct reference to the Lord’s mother, Mary. The Lord turns the focus away from his mother’s blessedness unto the subject of obedience. Those who hear the Word of God and obey it are the ones who are blessed.

Those who hear from the Lord daily and live in communion with Him, obeying those things that He commands—these are the blessed of God. So let us read the Bible day by day and ask Him to open our ears so that we are able to hear what He wishes to say to us. Jesus now reverts to the desire of the people to see a sign.

The Request for a Sign

11:29-30 - *“And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign;*

and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.”

Historically, the prophet Jonah was sent by God to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. His mission was to declare the message of God that in 40 days the city would be overthrown. However, prior to his arrival in Nineveh, Jonah had disobeyed God and fled in a ship to Tarshish. While at sea, God created a storm, and Jonah, by his own request, was thrown overboard. God then prepared a large fish which swallowed Jonah. The prophet remained three days and three nights in the belly of the fish.

This speech on “The Sign of the Prophet Jonah” is also recorded in Matthew 12:39-40: “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” The Lord’s generation was *wicked and adulterous*. They did not want the truth; they wanted a sign, a phenomenon. The spirit of adultery brings spiritual blindness. Christians who fall into adultery are always looking for a sign or confirmation that God is with them and blessing them. People want to sin but still have peace. They will look for prophecies to confirm that their third or fourth marriage is of Him. To a wicked and adulterous generation who were seeking for a sign, Jesus declared that the sign of Jonah will be the only sign they would receive—a reference to Christ’s death and resurrection. Again speaking of eternal judgment, Jesus continues:

11:31-32 - *“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.”* On the great day of Judgment, not only will there be the condemnation of the Holy Trinity, but also of one’s fellowmen. Oh God, give us grace to be true to you! Jesus now gives a discourse on light.

Discourse on Light

11:33 - *“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.”* The sense here is that we should let our light shine, witnessing when practical to all with whom we come in contact. But now Jesus speaks of the inner light within each believer, which is our conscience. The beloved Apostle John tells us that Jesus “is the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (Jn. 1:9).

11:34 - *“The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.”* “Singleness of eye” refers to singleness of desire. King David possessed this unique quality, as we see in Psalm 27:4: “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.”

Thus, David, in having a single eye, became more and more like Jesus. In fact, in his generation he was referred to as being “like an angel of the Lord” (1 Sam. 29:9; 2 Sam. 14:17, 20; 19:27). However, the converse is also true. If our eye is evil, our whole being will be filled with darkness.

If our dwelling places are in taverns, or movies, or if our eyes are glued to the evil on television screens, magazines, or evil literature, then our hearts will be filled with the darkness of this world. Let us be as King David, who said: “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes” (Ps. 101:3). Therefore, the Lord solemnly warns:

11:35 - *“Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.”* Oh, let us take heed to what we read, see, and hear, for this will determine our eternal destiny. Let us rather seek to be like Jesus who is the Light of the world. May His light shine forth through us.

11:36 - *“If thy whole body therefore shall be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.”* Let us walk as children of light. (See Eph. 5:8,11; 1 Th. 5:4-8).

The Three Woes **v. 37-54**

This part opens with the Lord being invited to the house of a Pharisee.

11:37 - *“And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.”* The

Greek word here translated “besought” is *erotao*, which means “to interrogate.” Thus, this Pharisee was very insistent that Jesus should eat with him. But in so doing, the Pharisee received a very blunt reprimand from the Judge of the whole earth.

1. Woe to the Pharisees

11:38 - “*And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.*” Outward holiness was the norm of the Old Testament rituals. Leviticus, the handbook of the priests, is a compilation of outward religious observances. However, many of the other Scriptures make it very clear that only *an inward holiness* is pleasing to God.

In the Law:

“And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deut. 30:6).

“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:18).

In the Psalms:

“Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Ps. 40:6-8).

“For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Ps. 51:16-17).

The Prophets:

“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22, cf. Jer. 7:22-23).

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?” Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic. 6:6-8).

Now Jesus will take the Pharisees to task, for they specialized in *adding* to the Law many rituals that were not prescribed in the Scriptures.

11:39 - “*And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.*” It is the attempt by man to be holy that leads him to outward observances such as washing the hands, while his heart is filled with all kinds of evil. The real problem is in the heart: “For out of the heart

proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Mt. 15:19).

The Lord has also spoken to me personally about holiness. He said it is *our words* that determine our state or degree of holiness. May God grant that our words be always as David prays: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (Ps. 19:14).

11:40 - “*Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?*” In view of the fact that God made our inward parts, we realise as did David, that this is where God wants us to be truthful. “Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom” (Ps. 51:6). The next verse will require some explanation.

11:41 - “*But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.*” The Greek word for “alms” is *eleemosune*, which means “compassionate.” The essence of this verse is that with compassion one gives from a heart of love to the poor in their need. In so doing, all outward gestures are also pure. If we are pure in heart, then outward actions will be right as well.

11:42 - “*But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*” While Jesus at all times upholds the law, He points out that these tithes are useless if our hearts and motives are not right before God.

11:43 - *“Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.”* Now Jesus reveals the pride of the Pharisees. In fact, pride is what bars them from the exalted positions in heaven. God resists the proud. It is unto the poor or the humble in spirit that the kingdom of God belongs. *“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”* (Isa. 57:15).

2. Woe to the Scribes

The scribes in the time of Jesus were those who preserved the written Scriptures. They also defended the oral law, the traditions of men that they had included with the Law of Moses. Their traditions were more highly esteemed than the Scriptures themselves (Mk. 7:5-13).

11:44 - *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.”* These scribes were claiming to be the source of life for the people, but in actuality they were ministers of death.

3. Woe to the Lawyers

11:45-46 - *“Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also. And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch*

not the burdens with one of your fingers.” The lawyers essentially were the interpreters of the law of Moses. In their interpretation of the law, the lawyers posed as the specialists and set all kinds of requirements for the people to fulfil in their religious duties—requirements that were not in the law of Moses. Many lawyers are like that today. Yet, as Jesus points out, these lawyers did not obey their own strict standards. They were completely hypocritical. They disregarded the teachings of the prophets but made elaborate mausoleums for them.

11:47 - *“Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.”* It was all so ritualistic. There was no real acknowledgment of or compliance with the message of the prophets that they sought to honour.

11:48 - *“Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.”* They were simply paying lip service to the prophets but not walking in obedience to their words.

11:49-50 - *“Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;”* The generation of whom He spoke was His own, for they had filled up the nation’s cup of iniquity by their actions. They professed admiration for the dead prophets, but the living ones they slew. These evil men slew the Lord of Glory Himself, and then went on to kill the early apostles.

11:51 - *“From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.”* Abel is among the prophets by the Lord. He was slain by his own brother, Cain. Why did Cain kill him? Because his brother’s deeds were righteous and his were evil (1 Jn. 3:11-12). The problem was jealousy. Zacharias, the son of Jehoiada, was slain by the order of King Joash. Zecharias was stoned in the court of the house of the Lord (2 Chron. 24:20-22).

11:52 - *“Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.”* The interesting fact about many lawyers, even to this very day, is that they profess to uphold the law but themselves do not keep the Ten Commandments. Shakespeare wrote, “Away with all lawyers.” Obviously, there are some lawyers who fear God and seek to uphold righteousness, but it is few and far between.

11:53 - *“And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things:”* The loss of self-control was the area in which Moses failed: “Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips” (Ps.106:33).

King David prayed: “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3). We want to triumph in every detail in this life so that we can give pleasure to the Lord. Remember friends: “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body”

(Jas. 3:2). True holiness and self-control is in the mastery of the tongue.

11:54 - *“Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.”* The scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers were very wicked men. They perfectly depict the words of Isaiah 29:21: *“That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.”* But our Lord triumphed over His foes in this and every other battle.

CHAPTER 12

Fear God

12:1 - *“In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”* Leaven is an ingredient by which bread becomes fermented and expanded through the gases that are released. Spiritually, leaven is error that permeates original doctrine.

In this case the “leaven” produced hypocrisy in the sect of the Pharisees, for it introduced legalism instead of true holiness. Pretending to be holy, the Pharisees were in fact filled with pride and self-righteousness through *works* instead of faith in Christ.

12:2 - *“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.”* At the final

Judgment, everything (including little words) will be revealed, as the Lord now warns:

12:3 - *“Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”*

Jesus warns us whom to fear, and that we are not to be afraid of men or even of the devil.

12:4 - *“And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.”* The Lord always looks at eternal values. Therefore, death is not to be feared, for death is not the end of the matter. Instead, it is the beginning of a new life of bliss for the redeemed. Death for the unredeemed is the beginning of an eternity of remorse, anguish, and hopelessness.

12:5 - *“But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”* We are not to fear death or those who destroy the body. However, we are to fear God, for it is His irrevocable decision that determines whether we spend eternity with Him or in the blackness of darkness forever. Now the Lord speaks words of consolation to His own.

12:6 - *“Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?”* The micro-management of God’s universe is now stressed, for He knows the whereabouts of each sparrow. This was such a comfort for me when my wife and I were on the very tip of the South Island of New Zealand in a very severe storm.

As we walked along a path that few travel, we saw numerous birds that had died because of the storm. It brought such a sense of reassurance to us that we had been preserved, remembering that we are of far more value to God than all our feathered friends. So this next verse became very real for us.

12:7 - *“But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.”*

It is amazing how fearfully and wonderfully we are made. We are known in such minute detail by our Heavenly Father, much more so than we are known by our natural fathers. Our earthly fathers have absolutely no idea how many hairs we have on our head. The Lord now turns to our personal relationship with Him.

12:8 - *“Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:”* We should take every opportunity to testify of His great salvation and His goodness to those in the land of the living. The martyrs overcame and will overcome by the word of their testimony: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev.12:11). Let us be fervent in season and out of season, for right confession does wonders for our faith.

12:9 - *“But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.”* Regretfully, those who deny their faith in Christ (unless they repent as Peter did) will risk being denied entrance into His everlasting Kingdom of light and peace.

12:10 - *“And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.”*

The graciousness of our Lord Jesus is seen here. He is so ready to forgive those who speak against Him, for He is truly *meekness* personified, and so must we be, too. In leadership, we are always going to be spoken against, but we must never hold grudges or bring up offences. In clearing others of the offences they have committed against us, we are being like our blessed Lord. The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is to attribute to Satan the works and miracles of the Holy Spirit.

12:11-12 - *“And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.”* How wonderful to know that in the time of trial we shall *never* be alone. It is so precious to be clothed with the Holy Spirit.

The Danger of Possessions

In considering this passage on the danger of riches, we should remember that there is never a funeral that is held where the possessions of the deceased are attached to the casket. Why? Because all surely know (with the exception of the heathen who bury their gold with the dead) that you cannot take it with you. The Lord always speaks with a focus on eternity, and how we need to live in the light of that! With that in mind, let us look at the text.

12:13-14 - *“And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?”* The man making the petition to Christ was not in the wrong. Certainly, his brother should have divided the inheritance. As so often is the case in families where money is involved, brotherly love disappears and it is everyone for himself. The Lord addresses this problem, for the one who was wronged was filled with avarice, too.

12:15 - *“He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”* How contrary to the thinking of the world are the teachings of Christ. Man lives in a materialistic manner, considering only this present life. Men praise each other when they prosper: “Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself” (Ps .49:18). However, to illustrate His point, the Lord gave the following parable.

12:16-19 - *“And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”*

Now this is clearly the thinking of this world, which is basically geared to retirement and ease. A person works for a certain number of years to build up equity or a pension so that

for the rest of his life he can live comfortably and without worry. That, too, was the thinking of this rich man, but to what avail?

12:20 - *“God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”* Certainly, whatever wealth we leave behind is of no use to us in the day of Judgment. In actual fact, hoarded wealth can work to our eternal detriment.

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The Apostle James says, “Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire” (Jas. 5:3). Some who have seen in visions that part of hell have actually been shown souls there being fed with liquid gold to add to their torments. James says those who have stored up gold and riches have heaped treasure together for their eternal judgment.

12:21 - *“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”* How important it is that when our time comes to be presented before Jesus that we come full of faith and good works. All of the world’s riches are counterfeit. Let us be rich toward God.

Seek the Kingdom of God

12:22 - *“And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither*

for the body, what ye shall put on.” Life is full of cares and worries, yet for the Christian, Jesus offers “the peace that passeth all understanding.” We are admonished to be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God (Phil. 4:6). For as Jesus now says:

12:23-24 - *“The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?”* We need to have our priorities right. We need to know Jesus as Jehovah Jireh—the Lord our Provider, not just the Lord our Saviour. Christ now develops the thought of our frailty.

12:25 - *“And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?”* Acknowledging that we cannot change our physical height, we should ponder this next verse very carefully.

12:26 - *“If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?”* The Lord is placing our “inability to increase our physical stature” as the least of things, and in a sense, the ability to provide for ourselves as being more difficult.

12:27 - *“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”* There is an inner beauty that the lily possesses, and this beauty is unlike

anything that Solomon ever knew during his reign of splendour (1 Ki. 10:1-6). May we ask the Lord to develop the beauty of Jesus within us.

12:28 - *“If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?”* Spiritually, grass is likened to people in Job 5:25: “Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth.” If the Lord can clothe the natural grass (and no two blades are identical), then God is certainly going to ensure that we are clothed.

12:29 - *“And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.”* The theme of Jesus’ teaching is relationship to God as our Heavenly Father. Knowing that our natural fathers are going to care for us, we should realise that even more so will the Heavenly Father care for us—this dear Father who is altogether good and all powerful.

12:30 - *“For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.”* The nations of this world who do not know God are obsessed with the need to provide for themselves. We who know Him should be different. Thus, the Lord admonishes us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

12:31 - *“But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* Filled with faith, power,

and glory, we are the sons of the living God, the One who will care for all our needs. Our one concern is to constantly nurture our love for God and seek to be near Him as we do to our earthly father. Let us seek to give Him joy and pleasure by our conduct. Now follows one of those blessed “Fear not’s” of holy Scripture.

12:32 - *“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* A place in the kingdom of God is infinitely more important than houses and homes here upon earth; so let us “set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2).

12:33 - *“Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.”* To the degree that we give to that same degree shall we receive in eternity, even as the Apostle Paul writes: “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor. 9:6).

12:34 - *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* This was forcibly impressed upon my mind when I was in England many years ago as a youth. I saw the angel of the Second Coming flying toward me, but he stopped just before me in the air and put one hand upon the bank where I had all my savings. I understood clearly in the Spirit what he was saying to me. If I was going to put my trust in my bank balance, I would not be able to accomplish God’s will for my life.

Waiting for the Lord

With respect to the Second Coming of the Lord, the key word is *readiness*.

12:35 - *“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;”* This admonition is similar to the parable of the ten virgins. In that parable, five virgins had their lamps burning while five had no oil left. There must be a sense of readiness, which is the meaning of having one’s loins girded. For while the actual Second Coming cannot take place until many other prophecies are fulfilled, nonetheless, His personal coming for us can be at any time.

12:36 - *“And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.”* Notice now the words “from the wedding” in this passage of Scripture. The Lord is placing His Second Coming *after* the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This has eschatological significance.

According to Revelation 19:1-10, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb precedes the battle of Armageddon. Then the Lord will appear with ten thousands of His saints. However, there must be believers who are still upon earth at that time, otherwise this verse would have no relevance. Again, the Lord emphasises the importance of readiness.

12:37 - *“Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he*

shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” Here we see the awesome meekness and humility of the Lord. Here is the Lord of Glory, the great I AM THAT I AM, condescending to wait upon tables for us miserable sinners. Who can fathom the love of God?

12:38 - *“And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.”* Here, too, the Lord is approaching another important truth with respect to His Second Coming, in that He Himself does not know the day nor the hour; but only the Heavenly Father knows.

12:39 - *“And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.”* With respect to “watching,” this warning is repeated in yet another form that His hearers can well understand.

12:40 - *“Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.”* If this be so, how may we tell when He will come?

The Faithful and the Wicked Servants

12:41 - *“Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?”* Now what the Lord has been saying is directed to one and all of His people; so we do not make the mistake of thinking that the Scriptures only apply to those whom Jesus was now addressing. Therefore, let us give diligent heed to these warnings.

12:42 - *“And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?”*

Whatever may be our appointed task, let us be found diligently doing it. Martin Luther once said that if his task was to plant trees, he hoped that when the Lord came he would be found planting trees. Whatever our appointed task, let us be found fulfilling verse 43.

12:43-44 - *“Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.”* The rewards of faithfulness are great. The Lord stresses that *faithfulness* is a quality that is absolutely required for becoming a ruler in His Kingdom.

The Lord now directs His attention to the wicked servants. Let us remember that He is not speaking of the unbelievers, but rather those whom He has chosen to be His ministers here upon earth. Certainly, the next passage deals with one who is extremely well versed in the Scriptures.

12:45 - *“But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;”* How can this minister say that the Lord delays His coming, if he had not set a date? We can certainly say that a train or a bus is delayed because we have a *timetable* that tells us exactly when it should arrive. However, the Lord definitely says that even He Himself does not know the time of His coming.

This servant then is so filled with pride that he thinks he is capable of calculating from the Scriptures the time of the Second Coming. Surely the set time cannot be hidden in the Scriptures, for if anyone knows the Scriptures it is the Lord Jesus Christ. But moving in presumption, this wicked servant has made a prediction. And when his prediction does not come to pass on the date he has projected, he says: "My Lord delays His coming."

Then this unwise servant moves outside the canopy of grace and his heart becomes filled with anger and hatred toward those who are under his care. Yes, he begins to smite them. Then he falls into drunkenness. What a warning for us all not to commit the sin of presumption! Let us ask the Lord to cleanse our hearts from the pride of prediction.

12:46 - *"The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."* How great is the judgment upon this wicked servant who actually thought that he was more favoured than the Son of God in receiving revelation concerning the timing of the Second Coming. What a tragedy to spend eternity in hell when he should have been in heaven with the other ministers, contemplating for all eternity the face of the blessed One in the Kingdom of the Father. Let us now hearken to the judgment of those who *knew* but did not *do* the will of the Lord.

12:47 - *"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall*

be beaten with many stripes.” The state of this servant is so pathetic! What sorrow a servant of the Lord will bring to the heart of God when he knows so much of God’s Word, but will not obey it. Let us note, too, that *ignorance* is no excuse.

12:48 - *“But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”* The greater our revelation of the Scriptures and of the Lord, the greater will be our responsibility to produce the fruit of the kingdom.

The Holy Division

12:49 - *“I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?”* When John the Baptist announced the coming of the Lord, he said that Jesus would baptise with the Holy Ghost and fire. This fire is “the spirit of burning” spoken of in Isaiah 4:4. It is a fire that purges and burns up the chaff in our lives. It also devours those who are the chaff (i.e. the unbelievers and the believers who continually work iniquity.)

12:50 - *“But I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!”* This is the fourth baptism mentioned. The four baptisms are: baptism in water, baptism in the Holy Spirit, the baptism of fire, and now the baptism of suffering.

12:51 - *“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:”* There are basically two

forms of division in the Church—division that is caused by the flesh and Satan, and division that comes from God. There is a division, that is man-made and often devil inspired, which seeks to separate the brethren.

Then there is division which comes from God to separate believers into groups. Some Christians desire to go on into fresh truth, while others are very content to remain on the spiritual plateau they have already attained. To those who wish to go on, the Lord says: “I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by” (Zech. 3:7).

12:52 - *“For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.”* This profound division separates even families, for not all who are born of the same parents want to go on with the Lord. This division sometimes even separates children from their parents.

12:53 - *“The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law”* (cf. Mt. 10:34-39).

It is a very painful situation, but if our allegiance to our parents or siblings is greater than our allegiance to the Lord, we will not be found worthy of Him. The only way to overcome this hurdle is to pray always for grace. I know personally how difficult it is to have family separations, but if we are faithful to the Lord, He will more than compensate us in this life, and obviously our rewards will be great in the world to come. When I was about to

go into the ministry as a young man, the one who objected the most was my own father. I had to make a choice between pleasing my father and pleasing my Heavenly Father. As I honoured God first, my father later was reconciled to the choice and became very supportive. Let Jesus always be first in your life.

Discerning the Times

Another great lesson in the Christian life is to understand that God has a timetable. King Solomon taught us this: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Eccl. 3:1). In Israel, the tribe of Issachar had an unusual ministry because they had understanding of the times. “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chr. 12:32). We should ask the Lord for this blessing so that we have understanding of the times in our lives, in the Church, and in our nation. Now the Lord gives us an earthly illustration.

12:54 - *“And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.”* This applies, of course, to the land of Israel where the rain clouds come from the west, which is the area of the Mediterranean Sea.

12:55 - *“And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.”* The south wind comes from Egypt and the Sinai desert, which are both very hot.

12:56 - *“Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this [present] time?”*

These people had natural discernment of the atmospheric conditions and weather, but not the spiritual understanding of the times in which they were living. They did not understand that it was the time for the appearance of the Messiah Himself.

On the Need for Natural Judgment

The Lord now turns His discourse to the thought of judging or discerning what is the right thing to do in day-to-day circumstances.

12:57 - *“Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?”* The case that Jesus takes into consideration here is reconciliation with your enemy if you are in the wrong. Obviously, you do not want a court case if you can have an out-of-court settlement, which is generally speaking much cheaper.

12:58-59 - *“When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.”* Failure to settle out of court can have disastrous results if you are in the wrong.

CHAPTER 13

Except Ye Repent

13:1 - *“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.”* This incident occurred when the Jews became incensed

that Pilate was going to use temple tax money for the construction of a new aqueduct to carry water into the city of Jerusalem.

The mobs gathered, and Pilate gave instructions that the Roman soldiers should carry heavy clubs under their garments to beat the protestors. The soldiers carried that order to an extreme, killing a number of men who apparently were hotheaded Galilaeans. He mixed their blood he mixed with the blood of the sacrifices.

13:2 - *“And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?”* The normal way of thinking, by the Jews and Christians alike, is that calamities come only because of sin. That was the argument of the three friends of Job.

However, when I had some illegal aliens break into my car and wreck it, I asked the Lord what I had done wrong. The Lord simply replied from 1 Corinthians 10:13: *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”* The Lord was confirming to me that what had happened was normal, and that it had nothing to do with my conduct.

13:3 - *“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”* Jesus is saying that this calamity was not because they were worse than others. *“I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and*

chance happeneth to them all” (Eccl. 9:11). Jesus repeats this theme by giving a further illustration:

13:4 - “*Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?*” As far as we can tell, there is no other historical evidence of this event. It has been suggested by some that these were workmen on an aqueduct, and while they were working, the tower of Siloam collapsed upon them. Whether that be so is mere speculation. Nevertheless, it does not detract from the repeated theme—No matter how good or bad we are, we all need to *repent*. Otherwise, we will perish with all the unrepentant.

13:5 - “*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” Our eternal state depends upon our repentance from the dead works listed in Galatians 5:19-21.

The Parable of the Fig Tree

The theme of this parable is *fruitfulness*. The Lord is here portrayed as a farmer who has a fig tree. One of the essentialities of farming is that all labor is designed to bring forth fruit. This is also the case in our own lives, for Jesus said in John 15:8: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” Fruitfulness in the spiritual sense is:

1. The fruit of the Spirit in our lives
2. The propagation of the Gospel through witnessing, preaching, literature, or whatever else we are ordained by God to do for Him.

13:6 - *“He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.”* It is a very normal action of any farmer to find out whether or not a tree is producing fruit. So what follows would be natural.

13:7 - *“Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?”* In other words, the farmer wanted to replace the fruitless tree by another that would produce the fruit. However, the servant whose responsibility it was to look after that tree had an attachment to the tree. Trees are a type of people. Perhaps a pastor who is responsible for a particular unfruitful saint would entreat the Lord to give the person more time. A Scriptural example of this would be Samuel and Saul. Samuel wept for Saul and prayed for him. *“And the Lord said unto Samuel, how long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?”* (1 Sam. 16:1).

13:8 - *“And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:”* The love of a pastor for his sheep can be seen here, as if he were asking the Lord to give this one a little more time. This was the attitude of Moses with respect to the children of Israel. Moses, the shepherd of God, pleaded with God to spare those rebellious children of Israel in the wilderness: *“Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written”* (Ex. 32:32). So in this parable the vine dresser continues and says:

13:9 - *“And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”* This same compassion is what God desires to instil in His under-shepherds. While justice always demands judgment, may we plead for extended mercy for the non-fruit-bearing saints.

The Woman with a Crooked Back

13:10 - *“And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.”* In the life and ministry of Jesus there was a consistent opposition by the religious leaders to His healing on the sabbath day. The observance of the sabbath day was the fourth commandment:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Ex. 20:8-11).

Unfortunately, the religious leaders had idolized that day, not realizing that they themselves were demanding of the people more than the Scriptures commanded. This commandment, like all others, was given for the *benefit* of mankind. It was not intended to be a burden.

13:11 - *“And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could*

in no wise lift up herself.” Physical problems can stem from natural causes, but some can be spiritual, as was the case with this lady. She had a spirit of infirmity. Undoubtedly, she had been to many physicians who were unable to help.

13:12 - *“And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.”* The word of faith came, and this brought deliverance.

13:13 - *“And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.”* In some cases Jesus just spoke and people were healed. In other cases, He laid His hands upon them, while in a few rare cases He employed other means.

13:14 - *“And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.”* Here we see the effect of bondage to religious observances. This bondage opposed the liberating work of the Holy Spirit.

13:15 - *“The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?”* Jesus ridiculed the attitudes of these religious leaders, for they would care for their animals on the sabbath day, but not people. How much greater is a human being in the sight of God than a mere animal. Thus, Jesus continues by saying:

13:16 - *“And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?”* Jesus emphasises that her physical problem was spiritual in origin, she had been bound all those years by a spirit of infirmity. When praying for the sick, we need to ask the Lord for discernment. We cannot assume that everything is demonic, or that everything is purely physical.

13:17 - *“And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.”*

Parables of the Kingdom of God

13:18 - *“Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?”* Here we have the Lord repeating essentially what He had given in the Sermon on the Mount, although this time it is in a different place.

13:19 - *“It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.”* The kingdom is likened unto the smallest of all seeds, which grows into a mighty tree. This principle of the kingdom is aptly described in Job 8:7: *“Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.”* God specializes in starting us small. During this time we are tested and tried. If we are found faithful, then we are promoted and enlarged in the service of the King. The next parable flows along with the same thought, although it is presented in a different form.

13:20-21 - *“And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”*

Like leaven, once the kingdom of God is introduced into a situation, whether it be an individual, a city, or a nation, there is a gradual but profound change for the good. The laws of the kingdom take over, transforming lives and the whole atmosphere of that city and nation. Whatever the kingdom of God permeates becomes good.

There Are Few Saved

13:22 - *“And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.”* The Lord’s journey from Galilee to Jerusalem is reported in far more detail in Luke’s Gospel than in any of the others. It was a preaching and teaching tour through the towns on the way. It gives us an idea how the Lord taught in the role of an itinerant preacher. He did so, in part, by answering questions from the people.

13:23-24 - *“Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”* Throughout His teachings, the Lord stresses the high standards of life in the kingdom. He commanded: *“Be ye perfect even as your Heavenly Father is perfect.”* The entrance and way is very narrow. There is also another truth that the Lord mentions here.

13:25 - *“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, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:” There is a time factor mentioned here. David warned: “To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness” (Ps. 95:7,8).

Paul refers to this in Hebrews 4:7: “Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” We must understand that God’s grace toward us has its *time limits*. The history of Israel proves this. When Israel sinned against the Lord and they were told that they could not go into the Land of Promise, the next day they tried to go in, but it was too late! God was no longer with them, and they were slain before their enemies. (Please see Numbers 14:22-45.) This truth about time limits applies to us as well, for God warns: “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found” (Isa. 55:6).

13:26 - “*Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.*” Being refused entrance into the Kingdom of God on the day of judgment, these very people who were in those towns and villages that Jesus had just passed through would argue that because He had been with them, they would automatically be saved.

13:27 - “*But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*” It is not the hearers of the Word that shall be justified, but the doers. So Jesus gives them a solemn warning.

13:28 - *“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.”* As we carefully study the Word we find that there are far more teachings concerning the dangers of hell than there are about the pleasures of heaven.

13:29 - *“And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.”* From all over the earth there will be Gentiles who will call upon the name of the Lord and be saved, while many of the Israelites were depriving themselves of everlasting life by refusing it (cf. Acts 13:46). In the next verse we have to face the reality of eternal judgment.

13:30 - *“And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.”* Many who have great pre-eminence upon earth will rank low in heaven. Many of those who were insignificant upon earth will have greater rank than these. Let us so live a life of faithfulness, (even in little things, and in humbleness of soul and spirit) that we may be found worthy in His sight.

Judgments upon Jerusalem

13:31 - *“The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.”* In the Gospels we receive a very poor impression of the Pharisees. Some, however, were true sons of Abraham, though it is estimated by commentators that the

ratio was about one in seven. While Jesus was in Galilee, the territory governed by Herod Antipas, some of the Pharisees advised Jesus that He should leave for His own welfare. After all, Herod was the man who had John the Baptist beheaded.

13:32 - *“And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.”* To call a king who was an absolute tyrant a “fox” was the act of a very brave and assured man. A fox is known for his slyness and destructiveness. Also, being an epithet for a very base man, *fox* certainly summed up the life and character of this wicked king.

Then the Lord very decisively showed who was in control by stating that He was going to finish the ministry appointed Him. The “three days” mentioned here does not refer to the last three days of His life, but rather are to be taken prophetically to mean the 3,000 years still left for man upon this earth—the 2,000 years of the Church age and then the 1,000 years of the Millennial reign. Second Peter 3:8 tells us that 1,000 years is as a day, and a day as 1,000 years to the Lord. Christ will be perfected in His Church, especially in the Millennial age.

13:33 - *“Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”* These days refer to the three days journey from Galilee to the city of Jerusalem where He would be crucified. Now the Lord breaks into a lamentation over the Holy City:

13:34 - *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!”* When one considers what Jerusalem should have been, and in actuality what it was, we can only weep. It was the city chosen by God to be the centre of worship in the nation, if not the world. It was the place where the temple of Solomon had been constructed.

At one time it was called “the faithful city” but afterwards it was so corrupted that God had it destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. Later it was rebuilt, only to be destroyed again in A. D. 70 by the Romans under Titus. In Revelation, Jerusalem is given two names that depict its evil spiritual condition—it is called Sodom and Egypt. The Lord, in verse 35, is prophesying of the coming destruction of Jerusalem under the Roman general, Titus. (A.D. 70).

13:35 - *“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”* The last part of this verse refers to Christ’s Second Coming, when His feet shall at that time touch down upon the Mount of Olives.

CHAPTER 14

The Healing of the Man with Dropsy

14:1 - *“And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that*

they watched him.” There was considerable interaction between Jesus and His opponents. We are not told whether or not these men were favourable to Him, having invited Him into their house for the sabbath meal, which was a great honour. Certainly, they were not all receptive since they viewed Him with suspicion. The Greek word *paratereo*, rendered “watch,” can mean “to be subtle or not sincere” in the manner in which they watched Him.

14:2 - *“And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.”* This dropsy is a condition of abnormal accumulation of fluid in body cavities.

14:3 - *“And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?”* There are seven occasions when Jesus healed on the Sabbath. Four are in Luke:

- Luke 4:38 – Peter’s mother-in-law
- Luke 6:6 – The man with the withered hand
- Luke 13:13 – The lady with the crooked back
- Luke 14:1-6 – The man with dropsy
- Mark 1:21 – The demon-possessed man at Capernaum
- John 5:9 – The paralytic man at the Pool of Bethesda
- John 9:14 – The man born blind

14:4 - *“And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;”* These men were the equivalent of the unbelieving “modernist” pastors. Can you imagine any pastor who would not enthusiastically urge Jesus to heal that man?

14:5 - *“And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?”* Again, He uses the same argument that He employed when healing the women with the crooked back.

14:6 - *“And they could not answer him again to these things.”* The whole attitude of the religious leaders was shameful. Their concern was not for the afflicted, but rather for their traditions and man-made doctrines. The spirit of the Word of God and the Law is *love*. It is summed up by the Apostle Paul in Romans 13:8-10:

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” May God grant that we will have grace ourselves to be rooted and grounded in love.

The Parable of Humility

14:7 - *“And he put forth a parable to those“ which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,”* In this illustration the Lord develops a teaching on humility, a character quality which the religious leaders rarely possessed. He uses the wedding feast as an example, since it was one of the most important events of village life.

14:8 - *When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;*” While we generally have the wedding receptions in churches or hired halls, the wedding feast in those days took place in the house of the bridegroom. Therefore, several rooms would be needed to receive all the guests. The principal room was where the bride and bridegroom were seated, and so it would be the room where the most important guests would be invited. However, to sit there uninvited would risk the following humiliating scene of demotion.

14:9 - *“And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.”* The main desire of those leaders was “to receive honour one of another, but they sought not the honour that cometh from God only.” (cf. Jn. 5:44).

This reminds us of Saul of old. After being rebuked by Samuel for his disobedience, he replied, “I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel” (1 Sam.15:30). The chief concern of King Saul was not righteousness, but maintaining a position of honour before the people. Continuing with our text, Jesus now gives them a warning.

14:10 - *“But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.”* Really, we are nothing, and anything that is good in our lives is because

of the grace of God. How then can we think highly of ourselves, and why should we seek positions of honour in the sight of man?

14:11 - *“For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”* Let us wholeheartedly seek true *humility*, which is rooted in a revelation from God of our own unworthiness. Remember, the greatest man said, “He must increase; I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30).

Being Blessed at the Resurrection of the Just

14:12-13 - *“Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:”*

This passage is self-explanatory, but how rarely is it practiced. We all tend to be partial, preferring to be surrounded by our own friends and those of like kind. But in so doing we receive no reward in the Kingdom for our trouble and expense. However, if we invite “the undesirables” and outcasts, then Jesus tells us how we will be blessed.

14:14 - *“thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”*

The Parable of the Great Supper

14:15 - *“And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.”* To eat bread in the kingdom was one of the goals of a pious Jew. One of the concepts of the Jews concerning the Messianic dispensation was that it would consist of one long glorious banquet. All those who had led respectable lives (or were even just a son of Abraham) were qualified to be guests at that feast. For this reason, the Lord spoke the following parable.

14:16 - *“Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:”* “A certain man” stands for the Lord Himself in this particular parable. The “great supper” represents the marriage supper of the Lamb.

14:17 - *“And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.”* In those days when a man planned a feast, the day was announced a long time beforehand, enabling the invited guests to set that time aside from their labours. However, the hour of the feast was not set. Therefore, when the feast was ready, the servants would be sent forth to call the guests. It would be a terrible insult to refuse to go after having accepted the invitation previously.

14:18 - *“And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.”* The excuses that were presented had absolutely no validity

whatsoever. The first man had no need to inspect that piece of ground on that particular day—anyway, who buys land without having seen it already? These excuses, however, have to be looked at in light of the spiritual state of the hearts of these guests.

Does land take precedent in our lives over spiritual matters? Unfortunately, it can! I remember a much-advertised men's prayer breakfast at a certain church. The purpose of the breakfast was twofold: First it was to help the men in the church become more interested in the church affairs. Also, it was an occasion to bring in other Christians so that they would become interested in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Yet, a certain farmer in that church decided to plant on that particular day, although he had already given his word to bring another man.

14:19 - *“And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.”* Why would one on that particular day have to test his oxen? There is a Scripture that we should all learn by heart so that it becomes a part of us. Psalm 15:4 says: “He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not.” We must keep our word. The next excuse, however, is even more bizarre.

14:20 - *“And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.”* This man certainly knew that at the time of the feast that he would have been married. Here we have another important spiritual lesson. A wife should never interfere with our duty toward God. Wives are to be helpmates enabling us to fulfil the will of God for our lives, never a

hindrance or a liability. So let us cleanse our hearts of all soulish attachments that might hinder us from missing the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

14:21 - *“So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.”* We must look at this from a spiritual standpoint. The maimed, halt, and the blind were forbidden in the Old Testament from participating in the ministry.

“Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, Or crookbacked, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God” (Lev 21:17-21). The Lord wanted only men who were without blemish. The Lord demands perfection in both man and offering (cf. Lev 22:19-20). These imperfections in Luke 14:21 make an interesting study, because each one has a spiritual significance. Let us look at them briefly:

- **The Blind** - spiritual blindness. These are people without vision. They do not know where they are going, and anyone

they lead will go off course, too. “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mt.15:14).

- **The Lame** - spiritual cripples. “And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed”(Heb.12:13). The lame are those people who have not continued in the straight path of righteousness, but have turned to the right hand or the left.

- **The Poor** - careless ones. Proverbs 13:23 says, “Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.”

Those who normally would be disqualified from the feast are the ones who are invited. Those who were invited (those Christians who should have been in the feast) are shut out. There will be many in the Church who will forfeit their privilege to be at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. There are others who are presently in the world (the maimed, halt, blind, and poor) who will eventually come to Christ and make it to the Marriage feast. Many who are first shall end up last, and many who come in last, (in the eleventh hour) shall end up first (cf. Mt. 20:16).

14:22 - *“And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.”* It is to the glory of God that His house be filled. God’s house being “full” applies not only to heaven above but to His sanctuaries here on earth. One church that we were helping to pastor had outgrown their previous building.

The Lord directed us to rent the largest building in the nation at that time. It held over 3,000, but the congregation was only in the hundreds. Yet God gave us this Scripture, “My house may be filled.” After that, we saw, to the glory of God, multiple services in that building. We should always rent or build according to God’s specifications.

14:23 - *“And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”* This thought of “compelling” people to come to church was used in ages past as a justification for the dreaded Inquisition of the Middle Ages. It forced conversions under the threat of torture. What this verse really means by “compelling” is to *urge* people to come to Christ and be saved. It is not a threat to them.

14:24 - *“For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”* Those who should have been at the feast forfeited their privilege. Regretfully, for so many this has been the case. They should have been in heaven but instead are in hell. Let us make the Kingdom our top priority in life.

The Cost of Discipleship

14:25 - *“And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,”* Much of the Rabbinical lecturing was given as the Rabbi, followed by his students, would walk in the market place or along the streets. Today, we have classrooms. One old college professor remarked after he had retired: “Instead of being annoyed at all the questions I was

asked by my pupils when walking through the campus, I should have realised that this time of interaction with them was the time they learned the most.” Jesus was adopting that age-old method of teaching, too.

14:26 - “*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*” This statement has to be viewed in the light of the fifth commandment, which states that we are to honour our father and mother. The thought here is that Christ must have *the pre-eminent place* in our life and that no human love or attachment must prevent us from following the Lord wholeheartedly.

14:27 - “*And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*” This cross that we are constrained to bear is one which *God* has appointed for us. It is not a self appointed or self-induced cross, for there is no grace given for that. Our particular cross may take many forms—a sick child, an irritating habit or problem in one’s spouse, or any number of situations. Yet for each form of cross, there is a corresponding form of God’s grace to help us not only to bear it but to triumph in it.

The Apostle Paul, who had his fair share of crosses, gives this testimony: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17).

Friends, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus. Therefore, let us with joy take up those crosses of which it is His pleasure

for us to carry, knowing the intended glory it will bring. Now the Lord continues to warn us to “count the cost” before we embark on the road to being His disciple.

14:28 - *“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?”* These illustrations can stand on their own merit without the need to spiritualize their meaning. They can be of inestimable value for us when we are placed in the position of having to build a church, recreational, or educational facility.

First, we must be sure that the Lord has told us to build. Many leaders have the tendency to copy what some other leader has successfully done. They assume that they can do the same and have the same results. I am thinking of one such leader. Seeing others build large sanctuaries for their ever-increasing flock, he did the same without having a growing flock. Unfortunately, the debts for his elaborate building were substantial. The dear man was forced to leave the ministry and find secular work in order to pay for that building, which in the end was not used for divine purposes.

14:29-30 - *“Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”* In many places there have been attempts to build for God, but the buildings were left unfinished and the work of God has fallen into disrepute. Please do not forget that when God bids us to build, He is the Author and the Finisher of it. Now the Lord gives another illustration that is very instructive for His people:

14:31 - *“Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?”* The Christian does not fight against flesh and blood, but against evil spirits. It is essential before starting any battle that we are sure that the Lord is involving us in the battle.

Also, we must know that we have been given the power and authority to win. One never starts a battle if he has little hope of victory. If that is the case, it is best not to stir up the enemy in the first place. In 2 Chronicles 35:20-24, God did not want the king to meddle in someone else’s battle.

14:32-33 - *“Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”* The overriding thought here is that to be a disciple of Jesus, we must be wholehearted.

The Warning to the Christian to Guard His Heart

14:34 - *“Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?”* It is good to consider the high value placed upon salt in olden times, and to realise the compliment the Lord was according His disciples when He said, “Ye are the salt of the earth” (Mt. 5:13).

1. Salt was used as a preservative for food. We are the preservative of God’s creation, keeping the good in the earth.

2. Salt was used (as it now is) for flavouring. It added life and zest to the food. We add zest to life and give life meaning.

3. Salt was used on the land to aid in the growth of good things. We help the growth of good people.

Salt is a symbol of sincerity. If you take the salt out of meat, it becomes corrupt. If we lose our sincerity, we become corrupt. Also, we lose respect and we are cast out and trodden under the foot of men. If we lose the beauty and love of God in our hearts, and if the sweetness of Jesus has become bitter, we are *no good*. We are like the salt that has lost its savour.

14:35 - *“It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”*

Those who let bitterness dry up their spirit so that they become critical and cynical, these will be cast out of the Kingdom on that day. Let us be careful to keep our heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). Salt that has lost its savour becomes worthless both to God and man.

CHAPTER 15

The Three Parables of Finding the Lost

15:1-2 - *“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”* The Son of God came into the world to save the lost. To that end He gave these three parables on *finding again*

that which was lost. The theme in all these parables is the same—that which had first been in the possession of the owner had been lost. Thus, these parables are directed toward the backslidden believer. While all three parables present excellent themes for reaching the unsaved, they also are directed to the *believer* who has strayed from the fold of Christ. The three parables also show how one, having once been saved can be lost—by ignorance, neglect, and wilfulness.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep – lost by ignorance

The Parable of the Lost Coin – lost by neglect

The Parable of the Prodigal Son – lost by wilfulness and rebellion

1. The Lost Sheep

15:3-4 - “*And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?*” In this parable of the lost sheep, we must remember the nature of sheep as depicted in Isaiah 53:6: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

A sheep is quite devoid of intelligence, and because of its ignorance, easily goes astray as it desires to go its own way. This parable represents a sheep that is lost *through ignorance*. If you are a pastor, you should ask the Lord to help you not lose any sheep that are entrusted to you because of ignorance. Teach them well. If they go astray, we must seek the sheep that are lost.

15:5 - *“And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”* This is the action of the Good Shepherd. He seeks His lost sheep. Ezekiel 34:11: *“For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.”*

15:6-7 - *“And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”* The Lord has come to save those who are lost, and the joy in heaven is great when the lost are found. We now come to the second parable of this series, which speaks of the one who was lost through *neglect*.

2. The Lost Coin

15:8 - *“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?”* The coin in this parable would be the drachma, a silver coin that would have been worth more than a working man’s daily wage. Perhaps it would be equivalent to one and half days’ pay. Therefore, it would be of great value to a poor woman. Certainly it would be a matter of concern that she had lost ten percent of her savings.

15:9 - *“And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.”* The Lord likens her

joy at finding the coin, which to her was very costly, to the joy in heaven when one who has been lost is found.

15:10 - *“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”* Now we come to the third parable—the parable of the Prodigal Son, the one who was lost through *rebellion* (15:11-32).

3. The Lost Son

15:11 - *“And he said, A certain man had two sons:”* Regretfully, in many families there are the prodigal sons. There may be one son who faithfully follows all the wishes of his father, bringing him much joy and delight by his obedience. Yet in that very same family there may be a son who has been brought up in identical conditions, but rebels and walks away from home and all its protections. Such was the case in this parable.

15:12 - *“And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.”* Here we have the tragic fulfilment of Proverbs 20:21, which says: “An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.” Several examples of men who rose too fast were the cases of Saul and Solomon. Both were “untried” when they came to the throne over the united Kingdom of Israel. Their ends were not good. They both lost the kingdom.

On the other hand, David, who had been tried and tested before he came to the throne, succeeded. This should be a

lesson for us not to be impatient to inherit the ministry or the promises that God has made to us. If we come into positions of authority too quickly, we probably will forfeit them in the end.

15:13 - *“And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.”* When one is young and inexperienced, fortunes are lost. Many great families have had this happen to them, and we could also cite several biblical examples to illustrate this truth.

Solomon wondered if the young man who inherited his kingdom would squander it or handle it wisely: “And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity” (Ecc. 2:19). Truly, Solomon’s forebodings came to pass. Much of the treasure that he had accumulated was lost by his son Rehoboam to Shishak, King of Egypt, because of his disobedience and folly (2 Chr. 12:1-5).

15:14 - *“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.”* There comes a time in our life when God (who watches over His own like a father) begins to hedge us in and bring us down for our own good. In prosperity, very few think of God. Thus, God brought the prodigal down.

15:15 - *“And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.”* The

God who can lift us up out of the dunghill and make us sit with princes is the same God who can reduce us to abject poverty when that is the only means to our ultimate salvation. This is what was needed to save this younger son.

15:16 - *“And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.”* I spoke with one young man who was very much like this son in the parable. He was riding very high in business and he was also wealthy. I said, “the Lord has given me a vision for you.” I then told him I was seeing him greatly reduced and having to curtail his lifestyle, yet after many years I saw the Lord raise him up again. For this particular young man, it was the only way that the Lord could deal with His pride and make him dependent upon God and not on his own abilities. It was the same with this younger son.

15:17 - *“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!”* How little we can do for a people until they realise how rebellious and prideful they have been. Indeed, people are their own worst enemy. Paul says: “In meekness instructing those that *oppose themselves*; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:25).

Coming to his senses, the prodigal realised that his former estate (which he had left in rebellion) had well provided for him. How often I have seen rebellious daughters, marrying against the advice and tears of their parents, then return home after their own home has been broken up by a drunken, insipid,

brutal, womanizing husband. The tears of acknowledgment have then flowed down their cheeks, but it is too late when they realise they were better off in their parents' home waiting for the one of God's choice for their lives. So it was with the prodigal, who said:

15:18 - *"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,"* In order to return to the place where we left the will of God, we first must acknowledge our iniquities. The prophet says: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God ... and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD" (Jer. 3:13). Hosea 14:2 beckons the backslider "to take words and turn to the Lord and say—take away all iniquity and receive us graciously." Thus, the prodigal continues:

15:19 - *"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."* One of the hallmarks of true repentance is not only to be willing to take the lowest place, but from our hearts to realise that *all we deserve is the lowest place.*

15:20 - *"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."* Now we see the beautiful character of the father of the prodigal. He has a heart full of compassion. We should realise that an earthly father, however good he is, is only a pale reflection of the heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus in telling this parable gives us an insight into the depths of the nature

of God, Who is *love*. Let us remember that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16).

There are other truths we should not miss in this parable. One of them is found in James 4:8: “Draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you.” When we make a step toward Him, He is there running toward us. Then, too, the father in this story did not go seeking the prodigal until he had turned. We have to *wait* until the backslider comes to his senses before we can have any hope of receiving him back. The backslider has to be willing to acknowledge his sin before restoration is possible. Thus, we see his confession.

15:21 - *“And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.”* It is this sense of our own unworthiness that endears us to the Father. It opens the way for Him to take us in His arms and bless us as He did David when he truly repented. In this process of restoration there are many lessons for us as leaders.

15:22 - *“But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:”*

The robe speaks of salvation and relationship. **The ring** is the symbol of authority. The **shoes** (feet being shod with the Gospel of peace - Eph. 6:15) speak of ministry. This speaks of the ministry being restored to him.

This should give each one of us hope in the God of restoration. If we will follow these steps, we, too, may be able to be restored to our former position even as King David was restored to his kingdom after his repentance from his sin.

15:23 - *“And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry.”* This fatted calf was a young bullock specially fed and kept for festive occasions in wealthy families. It was killed only on a very special day of rejoicing, such as this circumstance would warrant.

15:24 - *“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”* This verse merits a very careful study, especially since it is the Lord Himself who is speaking. We must assume that this younger son represents a backslider. Therefore, the words of the father take on a very serious meaning. When someone who is born again leaves the church and ceases to follow Jesus, that person dies spiritually. “This my son was dead” (cf. v. 32). He is lost and will go to hell. Numerous Scriptures support this truth. Therefore, we should do all in our power to bring back to the fold those who have gone astray. Otherwise, their eternal state will be far worse than those who never knew the Gospel (cf. 2 Pet. 2:20-22).

15:25 - *“Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.”* The case of the elder brother has often been misinterpreted by commentators and preachers alike. By the grace of God, we would like to attempt to rightly divide the Word of God on this matter of the elder brother.

15:26 - *“And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.”* It is clear that this was a wealthy family of landowners, for even the sons had their own personal servants.

15:27 - *“And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.”* The fatted calf, as we have already said, was only slain on very important occasions. Therefore, this was a very prized animal upon which much food and care had been lavished. The fatted calf would have been one of the finest of animals. To some degree we must try to understand the attitude of the elder brother, while not seeking to justify him.

15:28 - *“And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.”* By inference, the elder brother had sought by precept and word to prevent his younger brother from taking his disastrous course that had brought shame to the family name. In so doing, he would naturally think that he was more worthy of the fatted calf than the prodigal brother.

15:29 - *“And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:”* It would seem natural to him that he was far more worthy of the festive occasion than the younger reprobate. Therefore, he proceeds to berate or at least complain to his father concerning the inequality of the treatment. In his mind, he merited the calf, not his brother.

15:30 - *“But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.”* There are several grave charges brought against the younger brother:

- He consorted with prostitutes.
- He had wasted his father’s hard-earned money in riotous living and drunkenness.
- He had shamed the family name and reputation.

To the elder brother, the actions of the father are inconceivable. How could he slay the prized animal for such a wastrel? The father, however, saw the matter in a very different light.

15:31 - *“And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.”* This sentence is of great and paramount importance. It is supported by many Scriptures, as well as by a sense of justice in the minds of any fair-minded person. This faithful elder brother, by patient well doing, was going to inherit *all* his father’s estate. The father assured him, *“All that I have is thine.”*

In essence, this is the lesson we learn from the wayward ministers, the Levites who went astray from God and followed their idols in the time of Ezekiel. When they were restored, they could minister to the people but not unto God. Only the faithful sons of Zadok were allowed to come within the veil and minister unto the Lord (see Ezekiel 44:10-16).

We are further told in Revelation 17:14 that those who are with the Lord in the last great battle are the called, chosen,

and *faithful*. In this respect, may we be like the elder brother. Yet there is in the attitude of the elder brother something that had to be changed, and so the father speaks gently to him.

15:32 - *“It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”* The elder brother should have rejoiced over the restoration of the backslider, but lacked the loving heart of a father. Remember, although the prodigal received back his salvation, his authority, his position, and his ministry, he still lost his *inheritance*. There is a price to be paid for backsliding. May we, dear ones, pray that we be found faithful on that day when the books shall be opened.

CHAPTER 16

The Parable of the Unjust Steward

16:1 - *“And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.”* The steward in this parable was a man unto whom the owner had entrusted all his estate. He was also responsible to care for the family with respect to their natural well being. A type of a steward would be Joseph in Potiphar’s house:

Genesis 39:4, 6 says, “And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. ... And he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand; and he knew not ought he had, save

the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.”

16:2 - *“And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.”* This is a most solemn thought—we can only keep our ministry to the degree that we are faithful (cf. 1 Sam.13:13-14). Remember, the ministry is not ours but has been given to us by the Lord. *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers”* (Eph. 4:11).

16:3 - *“Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.”* What indeed can a man do when he was once chosen for the ministry but now has been rejected because of unfaithfulness? The solution of this steward was as follows:

16:4 - *“I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.”* In the natural, these “houses” are the earthly houses of his lord’s debtors. After he has been put out of his own house that was upon the estate of his rich employer, he hoped that his lord’s debtors would receive him into their houses out of gratitude. Later on in this parable we shall see a spiritual meaning.

16:5-6 - *“So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.”* The actions of the unjust steward would startle many. It would

have been all right if the steward had lowered the debts of those who owed him money. However, he lowered the debts that were owed to his master in order to find favour with the debtors. Obviously, this was not right. In so doing, he would cause his master to lose half of what he was owed.

16:7 - *“Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.”* It is not clear why there was a disparity in the payments, except that perhaps one was more able to pay than another.

16:8 - *“And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”* However, there is a more fitting truth that the Jesus is seeking to teach us.

16:9 - *“And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”* This is one of the two main teachings of this parable and it is a very solemn one, too. In eternity there are two main groups of people: those who go to heaven and those who go to hell. In heaven, there are many plains of glory. There are many categories and groups of people. As one star differeth in glory from another, so shall we be in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:41,42).

Likewise, in hell, from what little I have seen in visions, there are many different levels and dwelling places in the under world. While some places are not as terrible as others, none of the eternal habitations of the damned are pleasant places.

Far from it—they are filled with darkness and despair. Some of the doomed are in the sides of the bottomless pit. They hear the cries and screams of certain ones who are forever condemned to fall headlong into that pit. These cries of horror pierce one's ears and can never be shut out.

Then there are snakes (representing one's own particular sins) that writhe around one's body. There are worms, which constantly gnaw at one's bones and create constant pain that throbs through one's being.

Oh, let us follow the Lord of love wholeheartedly and not the Wicked One, that we may escape from hell below and dwell with Christ in the light and joy of His Kingdom of peace and love. Therefore, the full intent of this parable is that we may know verse 10:

16:10 - *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”* It is so important to realise that the little things in life determine and form our character. In this life we are being forged into what we are going to be for all eternity. Remember, we shall have to give an account to God for every idle word. Every little act of kindness, even a smile or a handshake will not be forgotten on that day.

16:11 - *“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”* First, God tests us in the realm of our natural or secular employment. If we are faithful there, we become candidates of consideration for spiritual positions and responsibilities.

16:12 - *“And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?”*

We are then placed in the vineyard of another man. Our conduct in another man’s work, either as an assistant pastor, elder, or deacon, will then determine whether or not we may be promoted and given our own work. Therefore, to summarize the lessons of this parable, we may say that it is a call to faithfulness in three areas:

- To be faithful in that which is least
- To be faithful in secular and natural things
- To be faithful in another man’s work, vision, or vineyard

Various Spiritual Laws of the Kingdom

16:13 - *“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”* A divided heart—that desires the things of God but still wants to hold on to the things of this world—will never hit the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This was the problem of the Pharisees and many religious leaders who tried to have one foot in heaven and the other in this world.

Let us ask the Lord to cleanse our hearts from all desires for this world. Otherwise, at the very best, we shall be like Balaam, who said concerning his eternal place: “I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh” (Num. 24:17). May God grant that we be in the place of our divine appointment, even as the prophet Daniel, who was told: “Go thy way till

the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days” (Dan. 12:13).

16:14 - *“And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.”* These religious leaders sought to keep the law, but in reality they did not pay any attention to the tenth command, which says: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s” (Ex. 20:17). The love of money is the root of all evil. Let us plead with the Lord to remove all covetousness from our hearts.

16:15 - *“And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”* Here the Lord highlights one of the most serious errors in human thinking. There is a tendency deep in our nature to justify everything we do, even when it is plain for all to see that we are wrong. We also commend men for their visible outer acts, but God looks upon the heart. At one time in my life, the Lord challenged me every night concerning the day’s happenings. Consistently He would ask me: “Why did you do that?” or “Why did you say it like that?” Most things, generally speaking, were good and probably would have been commended by the onlookers, but God was looking at my heart and saw the imperfect motive with which I did good things. On occasions, the Pharisees did things that were good, but with the purpose of drawing attention to themselves to receive man’s praise instead of God’s.

16:16 - *“The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.”* This verse shows us some of the differences between the Old and the New Testaments. John the Baptist was the dividing line between the Testaments. The Kingdom of God, however, was introduced by Jesus, and those who are to enter in must realise that “straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to eternal life.” Therefore, the Kingdom is attained only by a struggle against the forces of evil, which seek to turn us aside from the pathway of righteousness. We have to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

16:17 - *“And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.”* The emphasis that Jesus places upon the law should never be treated lightly. Some who have treated God’s law lightly, calling an emphasis upon it “*legalism*,” have erred from the faith. We should realise that the major difference between the two covenants is this: the old was external with the laws written on tables of stone, whereas the new is to have those very same ten commandments written upon the fleshly tables of our heart. Thus, the New Testament has a far higher standard than the Old Testament. This is shown vividly in the next commandment, given in verse 18:

16:18 - *“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another; committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.”* Let us all be very clear that remarriage to one who is divorced is adultery in the eyes of God. No laws instituted by any government can overrule the commandments of the Lord.

Furthermore, it was no accident that Jesus chose to use this particular example when showing the higher law of the heart.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

16:19 - *“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:”* Most of the Lord’s parables were based on actual events. They were not simply illustrations that He devised to make a point. The account of the rich man and Lazarus is no exception. This episode really happened, and we even know the name of the beggar. First of all, let us turn our attention to the facts that are recounted about the rich man. We are told three things about him:

1. He was rich.
2. He was clothed in purple.
3. He fared sumptuously.

Later in the parable we will be told that he lost his soul for these reasons.

16:20-21 - *“And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.”* There are also three things that we are told concerning Lazarus:

1. He was a beggar.
2. He was full of sores.
3. He was laid at the gate of the rich man.

16:22 - *“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;”* At death, the angels carried Lazarus to Abraham’s bosom, which was the name for “paradise” in Old Testament times. Paradise was the place where the departed spirits of the righteous were taken at death. There they awaited the resurrection of the Lord, and then were to be taken by Him to heaven.

When Jesus rose from the dead, He “lead captivity captive” (Eph. 4:8). This is to say that He had the keys of hell and death, which released the departed righteous spirits from this place in the lower parts of the earth to go into heaven. Before the resurrection, the righteous did not go to heaven. They rested in the lower parts of the earth. Now we will see the fate of the rich man.

16:23 - *“And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”* It is a fact that some people in hell are permitted to see the blissful state of the redeemed that they themselves could also have entered if only they had paid attention to these matters in their lives here on earth.

16:24 - *“And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”* I well remember one of my dear father’s letters to my mother while he was in Africa in World War II. He wrote that he well understood how we were suffering in the cold of an English winter, but at least we could get warm when it was

needful. In Africa, however, he said there was *no escape* from the oppressive heat of the tropics. Likewise, the judgment upon the damned includes the torment of eternal fire. The tongue literally burns with the unquenchable fire that can never ever be put out.

16:25 - *“But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”*

How careful we must be not to indulge ourselves in the luxuries of this present world and forget the Lord. Let us now look very carefully at the three things for which the rich man was rebuked for having:

1. Riches—money, power, influence, false security, no reliance upon God
2. Clothed in Purple—extravagant clothing to glorify one’s self and the outer man
3. Fared Sumptuously—the finest of food (gluttony); while others starved, his god was his belly.

Riches

Scripture abounds with the woes of the rich. We will quote the following warnings from both Testaments:

- “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches...” (Jer 9:23).

- “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 19:23).
- “But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation” (Luke 6:24).
- “But they that [will to be] rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Tim 6:9).
- “The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep” (Eccl. 5:12).

Clothed in Purple

- Jesus said that those who wore purple were in princes palaces (cf. Lk. 7:25).
- The Apostle Peter says that our emphasis should be upon the adorning of the heart and that we should not be overly concerned with outer dress (1 Pet. 3:3,4).
- Our clothing must be at all times simple and modest. We should be dressed appropriately for any given occasion. We should concentrate upon being clothed with the garments of salvation, humility, wisdom, praise, meekness, and thanksgiving.
- Solomon commands that our garments be always white (Eccl. 9:8).

- Elisha reprimanded his servant for covetousness, saying: “Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?” (2 Ki. 5:26).

He Lived Sumptuously

- King Solomon warns: “When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat” (Prov. 23:1-3).

- Let us therefore be like Daniel and eat simply. It is better for our health and also our souls. It also will enable us to think more clearly, and our spirit will be unencumbered to commune with God. Fasting not only helps cleanse our bodies, but also makes our minds and spirits sharper to hear from God. Now father Abraham says to the rich man:

16:26 - *“And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”* Both heaven and hell have their God-ordained boundaries. Those in hell cannot go to heaven and neither can those in heaven visit hell. Those boundaries are eternal. Therefore, in whatever state we die, in that state we will remain forever. May God grant that we be in our appointed heavenly position. Now the rich man reflects upon the sure eternal plight of his brothers who will certainly be with him in that place of eternal doom.

16:27-28 - *“And he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”* Undoubtedly, the five brothers had been as heartless toward the poor as had the rich man. We can assume that they had all looked upon these riches as something they should use for their own benefit, but Paul reminds us that we are only *stewards* of these things. Every blessing that has been entrusted to us is for the needs of the less fortunate (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

16:29 - *“Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.”* Moses instructs us about the poor in this fashion: “If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth” (Deut. 15:7,8).

In like manner, the prophets tell us our duty: “Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” (Isa. 58:7). All these things the rich man and his brethren neglected. But realizing that he himself had not heeded the law and the prophets, he was hoping there was still another way to reach them.

16:30-31 - *“And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. But Abraham*

said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” This is an awesome statement—even great miracles will not cause some people to turn from their life of self-indulgence and sin.

This truly was the case with the city of Capernaum, whose inhabitants enjoyed the best things that life could offer, for they heard and saw the great miracles of Jesus but did not repent. Oh, to have a heart that is tender toward the Word of God, so that our lives reflect and adhere to His teachings!

CHAPTER 17

Offences

This subject of offences is of great importance. Because of offences, many have been turned aside from following Christ, or have ceased to press on to possess all that the Lord had for them. In other words, they have suffered eternally. Knowing the seriousness of this matter, we must endeavour with everything that is within us not to be an offense to others and cause them to stumble. So let us now turn and read the words of Jesus:

17:1 - *“Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!”* There is within our human nature the sure capability for offending others. We tend to show insensitivity to the feelings of others through our words, our actions, and our character traits that others might find obnoxious. Whether by sins of omission or commission, we offend our

fellow-workers, neighbours, relatives, or brothers and sisters in Christ.

James says: “In many things we [all offend]. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (Jas. 3:2). Therefore, we need to pray for the spirit of understanding which is one of the seven spirits of the Lord mentioned in Isaiah 11:2,3. The spirit of understanding helps us become very sensitive in our thoughts, speech, and actions concerning those things that please the Father. Having this sensitivity toward others will help us not be an offence to people. We should not treat lightly the thought of punishment if we offend others and make them fall. In the next verse, Jesus is not referring to petty offences.

17:2 - *“It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.”* We should also be sure that we are not offended by others. This is possible when we ask God for the following:

- 1.) Forgetfulness (Gen. 41:51)—We can easily forgive others if we have forgotten an offence.
- 2.) Meekness—We must seek to have meekness worked out in our lives so that within us there is nothing of self that can be offended. Meekness is a “holy acceptance of circumstances.” It is the opposite of anger. Many people have a large uncrucified ego, and they are very touchy.

- 3.) Peace—“Great peace have all they that love thy law...nothing will offend them” (Ps.119:165).
- 4.) Humility—The Scriptures teach us that it is only by pride that we have contention (Prov.13:10). Therefore, we can only be truly offended if we are proud. Again, humility is the key to victory over all these slights and hurts from our fellow man.

On Forgiveness

A forgiving spirit is essential if we are to triumph in this world of sin that is filled with false accusations and maliciousness. Thus, the Lord starts with this warning:

17:3-4 - *“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.”* We must guard our hearts with all diligence so that deep in our hearts we do not harbour any resentment against our brothers or sisters. “But if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him...” This is very clear. We should tell people by what trespasses they have offended us. “And if he repent, forgive him.”

This does not mean just an isolated occasion. Even if there is a pattern of abuse, we are still to have a spirit of forgiveness that flows like a stream from our hearts unto our brother or sister. This must be supernatural, for no human sweetness is capable of such graciousness. In fact, human sweetness is

likened to honey. Honey was forbidden in Levitical sacrifices because it cannot stand the fire. Human sweetness cannot stand the fire. It is by grace alone that we can forgive continuously. Grace is divine enablement.

Faith

17:5 - *“And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.”* Indeed, this is a prayer common to many of God’s people. After coming to a knowledge of salvation, we begin to realise that even as our initial salvation is by faith, so also is every new blessing by faith and faith alone. Therefore, we want our faith increased.

The Apostle Paul tells us *how* to increase our faith in Romans 10:17: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Faith grows in our hearts as we *hear the word* through reading, studying, and preaching. Yet faith is also a gift. It is “not of ourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). Faith is also one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:9). Therefore, we must understand that, as with all gifts, the gift of faith increases by use.

Now the Lord, not really answering the disciples in this case, proceeds to tell them of the immensity of the power of that gift of faith.

17:6 - *“And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.”* In some small measure I understand what the Lord

was saying. In an open air meeting in India, my interpreter was plagued by a ferocious flying insect that resembled a very large bee.

I felt the anointing suddenly come upon me, and the words coming from my lips, as I pointed to that insect and said, “Go out that way in the name of Jesus.” The insect not only left, but did so by the way it had been commanded, to the amazement of the convention of pastors who witnessed it. Let us be encouraged by the words of our Master, who promised: “Greater things than these will you do because I go to my Father” (Jn. 14:12).

The Humility of the Servant Heart

17:7 - *“But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?”* Servants were very common in those days and were not well treated. In fact, even in our days I have seen this wrong treatment with my own eyes. One instance that comes to mind was a servant sleeping on the floor. When the master was taking me to my room, he literally kicked the servant, who was by the door, to awaken him out of sleep so that we could pass. In the time of Jesus, servants were little more than slaves and were given very little consideration by most owners. However, there were blessed exceptions, like the centurion mentioned in chapter 7 who truly loved his servant.

17:8 - *“And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?”* The position of a servant in those days was a thankless

one, for the servants not only had to work long hours in the field, but after working all day, they also had to prepare the meals for their masters as well.

17:9 - *“Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.”* Jesus is not commending this heartless attitude towards those servants. He is simply stressing the fact that this was how those masters acted. We know Jesus is not commending this harsh treatment because of the way in which He treats us so kindly. However, by the actions of these earthly masters He seeks to develop a truth, which He now explains.

17:10 - *“So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”* The whole thought of this truth is that we should not expect rewards or commendation for doing our God-given duty. Paul takes this position when he writes to fellow believers saying: “For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). So let us be very thankful for *any* opportunity the Lord gives us to be of service to Him.

The Ten Lepers

17:11 - *“And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.”* The actual text better reads “between Samaria and Galilee.” Possibly he passed through Beth-shean, crossing the Jordan there, and then re-crossed the Jordan near Jericho.

17:12 - *“And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:”*

Leprosy was the dreaded disease that made men social outcasts. Lepers were forced to keep their distance from all others. This was in accordance with the Levitical law (Lev. 13:45-46; Num. 5:2).

17:13 - *“And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”* These ten men saw their hope in Jesus and cried out to Him with a loud voice. Leprosy is a type of sin; therefore, we should also cry out to the One who alone can cleanse us from our defilement of sin.

17:14 - *“And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.”* This is a fulfilment of Psalm 107:20: “He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.” But how did they react to this gracious act of the Saviour?

17:15 - *“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.”* Only one out of ten was thankful. What a lesson for us! At the time of writing this book, I heard about a man who was healed of cancer upon his deathbed. What did he do? He neither thanked God nor came to church, although He had previously been a minister. God showed him mercy and healed him in his very backslidden condition. Still, he was not thankful. Let us *major* in thanksgiving, seeing God’s hand of benevolence in all the little issues of life. It will enable us to be so much more like Jesus.

17:16 - *“And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.”* This brings us to a very interesting perspective on life. That this one man is identified as a “Samaritan” suggests that the others were Jews. Normally, Jews and Samaritans did not mix, but in their common need these lepers became friends. This is so true in life and in nature. When there is a flood, animals that normally attack one another stand on high ground together peaceably, without animosity. It often takes tragedy to bring foes together.

In a hospital, at a funeral, and after a hurricane has struck, offenses are forgotten. Sometimes the Lord has to bring these upsets into lives in order to get us to flow together. May we be wise and pray that the Lord will soften our hearts so that there is nothing in us that precludes us from being conciliatory toward others in the body of Christ, even if we do not approve of their conduct.

17:17 - *“And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?”* We can sense His anguish and hurt as He realises that the others were not appreciative of their miracle.

17:18 - *“There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.”* His own people were not thankful. This is especially seen at His crucifixion when virtually everyone forsook Him. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Jn. 1:11). Yet the Samaritan, or the Gentile (the one outside the Kingdom of God) manifested gratitude.

17:19 - *“And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”* Now we see an added blessing that

thankfulness brings. He was “made whole” in the sense that he was healed in spirit and soul as well as in body, whereas the others were only healed in body. Let us have that thankful heart, but let us not be surprised if what we do for others is treated with ingratitude.

The ingratitude of others must never be allowed to make us bitter or cease from good works. In our home church we run a food bank for the poor and needy. It is rare that the staff who prepare the packages are thanked, yet they cheerfully continue their work of mercy with a smile, for they do it unto the One who is invisible. Their reward will be on Resurrection morning.

The Second Coming v. 20-37

The Lord’s teachings on His Second Coming have to be understood in the context of *all* His teachings. It is very unwise to take isolated verses and form doctrine from them. Christ’s teaching on His Second Coming is illustrated from just a few sayings in these passages.

God’s kingdom, according to
Jesus, is threefold in fulfilment:

1. The Kingdom of God is heaven itself.
2. The Kingdom of God is heaven brought down to earth—the Millennial reign of Christ.
3. The Kingdom of God is heaven *inside* the life of a believer. The Kingdom of God is within you.

17:20-21 - *“And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”* Where the King is, there is His Kingdom. All born again believers have Christ in them. Christ in us is the hope of glory. Therefore, the Kingdom, which is righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom. 14:17), is resident in the heart of every one of His blood-bought children. Now He speaks of another aspect of His kingdom.

17:22 - *“And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.”* Here He is speaking of the time when there will be great deception just prior to His Second Coming.

17:23 - *“And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.”* There will be many in our times who claim to be Christ. These false Christs all have followers who will seek to lead the saints astray. But the coming of the Lord is no secret thing; it is *visible to all*. This is attested to by the prophets, the Acts, the Book of Revelation, and the Lord Himself in all four Gospels. His coming is not secret, but open for all to see.

17:24 - *“For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.”* To substantiate our previous statements and this verse as well, we will now list a few scriptural references:

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him” (Dan. 7:13).

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Mt. 24:30).

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen” (Rev. 1:7).

Then Jesus brought his disciples back to their present time and the chronological order and sequence of events.

17:25 - *“But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.”* Christ always taught that a cross must precede a crown. It was true for Him and it is true for us as well. It was a truth that He was forever repeating even after His resurrection. In those days seemingly no one understood that their long looked-for Messiah must first go to the cross

before He could redeem them. Let us take up our cross in order that one day we may have a crown. To the degree that we suffer, to that same degree we will reign with Him. To the degree that a rubber ball is submerged in water, to that same degree it will arise into the air. Now Jesus warns of the suddenness of His coming.

17:26 - *“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.”* Before we go on any further, let us consider what the days of Noah were really like. We are told in Genesis 6 that those were days of violence, oppression, and extreme sexual perversion. As we see these things taking over the world today, let us realise that the time of His appearance draws nigh.

17:27 - *“They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.”* There was no prior warning to the inhabitants of the earth in those days of the imminence of the Flood. So, too, shall it be in the time of the Second Coming.

17:28 - *“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;”* The times of Lot are associated with Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities are known for the most perverted sexual practices known to mankind, which even animals do not do. We are seeing these abhorrent sexual practices entering into the mainstream of social life today. They are being accepted now even by governments, which in the last century not only condemned but incarcerated those convicted of performing such base acts.

17:29 - *“But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.”* Jude the Apostle reminds us of this event: “Even as Sodom and Gomorrhah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Ju.1:7).

17:30 - *“Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”* Although no one knows the day nor the hour of His Coming except the Father, let us be vigilant that at all times we may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless (2 Pet. 3:14).

17:31 - *“In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.”* This is speaking specifically of the commencement of the Great Tribulation, which starts immediately at the erection of the “abomination of desolation” (Mt. 24:15-16).

17:32 - *“Remember Lot’s wife.”* Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt because her desires were so attached to the things and lifestyle she had enjoyed in Sodom. I well remember a dream that was given to a young girl about the Second Coming of Christ when the Church goes up to meet the Lord in the air. As she was going up, she looked back at the earth and all the things she possessed. Then she started to go down. God was warning her of the love for the world. Let us seek to have all the attachments and desires for this life cut out of our heart so that we are truly ready on that day.

17:33 - *“Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.”* Let us not have a death-grasp on the things of this life, so that we can freely lay down our lives for the Lord. Now the Lord reverts to His literal Second Coming as He says:

17:34 - *“I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.”* Here the Lord is speaking of the intimacy of life where two boys perhaps have slept in the same bed one with another, and yet on that day the wicked and unbelieving will be severed from the righteous.

17:35 - *“Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”* Here is another example of the righteous being separated from the evil. These two women were perhaps workers together for years, yet their friendship will not save the one who is unrighteous in the Day of Judgment.

17:36 - *“Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”* We may see this situation in families. How often religious duties are relegated to one member of the family with the thought that this will take care of the others! A husband who leaves the church cannot rely on his wife in hopes that he will be saved by the faith and the devotion of his spouse. At His coming it will be too late. The disciples then asked the Lord where the ungodly will be taken.

17:37 - *“And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”* His reply was to quote a

well-known parable of His day, signifying that the bodies of the wicked would be left for the vultures to consume. This agrees with the visions of the last days as given by the prophet Ezekiel: “Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured” (Ezek. 39:4).

“And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood” (Ezek. 39:17). This is also confirmed to the beloved Apostle John in Revelation 19:17-18:

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.” Let us be those who are taken up, and not those who are taken in judgment.

CHAPTER 18

The Unjust Judge

18:1 - “*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;*” One of the

great themes in Scripture concerns prayer, for prayer moves the hand of God. Perhaps it is not going too far to say that prayer enables God to bless His people and avenge them of their adversaries, as the following story reveals. Jesus recounts an episode in the life of a poor woman:

18:2 - *“Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:”* This is an awesome indictment of this man. His heart was so hardened that He could not fear God nor have any respect for his fellow man’s need. It was he who was responsible for the administration of justice in the city. Yet though he had the power to help and make things right, he completely refused to right the wrongs. Jesus now introduces us to a woman in need.

18:3 - *“And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.”* It is clear from this account that the woman was completely in the right. Yet the judge would do nothing to help her, at least for a while.

18:4 - *“And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;”* This is similar to the pride of Lamech, who boasted: “I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold” (Gen. 4:23-24). Lamech showed no remorse but spoke admiringly of killing a man in self-defense. Then he presumed that God owed him protection and mercy. This was the callous attitude of this judge toward God and man.

18:5 - *“Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.”* The judge was not moved by the justice of her cause. It was only because he would be inconvenienced by the needless discomfort of her constant pleadings that made him take action.

18:6 - *“And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.”* The stigma attached to this unjust judge shows the contempt that mankind has for the judicial system everywhere. It is of interest to note that in a lawsuit, the defendants have the right to change the judge because of the judge’s past bias in other court cases.

18:7 - *“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?”* Jesus is saying that if the unjust judge could be affected by the importunity of that poor widow, how much more shall the Righteous Judge of all the earth do right.

This thought of God “bearing long” should be understood in the context of Romans 9:22.23. God does not immediately deal with the wicked. He endures the wicked with much longsuffering, while they are doing a special work on the righteous. When the work is finished in the righteous, then God judges the wicked.

18:8 - *“I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”* As God measures time, He will move quickly. For us it seems like an eternity before He moves on our behalf.

Then, as if He is making reference to the Second Coming, He asks will His people be filled with faith and what will be the number of those who believe. It appears that when He comes there will be comparatively few.

The Pharisee and the Publican

18:9 - “*And he spake this parable unto certain [ones] which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:*” The sin of self-righteousness is very deceptive, because genuinely good people are lured into a false sense of eternal security by their good works. But the Word of God is very clear on this subject in both the Old and New Testaments:

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all *our* righteousneses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isa 64:6).

“Their righteousness is *of me* saith the Lord” (Isa. 54:17b).

“Not having *mine own* righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish *their own* righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom.10:3).

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:19-20). See also Romans 9:31-33; 10:1-4.

18:10 - *“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.”* The Pharisees were those who sought to keep the law, while the publicans were thieves.

18:11 - *“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.”* This was a very true appraisal of the publican. Those three sins would probably have characterized his life.

18:12 - *“I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”* Again what the Pharisee was saying of himself was true. He practiced the outward observances of the law. He boasted in his own righteousness, but would not submit to God’s righteousness—the righteousness given to us by Jesus Christ. Thus, the Pharisee was trusting in his own outward works of righteousness.

18:13 - *“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”* The publican, however, saw his need for mercy and forgiveness from God. So should we all continually asking the Lord for cleansing, forgiveness, and mercy. Oh, to be “found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (cf. Phil. 3:9).

18:14 - *“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”* Humility must be our goal. When the prophets had an unfolding revelation of Christ, they saw themselves: “Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6:5).

The nearer we are to the light (and Jesus is the Light), the more we can see ourselves and our need. When Job saw the Lord, he saw himself and said: “I have heard thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5,6).

As Little Children

18:15 - *“And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.”* Again, this is an exhortation to humility. Before we continue, it would be well for us to understand that true humility is rooted in an inescapable knowledge of our own unworthiness. We should remember the following about our nothingness:

1. That we are all helpless sinners who have come short of God’s purpose for our lives. Even our apparent goodness is as filthy rags, for even God’s angels are charged with folly: “Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly” (Job 4:18).

2. That it is not in us to direct our ways: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer.10:23). We constantly need His guidance.

3. That the will of God for our lives is fulfilled only by the grace of God: “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;” (Rom. 9:11) See also 1 Corinthians 4:7.

4. That we cannot save ourselves. Even faith is a gift of God: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:” (Eph. 2:8).

Considering just some of these things, how can we not become as little children and accept them for what they are?

18:16 - *“Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”* We must by His grace become childlike but not childish. A child is wholly dependent upon the parent for all things. In like manner we must be dependent upon our heavenly Father to provide all things for us.

18:17 - *“Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.”* We must do away with all pride and loftiness of mind. Let us become poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit.

The Rich Young Ruler

18:18 - *“And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Here is the age-old question—“How do we inherit eternal life?”

18:19 - *“And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.”* He is refuting the fact that He is good in the sense that He will not accept the praise of man, but only that which comes from heaven. “For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (Jn. 12:43). The Pharisees loved to receive in the market place the adulation of the multitudes and be called Rabbi. Now Jesus continues with His answer.

18:20 - *“Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.”* Here the Lord upholds the law. We must never forget that the New Testament is the law of God written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. Therefore, it is higher. It goes beyond *act* to attitude and motive.

18:21 - *“And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.”* This man, commonly referred to as the rich young ruler, was indeed beloved of the Lord as we read in Mark 10:21. According to Matthew 19:20, the young man added, “What lack I yet?”

18:22 - *“Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and*

distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.” The Gospel of Luke has been called “the social Gospel,” since he writes more about the subject of the poor and the rich than any of the other Gospel writers. For this reason it would be wise to consider the teachings of Jesus with respect to the poor and the rich in more detail. Let us place this subject in the context of the whole of Scripture so that we may have a balanced understanding of this very important matter.

To be rich in itself is not a sin, since there were many very wealthy saints in both the Old and New Testaments. Abraham, Job, and David were all wealthy by reason of the peculiar blessings of the Lord that were extended to them. This was also true of some of the kings of Judah as well as believers such as Joseph of Arimathea. The problem with riches is that men tend *to trust in them* rather than in God. Also, to set one’s heart upon them leads to the wretched sin of covetousness.

I well remember being tested in a situation similar to that of the rich young ruler. It concerned my bank balance. Mercifully, God gave me grace to give away my savings, which were not in any way comparable to those of the rich young ruler’s treasure. However, for this rich young ruler, those riches were his downfall.

18:23 - *“And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.”* He was very attached to his wealth so that he could not part with it. How unlike the missionary, C.T. Studd, who gave away a fortune in order to follow Christ to China, India, and then Africa.

18:24 - *“And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!”* Riches can have a terrible hold upon a person, “for the love of money is the root of all evil.” Riches can become one’s idol and be worshipped more than God.

18:25-26 - *“For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?”* This illustration is best understood by considering the gates of a city. When the large gates were closed, commerce entered through the smaller gates. These smaller gates were doors in the larger gates and they were called “the eye of a needle.”

However, only people were able to pass through them. They were too small for a loaded camel. It was possible for a camel to pass through this smaller gate when his cargo had been taken off. The thought here is that a rich man cannot let go of his treasures that stop him from entering into heaven’s portals. The disciples, astonished at the Lord’s doctrine, then asked: “Who then can be saved?” The conditions to them seemed impossible to fulfill, but Jesus assured them that with God all things are possible.

18:27 - *“And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”* God can give us grace to enable us to fulfil His commands. Whatever He tells us to do, there is always grace to obey. Grace is a substance that God imparts to us, and this substance gives us divine enablement. Now the disciples (and Peter in particular) consider their own consecration that they have made in following the Lord.

18:28 - *“Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.”* As we look at the calling of the disciples, Peter, Andrew, James, and John had all left their fishing enterprises. Matthew had left his post as a civil servant. They had made very important sacrifices to follow the Lord. Jesus responds by telling them what their sacrifice will reap in eternity.

18:29-30 - *“Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”* Often in the service of the Lord we are required to make very distinct consecrations with respect to loved ones.

In return, the Lord rewards us with a very extended family of believers who are sometimes far closer and more precious to us than our own flesh and blood. When we give to Him, He gives far more in return. In addition to these manifold earthly blessings, we will inherit eternal life. Therefore, any sacrifice we make, large or small, will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

Jesus Speaks of His Crucifixion

18:31 - *“Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.”* Jesus never lost sight of His mission, which was to go to the cross for our sins. The cross was the mark of His high calling in God. God so dearly loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for us.

This was emphasised by the prophets, particularly in Isaiah 53:5,6: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Our Lord continues to describe His crucifixion.

18:32 - *“For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on:”* This too was prophesied in Isaiah 50:6: “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”

18:33 - *“And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.”* This would be a fulfilment of Psalm 129:3: “The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.”

18:34 - *“And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.”* At first this verse might seem puzzling. Amos 3:7 tells us He will do nothing unless He first reveals it unto His servants the prophets.

Therefore, the Lord declares His crucifixion to the apostles, but it is purposely veiled from their understanding at this time so that they will not seek to thwart God’s divine purpose for the redemption of mankind. After His resurrection they understood these things that He had spoken, and their understanding was opened to all that was spoken of Him by the prophets.

Blind Bartimaeus

18:35 - *“And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:”* Mark makes it clear in his Gospel that Jesus and His party had already moved through Jericho when they met the blind man (Mk. 10:46). Evidently they had entered Jericho and now as they were on their way out of the city they came in contact with Bartimaeus.

18:36 - *“And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.”* There are some opportunities in one’s life that are *not repeated* and must be seized then and there. At other times opportunities are repeated, in His graciousness, to give us an occasion not to miss His will. However, for the blind man, this was an occasion that would not be repeated. It is a lesson to be solemnly contemplated. God grant that we do not miss our divine *one-time* appointments, like Moses at the burning bush.

18:37 - *“And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.”* Do you remember the chorus, “Reach Out And Touch the Lord as He Goes By?” It is at that moment when “the waters are troubled” (Jn. 5:4) that one must reach out and touch Him as He passes by.

18:38 - *“And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.”* We must always recognise that there is not only man’s will but also God’s sovereignty. “He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy” as Paul reminds us in Romans 9:18. There is a good reason why God does not choose to show mercy to some people. Remember, He is no respecter of persons.

18:39 - *“And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.”* Here also we have a lesson. When deliverance is near, often those closest will try to deter us from receiving the Lord’s blessing. This is permitted by God in order to test us, even as Elijah sought to deter Elisha from receiving the blessed double portion (2 Ki. 2:2,2:4,2:6). Yet perseverance is rewarded, as we see in verses 40-43.

18:40-41 - *“Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.”* At moments such as this it is so important to know what to ask of God. Solomon knew that he had to ask for wisdom; Elisha asked for the double portion; Jacob at Peniel asked for a blessing; and this blind man did not hesitate, being full of faith, to ask for his eyesight.

18:42 - *“And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.”* “Ask and ye shall receive.” Let us likewise seize God-given opportunities and receive our blessing.

18:43 - *“And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.”* When we receive our particular blessing, let us remember to return to glorify God, so that everyone who hears about the miracle will give glory to the Lord.

CHAPTER 19

The Salvation of Zacchaeus

19:1 - *“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.”* Just after Jesus had healed the blind man, He had a divine appointment with another son of Abraham.

19:2 - *“And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.* This illustrates the point we made before that “man looks on the outward appearance while the Lord looks upon the heart.” Certainly, this publican had enriched himself unlawfully and was surely on his way to hell, but deep within his heart was the desire for the right things of life.

19:3 - *“And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.”* The ardent desire of this little man overcame his shortness of stature.

19:4 - *“And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.”* Zachaeus was determined to let nothing hinder him from seeing Jesus. Likewise, we ourselves must overcome all physical obstacles, whether they be poor sight, deafness, lameness, or *depressions*, in order to meet with the Lord. So many people make excuses why they have not been able to accomplish much for God. However, where difficulties abound in our lives, God gives much more grace.

19:5 - *“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste,*

and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.” God sees our inward desires and rewards them openly. Those who have the most difficulties on this earth are those who receive the greater rewards in heaven above.

Therefore, let us be as Paul, who gloried in tribulations. Even when he had such poor eyesight he triumphed by accepting the words of Jesus: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9).

19:6 - *“And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.”* Oh, the joy when the Lord meets us and brings us into His banqueting house, where His banner over us is love! Yet those looking on murmured.

19:7 - *“And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.”* One of the epithets thrown at Jesus contemptuously by the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees was that He was a friend of the publicans and sinners. Yet repentance had gloriously come to this little man.

19:8 - *“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”* How different was the heart of Zacchaeus from that of the rich young ruler, for the latter had a greater love for Jesus than the former. Money was secondary in his life, whereas for the rich

young ruler, the love of money, prestige, and power dominated him.

19:9 - *“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.”*

What joy and blessing come into our lives when we repent, and what blessing it opens up to others in our own household. I remember the time when my dear father died. That night the whole house was filled with light, for he had come to know the salvation of God in his last few days. Right decisions and the consequent blessings that we receive from God impact the lives of all those around us.

19:10 - *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* Now we have the clear-cut statement of the Lord concerning not only His mission in life but ours as well. Let us, like our Saviour, go into the highways and byways of life and seek for those who are lost.

The Parable of the Pounds

The preface to this parable is of utmost importance. From the onset of Christ’s ministry, there was a prevailing thought among His disciples that Christ was going to usher in His Kingdom upon earth *at that time*. Throughout all the ages of the Church, and especially in our day, that same thought has captivated the imagination of His people. So dominant is this thinking among some that they lose sight of their secular and spiritual duties and become non-fruit-bearing here upon earth. To this purpose the Lord spoke this parable because some thought that the Kingdom might appear immediately.

19:11 - *“And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.”* The intent of this parable is that we should “occupy until He comes.” We must be about our Father’s business so that we may fully accomplish His will for our lives.

19:12 - *“He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.”* In this parable the “certain nobleman” might well be identified as the Lord Himself.

19:13 - *“And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.”* In this parable, (which should *not* be confused with “the parable of the talents”) each servant received one pound. We might say that each one had “equal opportunity.” In a certain sense, each Christian has been given a gift by the Lord. What are we doing with the gift that He has given us? What, for example, are we doing with our *time*, our *abilities*, our *lives*?

19:14 - *“But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.”* This portrays the refusal of the people of this world to be ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ. It represents their rejection of Christianity, their refusal to submit their lives to the teachings of the holy Scriptures. They, in turn, have been given over to doctrines of demons. But let us now see what happens when Christ returns at His Second Coming.

19:15 - *“And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.”* Everyone will have to give an account to God for what he has done with his life, time, and gifts.

19:16 - *“Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.”* Rewards are given on the basis of our profitability.

19:17 - *“And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.”* These “cities” refer to the time of the Millennial reign of Christ upon earth, when His saints will rule and reign with Him: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).

19:18 - *“And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.”* The servant who had turned his one pound into five pounds, although commended by the Lord, had a reward that was half the size of the one who had made ten pounds. This truth should encourage us to be diligent. The Apostle Paul tells us: “Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Rom. 13:11). Let us cast off slumber and lethargy and be vigilant.

19:19 - *“And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.”* In the Millennium, this dear brother will be reigning over only five cities.

19:20 - *“And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:”* From the slothful one, who hid his light under a bushel, we have this excuse:

19:21 - *“For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.”* This is an accusation against the Lord that He is not righteous, which almost amounts to blasphemy. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right” said father Abraham. To that we must respond—Amen! By His grace let us never challenge the Lord of all the earth in His dealings with us. The response of the Lord to this wicked servant is severe.

19:22 - *“And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:”* Regarding the day of judgment, we must never forget our Lord’s statement in Matthew 12:37: “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” He will hold us to a very strict account for the things that we have said and done. If for every idle word we shall be held responsible, how much more for our actions?

The Apostle Paul, who knew the Lord so well, had no illusions about judgment. He said: “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11). He also knew that he had to bridle his own body, and tongue.

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [or a reject]” (1 Cor. 9:27). Let us walk

worthy of our high calling according to the admonition of Ephesians 4:1. The Lord as a good businessman who wants a return from His investments, continues to speak to this unfruitful worker:

19:23 - *“Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?”* May we ever be careful to bear fruit for the Master’s glory and profit. The result of *negligence* is to lose that which we once had. This is readily seen in life. If we do not continue to study and apply ourselves in any field, we will soon lose what we once had. I remember a former mathematics professor who informed our class that he had once been a student in the field of electricity and then left it. After ten years, he said that he could remember very little of what he had once learned.

19:24 - *“And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.”* Now we embark upon another principle of life that flows with the one that we have already mentioned—Those who have shall receive more.

It is true that whatever we pursue in life we gain more of. We increase to the degree that we apply ourselves. In the spiritual this is also true, as we see in Daniel 2:21: “He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.

19:25 - *“(And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)”* We see how different the Kingdom of God is from socialist thinking. Socialism teaches that everyone should have something and that everything should be equally shared. In

the Kingdom, one receives according to grace and merit, even as the Lord now states.

19:26 - *“For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.”* One always entrusts his money to the successful, and that is exactly how our dear Lord operates.

19:27 - *“But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.”* There is going to be at His Second Coming a time of awesome slaughter of the wicked: *“For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood”* (Isa. 34:2,3).

PART 6

Jesus' Last Days in Jerusalem and Crucifixion

(19:28 - 23:56)

His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

This passage marks the last week of our Saviour's life here upon earth. The distance between Jericho and Jerusalem was a scant seventeen miles. Luke does not mention that Jesus first went to Bethany and there supped with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus six days before that last Passover (Jn. 12:1-11).

19:28 - *“And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.”* It is to be noted that this last week of the Lord's life is reported by the Gospel writers in more meticulous detail than any other period of Christ's life. The last week focuses upon the reason He came into the world—to die for the sins of mankind. I admire the absolute precision and economy of movement that the Lord used in His ministry, and these few days in particular. He is like the master chef, whose every movement counts. There are no wasted gestures as He prepares the meals. Such was the case with our Lord as He now prepares to go to the cross.

19:29 - *“And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,”* These two twin villages of Bethphage and Bethany lay at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Bethany (House of Dates) was almost a suburb of Jerusalem just across the Kidron. Bethphage (House of Figs) was two miles from the city on the Jericho road.

In those days the Mount of Olives was covered with the trees that gave its name to the Mount. As we have already mentioned, Luke omits the account in John 12:1-11 which

tells us that the Lord had spent the previous night in Bethany at the home of Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

19:30 - *“Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.”* This is another one of those remarkable prophetic fulfilments in Scripture. Zechariah declares: “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). Here was this colt waiting for its divine mission in life, namely that it would carry the Lord of glory into His city. Now the God-ordained time for which it had been born had arrived and the word of the Lord came to “loose him.” Do we not see here a parallel in our own lives? Perhaps we have been aware of the call of God upon our life, and we have been preparing for it. Then after waiting many years the word of the Lord will come to us—“Loose him for what I have called him (or her) to do!” Sometimes we are released from our secular employment to fully follow the Lord.

19:31 - *“And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.”* I once knew a pastor in France who told me this story. He said the Lord had spoken to him these same words—“The Lord hath need of you.” He imagined that those words had been given to a mighty prophet in Scripture, and when he found that it applied to a colt he was somewhat humbled.

However, by God's grace he consecrated himself to the work that the Lord had called him. This brother went through years of preparation and then the time came when he was released from his pastorate to go to the mission field. He became fruitful for the Lord in the country to which the Lord had sent him.

19:32 - "*And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.*" Another lesson we see in this passage is this—when the Lord speaks, do it. These acts may seem very small, but they lead to eternal blessings. The simple act of obedience on the part of the disciples permitted the fulfilment of the triumphal entry of the King of Kings into His city. Their obedience also permitted that colt to perform the work for which he had been designated. Our obedience often releases others into their divine appointments as well.

19:33 - "*And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?*" Often when we are embarking on a fresh course for our lives it may mean we shall have to leave our present employer or our father's house. I have found that when we have the assurance that God is directing us, even the unsaved understand that we must do what God wants us to do.

19:34 - "*And they said, The Lord hath need of him.*" How triumphantly we can say *the Lord needs me*. What a privilege it is to be used of God in even a very insignificant fashion as this colt!

19:35 - "*And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.*" This is a

beautiful scene. The disciples took off their garments and laid them on the colt so that He could ride on this colt. How wonderful it is to lay all that we have before the Master so that He may use it for His purposes. This wholehearted consecration enables the Lord to fulfil His plans. May our hearts be set free in order to release everything we have to Him!

19:36 - *“And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.”* While it is true that these garments were the natural clothing of the disciples, in a sense they can represent spiritual garments of praise and rejoicing that we lay before Him in worship and adoration.

19:37 - *“And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;”* I cannot overemphasise the importance of a heart that is set free to rejoice and praise Him. It is so wonderful to be clothed with joy and to have that well of living waters bubbling up within our hearts.

19:38 - *“Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.”* This spontaneous outburst of adulation is profound. Within this praise is an understanding of the ecstasy heaven had, knowing that God’s will would be accomplished upon earth by Christ. We tend to fret so often, wondering if this thing or that thing will work out. Yet, heaven rests in the peace and knowledge that everything shall be even as the Father has willed. Oh, to enter into His rest and see God work and accomplish His will through our lives and through others upon whom we are dependent.

19:39 - *“And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.”* The religious leaders, filled with anger and envy, dared not try to silence the crowd directly, because they were afraid of their displeasure. Thus, they turned to Jesus, hoping that He would refuse their praise. Instead, they were rebuked by Him, for this was the fulfilment of prophecy.

19:40 - *“And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.”* This was the time that the Father had ordained for all to acknowledge His Son. He could have made even the stones shout for praise if He had so desired.

The Fall of Jerusalem Prophesied

19:41 - *“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,”* From the Mount of Olives there is a magnificent panoramic view of the city, and it was here that Jesus stopped. The crowds were rejoicing, as they should have done in His presence. However, with the eyes of a seer, He saw that they would soon reject and crucify Him, and consequently the judgments of God would fall on Jerusalem some 40 years later. With this in mind, He takes up this lamentation over the holy city:

19:42 - *“Saying, 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.”* Israel did not recognise the day of their visitation. If they had accepted Christ their King, it would have brought His peace into their hearts.

Instead, they were headed toward destruction. He now details that coming judgment.

19:43 - *“For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,”* He is prophesying of the siege of Jerusalem that took place under Titus, the Roman general. It culminated, as the Lord now describes, in the total destruction of the city and temple in A.D. 70.

19:44 - *“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.”* How serious and awesome is the fact that their destruction would come because they did not know the day of their visitation. It is therefore a truth upon which we need to seriously meditate, for each of us will have God-given opportunities as well. **When God visits us, we may have the direction of our lives changed for the better if we embrace His visitation, or we may experience terrible loss if we do not.**

The Second Cleansing of the Temple

19:45 - *“And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;”* While this was a literal historic event, it has a prophetic meaning for our day. We should note that there were two cleansings of the temple. The first one was at the time of His first ministerial visit to the temple during the Passover in John 2:15-17. The second was at the end of His ministry. These two cleansings portray two cleansings of

the Church. The first one is represented in Acts 5. The second one represents the cleansing of the Church prior to His Second Coming, which to a certain extent we are experiencing now.

19:46 - *“Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.”* The Lord’s intention is for His Church to always be a house of prayer for all nations. This means that prayer should continually be lifted up for all the peoples of the world.

The servants of the high priest (Annas) had in those days turned God’s house into a den of iniquity. They did so by selling animals that were to be sacrificed at inflated prices. Let us take heed that such commerce does not enter into our congregations. It is prayer that opens the windows of heaven and provides for all our needs, not commerce.

19:47 - *“And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him,”* I admire, among many other characteristics, Christ’s ability to teach with such poise and strength, knowing that only a few days separated Him from the cross. It is so important to be able to compartmentalize our lives. Let us not be so overwhelmed and distracted by other problems that we cease to give attention to the preaching of the Word.

19:48 - *“And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.”* His avowed enemies, the religious leaders, were impotent because of the crowds who attended to His teachings. The attacks of our enemies must not be allowed to deflect us from our God-ordained tasks.

However, it takes true greatness to be able to concentrate on the task at hand, while being under attack by the enemy.

CHAPTER 20

The Question of the Lord's Authority to Teach

20:1-2 - *“And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the Gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?”* The temple, representative of the Church, is the place of teaching. In the last days, God will exalt His Church, and the nations of the world will come unto her for instruction.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2,3).

Ever surrounded by His enemies, the Lord continued His teachings, but they now ask

In the last days, the nations of the world will come unto the Church for instruction.

the question: “By what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?”

It is a fact that when the Church enters into a state of spiritual coldness, the leaders seek to guard their positions by many man-made rules. One of these rules was the need for a license to preach, which had to be approved by the chief priests.

20:3 - *“And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me:”* Responding to a question by asking a question was the method used by Jesus on several occasions, and it was quite effective. It put His questioners on the defensive. This is a method that we should seek to employ at times when we are beset with those who are not genuinely seeking the truth.

20:4 - *“The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?”* In choosing this question, the Lord put his questioners on the defensive, as they quickly recognised.

20:5 - *“And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not?”* The wickedness of the Pharisees is made manifest by their own words. They openly acknowledged among themselves that they had not kept the commandments of God given through John. In effect, they were also acknowledging that John was a prophet sent by God.

20:6-7 - *“But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was.”*

Hypocritically, they admitted among themselves that they knew John's message was true, but to deny John they knew would incur the wrath of the people, whose praise they craved. They fell back on the hypocritical plea of ignorance.

20:8 - *“Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”* Jesus trapped them by turning their reply against them and by using it Himself.

The Stone Which the Builders Rejected

20:9 - *“Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.”* To reinforce His teaching on the wickedness of His enemies, Jesus gives a parable concerning the Lord of the vineyard and the wicked husbandmen.

20:10 - *“And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.”* This portrays the rejection of the Lord's servants throughout the history of Israel. Unfortunately, this is true of the Church era as well.

20:11 - *“And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.”* These verses not only depict Israel's rejection of the prophets over the centuries. The Church has also rejected its messengers many times during its history. At different time periods there has been rejection by the religious community

of the true servants of Christ—John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, and Francois Fenelon to name but a few.

20:12 - *“And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.”* Others who were rejected by the household of faith were John Bunyan and John Wesley—as well as the Huguenot movement, and the Pentecostals in more modern times. The literal historical meaning of the parable involves Israel’s rejection of all its prophets, culminating in the appearance of Christ, the heir of all things, whom Israel also rejected.

20:13 - *“Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.”* Israel had the witness of John the Baptist and all of the prophets. They even knew about the miraculous events surrounding Christ’s birth, the wise men, the miraculous star, and the fact that the time was at hand (Dan. 9:25-26). Still they rejected the One who performed so many miracles in their midst.

20:14 - *“But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.”* This reveals the inner thoughts of the religious party, as also Pontius Pilate discerned: “For he [Pontius Pilate] knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Mt. 27:18, Mk.15:10).

“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation” (Jn. 11:47-48).

20:15 - *“So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?”*

Here the Lord foretells His own death at the hands of the chief priests, lawyers, and scribes.

20:16 - *“He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.”* This refers to the fact that Israel as a nation lost her inheritance as the purveyor of God’s truth. That privilege has been given to another nation, the Church: *“But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you [a reference to the Church which is largely Gentile]. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people (Rom. 10:19-21, cf. Mt. 21:43). Now Jesus refers to Himself as “the Stone which the builders rejected.”*

20:17 - *“And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?”* The Lord is quoting from Psalm 118:22 which He identifies as speaking of Himself. This is confirmed by the Apostle Peter (1 Pet. 2:4,7,8). He is, as Paul states in Ephesians 2:20, the Chief Corner stone of the Church from which all our lives must be measured. Alluding to Isaiah 8:14-15, Jesus says:

20:18 - *“Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to*

powder.” Friends, let us be wise and in all humility fall upon the Stone, Christ Jesus, that we may have a broken and contrite spirit and become that sacrifice that is so pleasing to Him, as David says in Psalm 51:17. Otherwise, the Stone will fall upon us in judgment.

Controversy over Tribute Money

20:19 - *“And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.”*

The religious leaders knew that Jesus had outwitted them and that He was gaining favour with the people. Consequently, their own position and prestige with the people was threatened. Their sole recourse was to have Jesus killed. Therefore, they sought to find some accusation to bring against Him before the Roman governor, for they had no political authority of their own to put a man to death.

20:20 - *“And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.”* How true it is today that Satan plants his people in the congregation of the righteous to seek to destroy them through false accusations.

This is what happened to William Tyndale, who was betrayed by a scoundrel enlisted by the Bishop of London. Pretending to be a genuine believer, this thief and robber succeeded in delivering William Tyndale, against the wishes of the church, into the hands of his foes, who burned him at the stake. (Tyndale translated the

Old and New Testaments into the English language.) So these spies came to Jesus looking for something which they could bring as a charge before the governor, Pontius Pilate.

20:21 - *“And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly:”* By these very words the spies condemned themselves. These words will witness against them on Judgment Day. Their statement was true! Jesus taught the Word of God in honesty. To seek to ensnare and condemn such a One displayed their own depraved condition. They had sold their own soul for vain praise from their leaders. Then they asked Him another question.

20:22 - *“Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?”* Couched in all subtlety, it was a subject that was often debated by the nation as a whole. No one would have objected if Jesus had spoken against the taxation of the oppressive and hated invader, except, of course, the Herodian party, who then would have good grounds with which to accuse Him before the governor. However, please do not use this comment as grounds not to pay taxes, since we as Christians are governed by Romans 13:1-7.

20:23-24 - *“But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar’s.”* The Lord knowing all things, saw through their deceit.

20:25 - *“And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which*

be God's.” With this one statement the Lord declared that we should pay our taxes as well as give tithes and offerings to God. He gave His adversaries nothing by which they could accuse Him.

20:26 - *“And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.”* The wisdom of God puts His enemies to silence. We, too, should always ask the Lord for wisdom in our speech, thoughts, and actions.

The Doctrine of the Resurrection

The state of the redeemed in the resurrection is a subject of great importance because in understanding it, we may prepare ourselves with great diligence. The questions of these Sadducees we will comment on later. For now please read the text as it is given in the King James edition of the Bible until we come to the response of Jesus.

20:27-35 - *“Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto*

them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:"

By his response, Jesus is clearly stating that marriage is a bond that applies only for this lifetime while here upon earth. However, He is not saying that we shall not be with our loved ones in the world to come. We will be with them, but simply not in the marriage union.

20:36 - *"Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."* We shall be like the angels in heaven, and we shall all be brothers and sisters living in that blessed peace and joy that pervades all those who are counted worthy to be in the resurrection of the just. And now to counter the doctrine of the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, Jesus says:

20:37-38 - *"Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him."* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been dead for hundreds of years when the Lord appeared to Moses at the bush. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were in the lower parts of the earth, and they were very conscious and alert.

They did not go into oblivion when they died. Their spirits went into the lower parts of the earth into a resting place. In the account of the rich man and Lazarus, clearly they were

able to speak to one another. The rich man could see Abraham, and Abraham also spoke to him.

The Question to the Scribes

20:39-40 - *“Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.”* Having put to silence all His adversaries, our Lord then poses a doctrinal question to them:

20:41 - *“And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David’s son?”* The Lord asked this question because He was identified over and over again by the title “Son of David” (which even blind Bartimaeus used). The Lord is seeking here to show that He is indeed far greater than David.

20:42-44 - *“And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?”* The scribes gave no answer, but we can respond by saying that Jesus was a direct descendant of David through the bloodline of Mary, His mother. However, He was in reality also the Son of God, to whom David would do obeisance as His Lord. Simply put, Christ created David, but He also became a man and descended into the human race through him.

The Condemnation of the Scribes

20:45 - *“Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciple...”* Turning now to all the people who surrounded Him, Jesus utters this solemn warning concerning the scribes:

20:46 - *“Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;”* The pride of life perhaps would characterize the outstanding sin of this group, for they loved the praise of people. How we should seek to be purged of all this vanity and pursue the honour that comes from God alone. Above all, we should seek to hear those blessed words: “Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

20:47 - *“Which devour widows’ houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.”* These scribes enriched themselves by taking the assets of the poor and defenseless. They preyed upon the helpless. Because of their contemptible hypocrisy the Lord said that their eternal damnation would be far greater. Remember that there are degrees of pain and punishment in hell, even as there are degrees of glory and rewards in the light of heaven’s bliss.

CHAPTER 21

The Poor Widow and Her Two Mites

21:1 - *“And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.”* In this life our sense of judgment is so different from that of heaven. In this passage we are going to be instructed as to that difference. Here are the rich men casting in their abundance and receiving the plaudits of their fellow man. When I was pastoring a certain church many years ago, a wealthy member of the congregation decided that I needed a new suit and promptly, in front of others gave me a

sizeable sum of money. The Lord told me afterwards that his gift was “nothing” because to him it was equivalent to giving two cents. Now our attention is directed to another who also gave of her substance into the treasury.

21:2-4 - *“And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.”*

This poor widow has received a greater heavenly reward than all of those who gave of their riches. As a matter of fact, I read once that a certain saint had received a vision of heaven, and in the vision he had seen this widow’s heavenly house. The beauty of her house was in proportion to what she gave—she had given her all. Remember, God gives us His best when we give Him our best, and this woman had given her all.

Signs of the Times

v. 5-36

21:5 - *“And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,”* That beautiful temple of cream stone and gold was known as the Temple of Herod. It was an elaborate renovation of the temple that Zerubbabel had rebuilt. At the time of Christ’s first ministerial Passover in A. D. 27, the temple had been 46 years in building. It had now been 49 years. Still it was not to be completed until A. D. 64, just six years before its destruction by the forces of Titus. Josephus states that Titus wished to preserve the temple.

However, it was first set on fire by the Jewish defenders, and then a Roman soldier threw a burning firebrand into the golden window. Titus gave command to extinguish the fire, but to no avail. The Roman soldiers, consumed with an intense hatred for the Jews, pressed towards the temple and destroyed it, thus fulfilling the words of Jesus.

21:6 - *“As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”* The destruction of the city occurred by order of Titus, according to Josephus’ *Wars of the Jews*, Book 7:1:1. The commander of the Roman Army that was left (Terentius Rufus) fulfilled the prophecy of Micah 3:12: *“Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.”*

Thus, were the Saviour’s words fulfilled so that Jerusalem was left desolate and its inhabitants slaughtered, while others were sold into captivity in accordance with the prophecy of Deuteronomy 28:64-68 (which speaks of their being sold into captivity but being so pitiful that no man would buy them).

21:7 - *“And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?”* Matthew’s Gospel brings this out more clearly. There were several questions being asked by the disciples. *“When shall these things be?”* is in reference to what was going to happen in A.D. 70 (not one stone left upon another, the temple and city being destroyed, and the inhabitants scattered). Then they asked about the signs of

Christ's coming. Therefore, some things Christ says were for the first century, and some things are for our time. Some things He said could apply to *both* that time and our time.

- Some things Christ said were for the first century.
- Some things Christ said were for our time.
- Some things Christ said could apply to both that time and our time.

The question that is here asked, "When shall these things be?" must relate to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and is so understood by Jesus. In His reply, although He speaks of events leading up to His Second Coming, yet He specifically speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem in verses 20-24, which occurred in 70 A.D. Now in general terms relating to the Second Coming, Jesus says:

21:8 - *"Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them."* First He warns of deception and false christs. Josephus informs us that even at that time there were many who claimed divine inspiration and deceived the people, leading out numbers of them into the desert. He said the land was overrun with magicians, seducers, and imposters. These drew the people after them in multitudes into solitudes and deserts to see the signs and miracles which they promised to show on behalf of God.

21:9 - *"But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by."* History records that prior to the

destruction of Jerusalem there were violent agitations in the Roman Empire. Four emperors (Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius) suffered violent deaths in the short space of 18 months. In consequence of these changes in government, there were commotions throughout the empire, even though at this time the empire was at peace. Rival parties espoused the causes of different emperors, and much bloodshed ensued.

21:10 - *“Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:”* In his Antiquities XX:34, Josephus says that Bardanes and later Vologeses declared war against Jerusalem, but it was not carried out. Also Vitellius, governor of Syria, declared war against Aretas, King of Arabia and wished to lead his army through Palestine. However, the death of Tiberius, the emperor, in 37 A.D. prevented the war (Antiquities XV111:5.3).

21:11 - *“And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.”*

Earthquakes - There were many earthquakes shaking whole cities preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. Tacitus the historian mentions one in the reign of Claudius at Rome and says that in the reign of Nero the cities of Laodicea, Hieropolis, and Colosse were overthrown.

Famines - The famine, foretold by Agabus, (Acts 11:28) is mentioned by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Eusebius. It was so severe in Jerusalem that Josephus says many people perished for lack of food (Antiquities XX:2). Four times in the reign

of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) famine prevailed in Rome, Palestine, and Greece.

Pestilences - Raging epidemic diseases were recorded in Babylonia in A.D. 40 (Antiquities XV111:9.8); and in Italy in A.D. 66 (Tacitus 16:13). Both were before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Signs - In his *Wars of the Jews*, Josephus, (in Book 6, chapter 5 and paragraph 3) states that there were certain signs that occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem. One was a star in the form of a comet that remained over the city for a whole year. Also, before sunset, a considerable number of troops in their armor and with chariots were seen in the clouds. The eastern gate of the inner court of the temple that was shut with difficulty by 20 men, opened on the Passover night of its own accord. The men of learning interpreted these happenings as indicating coming judgments and that the temple would be opened to their enemies. Then, on the feast of Pentecost the priests in the temple heard a quaking and a noise, as if coming from a great multitude, and a voice which said: "Let us remove hence."

21:12 - "*But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.*" The Lord now warns the disciples of persecution against the Christians, which took place under the direction of Saul of Tarsus. Prior to this, Peter and John had been imprisoned (Acts 4:3), and Stephen had been stoned (Acts 7).

21:13 - *“And it shall turn to you for a testimony.”* By his death, Stephen became the first Christian martyr, and his name has become a praise unto many generations by virtue of his sterling witness.

21:14-15 - *“Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.”* This promise is very similar to Isaiah 54:17: “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.”

Stephen was given wisdom that confounded his adversaries: “Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:9,10). This is the kind of wisdom the Lord will give us when we have to give an answer for the hope that lies within us.

21:16 - *“And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.”* Regretfully, in times of persecution the words of Satan ring oh so true in many cases: “And Satan...said...all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face” (Job 2:4-5). We may

transpose Job 2:4-5 by saying that many people betray their own family members in order to save themselves.

21:17 - *“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake.”*

Jesus said in John 15:18-20: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.” We are not greater than our Lord. If the world hated Him, the world will hate us as well. All the Apostles suffered greatly for their Lord, and we are not greater than the apostles.

21:18 - *“But there shall not an hair of your head perish.”*

This little saying refers to the fact that not one part of our being will suffer eternal damnation, but will be preserved for resurrection morning.

21:19 - *“In your patience possess ye your souls.”* Therefore, we are to commit ourselves into the hands of the Lord, who “doeth all things well.”

21:20 - *“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.”* Now we come to the events of A.D. 70 when the Roman armies surrounded the city prior to its ultimate destruction. As the armies were moving towards encircling the city, the Christians were warned in prophecy to flee, which they did. They went

to Pella and other places beyond the River Jordan. There is no record of any of God's people perishing in the siege and consequent destruction of the city. (Eusebius Hist. Eccl.lib 111. Chapter 6)

21:21 - *“Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.”* Certainly there was a time to be in Jerusalem to worship the Lord, but there was certainly a time not to be found in the holy city. This will be true in the last days, since the Great Tribulation will start there (Mt. 24:15-22).

21:22 - *“For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.”* It is a fact of life that those who refuse the grace of God will incur God's wrath. This is plainly what happened to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They crucified the Lord of glory, and over 4,000 of their young men were crucified by the Romans.

21:23 - *“But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.”* A woman with child would have been at a distinct disadvantage in times like those, for food would have been very difficult to obtain, as would all the other provisions a young child would need.

21:24 - *“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”* It is estimated by Josephus that nearly 3,000,000 people

were in Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Approximately 1,100,000 of them perished during the Roman siege. Another 250,000 in the adjacent provinces were also killed. Josephus wrote that all the calamities which had befallen any nation from the world were but small compared with those of the Jews.

Also significant was the holocaust in the times of Nazi Germany. No nation was so singled out for divine displeasure as was Israel. Jerusalem has been governed by Gentile powers until the fulfilment of Jeremiah 30:3. “For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.” This happened in 1948 when the Jews returned to their homeland and Israel became a nation once again, but they have returned in order to be ready for the Great Tribulation, which is known as “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” Therefore, Jeremiah continues to speak God’s warnings:

“For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:5-7).

21:25 - *“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;”* When these events take place they will be the fulfilment of what the prophet Joel

said: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke" (Joel 2:30).

21:26 - "*Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.*" This is quoted by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 12:26, which in itself is a quotation from Haggai 2:6. This gives evidence that it will be fulfilled just prior to the coming of the Lord.

21:27 - "*And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*" The fact that the Lord will be coming in the clouds is emphasised in Scripture, and we will content ourselves by just mentioning Revelation 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

Having given the historical sequence from His time through the siege of A.D. 70, unto the days of the Second Coming, our Lord says:

21:28 - "*And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*" The final redemption for His Church, His Bride, will be when the heavenly Bridegroom comes for His redeemed. This is also the time of the resurrection.

21:29-30 - "*And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.*"

In the natural we are able to discern the seasons, but it is of much greater importance that we are able to discern spiritual seasons. There are basically four seasons in most countries of the world. Springtime, summer, harvest, and winter—these correspond to spiritual seasons in our own lives. They are characterized as such in the Song of Songs.

In the natural, the earth is doing something different in each season. Winter is a time of rest, spring is a breaking forth into new life, summer is a period of growth, and harvest is a time of reaping the mature fruit. We need to know and understand the seasons that we are experiencing in our own lives so that we can more intelligently work with God. This truth about seasons certainly applies also to missionaries. They cannot expect to reap *before* they have sown or someone else has sown in that particular field.

21:31 - *“So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.”* When we see the signs, especially that of the appearance of the Antichrist, the abomination of desolation, and of course the signs in the skies, we are to realise that the time of His Second Coming is nigh.

21:32 - *“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.”* “This generation” means the present Church age.

21:33 - *“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.”* The words of the Lord are immutable. They cannot be modified or changed. Obviously, all that is

recorded in Scriptural prophecy will be fulfilled, but also that which the Lord has personally spoken to each one of us will be fulfilled as well. Take heart and do not ever give up, but wait patiently for the fulfilment of those promises and you will see the glory of the Lord.

21:34 - *“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.”*

There is always a danger in becoming weary in well doing and then letting down our guard. When people get discouraged, they often turn to the amusements and lifestyle of this world while waiting for His coming. Friends, there have been many influential ministers who have been so trapped, descending into revelry or even drunkenness. They themselves, who have been the instruments whereby so many souls have been saved, have later become castaways.

21:35 - *“For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.”* We must take heed and keep our bodies under subjection so that our appetites do not drown us in the slough of sin. We are like soldiers who are ever so vigilant for a time in face of the enemy, but as the fighting goes on and on tend to become careless. There are so many warnings in the Scriptures against growing slack. Paul said to the Galatian church: “Ye did run well, who did hinder you?” Then he exhorted: “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 5:7, 6:9).

21:36 - *“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come*

to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” To “watch and pray” is the key to being preserved and hidden in the times of judgment. Zephaniah 2:3 verifies this: “Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be *hid* in the day of the LORD’S anger.”

“and to stand before the Son of man.” By “watching and praying” we shall also be counted worthy to stand in His presence. In the garden of Gethsemane the disciples stood in His presence, but the soldiers and Judas fell down backwards at the revelation of His name (Jn. 18:6).

There is also another meaning of “standing in His presence.” In eternity the servants who have been “called, chosen, and faithful” will have the privilege of standing in His presence (Rev. 17:14). All others will only know Him from a distance. Pray that you may obtain this promise of standing in His presence.

Christ’s Daily Occupation in His Last Days

21:37 - *“And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.”* At nights He stayed in Bethany, but he arose early in the morning to teach. This was just two days before the cross. Don’t you admire Him, always being about His Father’s business even in the time of greatest stress! I marvel at His poise and composure! Oh, how I love and adore Him!

21:38 - *“And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.”* As children of God, we are all called to teach to one degree or another. Paul gives believers the exhortation to teach in Hebrews 5:12-6:3. Let us learn how to teach. Above all, let us remember that we are living epistles known and read of all men. Therefore, we must *be* our message. That is the most important method of helping others find the way.

CHAPTER 22

The Blood Money

22:1 - *“Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.”* The origin of the Passover is given in Exodus 12. The Lord commanded His people to take a lamb for a house on the tenth day of the first month of the Jewish year. (Nissan, the first month, corresponds to March/April in our calendar.) Then on that fateful 14th night they were to slay the lamb, putting its blood upon the two sideposts and on the upper doorpost of their houses.

They were then to eat the lamb and prepare for the journey out of Egypt. That night the angel of the Lord went forth throughout the land and slew the firstborn of every family, but where the angel saw the blood he passed over the house and did not enter in to slay. Thus, they were saved by the blood of the lamb. Christ has become our Passover Lamb, and He was to shed His blood on this divinely appointed Passover for the sins of the world. Ironically, the religious leaders were to be responsible for His crucifixion, as we now shall see.

22:2 - *“And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.”* The religious leaders could not openly achieve their purpose in the death of Christ, for the common people heard Him gladly and the leaders feared that they would lose their popularity and position.

22:3 - *“Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.”* The betrayal of Jesus by one of His 12 disciples was foreknown by Him right from the beginning of their selection. It was to fulfil the Scriptures: “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Ps. 41:9). The foremost of all betrayers is Satan. As Lucifer, he betrayed the Father in the presence of Light and therefore, there was no repentance possible.

We often think the Lord’s betrayal was for the purpose of His identity with man, however, it was also in order to know the suffering of His Father. We also have to experience betrayal in order to enter into “the fellowship of His sufferings.”

22:4 - *“And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.”* Having been betrayed, I know what an evil thing it is to look at a person with benevolence, having dearly loved them, and later know that behind your back they are seeking your downfall. Jesus had to live with this knowledge of Judas for three years, and yet He did not allow His spirit to become bitter. We must only permit the evil in others to make us better, never bitter. How did Jesus triumph?

We are told the answer in the psalm that is devoted to Judas: “For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer” (Ps. 109:4). At times like this, let us always be lost in the realms of prayer with our Saviour, and we shall certainly retain the sweetness of Jesus in our soul.

22:5 - “*And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.*” The wicked have their fleeting moments of joy when they think that their evil plans are going to succeed. But good, in the end, always triumphs over evil (Job 20:5).

22:6 - “*And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.*” Away from those who undoubtedly would have risen up to protect Him, the wicked sought to accomplish their evil schemes in the dark.

The Passover Meal

22:7 - “*Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.*” We cannot subscribe to the traditional timetable of the crucifixion; so we will place this in the chronology of Dr. Graham Scroggie and other theologians as occurring on the evening of Tuesday. For a more detailed explanation, please refer to our book entitled *The Cross*. This would be the 14th of Nissan (our March \ April season).

22:8 - “*And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.*” For such an intimate meal, He entrusted the ones closest to Him for the preparation.

22:9 - *“And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?”* It is of interest that even the smallest detail of our Saviour’s life was meticulously planned by the Father, as we now see in the Last Supper.

22:10 - *“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.”* This is a sign that could not be missed since no man carried water. That was the duty of women. This indicates *humility* which was the virtue that was going to epitomize these last hours of His earthly life, even as Paul wrote: “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:8).

22:11 - *“And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?”* Here the divinely appointed water carrier would lead the two disciples to the selected house for what would be the most famous meal ever eaten. But privileges are merited; it was not just any house but one owned by a good man. How important it is for us to seek to be filled with His goodness at all times that we may also be candidates for His service when it is needed.

22:12 - *“And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.”* An upper room was invariably chosen by Rabbis for discussions with their intimate disciples. In this case, what disciples! But oh, what a Rabbi!

22:13 - *“And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.”* The procedural requirements would no doubt have been provided by the disciples. It is significant that Jesus partook of this ceremonial ritual, for in all situations He upheld the Law, which He alone fulfilled.

22:14 - *“And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.”* This would have been about six o'clock in the evening, the beginning of His last day. The seat of honour, situated in the centre, would have been occupied by the Lord. In those days, each guest reclined at full length, leaning on his left elbow that his right hand might be free. At the right hand of the seat of honour would have been the beloved disciple, John, whose head could be placed at any moment upon the breast of His friend and Lord, Jesus of Nazareth.

22:15 - *“And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:”* This was a meaningful occasion to our Lord. The very reason He had come to earth was now at hand. It was a time when He must finally bid farewell to those He loved so very much before going to the cross. “

22:16 - *“For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”* Having eaten of the Passover lamb that had been procured by His two disciples, He declared that this in effect would be the last time He would eat here on earth until He ate at His Father's table in heaven above.

22:17 - *“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:”* This was the cup of fellowship that the host offered to his guests at this time in the meal. It was a supreme act of cementing the bonds that bound Him to His disciples.

22:18 - *“For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.”* Once again, it was the last time He would be permitted to drink here on earth.

The Institution of the Holy Communion

22:19-20 - *“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”* Luke does not go into the detail of the other Gospel writers with respect to this sacred institution. Holy communion is one of the five ordinances of the Church. The five are:

1. The Dedication of an Infant
2. Water Baptism by Immersion
3. The Holy Communion
4. The Marriage Ceremony
5. The Funeral Service

The holy communion must be taken with great reverence by all blood-bought believers, for there is a blessing for all who so do; however, judgment is upon those who partake of it in

an unworthy manner, even as the Apostle Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32.

The Announcement of the Betrayal

22:21 - *“But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.”* The same hand that was partaking of the celebration of the Passover lamb, which they were all eating in sublime and holy fellowship, would be the very same hand that would identify Him to His adversaries that very night (in fact, only a few hours hence). But all had been pre-ordained by the Father.

22:22 - *“And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!”* The betrayal had been determined *in type* by Ahithophel who betrayed David. Korah is another example of betrayal, for he rose up against Moses. Daniel’s peers sought to betray him and put him in the lion’s den. However, all those betrayers had perished, and as Scripture records, so would Judas perish, even before the crucifixion (Mt. 27:3-5).

22:23 - *“And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.”* This is a point that should not be glossed over, for it is so very important! Jesus had such control of His spirit that He was able to live with the knowledge of the fact that Judas would betray Him, and yet not let the other disciples know. Often the Lord cannot entrust us with truths because we cannot keep secrets.

The Strife Among the Disciples Who Should be Greatest

22:24 - *“And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.”* As if it were not enough that Jesus had to bear the knowledge that His betrayal was close at hand and that there would be no sleep for Him before His crucifixion, He had to contend now with strife among His own disciples when He so needed their comfort.

This is one of the great afflictions of mankind—the desire to be the head. This was the cause of the rebellion in heaven when Lucifer declared: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (cf. Isa. 14:12-14).

This debate may have been caused by the fact that at the feast the seating arrangements did indeed indicate status or privilege. The tables were arranged in a square with one side left open. The Host, who was Jesus, sat at the top side of the square in the centre. The one on His right would have been John in the place of honour.

Then in descending order the one on His left, followed by the one next to John, then the one next to the disciple on His left, and so on. It was a very definite seating arrangement, and therefore, we understand the request of the mother of John and James to have her sons sit on the right and left of Jesus in

His Kingdom (Mt. 20:20). We also understand the scrambling for the best seats in the upper rooms at the feast given by the chief Pharisee (Lk.14:7).

22:25 - *“And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.”* In effect, Jesus was saying: “Yes, this is how the world acts.”

22:26 - *“But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.”* This lesson in humility must be worked out in our hearts. It must become a way of life to take the lower place on all occasions, whatever our status or rank.

22:27 - *“For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.”* We are called ministers, which really means “servants.” As such, we should first look after the welfare of others before ourselves. Now the Lord speaks graciously and comfortingly to His disciples.

22:28 - *“Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.”* Suffering holds a very high position and is esteemed of great price in the Kingdom. As we have suffered with Him, so shall we also reign with Him (cf. 2 Tim. 2:12). Obviously, those who had suffered most were these eleven who had faithfully followed the Lord and entered into the fellowship of His sufferings to the very highest degree. Therefore, their reward would be among the greatest.

22:29 - *“And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;”* They would each have a kingdom in His Kingdom and also enjoy a wonderful intimacy with their Lord in Heaven. He further promised them a throne.

22:30 - *“That they may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* In a kingdom there are many different ranks and positions. One may be a governor, but it requires friendship to sit at the table of the King. Thus, the disciples were promised both. Let us be faithful like the eleven in entering into the fellowship of His suffering. Then we will hear those words, *“Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”*

The Warning to Peter

22:31 - *“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:”* One of the realities of the spiritual life is the fact that Satan can and does have access unto God. God considers his requests and, as with this one, permits some of them. A parallel case in Scripture is when Satan was allowed to afflict Job.

However, we must always see that in the sovereignty of God, Satan is permitted to go only as far as God permits. It is God who establishes boundaries. The response of the Saviour must be carefully studied and understood. We see that He did not seek to spare Peter the trial, but rather prayed that he would not be lost.

22:32 - *“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”*

The deep concern of the Lord was that Peter, through his consequent denial of the Lord, would not give up and lose His faith in Christ. We are permitted, in the wisdom of God, to pass through trials. Although the Lord would have us pass our tests triumphantly as He did, He knows our frailties. Therefore, He prayed that the trial would not destroy Peter. Peter, however, now shows his confidence in his own self-strength.

22:33 - *“And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.”* Undoubtedly, this was the true desire of Peter's heart, but he did not yet realise that we can only triumph through God's grace or divine enablement. In declaring that he was able to be loyal by his own strength, he had prevented grace from being there to sustain him. Therefore, Jesus responded:

22:34 - *“I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.”* The Lord knows when honest-hearted people like Peter are going to fail. Therefore, He had already prayed that after his failure he would not leave the faith. This should be a source of comfort to all of us.

Preparation for the Betrayal

22:35 - *“And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.”*

This is a beautiful statement of faith in the Lord as our Provider. It

should be an encouragement to each one of us that as He cared for His beloved disciples, He will also care for us.

22:36 - *“Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.”* There are times when the Lord wishes us to have nothing, leaning completely upon Him for all things. There are times when provision comes from another source. At times even the minister is to be gainfully employed. We have to be careful that at all times we are hearing from Him and moving in the way that He wants to meet with us.

In my own life there have been times when God has forbidden me to work and has provided for me in an extraordinary manner. On other occasions, He has provided work for me that has supplied my needs. The sword was the common weapon for defense. However, in this case, it was to be more for symbolic reasons that the Scripture be fulfilled, as Jesus explains.

22:37 - *“For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.”* This is a quotation from Isaiah 53:12, which says: “He was numbered with the transgressors.” Therefore, the swords were necessary to give the appearance that they were the evil men of which they had been accused.

22:38 - *“And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.”* The two swords would be sufficient to give the appearance that they were a band of

robbers, as they had been accused of being. We are sometimes put into situations where it appears that we are evildoers, yet in reality we are honest people.

The Gethsemane Prayer

22:39 - *“And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.”* This mountain was a favourite place of prayer for our Lord in that it is the place of His betrayal and the place of His ultimate triumphs. Here He ascended, and here He will return again at His Second Coming.

As He ascended back to heaven, two heavenly messengers appeared and proclaimed: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven; Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey” (Acts 1:11-12).

Zechariah 14:4 confirms that this is the place where Christ will return: “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”

22:40 - *“And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.”* Our Lord’s prayer

contains the identical supplication—“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Peter was not protected from temptation because he was walking in pride and presumption. We certainly do not want to be placed in the situation of Peter where there was no grace for the test. Pride is the reason he failed. Humility is essential for receiving grace to triumph even as did our blessed Lord.

22:41 - *“And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,”* In times of great stress we have to be alone when we pray. It is only then that we can open up our hearts and let our petitions tumble forth as a torrent of pent up water to the One who is closer than a brother.

22:42 - *“Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”* Here in close intimacy with the Father, the most chilling act in the history of the universe would take place. Here a cup containing the sins of the world was offered to the spotless Son of God. In the agony of His soul He would become sin, as the Apostle Paul said: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21). As this cup was before Him, the greatest battle on earth took place. The Son was striving against all the forces of hell that had been thrown into battle to break His will and to cause Him to turn back.

22:43 - *“And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.”* Jesus was not alone. A mighty angel of God strengthened Him at this very time, for flesh and blood alone could not have withstood this onslaught of the wicked ones.

22:44 - *“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”* The Apostle Paul reminds us: “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb. 12:4). In prayer, He overcame.

22:45 - *“And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,”* Those nearest to Him, overcome by the sorrow of the hour, found solace in sleep.

22:46 - *“And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”* Again, perhaps specifically directed to Peter, He exhorts them to pray that they might not be tempted beyond their strength.

The Betrayal

22:47 - *“And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.”* How hypocritical that the sign of friendship was used as the sign of betrayal.

22:48 - *“But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?”* The question that we must ask ourselves is—Why did Judas betray the Son of God? Was he momentarily overcome with a fault, as later on we shall see was the case with Peter? No! It was premeditated and came from a heart that was full of cursing. Judas had a hatred for the anointing and a deep love for money that had developed over those three years as he stole from the community bag of

which he was the guardian (cf. Ps. 109:17). No one just falls into sin—it is a way of life.

22:49 - *“When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?”* His disciples, against overwhelming odds, were preparing to die with Him. It is estimated that there were 1,000 men in the army that came out to take Him, yet those eleven were willing to do battle on His behalf against those armed soldiers.

22:50 - *“And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.”* Peter was the one using the sword, and I am sure he was not aiming to remove the ear of the servant but rather his head, although in his haste, he missed his prime target.

22:51 - *“And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.”* The Lord seemingly said: “That is enough, you have proved your point” and then He healed the servant’s ear. Christ was so gracious, even in this time of great adversity. How we need to learn from Him. When we are tired or provoked we so often lose the sweetness of Christ, but this was not the case with our Lord. Don’t you admire and adore Him? Now Jesus reproaches the actions of the religious leaders.

22:52 - *“Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?”* Here the Lord is chiding them that they are treating Him as a

common criminal when they could have so easily taken Him in the temple.

22:53 - *“When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”* He is showing them their cowardice. They did not want to apprehend Him when He taught in the temple because they were afraid of the people. The righteous are as bold as a lion, but the wicked are afraid of their own shadow. Now He says: *“This is your hour, and the power of darkness.”* This was their hour of apparent triumph. In reality, however, they are fulfilling the very carefully and tightly scripted scene that was determined before the foundation of the world. Oh, how wondrous are His ways and how unsearchable are His judgments! The wicked are used to forward His plans for our eternal redemption. Praise the Lord!

The Denial of Peter

22:54 - *“Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest’s house. And Peter followed afar off.”* This was the house of the high priest Annas, whose son-in-law, Caiaphas, was the actual high priest at the time of the trial of Jesus. The time is reckoned by most commentators to have been around midnight.

22:55 - *“And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.”* At this hour the night chill would have necessitated a fire. Peter joined the soldiers sitting around the fire, having

been permitted to enter because John, who was also there, knew the portress who kept the gate.

22:56 - *“But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.”* In the light of the fire a servant maid declared openly that Peter was a follower of Jesus.

22:57 - *“And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.”* In a state of fear with all those soldiers around him, and with the certainty of arrest had he acknowledged his discipleship, Peter panicked and denied the charge.

22:58 - *“And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.”* It is easy to condemn Peter in this situation, as so many do, but let us consider a few facts. All the disciples, with the exception of John, had fled the scene.

This was in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7: *“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”* This was quoted by Jesus in Matthew 26:31: *“Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.”*

To this Peter had answered: *“Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended”* (Mt. 26:33). It

was then that Jesus had warned Peter that before the cock crowed Peter would have denied Jesus three times. Again Peter protested that he would die for Jesus. But prophecy had to be fulfilled. Also, Jesus had to fulfil all the *types* of the Old Testament sacrifices.

Therefore, it was impossible for Peter to die with Jesus. He had to be stopped, and stopped he was by the fact that no grace was given him to affirm his declaration. How many of us would have been courageous enough to have followed the apprehended Christ at midnight into the palace of that tyrannical high priest who was a friend of Rome? Let us be merciful to Peter as God has been merciful to us.

22:59 - *“And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean.”* This is the third accusation. Another said he had seen Peter with Jesus.

22:60 - *“And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.”* Sadly, after the third denial, the cock crowed, which would have been about three o'clock in the morning. All this time Jesus had remained bound and was unable to sit down.

22:61 - *“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”* It was not a look of reproach but one of sadness that someone so near had failed the test. Let us not make our Saviour sad in failing any of our God-appointed trials. In this case, however,

Peter's test was brought upon himself. Let us ever be in prayer that we do not enter into temptation.

22:62 - "*And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*" As we study the other Gospels, the concern of heaven was that Peter would not be overcome with remorse. Is that possible?—Yes! Regretfully a former pastor of mine was so overcome with remorse for falling into adultery that he committed suicide.

Jesus Endures the Mocking

22:63 - "*And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him.*" This scene was already prophesied by Jesus to His disciples on several occasions, especially as they neared Jerusalem. It was also a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 50:6 where it is written, "I gave my cheeks to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

22:64 - "*And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee?*" What humiliation! Yet it was borne with such dignity by the blessed Son of God who had all power to avenge His enemies. He could have called many legions of heavens angels to deliver Him.

22:65 - "*And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.*" "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, he threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:23). What perfect control did this Son of Man have over His spirit! May we realise the great price that heaven puts upon our self-

control. It is written: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32).

Jesus Before the Council

22:66 - *“And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying...”* Once I was unable to sleep the night before I was due to speak on the theme of the cross at a Sunday morning service. When I asked the Lord the reason I could not sleep He said, “I did not sleep either the night before I went to the cross.”

22:67 - *“Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe:”* The desire of the religious leaders to know whether He was the Christ was simply to condemn Him, not because of a sincere quest for truth. Truly, as Jesus said, their hearts were not predisposed to receive the love of the truth. Therefore, they could not have believed.

22:68 - *“And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.”* The Lord knew what ever He said, they had no intention of letting Him escape out of their hands. It was like the trial of Martin Niemoeller in Germany, who was acquitted by the court, but he was rearrested by the Nazis at the exit of the court.

22:69 - *“Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.”* Jesus declares where His eternal place will be—at the right hand of the Father. This fact

fortified Him. “For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross” (Heb. 12:2). Sometimes the Lord permits us to have glimpses of our place in heaven so that we may be able to bear life’s trials.

22:70 - *“Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.”* His adversaries now press Him specifically to declare Himself, which He does not hesitate to do.

22:71 - *“And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.”* This was what they had desired. They wanted an indisputable fact around which they could all rally. Now they accused Him of supposed blasphemy. The other Gospel writers tell us of the great difficulty they were experiencing as they sought two witnesses. It was in desperation that they sought evidence from His own mouth, which He gave.

CHAPTER 23

Before Pilate

23:1 - *“And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.”* Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judaea. He was a man described by Philo as a tyrant—brutal, coarse, and corrupt. He was an ideal candidate to preside at the trial of the Righteous One, whose accusers were just like the judge. Since Jesus had to be condemned unjustly, who could perform that deed more appropriately than an unjust judge who put innocent people to death at his whim.

23:2 - *“And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.”* Shouting such charges should not have been tolerated in a court of law.

23:3 - *“And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.”* Jesus gave a clear-cut answer to this question of His kingship. The Apostle Paul said that Christ, “witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate” (cf. 1 Tim. 6:13).

23:4 - *“Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.”* The judge, having delivered his judgment, should have at this moment released Jesus, but the accusers continued.

23:5 - *“And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.”* The charges were obviously false, and to a certain degree everything about the trial was not only false, but illegal.

23:6 - *“When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaeen.”* Pilate, however, was trying to avoid condemning Christ.

23:7 - *“And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.”* Pilate felt that by a master stroke of political acumen he might now be rid of an embarrassing situation and save himself from a decision he had no wish to

make. Thus, he sent Jesus to Herod. This Herod was Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee. He was the son of Herod the Great and Malthace. He had married the daughter of Aretas, the king of Arabia. Later he married Herodias, the wife of Herod Philip I. John the Baptist reproved him for taking his brother's wife, and Herod had John beheaded.

The Trial Before Herod

23:8 - *“And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.”* Herod had no concern for amending his sinful life. Rather, he was an adulterer who just desired to see signs and miracles to satisfy his curiosity.

“But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas” (Mt. 12:39). So this adulterer and murderer, Herod Antipas, member of one of the most hated families of all times, questioned Jesus with many words.

23:9 - *“Then questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.”* The Lord of glory had no desire to satisfy this evil ruler's curiosity.

23:10 - *“And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.”* These religious rulers also had no intention of letting their victim get away; so they, in the presence of the hated Herod, continued their accusations.

23:11 - *“And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.”* Now the savage vulgarity of Herod spewed forth all the venom of his depraved nature. His words were so coarse that they profaned the Lord of heaven’s glory and all the virtues for which He stood. Herod and his men mocked His innocence and further humiliated Him by arraying Him in a gorgeous robe. But Jesus, with the demeanor of the true King that He was, answered not a word.

The Second Trial Under Pilate

In effect, although Luke does not state them all, this is the sixth and final trial of this long-drawn-out drama of iniquity. There were three trials in the Jewish hearing, and three in the Roman hearing. In returning Jesus to Pilate, Herod had thwarted the plans of the Roman governor to rid himself of a very difficult situation.

23:12 - *“And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.”* Here are two enemies brought together and united by one thing—opposing the righteous. How often the wicked are reconciled over the pleasure of a common misdeed. If only we in the church could reconcile with one another when the Holy Spirit chooses to visit us. This does in fact happen in many churches. There is repentance, reconciliation, and an asking for forgiveness when God visits individual congregations. So, beloved, make sure we have reconciliation with the righteous over good things, and not reconciliation to the wicked over further misdeeds.

23:13 - *“And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people...”* We must never forget that although Pilate had to ultimately make the decision, it was the religious leaders (incidentally, those with the responsibility of killing the passover lamb for Israel) who were really responsible for the death of Christ.

23:14 - *“Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:”* It was blatantly clear to the Roman procurator that the charges were false. Then he adds:

23:15 - *“No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.”* It was therefore Pilate who sent the priests to Herod so that they could present their case against Jesus to the ruler of Galilee. Believing that Herod would not convict Him, Pilate wanted to release Him.

23:16 - *“I will therefore chastise him, and release him.”* Having pronounced Jesus “not guilty” Pilate should have released Jesus immediately. His offer to scourge Him was made in an effort to appease the Jews. This was further injustice.

23:17 - *(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)* To appease the Jews, the Romans would release one of their prisoners at the time of the Passover. This was a time-honoured tradition of the Romans.

23:18 - *“And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:”* Barabbas was a profane and wicked man, as we now read.

23:19 - (*Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.*) That Barabbas would have been preferred by His people to the Holy One speaks of the deplorable state of affairs in Israel at that time. The prophets describe it as a dry and barren ground. As John said: "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

23:20 - "*Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.*" Pilate tries again to release Him. Perhaps he did so because of a tinge of superstitious fear, since his own wife had warned him not to have anything to do so with this just and righteous man (Mt. 27:19).

23:21 - "*But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.*" It is pathetic that such a situation was permitted at a court of law, but then nothing was right about these kinds of trials.

23:22 - "*And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.*" It is inadmissible in any legal proceeding for the judge to bargain with the plaintiffs with respect to the sentence.

23:23 - "*And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.*" Thus, the one who was to uphold the law violated it. Because of his wayward life he had not the moral fortitude to do what was right. Therefore, he gave in to the crowd. This is indeed a lesson for us, since we must understand that the righteous are as bold as a lion. The wicked have no strength to do what is right. Such was the lamentable condition of Pontius Pilate.

23:24 - *“And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.”* By this act, Pilate joined the ranks of the unjust judges whose end is hell. Pilate committed suicide a number of years later after being banished by Caesar for another miscarriage of justice.

23:25 - *“And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”* The world loves its own and finds no fault in them. Here were the murderers of Jesus asking for another murderer to be released. Often sinners think that by being generous to others, who have sinned in the same manner as themselves, they themselves might be justified. However, they will not be justified before God.

23:26 - *“And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.”* It was the custom for those who were condemned to be crucified to carry at least the cross bar upon their shoulders. However, it was evident to the Roman soldiers that He lacked the physical strength to carry it from the Praetorium to Golgotha. Therefore, they impressed into service Simon from Cyrene, who afterwards was well known in the early Church because of his sons, Alexander and Rufus (Rom. 16:13).

On the Way to Calvary

23:27 - *“And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.”* It is clear that the common people heard Him gladly, but the rulers

crucified Him because of jealousy. What responsibility there is in leadership, whether it be secular or religious! The lives of so many people are affected by a leader's decisions. Therefore, choose to be under good, God-fearing men who hear from God. And if we are leaders, may we live in the presence of God and hear constantly from God so that we ourselves as well as those we lead will hit the mark of the high calling of God.

23:28 - *“But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.”* In His time of extreme suffering, the compassionate heart of our Saviour speaks to these mourning women who are weeping for Him. In tender tones He says that they should instead weep for themselves. After all, He is fulfilling with joy the will of God, but they and their children will live to see the horrors of Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70.

23:29 - *“For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.”* The Roman armies, first under Vespasian, then under Titus would besiege the city. In the day of trouble that was to befall Jerusalem, it would be better never to have had children than to see them die of hunger in the great famine of the siege.

23:30 - *“Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.”* This is a figure of speech. In a time of great calamities the people would wish that the mountains and hills would hide them from the judgments. This expression is also used with respect to the times of the great tribulation in Revelation 6:16,17.

23:31 - *“For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”* The inference here is this: if they have shown such cruelty to the Green tree, speaking of the innocent Lord Jesus Christ, how much more will the Romans vent their cruel nature upon the guilty nation of Israel. This is exactly what happened during the years of 66-70 A.D. when over 200,000 of the population were slaughtered by the Romans in the provinces, while over 1,000,000 lost their lives in the siege of Jerusalem.

23:32 - *“And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.”* Two criminals also accompanied Him to Calvary. They would have been cursing and screaming in agony and self-pity. The route from the palace of Pilate to the place of crucifixion was the longest possible road, to strike terror into the local population. And all along this route, He would have had these wretched thieves as his companions.

23:33 - *“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.”* The Gospel writers do not dwell on the details of the crucifixion, no doubt because it was well known to those living in their day. Therefore, we must draw from contemporary writers for our information.

Crucifixion means to die upon a cross. After the criminal had carried the cross to the place of crucifixion, attended by every insult possible, the cross was laid on the ground. The criminal was then stripped and nailed to the cross by his hands and feet. The cross was allowed to fall violently into a hole that had been previously. This produced additional suffering. The

crucified person was then left to hang until pain, thirst, hunger, or exhaustion brought on death. The person could continue for days and sometimes a week before death came. This death was considered so ignominious that no Roman citizen was allowed to be crucified.

On the Cross

23:34 - *“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”*

On the cross Jesus uttered seven sayings. No Gospel writer includes them all. This was the first. It is typical of our Lord that forgiveness should flow from His very being even unto those who were so cruel and vindictive toward Him.

The plea, “Father forgive them” was rooted in the fact that His persecutors were in ignorance. This is confirmed by the Apostle Paul: “Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8).

The Father had purposely blinded the rulers of the Jews and their Roman governor as to the true identity of Jesus so that they might crucify the Lord, so He might die for us. However, we should add quickly that they were chosen to be blinded by reason of their own wicked ways. Let us take heed lest we be used in the purposes of God to crucify others, figuratively speaking, because of our own wayward hearts.

The other truth we should remember is forgiveness. We should seek at all times to have our own hearts filled with forgiveness,

that we may freely forgive those who harm us. To be like Jesus must be the cry of our hearts! The parting of His garments was a tradition, too, for the victim's garments were given as compensation to the guards who were obliged to carry out the crucifixion. However, this act was also to fulfil the prophecy of Psalm 22:18, which was uttered centuries before. Crucifixion was a capital punishment, but was actually instituted first by the Persians, who were a very cruel race.

23:35 - *“And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.”* Again we see that it was the rulers who were so vehemently antagonistic toward Him. It was the rulers who stirred up the people. The common people were simply ill led.

23:36 - *“And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,”* Vinegar mixed with gall (which stupefied the senses) was given to the condemned in order to alleviate their suffering. However, we read in Matthew 27:34 that He refused it.

23:37 - *“And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.”* The taunting itself must have been so very distressing. In actuality, He could have come down. This was the last attack of Satan, who was inciting the crowd. Having failed to prevent the Lord from going to the cross, Satan now sought to cause Him to come down. He tried anything to stop the Son of God from finishing His course.

23:38 - *“And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING*

OF THE JEWS.” These three languages were the main languages of the civilised world. In reality, then, Jesus was declared King to the whole world. Praise the Lord!

23:39 - *“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.”* Even upon the cross the teachings of our Lord were fulfilled when He said, *“One will be taken and the other left.”* So it was for these thieves. One remained unrepentant until the end.

23:40 - *“But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?”* Here is a last minute act of repentance. This gives hope to every pastor and to those who have prayed for the erring prodigal sons, that before the clouds of death envelop their souls there might be a deathbed conversion. The repentant thief sees the light at the last and realises his lost condition.

23:41 - *“And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.”* Here the penitent thief received grace to realise who was beside him. The demeanor of our Saviour upon the cross opened his eyes, and so in the last hours of his life he turned to Jesus saying:

23:42 - *“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”* Ever the soul winner, Jesus won a man upon the cross—not the thief alone, as we shall soon see.

23:43 - *“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* Here we must see the graciousness of the Lord, because prior to his conversion the

thief had also been reviling Jesus. This is the second of the seven sayings upon the cross.

23:44 - *“And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.”* At midday the sun was darkened for three hours. During those three hours the Lord sustained all the attacks of hell’s fury. Every demon was summoned into action against the matchless Son of God. It was so terrible that mortal man can never be fully told.

23:45 - *“And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.”* The veil of the temple that separated the holy place from the holy of holies was rent from top to bottom. This signified that we have entrance into the very presence of God by the blood of Christ. Access into God’s presence was denied the Old Testament saints, for the blood of bulls and goats was not powerful enough to purge their sins and permit them to enter within the veil.

23:46 - *“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”* This is a verbatim quotation from Psalm 31:5. This was the last of the seven sayings and signified that the work of Jesus that the Father had given Him to do was finished. The supreme sacrifice for our sins had been paid. Praise His dear name. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we might be saved.

23:47 - *“Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.”* At Christ’s death another man saw the light. It was the Roman

captain in charge of the soldiers whose detail it was to crucify and then guard the crosses so that no man might seek to take them down. What a testimony from a man who was accustomed to seeing so many die in like manner. But he had never seen one like this Man.

23:48 - *“And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.”* On the part of the populace there was great grief, for they had heard Him gladly.

23:49 - *“And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.”* The women had to see from afar because He was naked. Put to shame before one and all, it was for the joy that was set before Him that He had endured the cross, scoffing at the shame (Heb.12:2). He counted the shame as nothing compared to the eternal glory that awaited him. May this mind that was in Christ also be in us.

His Burial

Concerning His death and burial Isaiah wrote: “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth” (Is. 53:9). Certainly Jesus went to His death with those wicked thieves, but His grave was that of a very rich man named Joseph.

23:50 - *“And behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just.”* We are told in Matthew 27:57 that Joseph was a rich man and also a

disciple of Jesus. His rank was that of “counsellor,” meaning that he was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the governing body of the Jews. It was before this assembly that Jesus was condemned at His third trial. To fulfil prophecy, Joseph buried Jesus in his own tomb—thus, He was buried with the rich.

23:51 - *“(The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.”* Tradition says that Joseph founded the first church in England at Glastonbury, having been sent there by Philip. His city in Israel is said to be the birthplace of Samuel, a city some ten miles northeast of Lydda.

23:52 - *“This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.”* We are told in Mark 15:43 that He went boldly into the presence of Pilate and pleaded with him for the body of Jesus. Normally the bodies of those crucified were left to rot upon those crosses. Being denied burial, their flesh was consumed by the vultures. Pilate was amazed that He had died so soon, but after having His death confirmed by the centurion, he gave permission for Joseph to have the body.

23:53 - *“And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.”* The Lord died at approximately three o’clock in the afternoon, and at six the sabbath began, after which all work was illegal. Therefore, Joseph had to go to Pilate to receive permission to take the body of our Lord off the cross and place Him in his own nearby tomb—all within three hours.

23:54 - *“And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.”* This was the “Passover” sabbath when the lamb had been prepared. The approaching sabbath was not a weekend sabbath.

23:55 - *“And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.”* The women are mentioned by name in Matthew 27:56. They are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, as well as the mother of James and John. These had time just to see where Joseph had laid the Lord’s body.

23:56 - *“And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.”* Therefore, the Lord was not embalmed, although John 19:40 tells us that He was wrapped in clean linen cloth with spices. Spices were sometimes used in such quantities as to form a bed upon which the dead body was laid. It says this of King Asa: “And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries’ art: and they made a very great burning for him” (2 Chr. 16:14).

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2)

PART 7

His Resurrection and Ascension

(24:1-53)

CHAPTER 24

The Empty Tomb

24:1 - *“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.”* The women had come with the spices to perform the embalming process for the body of Jesus.

24:2 - *“And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.”* Luke does not give the details of the rolling away of the stone that Matthew does, but contents himself with this simple statement of fact.

24:3 - *“And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.”* Those who have been in our Lord’s tomb know that there is a ledge upon which His body lay, similar to all Jewish tombs of that era.

24:4 - *“And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:”* These were heavenly messengers whose heavenly garments shine with a purity unknown and unattainable here upon earth.

24:5 - *“And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?”* Triumphantly the angels declare His resurrection.

24:6 - *“He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee.”* Then they graciously

reminded the women of the words of Jesus which He spoke to His disciples prior to His transfiguration. These words must have been told to the women by their sons.

Here we quote Luke 9:22: “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.”

24:7 - *“Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”* The angels repeat those words verbatim. This is interesting, because for them to have known these words, heaven must have been following the life of Jesus upon earth with intense concern. If not heaven in general, certainly these particular angels (who were to have a part in the resurrection story) knew what Jesus had said.

24:8 - *“And they remembered his words.”* It is amazing how we can forget those words that the Lord speaks to us, and yet they come back with such life when the Holy Spirit brings them to our remembrance.

24:9 - *“And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.”* We are prone to think that there were only the apostles who were in prayer at this time, but not so—for as we see from Luke’s account, there were 120 who were waiting in the upper room after His ascension. More than 500 saw the Lord at one time after the resurrection. This is according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:6.

24:10 - *“It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.”* As we have already said, there were a considerable number of women, according to the Gospel writers, who were with Jesus at this time of His crucifixion, and a number who were involved in the resurrection story. No writer gives a complete list. However, when these women came to the disciples, the disciples did not believe their testimony.

24:11 - *“And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.”* We must remember that these disciples were only in their twenties (possibly Peter was in his early thirties); so let us not be condemnatory.

24:12 - *“Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.”* Luke is moving along with the basic facts and does not mention that John was also with Peter (See John 20:1-8). Therefore, it is important to study a harmony of the Gospels to have the complete picture of these events. In all probability, Peter was the dominant one; therefore, Luke simply is content to mention him.

On the Road to Emmaus

24:13 - *“And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.”* We learn also from Josephus in his “Wars of the Jews” that Emmaus was 60 furlongs (or seven

to eight miles) from Jerusalem. After A.D. 70, the village of Emmaus was given by Titus to 800 men whom he had dismissed from his army. The whole land of Judaea was to be sold by the orders of Caesar. Josephus remarks that it is amazing that Titus did not populate this desolate part of Judea and so it was left for the future restoration of the Jews.

24:14 - *“And they talked together of all these things which had happened.”* How wonderful it is when we have friends whom we can talk to about the things of the Lord. It is one of life’s finest pleasures. David knew this companionship, as he writes in Psalm 55:14: *“We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.”*

24:15 - *“And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.”* This story is the basis of one of the world’s best known paintings, entitled *“Two on the Road to Emmaus.”* The picture features the two disciples and Jesus in the middle. What blessed fellowship.

24:16 - *“But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.”* This is true for us as well. The Apostle Paul says: *“Some have entertained angels unawares”* (Heb.13:2).

24:17 - *“And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?”* How sweet it is to realise that He knows our every mood, and although we are so often not aware of His presence, He is there to comfort us as He did these two friends.

24:18 - *“And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?”* Although Jesus knows all things, it is so gracious of Him to meet us on our own level and let us do the talking.

24:19 - *“And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:”* Here is a clear-cut testimony from Cleopas of his faith in Jesus as the prophet of whom Moses spoke.

24:20 - *“And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.”* As we have said before, there was an understanding among the people that it was *the religious rulers*, not the common people, who had condemned and crucified Jesus.

24:21 - *“But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.”* Here again is the common belief among the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah who would bring about a military victory for them and remove the yoke of foreign aggressors from off their necks. It is this belief in the immediacy of His Coming and their deliverance that Jesus had sought to counteract in His teachings, especially in the parable of the pounds (see Luke 19:11-27). This will come to pass only at His Second Coming, when His feet will stand on that day upon the Mount of Olives. It has been the same throughout the Church Age. Many have believed that He would return at any time.

24:22 - *“Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;”* Thus, we see that the women did not bring the report to the eleven only, but there were many others waiting with the apostles, as we have already said in verse 9 of this chapter.

24:23 - *“And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.”* The resurrection story was well reported by many eyewitnesses.

24:24 - *“And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.”* At once we see the violent struggle within the hearts of His disciples concerning their beliefs and hopes that He would deliver them, and the tragedy and the apparent spoiling of all for which they had lived over these last three years.

Perhaps we may understand their sadness since we, too, may have already passed through periods in our own lives when we had expected one thing and then it did not happen. Confused and frustrated, we have spent some time in crying or self-pity, only to discover that the events that did not materialize as we had hoped were in fact perfectly fulfilling the will of God. So often we misinterpret what He has said to us, and then we suffer emotionally and perhaps financially as well.

The most important event in the history of the world—the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God—was very well documented by numerous witnesses who, in turn, have

spread the story far and wide. Now Jesus responds to all their negative speech.

24:25 - *“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:”* The word “fools” employed here denotes not wickedness or stupidity, but rather a sense that they had dullness of perception in not being able to comprehend the Scriptures. This is the clear meaning of the word as we read on, for He gently chides them.

24:26 - *“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”* “A suffering Saviour” was a concept that few if any of the Israelites understood. They perceived Him only as the conquering King of kings. At this point may we suggest a prayer of that beautiful unnamed man of God who penned Psalm 119. “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Ps. 119:18). Also, his heart cried: “Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works” (Ps. 119:27). Now Jesus started to open their eyes to Scriptural truths.

24:27 - *“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* The Lord probably started at Genesis explaining the clothing of Adam and Eve with animal skins, which speaks of his people being clothed with the garments of righteousness obtained through Christ our Passover Lamb. Then undoubtedly He would have taken them through all the Levitical sacrifices, explaining how He had fulfilled them. He opened the Psalms, which are all Messianic and speak so

often of the suffering Saviour, as well as Isaiah, who had such a revelation of the One whom he called “The Man of Sorrows.” Truly, Christ is seen on every page of Scripture.

24:28 - *“And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.”* Here we see the graciousness of Jesus as one who does not intrude but waits for our invitation. Let us be sure that we do not let Him pass by, but rather let us *implore* Him to dwell with us.

24:29 - *“But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.”* The importunity of the friends caused them to be privileged to receive a greater revelation of Jesus. Remember, whatever we have received from Him in the past, there is always much more that He has for us if we will but *persistently* ask.

24:30 - *“And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.”* Here in type is the first post-resurrection communion service, where literally the Lord of Glory presided. In every communion service He is there as we invite Him by faith to come.

24:31 - *“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.”* Let us pray that we shall have an unfolding revelation of Jesus through His Word and by His Spirit. As Christ is revealed, we are changed into His image from glory to glory.

24:32 - *“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”* As we study the Word and meditate in His presence our own hearts also burn within us, filling us with such joy and love for Him. Then He left, having fulfilled the will of His Father, but the joy of the two friends knew no bounds and they simply had to share the good news with the others.

24:33-34 - *“And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.”* Before they were able to relate their own story, they were told by those assembled that the Lord had already appeared unto Peter.

Paul makes this clear that the Lord first appeared unto Peter (1 Cor. 15:5). This was a gracious act in the restoration of Peter, who was forever grieved by his denial of his Lord. Then apparently the two friends, who were not apostles because they came to the eleven, were able to give their testimony.

24:35 - *“And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.”* What a night! But much more was to come.

The Lord in Their Midst

24:36 - *“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”* Just as He had promised in His teachings, where two or three are gathered together in His Name, He is there in the midst. Yet here in person

was the risen Lord of Glory among His loved ones, among those who had continued with Him in His temptations. There is such joy among those who have suffered and hazarded their all for their blessed Lord when He comes.

It reminds me of the story of William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. When he was a young Methodist minister he had visions of heaven. He saw one group in heaven who were waiting with blessed anticipation for their Lord, and oh, what joy when He came and joined them. Then turning to William Booth, the Lord said, “How can you know their joy if you have not suffered for the Gospel?” Later William Booth suffered greatly for Christ and no doubt has joined that happy band of sufferers in heaven.

24:37 - *“But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.”* In spite of His gracious greeting of “Peace be unto you” they were still in fear.

24:38 - *“And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?”* Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, but also that is where we are filled with thoughts. How important it is to “keep our heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). How important it is that our hearts are continually being opened to the Divine Gardener so that the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, and peace are consistently reproducing themselves in the whole of our beings. Then perfect love will cast out all fear. Jesus now seeks manifestly to prove His resurrection by saying to them:

24:39 - *“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as*

ye see me have.” Here is the profound difference between spirits and the resurrected Lord. Just like our Lord, in the resurrection we will have tangible bodies. Demons and fallen angels do not have tangible bodies.

We are clearly told in Hebrews 2:16: “He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” The Lord’s favourite title for Himself was “Son of Man.” By being born of a woman, He has taken upon Himself a body of flesh, even as it is written, “a body thou hast prepared for me” (Heb. 10:5). But the angels do not possess that body of flesh, and therein lies the difference between our Lord and the spirits. How humbling it is to think that He humbled Himself to become like us, depraved sons of Adam.

24:40-41 - *“And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?”* Even after showing them His hands and feet, they were so bewildered because of their state of ecstasy that Jesus ate with them to give them further proof.

24:42 - *“And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.”* Disembodied spirits do not eat food. On one occasion demons were saying to a preacher, “Do you think that we feed on your food? No, we feed on hate, envy, jealousy, misery, regret, and bitterness.”

24:43 - *“And he took it, and did eat before them.”* One of the pleasures of heaven will be the ability to eat the fruits of heaven’s trees. Now the Lord reminds them of His teachings while He was ministering to them during his earthly life.

24:44 - *“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.”* This is what He spoke to the two friends when they were on the road to Emmaus. It is repeated with the intent that we also should study the prophecies that relate to His life. In so doing, we will be firm in faith and believe that Jesus is truly the Messiah, our Saviour and soon coming King.

24:45 - *“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”* Although they had walked with Him for 3 years, it is clear that even Christ’s own Apostles were not given intimate understanding of Him or the Scriptures until this time.

It was the same with the children of Israel. They had not been given eyes to see or ears to hear, even after they had walked for 40 years in the wilderness (Deut. 29:4). This was said to them when they were on the borders of the Jordan after their 40-year journey. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we walk by faith in the way the Lord is leading us, even when we do not understand the whole picture. In so doing, we will be pleasing unto Him and accomplish His will and arrive at that place where He will finally give us a heart to understand.

24:46 - *“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:”* The clear-cut emphasis was that Jesus Christ was foreordained to suffer and to die. It was for this very reason

that He came into the world. Without His sacrifice there would be no salvation for fallen humanity. Therefore, all that happened was foreordained by the Heavenly Father, who gave us His only begotten Son.

24:47 - *“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”* Let us remember that there is no other name under heaven whereby a man might be saved. Then Jesus said to His disciples:

24:48 - *“Ye are witnesses of these things.”* Not only they but we also are to witness to others of the great things that the Lord hath done.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

24:49 - *“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”* The Promise of the Father is given in several scriptures:

Isaiah 44:3 - *“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:”*

Acts 1:4 - *“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.”*

Acts 1:8 - “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” The promise of the Father was fulfilled in Acts 2:1-4.

Acts 2:1-4: “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Now in saying that the promise of the Father was fulfilled, we want to emphasise the ongoing experience for *all* believers, as the Apostle Peter said in Acts 2:38-39: “Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is evidenced by speaking in other tongues. Thereafter the believer may seek the Lord for the nine gifts of the Spirit as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12.

The theme of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus says, is *power to witness*. In I Corinthians 14:4, the Apostle Paul

emphasises that speaking in other tongues “builds up” or edifies a believer. Therefore, in speaking fluently and frequently in other tongues, we become burning witnesses for Jesus.

The Ascension of Jesus

24:50 - *“And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.”* Bethany is where He raised Lazarus from the tomb and where His beloved friends Martha and Mary lived. It was the place of His ascension, located on the Mount of Olives.

24:51 - *“And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”* Luke tells us in the book of Acts, a sequel to this Gospel, that while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel (Acts 1:10). Dr. Paul Caram has written a commentary on Acts, which we highly recommend.

Acts 1:10-11 says, “And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

This conforms to the prophecy of Zechariah 14:4: “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall

cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.” Well, dear ones, what a blessed hope we have! This should inspire deep worship as we see in the next verse.

24:52-53 - *“And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.”* Let us seek the Lord continually as they did, and be blessed forever!

EPILOGUE

Saint Luke was essentially the writer who emphasised two aspects of the Christian life. He emphasised *compassion* and *the power of God* to do miracles, as is evidenced particularly in his Book of Acts. Let us ask the Lord for those twin virtues so that we also will become effective witnesses for Jesus.

We trust that this book has been a blessing to you and may it be used of God to bring us all into a closer walk with our blessed Lord!

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