

*The Gospel
of
Matthew*

Dr. Brian J. Bailey



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“The Gospel of Matthew”

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Introduction

The Bible comprises two testaments, the Old and the New. They are called “testaments” because they are rooted and grounded in *death*. A testament (or last will) has no force without the death of the testator, as Paul clearly states in Hebrews 9:16-18. The Old Testament was based upon the shed blood of animals, while the New Testament was founded on the shed blood of the Son of God, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John introduce the New Testament canon, which comprises a total of twenty-seven books. These four Gospels present the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus in different ways and from different viewpoints. No one Gospel by itself can give us a complete account. Therefore, we need to be acquainted with all four in order to have the complete picture. For this reason, we have prepared companion volumes entitled, *The Synoptic Gospels* and *The Life of Christ*.

The different views from which these four Gospels are written may be appreciated by a vision that Ezekiel had of the four living creatures that surround the throne of God. We read in Ezekiel 1:10, “*As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.*”

These four aspects of the character of God are reflected in the four Gospels as follows. Matthew depicts Jesus as the lion, the king of all beasts, and reveals Him as the King of the Jews. Mark presents Jesus as the ox. The ox was one of the principal sacrifices of the Old Testament. Thus Jesus is shown as the suffering Savior and Servant who fulfills those sacrifices.

Luke depicts the humanity of Jesus as the Son of Man in all His passion and purity. John the beloved presents Jesus as the eagle who soars into heavenly places, representing Him as the Son of God. Thus, we see the four faces of the living creatures revealing the four aspects of God’s character.

Matthew	The face of the lion	The King of the Jews
Mark	The face of the ox	The Sacrificial Servant
Luke	The face of a man	The Son of Man in all His purity
John	The face of an eagle	The Son of God in all His power

Matthew the Author

We know little of Matthew except that he was a tax collector. In those days, tax collectors were employed by the Roman occupation force. Unfortunately, these tax collectors made huge profits by taking advantage of their fellow citizens. Thus, theirs was a despised profession. It was while Matthew was sitting at the toll office near Capernaum on the great West Road from Damascus to the Mediterranean that Jesus called him. He was called “Levi the publican” by Mark (2:13-17) and Luke (5:27-32), but in his own Gospel he uses his new Christian name Matthew, which means “gift of God.”

Because of his profession, he brought skills to the Apostolic band that the others did not possess. Many of Jesus’ disciples were fishermen, whereas Matthew was an accountant. It is noteworthy that more references to money occur in Matthew’s writings than in the other Gospels. He mentions “coins” more often, even rare ones.

Mark brings out three coins that are the poorest—the mite, the farthing, and the penny. Luke refers to the mite, farthing, and pound, while Matthew (who was in the habit of handling money) uses such words as “tribute money” (didrachmon) in Matthew 17:24, “piece of money” (stater) in Matthew 17:27, and “talent” in Matthew 18:24; 25:15. The talent was worth sixty times the “pound” mentioned by Luke.

Matthew also speaks of gold, silver, and brass. He uses terms that would be familiar to an accountant, like *reckoning*, *debt*, and *moneychangers*. As an accountant, he was skilled in collecting material and putting it in order. Thus, his Gospel could be called the teaching Gospel, for he collected more of the teachings of Jesus than any of the others, and placed them under headings.

Matthew’s Gospel is also filled with many Old Testament quotations (130 quotations or allusions) because he sought to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, the King of the Jews. To this intent, he begins with the genealogy of Jesus emphasizing that He is the Son of David, while Doctor Luke takes his genealogy all the way back to Adam to emphasize the humanity of Jesus.

OUTLINE OF MATTHEW

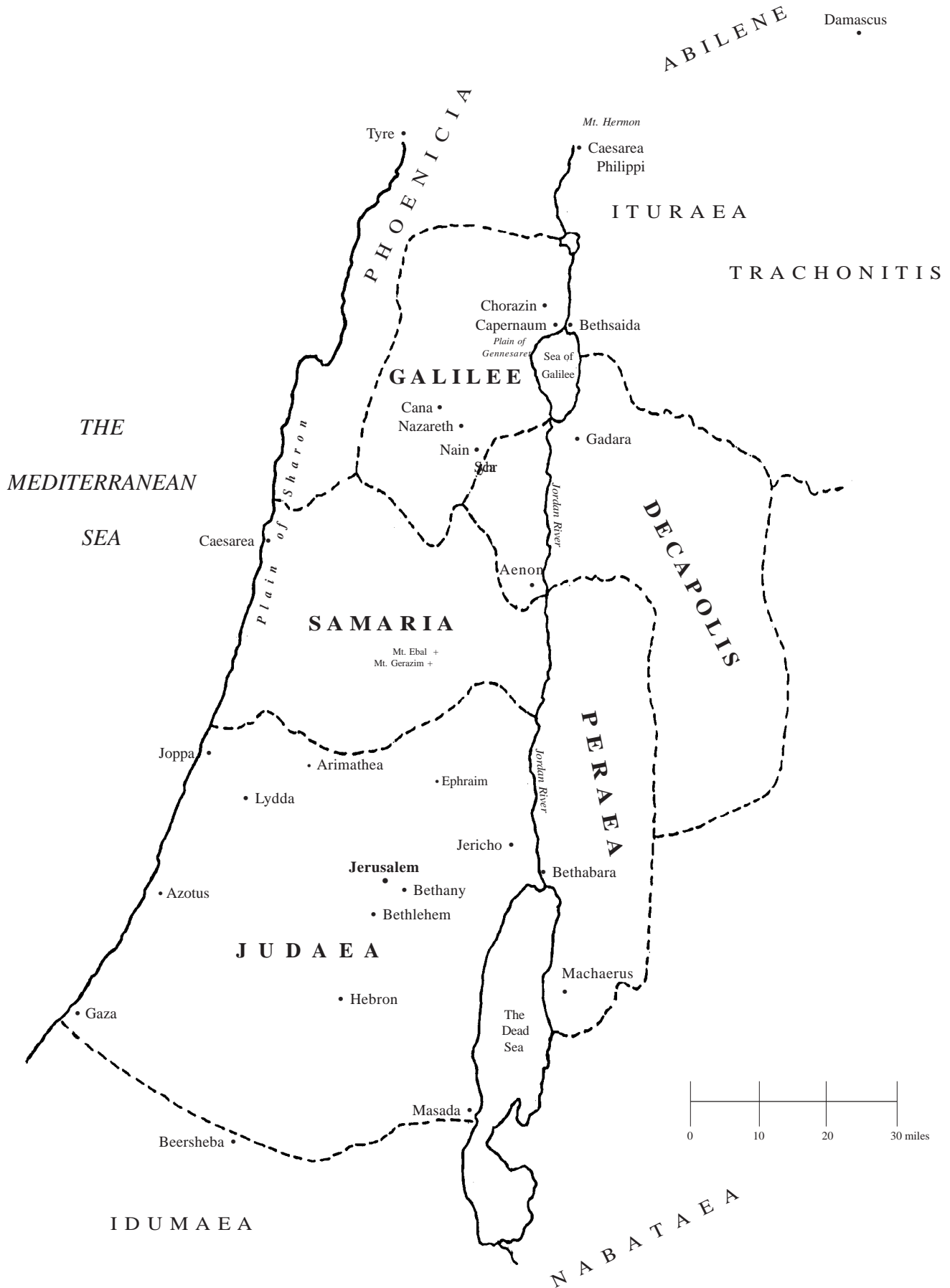
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PALESTINE IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES



Chapter 1

The Genealogy of Jesus

1:1-17

1:1 - *“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”*

Writing to Jewish readers, Matthew seeks to prove that Jesus was the promised Messiah. The first thing every Jew wanted to know was—Could the genealogy of Jesus be traced back to David? Therefore, Matthew introduces Him as “the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.”

1:2 - *“Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren.”*

Here Matthew names the first three patriarchs of the nation—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Matthew carefully separates the lineage so that there is no mention of Ishmael, the firstborn of Abraham by Hagar. The Apostle Paul expressly excludes Ishmael in Romans 9:7, saying: “In Isaac shalt thy seed be called” (Gen. 21:12).

Then Matthew mentions Jacob, but not Esau, Isaac’s firstborn who lost his birthright. Following Jacob was Judah. Matthew did not include the other eleven sons of Jacob, for it was through Judah that Jesus derived His lineage. It was Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, who had the promise of the scepter, or the right to the throne (Gen. 49:10).

- Abraham was the father of the nation.
- Isaac (not Ishmael) was chosen.
- Jacob (not Esau) was chosen.
- Judah (not his eleven brothers) was chosen.
- Pharez (not his twin brother Zara) was chosen.

1:3 - *“And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram.”* Judah had twins, Pharez and Zara, from Tamar (Gen. 38:27-30; Ruth 4:12). Pharez prevailed over Zara. Now Matthew gives the line of succession from Pharez down to Christ.

1:4 - *“And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon.”*

From a spiritual point of view, these people are not important. Except for their names, no other mention is made in Scripture concerning them.

1:5 - “*And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse.*” Here we are presented with the immediate ancestors of King David among whom Rachab (or Rahab) is mentioned. In the Book of Joshua, Rahab hid the spies when Israel invaded the land of Canaan (Josh. 2:1-21). Rahab the harlot is mentioned among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:31 (see also James 2:25).

This young woman had a bad beginning, but a very good end. By profession, she was a prostitute, but she had a desire for a different life. Rahab had a heart for God, and when she received knowledge of the true God, immediately she responded with faith. Later, she married a good man named Salmon and came into the Messianic line.

Together they had a son named Boaz. The story of Boaz and Ruth is beautifully told in the Book of Ruth, which took place during the days of the Judges. Boaz and Ruth had a son named Jesse, who became the father of King David. In Matthew 1:5, we see two consecutive Gentile women in the Messianic line—Rahab and Ruth.

1:6 - “*And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.*” The importance of mentioning David in the lineage of Christ is to prove that Jesus was indeed the Son of David and that Jesus had a legitimate hereditary claim to the throne of Israel. Jesus can indeed be called “The King of Jews” as Pontius Pilate wrote on the accusation over His head at the crucifixion (Mt. 27:37).

Another note of interest in verse 6 is the issue of Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon. Of all the sons of King David, God chose Solomon, who was the son of David and Bathsheba, to be king. Bathsheba was the former wife of Uriah the Hittite. David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and later arranged for Uriah her husband to be killed in battle in order to cover his sin and marry her. In spite of the circumstances surrounding the birth of Solomon, God chose Solomon to succeed David as king. Thus, we see the grace of God shown to Solomon, as Matthew records: “David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.”

1:7 - “*And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa.*” The kingdom of Israel was divided after Solomon’s reign. Twenty kings succeeded Solomon, Rehoboam being the first king to sit upon the throne of David after the kingdom divided. Matthew, however, does not list all the twenty kings from Rehoboam to Zedekiah. He omits several of the kings. The history of the kings of Judah is contained in the books of Kings and Chronicles.

1:8 - *“And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias [Uzziah].”*

There are several generations between Joram and Uzziah that are not mentioned, namely the kings Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah. Some of these kings were godly men like Jehoshaphat, who experienced national revival in his days. He was a man of righteousness and piety. Others, however, were very wicked.

1:9 - *“And Ozias [Uzziah] begat Joatham [Jotham]; and Joatham begat Achaz [Ahaz]; and Achaz begat Ezekias [Hezekiah].”*

Ahaz was extremely wicked, while his son Hezekiah was righteous. Hezekiah, in conjunction with the prophet Isaiah, saw the sun go back ten degrees, as well as witnessing a national revival. Also, he saw the angel of the Lord slay the forces of Assyria who were encamped around Jerusalem.

1:10 - *“And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias [Josiah].”*

Although Hezekiah was a very godly man, his son Manasseh was one of the most wicked men in the history of Judah. Notwithstanding, God spared Manasseh and restored him to his throne from Babylonian captivity after he humbled himself greatly (2 Chr. 33:9-13). Therefore, friends, there is hope for the prodigals. On the other hand, Manasseh’s son Amon did not repent and was quickly judged by God. Amon’s son Josiah was a godly man. Along with the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah, Josiah was instrumental in leading the greatest revival in Israel’s history.

Amon was very wicked, yet his son Josiah was very righteous and changed a nation. This account in Scripture gives great hope to sons and daughters whose parents are evil. In spite of their heritage, they can come to know the Lord in a mighty way and be used of God, for God is not a respecter of persons. Our heritage does not disqualify us. It is our personal life that disqualifies us. God has no prejudice in His heart. That is a clear theme of this genealogy.

1:11 - *“And Josias begat Jechonias [or Jehoiachin, grandson of Josiah] and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon.”*

Amazingly, all of Josiah’s sons were wicked. They were responsible for bringing God’s wrath against Jerusalem, namely the armies of the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar. Josiah was actually the father of Jehoiakim and the grandfather of Jehoiachin. Three sons of Josiah (who later became kings) are not named in Matthew’s genealogy. They are Jehoahaz, Jehoakim, and Zedekiah. Jehoiachin, Josiah’s grandson, was taken into captivity at the time of the prophet Daniel. It is from Jehoiachin that the legitimate Davidic line continues until Christ.

1:12 - *“And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias [or Jehoichin] begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel.”* Jehoiachin was the last king mentioned in this genealogy. The other kings (sons of Josiah) had been appointed by pagan rulers. Here at Babylon marks one of the great divisions in the history of the children of Israel. They remained in Babylon for seventy years. Salathiel is actually the grandfather of Zerubbabel. Pedaiah (father of Zerubbabel) is omitted from the genealogy.

1:13 - *“And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor.”* Zerubbabel was the governor and builder of the restored temple along with Joshua the High Priest, as recorded in Ezra chapters 1-6. They were aided mightily by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The piety of Zerubbabel can be seen in the Lord’s commendation of him in Haggai 2:23: *“In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.”*

1:14-15 - *“And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob.”* Now we have a series of persons mentioned of whom we have no other knowledge, except that they are blessed to be in the Messianic line.

1:16 - *“And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”* We must note that Matthew does not call Joseph the father of Jesus but “the husband of Mary.” That is because God is the Father of Jesus. Joseph was only His earthly adopted father. Nevertheless, in so doing, Matthew establishes the legitimacy of Jesus’ claim to the throne of David.

1:17 - *“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.”* Typical of an accountant, Matthew divides the generations from Abraham to Christ into three divisions of fourteen generations, making a total of 42 generations.

- 14 Generations from Abraham to David
- 14 Generations from David to the Babylonian exile
- 14 Generations from the Babylonian exile to Christ

There were forty-two generations from Abraham to Christ. These three divisions of fourteen generations reflect Matthew's understanding of the importance of numbers in revealing spiritual truths. The number fourteen is obtained by multiplying 2 by 7. In Scripture, the number "two" signifies *witness* and the number "seven" represents *spiritual perfection*. The number "three" speaks of *divinity* because of the Trinity. Thus, these divisions of fourteen multiplied by three (3 times 14), signify "the witness of divine spiritual perfection."

There were another twenty generations from Abraham back to Adam. From Adam to Noah there were ten generations, and from Noah to Abraham were another ten generations. When we add the twenty generations from Adam to Abraham, we have a total of sixty-two generations from Adam to Christ.

This is important in that the mystical number *sixty-two* occurs in Daniel 9:25, which says, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two [62] weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." A *week* in Hebrew means "a seven," or seven years.

There were exactly sixty-two weeks or sixty-two sets of seven years (483 years) from the commandment given by Artaxerxes, King of Persia (Ezra 7:7), to rebuild the walls (Ezra 9:9) and streets of Jerusalem (Ezra 10:9), until the coming of Christ. There were 483 years from Artaxerxes' decree, given in 457 B.C., unto the commencement of Christ's ministry in 26 A.D. at the Jordan River.

Also, Darius the Mede was *sixty-two* years old when Babylon fell and he brought in a new order (Dan. 5:31). This typifies the end of the Church Age and the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ. After the rebuilt city of Babylon, which will be the capital of the Antichrist in the last days, falls as recorded in Revelation 18, the millennial reign of Christ will begin. Thus again we have the number 62 associated with Christ's coming. Summary of the number 62:

- 62 generations from Adam to Christ
- 62 weeks from decree to rebuild Jerusalem until Christ's first coming
- 62 was the age of Darius when Babylon fell and a new order began—a type of Christ's Second Coming

* For more on genealogies, please see Appendix A at the end of the book.

The Birth of Jesus

1:18-25

1:18 - *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.”* Matthew, unlike Luke, enters straight into the fact that Mary has been carrying the Son of God in her womb by reason of the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. It is the beloved physician alone who provides the account of the visitation of the archangel Gabriel to Mary (cf. Lk 1:26-38). Because Joseph knew nothing of the angelic visitation, he was tested by God to see his worthiness.

1:19 - *“Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.”* This is an interesting statement. Joseph and Mary were only engaged, but the Scripture calls Joseph *her husband*. Furthermore, Joseph was “minded to put her away” when he found her expecting a child. How could he “put her away” (divorce her) when they were only engaged? The answer actually is quite simple.

In Jewish culture, engagement lasted usually about a year, during which time the couple was called and looked upon as husband and wife. Also, the Jews regarded an engagement almost as highly as the marriage itself. Since Joseph suspected Mary to have been involved in fornication (not adultery), he was determined to break his engagement and put away Mary, to whom he was engaged.

When we understand this custom, we can grasp what Christ really meant when He taught the Jews about divorce because of “fornication” (cf. Mt. 5:31-32, 19:9). Verse 20 affirms that they were called husband and wife, even while they were engaged. The angel of the Lord said to Joseph in verse 20, “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife.”

In this account, we see the picture of a righteous man manifesting the righteousness and mercy of God. A self-righteous person so often is hard and condemnatory, while one who is filled with the righteousness of God is conscious of his own weaknesses and failings and is compassionate toward others.

This reminds us of Proverbs 10:12, which says, “Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.” Joseph could have been filled with hatred toward Mary, but because of his true love for her, he sought to protect her. A truly righteous man is just, kind, and compassionate.

1:20 - *“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.”*

Before God reveals truth to us or opens our eyes to a situation, He will often test us to see what is in our hearts. Although Joseph passed this test, others have not! One of the most prominent men to fail his personal test was Hezekiah, of whom we read in 2 Chronicles 32:31: “Howbeit 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.”

Hezekiah failed because he became lifted up in pride. He foolishly showed all of his riches and secrets to the ambassadors of Babylon. May we always cry humbly to God for mercy in similar situations so that we are able to triumph as did Joseph and show forth true righteousness, cradled in kindness.

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.”* The angel, still speaking to Joseph in the dream, reveals the name of this miracle baby. *Jesus* means “Savior.” That was the goal and purpose of His life—to save all who will believe on Him from their sins. Friend, have you called on Jesus and experienced the joy of having your sins forgiven?

The fact that Jesus was named while still in the womb of His mother fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 49:1: “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.” Others who were named prior to their birth were the godly King Josiah (1 Kgs. 13:2), and the Persian king, Cyrus (Isa. 44:28). However, the miraculous birth of Christ was the fulfillment of another prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14, as we now read in verses 22-23:

1:22-23 - *“Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”* Matthew makes it clear that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. He is “God with us”—God in the flesh.

1:24 - *“Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and*

took unto him his wife.” Here again we see the beauty of the character of Joseph. He had instantaneous obedience to the Word of God. It is no wonder, then, that he qualified to become the earthly adopted father of the Son of the Highest.

1:25 - *“And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.”* Here we see the purity of Mary while she was carrying the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing less would have been possible prior to the birth of the Holy One of God.

Chapter 2

The Wise Men

2:1-12

2:1 - “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.” The Herod mentioned here is the wicked ruler called Herod the Great, whose family ruled the nation of Israel after him. He died in 4 B.C one year after the birth of Jesus.

All aspects of the life of Christ have significance, either by the fulfilling of prophecy or of some Old Testament symbol or type. In this case, His birth in Bethlehem fulfilled both prophecy and symbol.

First, Christ’s birth in Bethlehem fulfilled the prophecy of Micah 5:2: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Bethlehem was the burial place of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob. Ruth lived there when she married Boaz. Above everything else, Bethlehem was called *the city of David*, and Matthew was seeking to identify Jesus as David’s Greater Son.

Second, Bethlehem means “House of Bread.” Being born in Bethlehem, Jesus is “the Bread of Life,” fulfilling the type of the manna that Moses gave to the people, as we read in John 6:31-33: “Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” Later Jesus would say in John 6:35: “I Am the Bread of Life.” This is one of the seven “I Am’s” of John’s Gospel.

2:2 - “Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.” The wise men, called *Magis*, came from Persia, as we are told by the Greek historian Herodotus. The Magis were renowned for their wisdom, as well as their studies in medicine and natural science. They also were well versed in astronomy. There was evidently an unusual star in the heavens, although we have no independent record of it outside of Scripture.

2:3 - *“When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.”* The reason the opinions of the Magis were treated with all seriousness was a prevailing belief in the world of that day that there would come men from Judea who would rule the world. Thus wrote the Roman historian Suetonius in his Life of Vespasian 4:5.

Another historian, Tacitus, said that at this time there was a universal belief that the East would grow stronger, and rulers coming from Judea would take over the world. Even Josephus admits that the Jews cherished a belief that there would arise from among them one who would be governor of the world. In light of this, it is easier to understand that when such respected people as the Magis brought such news there would be deep concern on the part of Herod and the whole city.

2:4 - *“And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.”* Living among the Jews, Herod, who himself was not a Jew, would naturally link this news with the expectation that the people had of the birth of Christ. The reason for this was the prophecy of Daniel 9:25-26, which pinpointed His birth in that time period.

2:5-6 - *“And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.”*

All the Jews were very clear that the birthplace of the Messiah would be in Bethlehem because of the prophecy of Micah 5:2. Later in His life and ministry, the Jews rejected Jesus. They assumed that He had been born in Nazareth, not realizing that He had indeed been born in Bethlehem.

2:7-8 - *“Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.”* Herod, who had obtained his throne by intrigue, had no intention of losing it to a babe. Actually, the investigation of this search was the height of hypocrisy, since under no circumstances was Herod going to acknowledge that the baby was the expected Messiah.

2:9 - *“When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east,*

went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.” From this account it is clear that the star was indeed a miraculous appearance of a celestial body and cannot be equated with any other constellation.

2:10 - *“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”* The star that had led them this far was a source of great joy to these holy men. Is it not also the same with us when we have the sense that we are being guided sovereignly by God and we have the joy of heaven in our heart! Remember, the mature sons of God are those that are led by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14).

2:11 - *“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”*

The gifts that the wise men presented to Jesus typified His life and ministry:

- *Gold* is a symbol of deity.
- *Frankincense* is the symbol of suffering.
- *Myrrh* is symbolic of death, as it was the ancient embalming fluid.

Therefore, by these gifts the wise men were saying, in effect, “Here is God who was born to suffer and to die.” The wise men fell down before Him who *is* Wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24), for Jesus is the very personification of wisdom as shown in Proverbs 8.

The scene also depicts the “hidden wisdom of God” of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 2:6-7: “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.” He is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30).

2:12 - *“And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.”* All of these manifestations at the birth of Jesus were orchestrated by God the Father, who sent the wise men back another way because He knew Herod’s wicked plot.

The Flight into Egypt 2:13-15

2:13 - *“And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.”*

The supernatural visitation to Joseph brought protection to the baby Jesus. Without this protection, He would have been destroyed at birth. It is remarkable how many efforts are made by Satan to destroy God’s messengers at an early age or the works that God is seeking to raise up through His chosen ones. There are three main genocides recorded in Holy Scripture:

1. At the birth of Moses all the male children of Israel were commanded by Pharaoh to be killed.
2. At the time of Jesus all the male children in Bethlehem two years old and under were slain.
3. At the time of the birth of the Man-child in Revelation 12, Satan will attempt another slaughter.

We should further note that now in our day and age abortion is killing millions of babies before birth.

2:14 - *“When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.”* Egypt was the nation chosen to nourish the children of Israel at the time of Joseph. In like manner, the holy family was protected there in an area just north of modern-day Cairo.

2:15 - *“And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.”* The children of Israel were taken down into Egypt and were then brought out by Moses through the blood of the Passover lamb being sprinkled over the door posts of their houses.

In like manner, Jesus the Head of the Church was taken down to Egypt (a type of this world) to be brought out even as we are born into this world and brought out by the blood of our Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ. This was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Hosea 11:1, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.”

The Slaying of the Children on the Orders of Herod **2:16-18**

2:16 - *“Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.”* Herod, who usurped the throne of Israel, had no peace throughout his life. He lived in constant fear of losing his throne to another. Even at the end of his life, Herod sought to kill babies for fear that a babe would take away his throne. Another king centuries later who had likewise usurped the throne said, “Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.” May we all take this to heart. That which has been taken unlawfully will never give the thief peace or happiness.

2:17-18 - *“Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”* Even in this slaughter there was the fulfilling of prophecy. Why is this? Because God foresees the future and can declare a thing before it comes to pass. Therefore, He caused it to be recorded in Jeremiah 31:15, six centuries before its fulfillment.

Rachel is buried in Bethlehem on the road to Jerusalem. Here in poetic language the weeping of Rachel’s descendants is so great that they are depicted as being heard in Ramah, about six miles northwest of Jerusalem on a hill from which the Mediterranean Sea can be seen. Ramah is located a distance of fifteen miles from the Mediterranean.

The Return from Egypt to Nazareth **2:19-23**

2:19-20 - *“But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child’s life.”*

In 4 B.C. Herod the tyrant died, being vexed with suspicion to the end. One man said of him, “He was a murderous old man.” All through his life he had murdered anyone who could have been a rival to his power. So bad was his reputation that even the Roman Emperor Augustus

said that it was safer to be Herod's pig than his son. Nonetheless, Herod was allowed to continue ruling because he kept the Jews in line. Even as his death approached, he ordered three thousand notables to be imprisoned and killed at the moment of his death so that at least there would be tears shed, although he knew that no one would mourn his own death.

At this time in Matthew's narrative, the angel ordered Joseph to leave their haven of safety in Egypt and return to his native land for the furtherance of God's purposes for His Son. The angel gives further assurance that the one who sought the life of the baby Jesus was now dead.

2:21 - *“And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.”* In his usual obedient manner, Joseph departed from Egypt for Israel. There is a time to flee and there is a time to return. May we understand God's timing in our lives. I commend to you the study of Ecclesiastes 3:1-9, which contains King Solomon's instructions on God's timing. God makes everything beautiful in *His* time!

2:22 - *“But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee.”* Herod Archelaus, who governed Judaea, Idumaea and Samaria was every bit as cruel as his father. He was deposed by Caesar in A.D. 6, having reigned from 4 B.C. He went to reside in the area where his younger brother, Herod Antipas, was the ruler. It was before Herod Antipas that Jesus appeared during His trials.

2:23 - *“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”* Jesus was not a “Nazarene” by birth. Most commentators say “Nazarene” is better translated *Nezer*; a reference to the Branch in Isaiah 11:1, where it is stated: “There shall come forth a [shoot from the stump] of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” Jesus is called “the Righteous Branch” in Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15, as well as in Zechariah 6:12.

Chapter 3

The Person of John the Baptist and His Message

3:1-12

3:1-6 - *“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”*

In Matthew 3:1-6, we are introduced to John the Baptist, the son of Elizabeth and Zacharias. He was Jesus’ forerunner. He appeared on the national scene preaching the message of repentance in order to prepare the hearts of the people for Jesus. In verse 3, we read that Isaiah prophesied of John in Isaiah 40:3, where we read, *“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.”*

John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah, as Jesus declares in Matthew 11:14. We know that Elijah will return in the last days with Moses prior to the Second Coming of Christ, and John came in the spirit of Elijah prior to Christ’s First Coming. In verse 4, John is described in a similar manner to the description of Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8.

3:7-10 - *“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet [or fit] for repentance; And think 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. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”*

John’s message was one of repentance. He told the gathered crowds to bring forth fruits of repentance. It is not enough for a person to say that he has repented; he must manifest the fruits of repentance. There must be an evident change in his life. Repentance means “to have a change of mind”; and it signifies a turn in the opposite direction. Whereas before we were walking in

sin, when we repent, we turn and walk in the other direction in the paths of righteousness. Here John depicts the severity of the purification of an individual believer as well as of the Church. As we shall see later, Jesus taught that the standards of the New Testament are *far higher* than those of the Old Testament. Thus the theme of holiness and purity flows through His teachings, as well as through those of the apostles.

3:11-12 – *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”* John made it very clear to everyone that he baptized them in water, but when the Messiah came, He would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and fire.

The Baptism of Jesus **3:13-17**

3:13 - *“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.”* Jesus’ life had been spent within the confines of the town of Nazareth, which was not an isolated village since it was positioned on a hill that overlooked the routes that traversed the nation. Thus this region was called “Galilee of the nations” (Isa. 9:1), because in one sense the great caravan route from Damascus to Egypt passed nearby, as did the route from Accra to the east. Also, the city was peopled with citizens who were not exclusively Jews. Thus, the Lord would have been exposed to those of other nationalities. In leaving Galilee, Jesus was leaving the place where He had been prepared of God and now was ready to begin His ministry at the Jordan River.

3:14 - *“But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?”* I once had a vision of the meeting of these two cousins. Since both men had similar preparations, they could appreciate one another. John, however, was in a state of adoration when He beheld Jesus, who so vastly exceeded him in spiritual growth. Thus, he shrank from performing that holy rite of baptism, realizing not only that Jesus exceeded him in spiritual stature, but also recognizing that Jesus was Deity, the One who epitomized perfection.

3:15 - *“And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer [or let] it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.”* Thus, here we are confronted in the words

of Jesus with the fact that being baptized in water is an act not only of obedience, but it is also one of righteousness. When we are water baptized, we are fulfilling an act of righteousness.

3:16 - *“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.”* At this instant, Jesus was anointed with the seven Spirits of the Lord, which are described 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.”

3:17 - *“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* Here we have the Holy Trinity ministering together. The Father spoke from heaven and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove came upon Jesus. Jesus delighted the Father on earth, even as He did in heaven. We read in Proverbs 8:30, “Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” May we so seek to please our Heavenly Father likewise by doing *only* His will.

Chapter 4

The Three Temptations

4:1-11

4:1 - *“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”* The life of Jesus was a Spirit-led life, for it was through the Eternal Spirit that Jesus offered Himself without spot to God (Heb. 9:14). Thus from this time onwards the Holy Spirit enveloped Jesus and guided Him in the pathway of God.

To emphasize the control of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus, Mark 1:12 says, “Immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.” This is what the same blessed Holy Spirit desires to do in our lives, even as Ezekiel 36:27 says: “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” God will *cause* us to walk in His ways. This is the Spirit-led life.

4:2 - *“And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.”* After being a number of days on a prolonged fast the hunger leaves, but it returns with a vengeance towards the end. Then the person fasting is subject to weakness and terrible hunger. It was at such a low point that Satan came to Jesus.

The First Trial (4:3-4)

4:3 - *“And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”* From these trials in the life of Jesus we should seek not only to understand the matchless wonder of His character, but also we should receive instruction that will help us through the trials in our own lives. Therefore, in examining these trials we should seek to discover the reason for them, as well as capturing their atmosphere.

Satan started his offensive with the phrase, “If thou be the Son of God.” Obviously, Satan understood that if Christ went to the cross, he would be defeated. Therefore, when Satan was given the opportunity by God to test Jesus, he used his strongest weapons. It was the dart of *doubt* that he used first against Jesus.

It was this dart that was so successful against our mother Eve when Satan said to her: “Yea, hath

God said, "Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). Satan first seeks to shake the faith of the believer with doubts and fears, especially in the realm of the Word of God. Above all, he seeks to shake our confidence in the Word that God has spoken to us personally.

Then Satan tempted Jesus to perform a sign and transform the stones into bread to prove He was the Son of God. Satan wants us to tempt God by seeking some form of a sign that will bolster our faith and give us assurance. Gideon of old did this by the fleeces he set out in Judges 6:37-40.

4:4 - *"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* Here the Lord is quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3: "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."

The children of Israel were guided through the wilderness by the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day. They suffered many trials to learn lessons by which future generations would be instructed. One of these lessons was the manna that they were given every day. The manna is a type of the Lord Jesus, who is the Bread of life. We, therefore, should feed on the Word of God every day so that we may become strong in the Lord and have the power of His might.

The Second Trial (4:5-7)

4:5 - *"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple."* It is amazing to see the humility of Jesus demonstrated here. Jesus permitted Satan, who represents all evil, to speak to Him, and even direct and lead Him. Jesus did so because He knew that it was God's will.

4:6 - *"And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."* Now the devil quotes Scripture very cunningly. Satan is quoting Psalm 91:11-12. Remember, truth taken out of context becomes error. Let us take heed to ourselves to know the Scriptures. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). A thorough knowledge of the Scriptures is invaluable to counteract error.

4:7 - *“Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”* The Lord silenced the devil by quoting from Deuteronomy again: “Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God” (Deut. 6:16). In times of trial, a good guideline to follow is to ask ourselves this question: “What is right? What would Jesus do in this circumstance?” This helps, especially in this instance when the devil is seeking to use Scripture to justify an act that is obviously wrong. Another warning is not to be guided by *individual* Scriptures, but rather seek the whole counsel of God by balancing Scripture with Scripture.

The Third Trial (4:8-11)

4:8 - *“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.”* The Lord humbled Himself once again by allowing Satan to lead Him. This time it was to behold all the glories of this world. When a person is in the realm of the Spirit, the whole world can be taken in at one glance, for one’s view is without limit, even as it is in heaven above. Angels (both good and bad) have this faculty, but mankind’s sight is limited. Once when my own spiritual eyes were opened I saw an angel, and God allowed me to see even as this angel could see. I saw a huge building and could look into every room simultaneously and see everything that was going on. This is why it is written in Mark 4:22 that there is nothing hidden that shall not be manifested.

4:9 - *“And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”* Luke’s account adds another dimension to this story. Luke 4:6 includes that the devil also said: “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 received this power when he defeated Adam in the Garden of Eden. Jesus acknowledged Satan’s power and authority when He called him “the prince of this world” on three occasions in John’s Gospel (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In John 16:11, Jesus declared that the prince of this world was judged by reason of the fact that He would defeat Satan and strip him of his power upon the cross.

In reality, the devil was offering Jesus a *shortcut* to the throne, for all the kingdoms of this world and much more would be His after the cross. All of heaven’s glories would be Christ’s, for He would be given a Name above every name and be seated at the right hand of the Father throughout all eternity. Satan was only offering a passing moment of fame. How many are also offered

the passing vanities of this world for which they *forfeit* heaven's glories! Let us ask the Lord to teach us true values. Let us not exchange an eternal crown for "a mess of pottage" as did Esau.

4:10 - "*Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*" In demanding worship as the price for the kingdoms of this world, Satan desired to be acknowledged as the supreme being of the universe. In effect, the Lord was reminding Satan that this exalted place belonged to God and God alone.

4:11 - "*Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*" After every testing and trial there comes blessing and refreshing. Now the angels of the Lord in their glistening garments of pure white brought the joy and peace of God to Jesus. The angels made obeisance to Jesus who was their co-Creator.

The Beginning of Christ's Ministry in Galilee

4:12-17

4:12 - "*Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee.*" The other synoptic writers, Mark and Luke, as well as John, provide details of earlier happenings in His ministry. Matthew, however, is interested in our understanding the theme of His preaching which was the Kingdom of God. Matthew mentions the *Kingdom* 55 times in his Gospel.

4:13 - "*And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim.*" Jesus reminds us that a prophet is not without honor except in his own country. Certainly, this was as true for Him as it was for any other of God's servants. This is why the Lord often sends us to fresh fields and new places. Having been rejected by His own people, as Luke 4:16-31 tells us, Jesus settled in Capernaum. This was an influential city on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Unfortunately, it was not filled with faith, for Jesus could not do any mighty miracles there because of their unbelief. In other places, Jesus had a far greater response.

4:14-16 - "*That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the*

Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” This is a quotation from Isaiah 9:1.

Zebulon and Naphtali were spiritually neglected areas of the nation. Jerusalem was the religious and political center. The religious leaders of the nation prided themselves in the assumption that God would only move in Jerusalem. Instead, the Lord came to those who were less haughty. “The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death is light sprung up.” We must realize that the Lord usually moves in the most unlikely places and at times when the spiritual climate is very bad.

Thus it will be in our days, as Isaiah said 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.” As we see spiritual darkness all around us, let us pray that the Lord, the Light of lights, will shine deep into the hearts of the people.

4:17 - “*From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” The message was a continuation of John the Baptist’s message of repentance—to turn from the sins of pride and indifference and to turn toward humility and put things right in the inner man. Not only was the Kingdom of Heaven there, the King Himself was there. We, too, need to realize that repentance is the way whereby the King may come in all of His glory to our lives. Repentance and glory first start in our hearts, homes, and churches, and then it overflows into our communities.

The Calling of the Disciples **4:18-22**

4:18 - “*And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.*” We must remember that Peter and Andrew had already met Jesus by the Jordan River when John was baptizing. They heard John declare concerning Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Time had elapsed since Jesus had passed through the three temptations. Therefore, these men had been through some preparation to answer the call of the Master. Often, we do not realize that there is much work done in secret in a life so that one may respond to the call for higher duty.

4:19-20 - *“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.”* Another truth that must not be overlooked is that Jesus often uses secular work to prepare people for the ministry that He has for them. Thus, Peter and Andrew were fishermen by trade who cast their nets to catch fish, but later they would be evangelists who would catch men for Christ. Peter and Andrew’s immediate response to the call of God is also echoed in the lives of all of God’s choicest servants.

4:21 - *“And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.”* Here we see another aspect in the lives of fishermen, the art of mending their nets. This is reflected also in the spiritual ministry of these disciples, for John is associated more with a pastor-teacher who mends the lives of his congregation. In looking back we must see how the Lord has been preparing us while we were working in our secular occupations so that we may have understanding of His purpose for us in the future.

4:22 - *“And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.”* Here again is that blessed virtue of instantaneous obedience that is so dear to the heart of God.

The Galilean Ministry Continued

4:23-25

4:23 - *“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.”* Being an accountant, Matthew gives here a general statement concerning the ministry of Jesus, and will group the particular teachings into themes later. He emphasizes that Jesus taught in the synagogues, upholding Jewish traditional methods of congregational worship.

We also should honor the local churches and seek to use them for ministry so that we may build up the individual believers and connect them to a congregation where they may receive care and grow spiritually. Today, many are forsaking the local church, staying home and watching Christian television.

Another aspect of the ministry of Jesus was that He healed the sick. It is by His stripes that we are healed (1 Pet. 2:24). We should ask the Lord for manifestations of His healing power in our own lives and ministries.

4:24 - *“And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.”* It is the healing ministry that draws the crowds. When crowds gather, there is an opportunity to preach the Gospel to them. However, I have observed in my own experience that many who come to be healed never return to church after they have received their healing. God uses this opportunity to offer them eternal life and confront them with a choice.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16: “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?” Therefore, we are actually preparing people for heaven or hell, so we must not be discouraged at their responses to our message.

4:25 - *“And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.”* Undoubtedly, the anointing and the power of God drew the crowds, but what did the people follow Jesus for? Jesus said, “Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled” (Jn. 6:26).

Do not be discouraged when you work with people like this. People, generally speaking, are very self-centered and only want something that will benefit them. There are so few that will be saved. Even fewer are wholehearted for the Lord and place Him and the things of the Kingdom first in their lives (cf. Mt. 7:13-14). Often a minister has to fight discouragement over people, but the Lord is never a disappointment. Let us make Christ our goal and we will surely overcome!

Chapter 5

The Beatitudes

5:1-12

5:1 - *“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.”* Luke gives a fuller explanation of this journey, which started in Capernaum and included an all night vigil in prayer. In New Testament times, much of the teaching of the rabbis was done while walking. However, when they had something of great importance to say, they sat down.

5:2 - *“And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying.”* Similarly, when the expression “he opened his mouth” is used, it is to show us that a pronouncement of extreme importance is going to be given. The following Beatitudes are to the New Testament believers what the Ten Commandments were to the Old Testament saints.

5:3 - *“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* The first Beatitude concerns those who are poor in spirit. This spiritual condition speaks of a holy brokenness before the Lord. It is achieved by falling upon the stone, Christ Jesus, for whosoever falls upon Him shall be broken (Mt. 21:44). This is an attitude produced deep within our hearts that we are nothing; and, as a beggar, we cringe before the Holy One of God. This disposition of complete dependency upon Him is so pleasing in His sight.

The words of John the Baptist perfectly depicted this thought when he said in John 3:27: “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.” This verse implies that all we have and all that we will ever be depends on grace and grace alone. Remember, God gives grace to the *humble* (Jas. 4:6).

5:4 - *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”* This aspect of mourning refers to those who cry over the state of the Church. It may be understood by looking at Ezekiel 9:4: “And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” Holy mourning is a hallmark of those who dwell in spiritual Zion. “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they

might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified” (Isa. 61:3). To the degree that we mourn, to that same degree we will know the God of all comfort.

5:5 - *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”* The previous two Beatitudes are preparation for this rare virtue. Only two men in Scripture are termed meek: Moses (Num. 12:3) and Jesus (Mt. 11:29). Meekness is manifested in a quiet and controlled spirit. It is not provoked, nor does it move in reaction to another’s taunts. It does not pity itself, but rather is shown forth in a disciplined life-style that courteously considers the needs of others above its own. Meekness relinquishes all rights.

5:6 - *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* The previous three beatitudes create a sense of one’s own unworthiness, causing us to desire to be filled with God’s righteousness. Indeed, all our righteousness is as filthy rags, as Isaiah 64:6 tells us. Therefore, we must come to the place where we forsake our own self-righteousness, as Paul wrote in Philippians 3:9: “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.” It is only when we are truly convinced that in ourselves there “dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18), that we can be filled with God’s righteousness.

5:7 - *“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”* As we stated earlier when we were studying Joseph, a truly righteous man is also a merciful man. Righteous men are keenly aware of their own failings and sins. Thus, they are tempered with mercy in their judgment of others. Righteous, merciful men tend to see why people do what they do, being moved with compassion. Mercy is always associated with good fruits (Jas. 3:17). It is not sufficient to be merciful only in our hearts. We should express mercy with a helping hand. It is not good enough to say a kind word to someone who has fallen into a pit. True mercy finds a way to pull him out. Thus, we advance to the next Beatitude.

5:8 - *“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”* The previous Beatitudes have been cleansing our hearts from pride, love of evil, self-will, self-righteousness, and criticism of others so that we are ready to enter into the experience of a pure heart. We should understand that we need a new heart, as King David said in Psalm 51:10: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” When this is accomplished, then we can become peacemakers.

5:9 - *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* One of the attributes of our God is that He is called “the God of Peace” by Paul in Romans 15:33, and elsewhere. Heaven is a realm of peace, but Jesus came to bring peace on earth, peace between God and man, and also peace between us and our fellow man. “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (Eph. 2:14). That middle wall, made up of our sins, has to be broken down so that we may have peace (oneness) with God.

Jesus had to pay a high price for this peace. It was foretold in Isaiah 53:5 that “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” In order to bring peace, there is a price to pay. True peacemakers are willing to suffer themselves in order to bring people together in oneness and acceptance of each other. Those walls that separate us are made up of such stones as self-pity, lies, jealousies, and pride, as well as countless other offenses.

The Heavenly Peacemaker will lay upon an earthly peacemaker the suffering that is needed to bring the walls down. Sometimes both parties turn against the peacemaker and he has to bear unjust criticism. In effect, he becomes the olive oil between the saints. In a vision I had several years ago, I saw an olive placed between two millstones that were moving in opposite directions. The olive was reduced to pulp, and out from the pulp came the olive oil that permitted the two parties to be reconciled and be at peace. The olive was the pastor. He had to pay the price to be the peacemaker. What should a pastor do in times of persecution? He should count himself “blessed” as it says in the next verse.

5:10 - *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* We should rejoice and consider ourselves blessed when we are privileged to be persecuted for the Lord. I remember reading a book written by a particular saint of centuries past. This saint of God complained to the Lord concerning the treatment he was receiving at the hands of his brothers in Christ. He said, “What am I, Lord?”

Just then he went outside his room where there was a commotion taking place. He saw two dogs fighting over a doormat. They were chewing it and pulling at it from opposite directions and tossing it up into the air before pouncing upon it again. God said to the saint, “I want you to be a doormat for your Lord.” May we be willing to be those “heavenly doormats.” Continuing along the path of sainthood we find still another blessing that trouble brings, if our response is right.

5:11 - *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.”* How many of God’s choicest saints seek to defend themselves when falsely accused, but in doing so lose a reward that was intended for them by the Lord. Let us, with a holy resignation, allow the Lord to justify us if He should so choose. Let us remember that as far as can be determined in Scripture, Joseph was not justified in his lifetime. Mary was carrying a child all the time they were engaged and it was a reproach for Joseph as well as for Mary. What should we do in cases of injustice that are never made right in this life? Let’s look at the next beatitude.

5:12 - *“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”* We must not have a false complex of martyrdom, but rather a radiant face of the triumphant saint who is rejoicing that he has been found worthy to suffer for Jesus. We read of the apostles in Acts 5:41: *“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”* After the Beatitudes, Matthew collects the teachings of Jesus and places them under headings which we will now examine together.

The Similitudes

5:13-16

5:13 - *“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”* Salt was one of the most precious commodities in Jesus’ days. Salt was known and esteemed for three main qualities:

1. Purity
2. Preserving power
3. Pungency, adding zest and flavor to food

Christians should be pure in thought, word, and action. Let your speech be “seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:6). We are called to preserve this world from its corrupting influence of sin. Jesus said, *“Ye are the salt of the earth.”* We should add flavor and zest for life wherever we go. Life has purpose, but it is possible to live life to its fullness *only* through Christ. As salt that adds flavor to food, so Christians should make life meaningful and wonderful.

However, salt can lose its savor if it is mixed with earth and other vegetation. In the same way, Christians who become entangled with the things of this world lose their purity and no longer have power to preserve that which is good around them. They become like polluted salt, which in olden times was thrown out of the houses, being used much as we use gravel today for paths and streets, walked upon but having no real value. Let us retain the purity of Christ in our lives. Otherwise, all respect will be lost and men will cast us out and we will be of no worth.

5:14 - *“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.”* Christians have Christ in them and He is the Light of the world. Thus, the light of Christ streams forth from them into a darkened world. A church filled with Christians is like a city that cannot be hidden because everyone in the community can see the Light of Christ shining from them. Therefore, the Lord exhorts us by saying in verse 15:

5:15 - *“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.”* We should not hide our faith in Christ, but instead, witness to all men everywhere. To be a secret believer is to be ashamed of our Lord.

5:16 - *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* King Solomon taught in Proverbs 20:11, “Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.” Thus, by our works we will be known as followers of Jesus, a fact which 1 Peter 2:12 confirms: “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Let us be remembered on this earth for good works.

The Fulfillment of the Law

5:17-20

5:17 - *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”* One of the most misunderstood aspects of the difference between the Old and the New Testament is the belief that the Law no longer applies to Christians. In effect, the difference lies in the fact that for the Old Testament saints the Ten Commandments were written upon tables of stone, while for us they are to be written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. Jesus fulfilled all the types of the Old Testament sacrifices. However, God intends “that the righteous-

ness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).

5:18 - *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* The Law was our schoolmaster [tutor or teacher] to lead us to Christ (Gal. 3:24), so that in all the aspects of the Law we might understand Christ. Therefore, He fulfilled all of those commandments.

5:19 - *“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”* We see the importance of these commandments in verse 19. It is purposed by God that we should have the Ten Commandments written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts by the Spirit of God and to walk in them so that we fulfill the Law. This is a real New Testament Christian. We are called to fulfill the Law. Our position in heaven is dependant upon the degree to which this is accomplished in our lives, as well as in our teaching. We are to *do* and *teach* them.

5:20 - *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* The Pharisees and teachers of the law had external righteousness, but inwardly they were filled with sin and hypocrisy.

Murder and Anger **5:21-26**

5:21 - *“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.”* Here the Lord is citing the sixth commandment of the Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 20:13). However, the Lord now shows that the New Testament standards are infinitely higher than the Old Testament because we have grace that strengthens us to fulfill not only the letter of the Law, but also the spirit of that Law.

5:22 - *“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”* Here we have three degrees of emotions that Jesus warns can send us to hell.

To be angry

This is not a sudden uncontrollable fit of anger which flares up in a moment and dies just as quickly. Rather, it is an anger that is nourished over a period of time upon which a man broods until it consumes him with a persistent, burning hatred for another. This anger is the precursor of murder. Although the act might never be accomplished, yet it desires the hurt or even death of another person. Therefore, Jesus condemns the anger that broods, does not forgive, and can never be pacified. The Apostles wrote: “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1:20). Paul commands, “Put off anger” (Col. 3:8). A man can be brought before his village court as a consequence of anger.

To call a man “Raca”

Raca was a Syriac word which can roughly be translated as “worthless, senseless, empty, or stupid.” Terrible hardness and wickedness enters the heart when we continually use foul adjectives. We bring judgment upon ourselves by name-calling. This man would be in danger of being brought before the Council, which was the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin would be the equivalent of a national high court today.

To call a man a “fool”

The Greek word “fool” means a moral fool who is living an immoral life. Such a person was a reprobate, destitute of all divine knowledge, as the one mentioned in Psalm 14:1: “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.” Therefore, to call a man a fool was to take his name and reputation from him. The reviler who called another a “fool” would be in danger of Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom, the place just outside of Jerusalem where the dead carcasses and other refuse were burned. This meant that the man who so ruined the reputation of another would himself be in danger of being cast into that fire which burns unceasingly day and night.

Thus, we see in Titus 3:2 that we are to speak evil of no man, not to be brawlers but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men. Instead, we are to esteem others greater than ourselves, and above all, not fall into the way of the false religious leaders who with their tongues bless God and at the same time curse men: “Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God” (Jas. 3:9).

5:23 - *“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee.”* We are to be the ones who seek to put things right with our fellow man, especially those of the household of God.

5:24 - *“Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”* Bad relationships with each other can mar or hinder our relationship with God. A gift to God is of less value than being in harmony with one another, especially with one’s wife. Peter makes this very clear: *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous”* (1 Pet. 3:7-8).

5:25 - *“Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.”* Now Jesus talks about our relationships with our enemies. It would seem from this passage that it is important that we do not take another person to the law.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:6-8: *“But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.”* However, if one were the guilty party, obviously it makes very practical sense to reconcile before one goes to trial, for then a person could be in danger of serious consequences, as Jesus points out in the next verse.

5:26 - *“Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.”* The danger of not reconciling is that one could lose everything.

Adultery **5:27-30**

5:27 - *“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery.”* This is perhaps one of the most important teachings of Jesus, for today it has divided the Church. He starts by quoting the seventh commandment from Exodus 20:14. Then Jesus raises the standards to a much higher level:

5:28 - *“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”* Here again Jesus demands that New Testament believers have these commandments written upon the fleshly tables of their hearts.

5:29 - *“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”* Jesus makes it very clear that if adultery is not repented of, it can lead one to hell. Therefore, if a person has problems with the lust of the eyes, it would be better to lose one of them than to have that member bring him down into hell. The same is true of any other member of our body.

5:30 - *“And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”* Likewise, it is better to lose a hand or foot if those members are used for evil than to go to hell. The loss of *anything* to avoid eternal judgment is well worth it.

Divorce and Remarriage **5:31-32**

5:31 - *“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.”* Here Jesus is quoting from the law of Moses, whose standards were much lower than the standards of the New Testament. Deuteronomy 24:1 permitted remarriage, but Jesus negates that with His next statement:

5:32 - *“But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, [saving for the cause of fornication,] causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.”* Divorce was not permitted for adultery, but for *fornication*. This clause “except for fornication” is only recorded by Matthew, who was writing to the Jewish world, a community that had different marriage customs.

In Jewish culture, engagement lasted about one year, during which time the couple was called husband and wife. Such was the case with Joseph and Mary. At this point it would be good to review Matthew 1:18-19. The Jews regarded an engagement almost as highly as the marriage itself. When Joseph suspected Mary to have been involved in fornication (not adultery), he was determined to break his engagement and “put away” his engaged wife. This was for fornication,

not adultery. Adultery involves married people. When this Jewish custom is understood, we will see that Christ was merely allowing *engaged* spouses to be put away if they had been unfaithful during engagement. Matthew 1:20 affirms the fact that Joseph and Mary were called husband and wife even while engaged. “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife.”

Therefore, the “exception clause” that is preached today from many pulpits that permits people to divorce their spouses and remarry on the grounds of marital infidelity is contrary to Scripture. God makes it very clear that He hates divorce in Malachi 2:16.

Oaths **5:33-37**

5:33 - *“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, [or swear falsely] but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.”* Jesus is now quoting from Numbers 30:2 and Deuteronomy 23:21-22, but He is emphasizing simplicity of speech. Whenever we speak we must tell the truth, not just when we have made vows or promises to God.

5:34 - *“But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne:”* The Jews had fine-tuned their oaths to such an art that only oaths that used the name of God were binding. Therefore, oaths had been reduced to something false and meaningless. Lawyers are just the same today. In effect, Jesus was speaking against the common oaths and practices of His day.

5:35-37 - *“Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”* Brethren, when we say “yes,” let us mean “yes,” and when we say “no,” let us mean “no.” Let us be men and women of our word so that people can rely on our word as being our bond.

This mentality of “meaning just what we say” became the norm of Christian life. James said, “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” (Jas. 5:12).

Holy Acceptance of Circumstances With Joy

5:38-42

5:38 - *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:”* In this passage, the Lord is referring to the law in Leviticus 24:20 which states: “Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.” This law was given to limit vengeance. A person could only go so far in assuaging himself for the wrong of another.

5:39 - *“But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”* The Lord again cites a higher way in verse 39. Turning the other cheek can be very disarming to an opponent. I have personally seen that strong men break down in tears when the people they are attacking have meekly turned the other cheek. They were completely overcome by the meekness and sweetness of the character of the Christian. This verse also means that a Christian should endure insults without the thought of retaliation.

5:40 - *“And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.”* This is rooted in the law, which says in Exodus 22:26-27: “If thou at all take thy neighbor’s raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.” Now in the New Covenant the Lord was saying that one should not even complain if someone took his other garment in which he slept at night. Christians should not rise up in anger and defend their rights.

5:41 - *“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”* Under Roman law, a person could be compelled to carry a soldier’s pack for a mile. When pressured to do so, the one obligated to do it did it grudgingly. However, Jesus taught His followers to carry the burden *two* miles and to do it joyfully. What a victorious life true Christianity offers!

5:42 - *“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.”* Finally, in this section the Lord alludes to Deuteronomy 15:7-11: “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. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The

seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.”

We are to develop a joyful spirit of giving to those who are truly in need. In doing so, we are promised that “the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.”

Love **5:43-48**

5:43 - *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.”* The first phrase is a direct quotation from Leviticus 19:18. The second phrase, “and hate thine enemy” is not found in Scripture. Instead, it was a teaching of the Pharisees whose tendency was to corrupt Scripture by their traditions. Jesus now corrects this tendency.

5:44 - *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”* Loving one’s enemies does not mean to love them as friend or relative, but rather to be filled with that unconquerable love of Jesus that will only do them good.

5:45 - *“That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”* The agape love of Jesus is impartial, doing good to all, whereas the love of the world is partial.

5:46 - *“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?”* Rewards are not given to those who are selective in their goodness. Rewards are given to people who are kind to others who do not merit their goodness.

5:47 - *“And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?”* Many years ago, someone I knew had been to heaven and was shown something

of the system of rewards that are given to the saints. This person understood that even a smile and a handshake are rewarded. In this passage, the Lord is carrying this to a higher dimension. He is saying that we should not limit the warmth of our greetings to our family and friends, but that we should be kind to one and all.

5:48 - "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*" The standard for Christians is clearly stated in this verse. Nothing but *perfection* is what our blessed Lord desires from His children. Christian perfection is to show forth *agape* love to all, for Paul tells us that "love is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14).

Let us ever pray the prayer of Paul that is found in Ephesians 3:17-19: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Chapter 6

Almsgiving

6:1-4

6:1 - *“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.”* The sense of rewards pervades the teachings of Jesus. We can feel in His teachings that it will be such a joy for Him to present us with the rewards that He has prepared for us, as we qualify for them.

Jesus is warning us that our giving is only going to be rewarded when we give without making it known to others. We must not advertise our giving or seek to let others know what we give, for if we do, we have no reward from the Father.

6:2 - *“Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”* The Pharisees gave with great pomp and even pageantry as Jesus warned against in verse 2. The all-important question is: Where and from whom do we want to receive our praise, honor, and rewards? From men or God? This is the reason the Lord pleads with us.

6:3-4 - *“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”* Give in such a way that no one knows. The promise of being rewarded by the Father is not just limited to eternity, but also applies here on earth. Secret giving is between us and the Father, and our faith is increased thereby. The Lord warned: “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (Jn. 5:44). Therefore, *the way we give* is seriously going to affect our relationship with God and our spiritual life.

Prayer

6:5-15

6:5 - *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily*

I say unto you, They have their reward.” The Pharisees were plagued by the besetting sin of spiritual pride, desiring to be noticed by others, even in their prayer life. The Father would have loved to reward them, but they had already received the reward they had chosen—the praise of men.

6:6 - *“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”* The choice is ours. When our prayers are seen by the Father alone, we will receive His reward, but if we pray to be seen of others, the praise of men will be our vain recompense.

6:7 - *“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”* The Buddhist prayer wheels are to no avail, for the Lord wants intelligent requests inspired by the Holy Spirit, who makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

6:8 - *“Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”* In His holiness, the Father has chosen to limit Himself by becoming dependant upon the prayers of His people. Therefore, we should pray without ceasing so that His will and purposes might be fulfilled upon earth.

Now we have our Lord’s Prayer, or as it is called in Latin, *Pater Nostra*.

6:9 - *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”* The Lord constantly reminded us of our blessed relationship with God by addressing Him as “Father.” When we meditate upon our Heavenly Father, we should contemplate Him as we would our earthly father, with warmth and love. The Father has begotten us for His good pleasure.

Since we did not choose to be born, we understand that we were born because of our natural father’s decision to have us. However, we do have a choice to be part of God’s family. It is a two-way choice. First, it is the Father’s sovereign right to invite us; it is our choice to accept or refuse. We can choose to be in His kingdom of light and joy, or to be in the kingdom of the other father, Satan, whose kingdom is full of wretchedness and gloom. Contrariwise, in Christ’s kingdom there is peace, joy, and eternal bliss.

6:10 - *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”* Here our Lord expresses the hope of Israel for the coming Kingdom of God upon the earth. It will be experienced not only at His Second Coming, but as He Himself said, “the Kingdom of God is within you.” By the grace of God, we should manifest on earth the virtues and graces of His Kingdom, which are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

6:11 - *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* Then we are taught to ask the Lord for our daily needs. Even as the children of Israel were provided manna from heaven each day, so we are dependant upon our loving Heavenly Father for our daily necessities of life. This is why we should teach our children to be thankful for their daily food and to give thanks at every meal for that which God has provided.

Let us take nothing for granted in this life. In so doing, we bring glory to His matchless name, recognizing Him as Jehovah-Jireh—the Lord our Provider. We are taught to see God as the One who portrays the warmth, security, and provision that we associate with our earthly fathers.

6:12 - *“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”* In respect to our earthly fathers, we find that they pity us and are quick to forgive our transgressions, but only in the measure that we forgive our own brothers and sisters. It is the same with our beloved Heavenly Father. He is compassionate, kind, and forgiving to all who call upon Him. We do not want to go to heaven with any unconfessed sin or harboring anything against someone else. We must go to heaven clean, pure, and forgiven.

6:13 - *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* We should always earnestly pray that the Lord will spare us from unnecessary temptation. In the Gospels, we have an account of the temptation of Peter. Young Peter was forewarned by the Lord that he and all of the apostles would forsake Him in His hour of greatest need in order to fulfill the Scriptures. Nonetheless, Peter protested that although all the others would leave Him, he would remain loyal and even die with his Lord.

Peter was strong in himself and felt that he was more dedicated to the Lord than his brethren were. For this reason, he was exposed to temptation and he denied the Lord. We are specifically warned that we should ask to be preserved from temptation so that we do not fall. Then the Lord finishes His prayer with adulation of the Father unto whom all power belongs; for the kingdom is His since all things were created by Him, for Him, and for His good pleasure (cf. Rev. 4:11).

6:14-15 - *“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* Then the Lord returns to the theme of forgiveness. The fact that Jesus’ teachings contain so many references to forgiveness should alert us to the reality that it is a very difficult virtue to cultivate. Because our eternity depends on being forgiven, it is obviously one virtue that we desperately need to have in our lives. The Lord made it clear that if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us.

It is essential for the spirit of forgiveness to flow through our minds and hearts, purifying them of all bitterness and unforgiveness. This frees us from all remembrance of the past wrongdoings of others against us. Nevertheless, we must ensure that we have not offended others so that we are free on both counts. To go into eternity unforgiven is to risk hell fires, so let us major on forgiveness.

Fasting **6:16-18**

6:16 - *“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”* Again we have the theme of rewards, but this time in the context of fasting. There is a reward for those who fast. However, if we fast to be seen of men and receive their praise as did the Pharisees, then we will have no reward in heaven.

6:17-18 - *“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”* When we fast, we should not try to make it obvious to others that we are fasting. At times, however, it is appropriate to call a fast for the whole church. Jesus makes the theme of rewards very clear. It is our choice to receive our reward from men or in heaven. May God help us to choose the honor that comes from heaven above.

Heavenly Treasures **6:19-23**

6:19 - *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.”* The overriding incentive and desire of men of this

world is to become rich. People covet wealth and possessions that will enable them to live comfortably into a ripe old age. For some, the love of money is so great that they are consumed by it and gather together more than they could ever spend. However, money can never satisfy us; only the Lord can. What a blessing it is, indeed, to be content with what God has given us, whether it be much or little. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 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” (1 Tim 6:7-10). I have never found a man who has been made happy by his money.

6:20 - *“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”* In verse 20, Jesus tells us where we should invest. We need to realize that there are eternal riches awaiting us in heaven that we will enjoy throughout all eternity. The wise man, therefore, invests constantly in the Kingdom that is to come. The foolish invests in this world that will soon pass away.

6:21 - *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* Jesus quotes a maxim in verse 21. If our money is invested in this world, our desires also will be constantly earthbound. Another thing to consider is interest rates. The most advantageous interest rates that are offered rarely are better than 15%, whereas Jesus promises one hundredfold (Mt. 19:29). Therefore, no matter how you look at it, investments in the Kingdom of God give far better dividends than investing in this world.

6:22 - *“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”* Certainly, what we look at either fills our heart with light or darkness. Watching the television screen for hours at a time only fills us with the darkness of this world, while reading the Word of God and books that are devotional and uplifting in nature fills us with the light of heaven.

6:23 - *“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”* If we look at magazines that are devoted to sin and pleasure, the spirits behind those magazines will enter into our very being and possess our souls. Do not allow the Light of Christ to be snuffed out by the things of darkness.

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God **6:24-34**

6:24 - *“No man 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.”* The two masters mentioned here are diametrically opposed to each other. Mammon literally means “material goods,” in which we place our trust. Therefore, these things become our master, for which we work and consequently serve.

We cannot put our trust in two masters who are opposed to each other. Satan is the god of this world, but we are called to serve the only true God that made heaven and earth. He is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord our Provider. Basically, what Jesus is saying is that we cannot look to God and then to Satan for provision. It must be one or the other. All or nothing!

6:25 - *“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life [or do not worry], what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”* Our minds are not to be tormented by worrying about our needs. However, I am well aware that the Lord at times puts us in situations where we are without food and perhaps clothing in order to teach us that He is our Provider.

These very same Scriptures were my constant reading when I was passing through a time of great financial need. As I read them, they seemed to almost mock me. The more I read them the less real they seemed as my needs increased. But mercifully, after a number of weeks, the Lord came to our rescue and all our needs were met in abundance. Looking back on those times I realize that iron was being wrought in my own soul and faith was sending its roots down deep within my heart. My trust in God brought forth its wondrous fruit in the form of a bountiful provision in due time.

6:26 - *“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”* Jesus now turns to nature for His examples of the Heavenly Father’s loving care for the whole of His creation. Using the fowls of the air, Jesus shows us that the Heavenly Father is aware of all their needs. There are untold millions of our feathered friends in the world, and every one of them is known and cared for by our loving Creator.

6:27 - *“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”* We cannot make ourselves taller by any amount of anxious worry. We must have a godly acceptance of ourselves as we are. Our thoughts will never change our height. Luke adds that Jesus also said after this statement: *“If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?”* (Lk. 12:26). This is a most remarkable statement by our Lord. It implies that making ourselves taller, which we know is impossible, is easier than looking after our daily needs.

6:28-29 - *“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”* As we study God’s Word, it is wonderful to realize that the Lord actually clothes the lilies of the field so that they are all different. They are so beautifully created that Jesus said that *“even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”* The work and craftsmanship of man cannot compare with nor equal the beauty of God’s handiwork.

6:30 - *“Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”* Botanists who specialize in the study of grass tell us that no two blades of grass are identical. Here we see the greatness for our God, who is the God of infinite variety. This should help us understand that humans, whom Jesus likens to grass, are not identical. We all have our own individuality. Therefore, we should not try to be like someone else.

We need to realize that the Lord has a plan and purpose for each of our lives that differs from His plan for others. When we come to this realization, we will find rest for our souls and we will not be overcome with jealousy and envy toward others.

The essence of the Lord’s illustration here is simply that if the Heavenly Father takes such wondrous care to clothe a blade of grass that is here for but a moment of time, how much more will He ensure that we are clothed and well cared for. In contemplating the beautiful and delicate structure of a blade of grass, Jesus sought to increase our faith to believe that He will take care of all our temporal needs.

6:31 - *“Therefore take no [anxious] thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”* We should not be anxious concerning our temporal needs, yet so many people are filled with fear and anxiety. Fear and worry are like thorns;

they prevent the fruit of the Spirit from growing freely in our lives and coming to maturity. The garden of our heart can be easily overrun with weeds of worry, which, in turn, can manifest bitterness, criticism, and anger. We must pay attention to these teachings of Jesus for they affect the whole of our spiritual life. If we will hearken to the words of Christ, we will enter into His rest.

6:32 - *“For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”* One of the most amazing aspects of the character of our Heavenly Father is His amazing attention to detail. Also, He knows everything that is happening not only to His people, but also to the birds of the air, the animal kingdom and the vegetable kingdom. A sparrow cannot fall to the ground without the Lord noticing it (Mt. 10:29). Therefore, He knows all of our needs and has already decided how He will provide for them. Praise His wonderful Name!

6:33 - *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* Our priority must be to seek all the things that pertain to godliness and righteousness. The garden of our heart must be filled with the wondrous eternal fruit of the Spirit. If it is, the Lord will walk in our gardens and enjoy sweet fellowship with us.

6:34 - *“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.”* Let us live in the present and be thankful for our daily food, clothing, and shelter. The Apostle Paul echoes this in his letter to Timothy, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim 6:8).

Live one day at a time for Jesus. Do not worry about tomorrow. You only need grace for today. When tomorrow comes, there will be grace for tomorrow. God will not give you grace today for something you need tomorrow. Amen!

Chapter 7

Judging Others

7:1-6

7:1 - *“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”* This passage is a clear warning from God that we should not be critical or judgmental toward others. There are several reasons that we should not be critical.

1. We do not have perfect knowledge. God alone knows all things regarding the motives and intents of the heart. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:5: “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.” God alone knows what a person would do in every circumstance.

The Lord said in Matthew 11:21-22: “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.” Perhaps in more favorable circumstances, others would react far better than they do now. Maybe they would react far better if they had the opportunities we have. God knew that if Tyre and Sidon had been privileged to witness the ministry of Jesus in person, they would have repented.

2. We live by the grace of God and we are wholly dependant upon His strength for everything we accomplish in this world. We are what we are by the grace of God. As Paul said, “What has man that he has not received?” (1 Cor. 4:7; cf. Jn. 3:27). We were all formed by God according to His good pleasure. How, then, can we criticize another person who was formed differently according to the wisdom of God? The fact that others have done things that are wrong does not justify our condemnation of them, since they may have had pressures or temptations that were too strong for them. In their circumstances we could easily have done worse. *“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”*

Obviously, there are times when people commit severe sins and are unwilling to repent that we must break fellowship with them, but we should never criticize others because it is only the grace of God that keeps us from committing the same sins.

3. The attitude of the angels toward Satan is a lesson in prudence for us. Some people are not afraid to speak evil of angels, yet Michael the archangel would not revile Satan or speak slanderous words against him. Instead, he simply said, “The Lord rebuke thee” (Jude 1:8-9). The angels of God know that it was only by clinging to the mercy of God and the Mercy Seat in heaven that they were not swept away by Satan’s rebellion in heaven. It is only the mercy of God that keeps us from rebellion as well. It is only the grace and mercy of God that keeps us in the ways of righteousness. Thus Paul writes that we should take heed to ourselves lest we also fall (see 1 Cor. 10:12; Rom. 11:20-22; Gal. 6:1).

The Apostle Peter confirms the words of Jude. He makes it very clear that angels, which have more power than humans, do not hurl railing accusations against other dignitaries and celestial beings: “Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord” (2 Pet. 2:11). Let us learn from this passage of Scripture that it is never right to slander and revile, not even the wicked. If you do, hardness and evil will come into your heart.

7:2 - *“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”* God will deal with us and treat us the same way we treat others. This is a mirror-image of the Golden Rule in verse 12.

7:3 - *“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”* Our fallen nature is so prone to criticize and see the faults of others, while our own faults we simply do not see. In fact, the tiniest imperfection in another person looms very large, as though we look at others through a spiritual magnifying glass. This causes criticism to flow like torrents out of our mouths toward others.

I know of a lady who was criticizing her pastor’s wife to others, but at this same time she had a vision of herself falling into hell’s fire. Only by the warning of this vision was she restrained from further gossip and led to true repentance. Remember, holiness involves the control of the tongue. What comes out of the mouth is a revelation of the heart.

7:4 - *“Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?”* This is a very peculiar paradox that I have noticed. There are certain brothers and sisters who love to pray for others for deliverance from very minor things in their lives. In fact, they delight greatly in spending long hours in counseling these dear

souls. The Lord has shown me that those with a so-called “deliverance ministry” are often the most in need of deliverance. The Apostle Peter puts it this way in 2 Peter 2:19: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”

7:5 - *“Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”* Let us come before the Lord so that in His light we may see our own needs. Then having sought to be cleansed by the Lord from all our own bondages, we shall be in a better position to help others with a quiet and meek spirit of compassion that is void of all criticism.

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.”* This is a warning about sharing that which is holy with those who do not appreciate these precious gems of wisdom. In the Old Testament, the holy priests of the Lord had to change their garments when they came out of the sanctuary and mingled with the people.

They had to wear special garments when ministering to the Lord, and other garments when coming out to the people. “And when they go forth into the [outer] court, even into the [outer] court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments” (Ezek. 44:19).

We sometimes think that if we give deeper truths to people who are profane that they will appreciate those truths and will esteem them. In reality, purity is perceived only by those who are pure (Titus 1:15). Evil people can only see evil in everything.

Ask, Seek, and Knock

7:7-11

7:7 - *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”* In His teachings on prayer, the Lord was forever emphasizing that the Heavenly Father not only hears our slightest cry, but is swift to answer. He gives us three aspects of prayer which are written in the present imperative tense. This indicates to us that we are not to simply ask once but to keep on asking until we receive. Therefore, we may characterize these by saying:

- *Ask and keep on asking*
- *Seek and keep on seeking*
- *Knock and keep on knocking*

In each of these actions, the Lord assures us that we shall be rewarded. Prayer is not an exercise by itself; it is a means to an end. The purpose of prayer is not really to ask, but to receive that for which we ask. This absolute certainty gives us assurance, which, in turn, gives rest and peace within our hearts and minds.

7:8 - *“For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”* Now the Lord repeats Himself to make sure we understand perfectly what He is saying. When we keep on asking with a persistence that will not give up, we will receive. This can be well illustrated by the persistence of Jacob when he wrestled with the angel in Genesis 32:26: “And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” One of Jacob’s sons was named Naphtali, which means “wrestler.” Let us likewise be holy wrestlers in the kingdom, never giving up until He answers. Jesus now gives two illustrations about asking.

7:9 - *“Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?”* It is inconceivable that a father’s heart would so mock a son crying out for food that he would toss him a stone to eat.

7:10 - *“Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?”* Fish is a clean meat according to Levitical law, but a serpent or an eel of the waters is unclean. “Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you” (Lev. 11:12). Would a father give his child something that would cause him harm? Would he give him something from the kingdom of darkness? Would he give him a serpent or scorpion? Certainly not!

7:11 - *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”* There is an important truth that should not be overlooked in this matter of asking and receiving. Sometimes we ask amiss. In other words, we ask for things that the Father knows ultimately will not be good for us. James 4:3 says: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”

Therefore, we must temper our requests by seeking to know God's will for our lives. Sometimes in His mercy, God does not answer us and give us our requests. We must remember that "no" is also an answer, although at times it is not the answer we are hoping for.

The Golden Rule

7:12

7:12 - *"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."* When our conduct is governed by this simple rule, how easy and pleasant life becomes. We should ask ourselves this question, "Would I like to be treated like this?" If the answer is "no," then we must not do it to someone else. This question should govern our thoughts, words, and actions towards others.

Four Warnings

There now follows what we might call four specific warnings comparing the true and false:

- The True and the False *Ways*
- The True and the False *Ministers*
- The True and the False *Believers*
- The True and the False *Builders*

The Straight and Narrow Way

7:13-14

7:13 - *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."* The pathway of life is filled with temptations and trials. We are constantly called upon to make choices which will determine our eternal status. In Proverbs 1:15-16, King David warns his son Solomon to refrain from walking in the way of evil men. Regretfully, there are two categories of churches—those that are alive and those that are dead. In Proverbs 21:16, there is "the congregation of the dead." This is a church which has no spiritual life. They are lost and spiritually dead.

However, there are some members even in the "live" churches who are disobedient. One such transgressor stated: "I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly"

(Prov. 5:14). We need to guard our hearts with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). It is clear, as the Lord continues, that not many people do this.

7:14 - "*Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*" One cannot overemphasize the fact that the standard for heaven is very high. We are told to "be perfect even as our Heavenly Father is perfect" and we are commanded to "be holy even as He is holy." Let us constantly cry out that He will create in us a pure heart so that by His grace and His grace alone we may first find and then remain on *the narrow path* that leads to heaven.

As a warning, I would like to recount a vision that was given to a certain missionary. He saw a wide path, and on this path were many Christians. Someone in the vision was saying to another by her side, "Surely we are on the wrong path." Her companion said, "But we must have confidence in our pastors for they have led us on this path." Then the path stopped abruptly at a dark chasm and the multitudes on this path continued walking, falling over the chasm into hell. Friends, we must be so careful where we are planted and whom we rely on for counsel and direction. Remember, only the pure in heart shall see God (Mt. 5:8).

The True and the False Ministers

7:15-20

7:15 - "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*" It is a fact of life that Satan is a deceiver and that he is able to come as "an angel of light," as Paul warns in 2 Corinthians 11:14. Paul adds in 2 Corinthians 11:15: "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Satan has ministers in the pulpits of many churches today! They appear to be very righteous, and they quote plenty of Scripture too.

When Satan appeared to Jesus in the three temptations, he quoted Scripture. It is important to realize that the false will appear to be righteous. The Lord tells us they will appear as true ministers, *dressed in sheep's clothing*. Therefore, with one's natural eyes it is often impossible to discern between false and true ministers of the Lord. But in the next passages the Lord gives us certain guidelines for recognizing the false. *Wolves* is the description given of false rulers and ministers, as we also see in Ezekiel 22:27: "Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain."

A wolf essentially preys upon *sheep*. The false minister or shepherd will seek to enter into the congregation of the righteous and turn them into the same error that he himself embraces. It is a fact that a drunkard will seek to get others drunk. An adulterer (or one who has remarried while his former wife is still living) will seek to get others who are divorced to remarry.

They will encourage couples who are struggling with incompatibilities to divorce and marry someone else who would better suit their life and ministry, saying that “everyone deserves some happiness.” One who espouses heresy will forever be majoring upon that false doctrine to the exclusion of sound truth. It will virtually come out in every service.

7:16 - *“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”* Now Jesus tells us how we can discern these wolves. By people’s fruits, we will be able to discern whether they are godly or ungodly. The Lord is speaking here of the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal. 5:22-23). To these we add the other virtues of truth and integrity. These divine fruits are not manifested by the wolves. Any fruit they manifest is a counterfeit of the fruit of the Spirit, such as false love, false meekness, and false joy.

7:17 - *“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.”* The evil bring forth corrupt fruit. This is a reference to the works of the flesh that are enumerated in Galatians 5:19-21: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

7:18 - *“A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”* It is a fact established by God’s act of creation that every tree in the natural brings forth fruit after its own kind. The natural is a type of the spiritual. Nature reveals heavenly truths, even as Paul writes in Romans 1:20.

In the Word of God, people are often likened to trees. Thus, in the same way that trees can only reproduce what they are, so we can only bring forth what we are. A good man can only bring forth godly virtues, while the evil man can only bring forth words and actions that are reprehensible.

7:19-20 - *“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”* The day will come, Jesus warns, when “every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire” (cf. Mt. 3:10). This certainly refers to the end of life when the wicked will be cast into the eternal fire of hell.

In closing this lesson, Jesus reminds us that we recognize and know people by their fruits, not their gifts. Study a man’s conduct for a sufficient length of time and you will soon know whether he is of God or of the devil. May I add that if we walk with the godly and wise we shall be accustomed to the genuine and then the false will be readily detected.

The Workers of Iniquity

7:21-23

7:21 - *“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.”* This is a continuation of our Lord’s warnings with respect to false teachers and prophets. They use the name of the Lord and even call upon Him, but they do not obey Him. Paul, writing to these false teachers, said, “Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?” (Rom. 2:23).

7:22 - *“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?”* Many believers feel that manifesting the spiritual gifts is sufficient proof that they will be saved, but Jesus said something quite different in verse 22. These people Jesus is referring to are clearly Pentecostal believers who have been filled with the Spirit. They have experienced the blessing of being saved by grace, baptized in water, and baptized in the Holy Spirit, but they are not living in obedience to the Scriptures.

7:23 - *“And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* This phrase, “I never knew you” troubles many into thinking that these people were never believers at all. However, that is not the case. I will try to explain it by giving the following tragic example. I have had the privilege of having many students who after they graduated from college have remained in close contact with me. It has been a very blessed experience to walk with them, some for over thirty years.

Regretfully, there have been a few, although I walked with them for many years, that I did not

really *know*. They walked with me outwardly, but inwardly they were wolves. I can honestly say that I never really knew them. They were not true friends, although outwardly they made long and loud protestations of their friendship and loyalty. These few have left our fellowship and really I must say they are not missed because they were never really a part of us (cf. 1 Jn. 2:19).

The Two Builders

7:24-27

7:24 - *“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.”* As Paul said of Moses (Heb. 3:1-5), we are the houses that God has built. There is no foundation upon which we can stand other than the Rock, Christ Jesus. All other ground is sinking sand. Jesus, however, makes it clear that while our lives and ministries are indeed houses, the foundation is obedience to His Word. Every one of us will be tried and tested by the elements of life, for only the tried and tested will be fit to enter into the Kingdom of eternal Light.

7:25 - *“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.”* In the Word of God, rain, wind, and floods can speak of disasters, doctrinal errors, and multitudes of ungodly men. At times in our lives, to one degree or another we will be afflicted by one or all of these. Our obedience to the Word and the teachings of Jesus will determine whether or not we will stand in those times.

7:26 - *“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.”* How many people build their hopes for their eternity upon churches that have either erroneous doctrines or a loose lifestyle. I have seen people washed away in the sloughs of sin and degradation, far from the Kingdom of God in their last days.

7:27 - *“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”* Many home-owners have built the most magnificent of houses perched high upon cliffs overlooking beautiful coastal scenery, only to find that after years the cliffs have eroded due to rain and their homes have come tumbling down. So is it with those who do not pay attention to the works of the flesh in their lives. After time, the works of the flesh erode the foundations of their faith and they come crashing down. Friends, there is no substitute for true holiness!

Authority
7:28-29

7:28-29 - *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”* In Jesus’ day, even as in our times, there were theologians who quoted each other and came to no definite or defined teaching. Thus, they presented man’s opinions that were not based upon the Word of God. They did not compare Scripture with Scripture. They were the blind leading the blind, but Jesus “taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” Jesus said, “My doctrine is not mine but His that sent Me” (Jn. 7:16). True authority comes from God.

Chapter 8

In the next two chapters, Matthew records the miracles of Jesus. The disciples, who witnessed these miracles, were then prepared to go forth themselves with the anointing to heal the sick and cast out devils. It is a premise of leadership that the teacher must first demonstrate truth before he expects his students to do likewise.

I was privileged to minister years ago in a country that was opened up to the Pentecostal message by an evangelist who majored in the laying on of hands for healing. He was surrounded by young men who followed him. Later, when these men were given responsibilities for congregations that had been raised up by the evangelist, they asked him what they should do. His response was, “Do as I do.” As a result, that country was filled with churches proclaiming Jesus as the Savior and Healer. In effect, this was what Jesus did.

The Cleansing of the Leper 8:1-4

8:1 - *“When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.”* Jesus’ teaching astonished the people because of its clarity and authority. This was the year of His popularity when all men were very open to His message. Now He starts to manifest His authority through signs and miracles.

8:2 - *“And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”* The simple child-like reverence and faith of the leper is very touching as he acknowledges the sovereignty of God. May we learn from this poor afflicted man. Let us come to the Lord with our needs in great humility of spirit. Remember, the Lord is nigh to the humble (Isa. 57:15).

8:3 - *“And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”* Jesus broke with tradition since contact with a leper was forbidden in the Law. Jesus manifested compassion toward the afflicted man. When Jesus touched the leper, the healing, cleansing virtue of the Son of God flowed through his body, making him completely whole. The Lord’s touch has not lost its ancient power. Just one touch from the Master can make the vilest person clean from every sickness that might be afflicting him—in body, soul, and spirit. Pray believing, and then become His hand extended to others.

8:4 - *“And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”* Matthew is very careful to include the instructions Jesus gave to show once again how the Master consistently upheld the Law which was recorded in Leviticus 13:1-59.

We read in Leviticus 13:45, *“And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.”* This law for the leper was to be strictly adhered to, as Moses was commanded in Deuteronomy 24:8: *“Take heed in the plague of leprosy, that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so ye shall observe to do.”*

In commanding the leper not to publish abroad his healing, Jesus was seeking for anonymity so that He might move freely among the people and not be hindered by the crowds who might seek to make Him king in view of this miracle.

The Healing of the Centurion **8:5-13**

8:5 - *“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him.”* This captain in the Roman army was fully confident that Jesus was well able to do whatsoever he asked. The beauty of the character of this officer is revealed in his asking on behalf of someone else. Centurions were in charge of a hundred men. Each Roman legion of six thousand men was divided into sixty centuries.

Centurions were reliable men who had served well. They were expected to hold their ground under attack, and if necessary, to die at their post. The centurions mentioned in Scripture are all spoken of commendably. We also see a centurion at the cross, and Cornelius the Centurion in whose house the Holy Spirit was first poured out upon the Gentiles (Acts 10).

8:6-7 - *“And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.”* A centurion had his own servant to care for him, and in this particular case, there was a mutual affection between the master and his servant. Like begets like; seeing compassion begets compassion. Jesus was moved with the love the centurion had for his slave. If we will ask God to develop love and compassion in our own hearts for others, we will see the healing power of God released through us to meet their needs.

8:8 - *“The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.”* The humility and faith of this serving officer now emerges. I cannot overstress how much one’s professional formation affects one’s spiritual life. There is a tendency to regard the secular as being unimportant. However, we must think of Moses and Daniel, two great leaders who were trained in the greatest schools and governments of their times. The secular life can teach discipline and responsibility, two virtues which are of inestimable value in the affairs of the Kingdom of God.

8:9 - *“For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.”* Obedience is another exemplary trait that is instilled in both business and military men and women. This is clearly displayed by the remarks of the centurion. Obedience also is extremely important in our spiritual life. Our spiritual life is conditioned by prompt obedience to the written and spoken Word of God. Great men of God like Abraham and Joshua were noted for their rising up early to do God’s revealed will for their lives (cf. Gen. 22:3; Josh. 3:1).

8:10 - *“When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”* Obedience and faith flow together. The obedient tend to have faith and trust worked out in their lives by obeying commands of superiors. Faith pleases God, and “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).

8:11-12 - *“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* Here Jesus is acknowledging that the Kingdom would be opened up to all nations, while the privileged people of Israel would be excluded. The children of Israel would lose their privileges.

Their privileges would be given to that peculiar nation of whom Moses wrote. That nation, of course, is the Church. “They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation” (Deut. 32:21).

8:13 - *“And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done*

unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.” This is a beautiful word of assurance not just to the centurion but to us as well. As we believe, it shall be done unto us. Let us believe God for good things that are dear to His own heart, and it shall be done unto us.

The Healing of Peter’s Mother-in-law

8:14-17

8:14 - *“And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever.”* Peter lived at Capernaum, a fishing town on the Sea of Galilee. This is a very important statement here, proving that Peter was a married man. This is substantiated by Paul, who said in 1 Corinthians 9:5, “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?”

8:15 - *“And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.”* Whatever this fever was attributable to—whether germs, virus, or a spirit—it left at the touch of the Almighty. It has been shown often that diseases shrivel up in the presence of the anointing of the Lord. Here is a beautiful portrait of a godly woman who ministered to the Lord and His servants after He healed her. There is a story of Saint Monica who looked upon her father as the Heavenly Father, and her brothers as the apostles. Viewing them as such, she served them in abject humility. May God grant us the reality of Philippians 2:3, that in lowliness of mind we esteem others better than ourselves, and that nothing should be done through strife or vainglory.

8:16 - *“When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick.”* While this literally happened, there is another thought behind this verse. At the “evening” or close of the Church Age, God is going to pour out His Spirit to heal *all* who come. What a privilege it will be to minister during the last day revival.

8:17 - *“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”* Jesus was personally the fulfillment of this prophecy of Isaiah 53:5, for “with His stripes we are healed.” As we receive salvation because we know He died for our sins, let us also receive His free gift of healing. Remember, He is the One “who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth [every single one of] thy diseases” (Psa. 103:3). Let us believe and receive both blessings of healing and forgiveness. Praise the Lord!

The Price of Discipleship

8:18-22

8:18 - *“Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.”* Jesus is so unlike many ministers of our day who are seeking the multitudes in order to build their own kingdoms. As we study God’s Word carefully, we find that ministers who have not been faithful to the Lord are banned from the Holy of Holies and are limited to the Outer Court. They are only allowed to minister to the people. On the other hand, faithful ministers of the Lord have the privilege of ministering in the seclusion of the Holy of Holies, in the very presence of the Lord Himself.

This is brought out in the following passages in Ezekiel. We read concerning the unfaithful ministers in Ezekiel 44:10-14: “And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity. And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed. But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein.”

However, to His faithful servants the Lord said in Ezekiel 44:15-16: “The priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD: They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.” The Lord prefers the solitude of being alone with His own, and above all, being with His Heavenly Father.

8:19 - *“And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.”* It is easy to make such statements. This dear soul was obviously very sincere, declaring in a burst of enthusiasm that he would follow Jesus at any cost! However, Jesus wanted him to realize what following the Master really meant.

8:20 - *“And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”* Following Jesus means we must give up everything. This certainly has been the experience of my wife and myself earlier in our lives. At times, we literally did not know where we were going to sleep or what we were going to eat.

8:21 - *“And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.”* One of Jesus’ followers placed duties to the family before the service to the Lord, which the Lord corrected. We must never place our families, even our spouses, before the Lord. He must come first in every area of our lives!

8:22 - *“But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.”* As precious as our families are, we must see that the Lord and His service always occupy a prime place in our hearts and lives.

The Calming of the Seas

8:23-27

8:23 - *“And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.”* Escaping the multitudes, Jesus crosses with His disciples to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, taking the opportunity to rest from exhaustion and the great demands of the ministry.

8:24 - *“And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.”* The Sea of Galilee can be calm one moment and then be aroused the next moment. As the hot air cools suddenly at nightfall, the winds rush down from the mountaintops. These conditions create storms on the lake. It was this kind of storm that Jesus and His disciples encountered on the lake.

8:25 - *“And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.”* The waves were so high that they were entering into the boat. In spite of the actions of the disciples in bailing the water out, they were losing the battle and the boat was sinking. In a moment of great desperation, they came and awoke Jesus.

8:26 - *“And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.”* Arising slowly and deliberately from His rest, Jesus calmly chided His fearful disciples for their lack of faith. Then moving

toward the side of the boat, He pointed to the storm and rebuked it saying, "Peace be still." What the Lord did in this account is available to us today if we will only believe. We can speak to the storms, to lightning, or to the hail and they cannot harm us. When there is an approaching thunderstorm that could do much damage, we should speak, believing that it will change its course.

I remember the story of an African village at a time when an approaching storm could have ruined their crops. They simply prayed with faith and commanded the storm to turn from them, and it did, to their joy. In another sense, we may pray for rain and it will come when we need it. In times of drought, holy men and women have knelt in believing prayer and the skies which had been clear for days and weeks have soon become overcast and the needed rain has fallen in bucketsful.

8:27 - "*But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*" Let us look up in time of need and offer the prayers of faith that will change nature. When George Müller was traveling to the United States, he was told by the captain that the ship would be delayed in arriving because of the fog. Pastor Müller then knelt in prayer, the fog parted, and he arrived on time. There is power in faith-filled prayers!

The Casting Out of Devils

8:28-34

8:28 - "*And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.*" This was a town on the east of the lake, some six miles inland. Here at the graveyard outside the town there were two demon possessed men. Mark 5:1-17 and Luke 8:26-37 go into much more detail, but they focus upon only one of these poor men. The devils were associated with death in that they inhabited the graveyards. These demons were so fierce and strong in the man that no one could bind him.

8:29 - "*And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*" Demons are very aware that after the coming of the Lord Jesus, when their own leader Satan will have been vanquished and put into the bottomless pit, then they themselves will be hurled into the pit of hell and subjected to eternal torments. The very thought of this makes them tremble. Their concern was that they

were going prematurely to their eternal damnation when they saw Jesus, whom they knew to be the Son of God.

8:30-31 - *“And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.”* Knowing that they were going to be cast out of the man, they desired another place of habitation. Demons seek to inhabit bodies. The swine, being unclean animals, were very acceptable to the demons.

8:32 - *“And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.”* Only momentarily did they achieve their desire to enter into a body when cast out of their former dwelling place in the two men. The impact of their entry into the swine was too much for the animals. Terrified, the pigs bolted and fell off the steep place into the sea where they drowned. Therefore, the demons were rendered homeless again in a matter of a few moments.

8:33-34 - *“And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.”* The herdsman who kept the pigs were so afraid that they went running into the city to tell all whom they saw. They were afraid of the manifestation of the power of God and did not want to lose any more of their livelihood. In the Gospels of Mark and Luke, the Lord commanded the men who had been delivered from the demons to remain in that locality and evangelize. They were to tell the people “what great things the Lord had done for them.” The effect of this was that on a later visit, the people of this area heard Jesus gladly.

Deliverance does not always bring pleasant results to the deliverance minister. Paul had a similar opposition when he delivered a girl from a spirit of divination. The town rose up against him, and consequently he was beaten along with Silas and put in prison (Acts 16:16-24).

The enemy does not like losing his territory. But let us be of good cheer because the Lord eventually had a harvest of souls due to the deliverance that Paul had wrought. Paul saw the salvation of the prison keeper’s family. In the end, God *always* causes us to triumph, though it sometimes takes time!

Chapter 9

The Healing of the One Sick With Palsy

9:1-8

9:1-2 - *“And he entered into a ship, and passed over; and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”* Now the Lord returns to Capernaum, the city where He lived during His years of ministry.

There was a universal belief and teaching in Israel that sickness was the result of sin. It was thought that if a person’s mind was tormented by a sinful state, then the body would not be whole. Certainly, a person who is bitter and unforgiving is going to have physical problems. However, to say that sickness is a result of sin must be qualified. Job was one of the most righteous men who ever lived, yet he was afflicted for a time. Suffering, therefore, may be divided into the following classes:

1. We suffer as punishment for our sins (1 Pet. 4:15).
2. We suffer to learn obedience (Heb. 5:8).
3. We suffer vicariously for others as Jesus did upon the cross (Isa. 53:5; Col. 1:24).

In this episode in chapter nine, Jesus forgave the man’s sins because there is no healing unless the question of sin has first been addressed. This applies to all of us. If we are sick, we must ask the Lord to search our hearts to see if there is any wicked way in us. To have an understanding of where our sickness came from, let us pray the prayer of King David: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139:23-24).

9:3 - *“And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.”* One thing we must understand is that while we are upon this earth, men do not know our thoughts, although God does. However, in heaven everyone will know our thoughts. So let us gird up the loins of our minds and ensure that our thoughts are as pure as our words and actions. We must all ask God to create within us a pure heart.

9:4 - *“And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?”* All

critical and judgmental thoughts are evil; so as we meditate upon this passage, let us take this time to ask God to deal with our mind and our thoughts. This is a heart issue, for in Matthew 15:19 Jesus said, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.”

9:5 - *“For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?”* On this matter of saying to a person, “Thy sins are forgiven,” the Lord gave this same authority to the Apostles. After He was risen from the dead, Christ said to His disciples: “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (Jn. 20:23).

If the Lord quickens this particular passage to us, then we also have the power to forgive sins. As God’s spokesmen, when we are anointed, we are authorized to say to a person, “Thy sins are forgiven.” Oh, what joy fills our soul, as well as the one to whom we accord forgiveness for past sins. Even the angels rejoice with us, for that is the message of heaven sent down through the giving of Jesus for all of our sins.

The Heavenly Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, as well as all of heaven rejoice together over sins forgiven. Oh, what a precious promise is given to us through the beloved Apostle John: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9).

Let us go no further with this study until we have that wonderful joy and assurance in our hearts of knowing that our sins have been freely forgiven by the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Let us ask Him now! Not only can He forgive us for past sins, but He can also cleanse us from all unrighteousness so that we do not continue to sin.

9:6 - *“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.”* As proof that He had power to forgive sins, Jesus healed the sick man. I believe that on occasions we also can pray with the sick and they will be healed as proof that Jesus forgives sins now as He did when He was upon this earth. Healing inspires faith that God also forgives and accepts us.

9:7 - *“And he arose, and departed to his house.”* Jesus went home to rest. We must remember that we still live in this mortal body and we need rest after a day of ministry. Some ministers have become burned out and some have even died before their appointed time because they

have not taken time to rest. Let us beware and take care of our bodies.

9:8 - *“But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.”* The adulation of the multitudes meant nothing to the Lord. May the praise of man never be our meat and drink. Instead, may we rejoice only in the knowledge that we have done what is pleasing in the sight of our loving Heavenly Father, whom we live to glorify.

The Call of Matthew

9:9-13

9:9 - *“And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.”* Although employed by the government, Matthew the tax collector (or Levi as he is called in Luke 5:27), rose up and left all. He would have left not only a very lucrative profession, but also one that gave him a lifelong security, as does a civil service post in most nations. He gave up all to follow Jesus, but in so doing, he gained one of the greatest prizes possible, becoming known for time and eternity as one of the Gospel writers. No civil service post could ever have been so rewarding. We sometimes think we have given up much for Jesus. In reality, we gain far more when we follow Jesus than we could ever give up. We gain eternal rewards as we continue to walk with our Savior throughout life’s journey, as well as a secure home in heaven for all eternity.

9:10 - *“And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.”* Matthew does not mention many of the facts concerning his call as does Luke. He did not say that he left all, nor did he mention that this feast was given by himself in honor of the Lord Jesus. The Gospel writers were very self-effacing because they knew the Lord so well and realized that we are what we are only by the grace of God.

9:11 - *“And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?”* The Pharisees were strict adherents of the law and were called “separatists” by their fellow men in almost mocking derision. However, while seeking to keep the law, they were not fulfilling the spirit of the law, which is love. Thus, they were the greatest violators of the law and were spiritually dead because of it. Therefore, they were condemnatory in their remarks toward Jesus, who was associating with those whom they termed “sinners.”

9:12 - *“But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”* Those who are well do not receive visits from the doctor, but only those who are ill and in need of a cure. Therefore, the religious leaders should have been seeking to heal or convert those sinners instead of shunning and criticizing them.

9:13 - *“But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* In our personal quest for holiness, let us not forget that in a spiritual sense we are doctors. We should go where the disease of sin is in order to rescue the dying. Our goal is to heal people of their illnesses, both spiritual and natural.

On Fasting **9:14-15**

9:14 - *“Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?”* Fasting was one of the three great spiritual exercises of the Jewish religious life, along with alms giving and prayer. These three things, along with the reading and studying of God’s Word, would also constitute those of the Christian life.

Here in this episode, their inquiry only concerned fasting. The disciples of John in all probability followed the custom of the Pharisees in fasting twice a week (Lk. 18:12). There was also the compulsory fasting on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:31). Generally speaking, the Jewish fast consisted in eating nothing during daylight hours until night had fallen. However, we should fast as the Spirit leads us. Above all, we should fast, whenever practical, without drawing attention to ourselves lest we fall into the snare of spiritual pride. It was noticeable to the Pharisees that the disciples of Jesus did not fast. Thus, Jesus now responds to them.

9:15 - *“And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.”* To answer their question about His disciples not fasting, Jesus chose the illustration of the Jewish marriage feast, which is a time of great joy and festivity.

This joy and celebration was especially true of the children of the bridechamber who were the close friends of the Bridegroom. How could they fast and mourn in the presence of Jesus the Bridegroom? One can do nothing but rejoice! When the Bridegroom returned to heaven, then they would fast.

The New and the Old

9:16-17

9:16 - *“No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.”* While it is obvious that a new piece of cloth sewn on to an old one will only make the tear worse, the Lord is developing a spiritual truth that is of far greater importance.

9:17 - *“Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.”* Old wine skins do not have the elasticity that the sparkling, fermenting new wine demands. As a result, the wine skins burst. In reality, the Lord is talking about the new truths that He brings to His Church in the New Testament Age.

Because the Jews could not receive these truths, God turned to the Gentile believers. This is also the case today. In each new move of God there is fresh truth given which many of the older churches cannot and will not receive. Therefore, God has to bypass them and turn to new converts who will embrace the new wine. Let us pray that we are always flexible and open to receive new and fresh truth from the Lord.

A Woman and a Daughter Healed

9:18-26

9:18 - *“While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.”* The magnitude of Jesus’ miracles was such that people were able to believe that all things were possible, even the raising of the dead.

9:19 - *“And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.”* We see the readiness of mind and the deep humility of Jesus to be of service to one and all who called upon Him. This, too, should greatly encourage us in our time of need. As I write this it is as though the pages of the Bible fade away and I am looking at Jesus in a vision. He is so young, alert, and energetic as He stands up quickly and moves in the direction that He has been beckoned.

9:20 - *“And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came*

behind him, and touched the hem of his garment.” Even while on a mission to heal a woman’s daughter, He performs another miracle. It is as if no moment is wasted in His life and ministry. A woman who was afflicted with an issue of blood for twelve years was healed when she touched Jesus.

9:21-22 - *“For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.”* The faith of this woman was remarkable, for all other sources had failed her. We are told in Mark 5:30 that the faith of this woman released healing virtue from Jesus. He felt it surge from Him. May God grant that we have such faith to release His power to meet our needs as well.

9:23 - *“And when Jesus came into the ruler’s house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise.”* There is no noise like the wailing of the mourning women in the East. The minstrels with their flutes also helped to create a hysterical atmosphere with others rending their garments. Such pandemonium would have made the prayer of faith impossible.

9:24-26 - *“He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.”* There was no respect shown to Jesus by these professional mourners. To the consternation of one and all, He raised the girl to life again. In those countries, and especially at that time, news traveled fast and the whole land would have heard of these miracles. Her father was a notable ruler of a synagogue and was, therefore, completely trustworthy with respect to the accuracy of the events.

The Restoration of Sight to the Blind

9:27-31

9:27 - *“And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us.”* In according Him this title, the two blind men were, in effect, acknowledging Jesus as David’s greater Son—the Messiah!

9:28 - *“And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.”* The Lord obviously could have healed them at their first cry, but He was testing them in the realm of perseverance.

It is this virtue that is most precious in the Kingdom, because it *determines* if we are really serious in desiring and receiving spiritual blessings. We see it in the way Elijah tested Elisha on his last day on earth. Elijah sought to encourage Elisha to stay while he went on, but Elisha was determined to remain with him until he was caught up. Because of his perseverance, Elisha received that which he desired—the double portion of the anointing that was upon Elijah. Let us also persevere that we may receive all that the Lord has for us.

9:29 - “*Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.*” Once again we see that it is faith that determines what we receive. Little faith yields little rewards, but great faith brings great rewards. Let us be *specific* in our requests and not vague. These men did not just ask for a general blessing. The blind men knew exactly what they wanted when they came to Jesus.

9:30 - “*And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.*” Jesus wanted no advertising. He did not seek the popularity that comes from large crowds. His life was dedicated to doing His Father’s business. May we be likeminded.

9:31 - “*But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.*” Jesus had charged them not to publicize the miracle. They did not realize the reason Jesus desired their silence. Probably because of their excitement and gratitude, they told all of the great things that the Lord had done for them. Consequently, the crowds increased.

The Healing of the Dumb Man **9:32-34**

9:32 - “*As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.*” It was readily accepted in those days that the physical body was made up of many organs, each of which could be inhabited by a demon. Therefore, they believed every sickness was caused by a demonic possession. This, however, is only partially true. Demons can indeed inhabit organs of the body, and some sicknesses come upon a person as a result of sin. However, this is not true of all illnesses. We need to have discernment or the gift of discerning of spirits in operation. This enables us to have our spiritual eyes open either to know when demonic possession is the problem, or whether the illness results from a virus or a simple physical malady.

9:33 - “*And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying,*

It was never so seen in Israel.” In this case, the dumbness was caused by a demonic possession. After Jesus cast out the devil, the dumb man was able to speak. You will notice that in most cases miracles are originated by the sick person himself petitioning Jesus for help. Thus we should not be slack in coming forward with our requests for help. This moves the hand of God.

9:34 - *“But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.”* The Lord replies to this derisive remark by saying that if Satan casts out Satan, then his house would be divided against itself and could not stand. The jealousy of the religious leaders was such that they sought to discredit Jesus’ ministry at all costs. Jealousy, Solomon tells us, is as cruel as the grave (Song. 8:6), and this very same jealousy and envy sent Jesus to the cross (Mt. 27:18). May we ask the Lord to cleanse every trace of this diabolical poison from our own hearts and minds.

The Need for Laborers

9:35-38

9:35 - *“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.”* Here we have a glimpse of the Lord’s very active life. It is very similar to the circuit riders of old who faithfully came, whether through wind, hail, rain, or storm, to faithfully proclaim the Gospel to their charges.

9:36 - *“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”* The spiritual condition of the people of His day was deplorable in that there were virtually no faithful shepherds proclaiming the truth of God’s Word.

9:37 - *“Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.”* So many would respond if only they heard. Therefore, one of the most fruitful ministries is to raise up laborers or fellow ministers who will proclaim the Good News and help bring in the harvest.

9:38 - *“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.”* Paul asks in Romans 10:15, “How shall they preach, except they be sent?” Here again we see the sovereignty of God in sending laborers, but we must pray that He will raise up workers for the harvest, especially in these last days.

Chapter 10

The Calling of the Twelve

10:1-4

10:1 - *“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”*

In these passages, we see the beauty of the coordination of events in Matthew’s Gospel. After the Lord Jesus demonstrated His healing power, He declared that the laborers are few. Then He called His twelve disciples to come to Him and He anointed them with power.

10:2-4 - *“Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.”*

Simon is called Peter and Cephas (Cephas is Aramaic), both names meaning “rock” (Mk. 3:16). He was also called “The son of Jona” (Jn. 1:42). He lived at Bethsaida (Jn. 1:44), later at Capernaum (Mk 1:21,29), and was a fisherman (Mk. 1:16,19). His brother was Andrew. Peter wrote two Epistles and provided the material for Mark’s Gospel. He was also the first leader of the Church (Acts 1-15; Gal. 2:9). Church history tells us that he was crucified upside down, an event that was foretold by Christ (Jn. 21:18-19).

Andrew, like his brother Peter, first lived in Bethsaida and then in Capernaum. Andrew was also a fisherman. He was originally a disciple of John the Baptist. Andrew later preached in Scythia, Greece and Asia Minor. He was crucified on a cross.

James was the son of Zebedee and Salome (Mt. 20:20; Mk. 15:40). He lived first at Bethsaida and then at Capernaum. He was the brother of John and was also a fisherman. Because their mother Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Jn. 19:25), James and John were Jesus’ cousins. He preached in Judea and was beheaded by Herod Antipas in A. D. 44 (Acts 12:1-2).

John, called “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” was the brother of James. He was also a fisher-

man by profession. John wrote the fourth Gospel, three epistles (1,2,3 John), and the Book of Revelation. John ministered in Jerusalem, and from Ephesus he had apostolic responsibility for the seven churches in Asia Minor. Banished to the Isle of Patmos during the reign of Domitian, where he wrote the Revelation, John was then liberated and died in his nineties of natural causes in Ephesus.

Philip lived at Bethsaida (Jn. 12:21). He preached at Phrygia and died a martyr at Hieropolis.

Bartholomew, also called Nathanael, was the one of whom Jesus said, “an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile” (Jn. 1:47). His home town was Cana of Galilee (Jn. 21:2). He became a missionary to Armenia and was flayed to death.

Thomas was called *Didymus*, which in the Greek means “twin.” As in all the Synoptic Gospels, Thomas is connected with Matthew. Therefore, it is possible that they were twins. Many commentators have remarked on the double-mindedness of Thomas, in whom the twins of unbelief and faith battled one another for mastery of his mind. In reality, he was a man of great courage who willingly laid down his life for the Lord. He ministered in Parthis, Persia, and India. He was martyred near Madras, where his tomb lies today on Mount St. Thomas.

Matthew was called “Levi” in Luke 5:27, and the “son of Alphaeus” in Mark 2:14. Matthew seems to have been the name he adopted, meaning “the gift of God.” According to Mark 2:1,14, Matthew lived in Capernaum. He is the third among the twelve who contributed to the writing of the Holy Scriptures. He ministered in Ethiopia and was martyred there.

James the son of Alphaeus was called “James the less,” which means “little of stature” (Mk. 15:40). He preached in Palestine and Egypt, where he was crucified.

Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus, is also called Judas (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13). He preached in Assyria and in Persia, where he was martyred.

Simon was called the zealot (Lk. 6:15). The zealots were a fierce religious party that knew no King but God. He was later crucified.

Judas Iscariot was the only non-Galilean among the twelve. Iscariot means “a man of Kerioth.” Kerioth was a place ten miles south of Hebron in Judah. He was the son of Simon (Jn. 6:71).

Psalm 109 is prophetic of Judas, speaking of the character both of Judas and his father and mother. Judas was the one who betrayed Jesus.

The Twelve Commissioned ***10:5-20***

10:5-6 - *“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* The initial call to the Twelve Apostles was the same as their Master’s. Their first call was to preach to Israel. This is seen in Isaiah 49:5-6: “And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

They were to go first to the Jews, since the Jews were the nation chosen of God, as Moses said: “Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? ... And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt” (Deut. 4:33-34,37).

The Apostle Paul followed this principle when he preached the Gospel. He first went to the synagogues. If they did not receive him, he would then go to the Gentiles. We read in Acts 13:46, “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” Paul said, “To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”

We read in John 1:11 concerning Jesus, *“He came unto his own [the Israelites], and his own received him not.”* Jesus first went to the Israelites, but the majority of them did not accept Him, so He then went to the Gentiles.

10:7 - *“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* As we have already seen in 4:17, this was exactly the same message that Jesus preached: “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This little phrase, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand,” could be translated, “The reign of God draws near.” It refers to the Lord’s millennial reign, for which the Jews were ardently waiting.

Their expectation, however, was that their Messiah would come and throw off the yoke of the fourth kingdom (Rome) by military might, as Daniel 7:13-14,18 declares: “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. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. ... But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.”

Jesus used the same terminology—the kingdom of God—but He sought to make it clear that the Kingdom message was spiritual. He spelled out the laws and ways of the Kingdom of God, not the immediate military take over of Israel by her King.

10:8 - *“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”* These four aspects and manifestations of the power of God will be in the Church with an increasing degree in these last days. They will flow out freely not only from ministers, but from *all* Spirit-filled believers. The saints of God have the power to:

1. Heal the sick
2. Cleanse the lepers
3. Raise the dead
4. Cast out demons

10:9-10 - *“Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.”* The Early Church certainly had little money, as Peter attested to when he said to the lame beggar: “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6).

“Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.” Jesus indicated that all the temporal needs of His ministers would be cared for by those to whom they ministered. The Apostle Paul restated this in Romans 15:27: *“And their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in [temporal] things.”* The Lord clearly intended that congregations should look after the welfare of their pastors.

10:11 - *“And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.”* Here is a key when we travel and come into a town or village with which we are not familiar. We should search for a worthy person in the town (presumably from the household of faith) who will welcome us, receive our message, and extend hospitality to us.

10:12-13 - *“And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.”* We should bless the house into which we come so that the presence of the Lord may be there. If this house is really the house of a good man, then we are to release the peace of God that is upon us to abide also in that house. It is a fact of life that we can only give what we have. Therefore, let us be sure that the peace of God is always covering our hearts and minds so that we can give it to others.

10:14 - *“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.”* I have known of villages where this has literally been done by visiting evangelists. As a result, no church has ever been able to start within the village limits, even after fifty years. We can see then that this is a very powerful expression of God’s displeasure and judgment.

10:15 - *“Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.”* The Gospels often mention eternal judgment. Jesus speaks of the fact that judgment is based upon the opportunities we have had in this life. He also compares our judgment with the judgment of others. For example, Sodom and Gomorrah will have far less judgment than someone who has heard the Gospel and refused to walk in it.

10:16 - *“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”* The nature of a minister of the Lord is compared to that of a sheep. Isaiah 16:1 says, *“Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land.”* The most striking characteristic of a lamb is that of meekness. This is the prime virtue that we need to prayerfully cultivate

as ministers. We should have the wisdom of a serpent, which is known for escaping with great rapidity from danger.

Another Scripture that would link wisdom with caution is Proverbs 22:3, which says, “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.” Furthermore, the minister of God must be filled with goodness, a quality which makes him incapable of doing evil to anyone, even as a dove that brings only peace wherever it goes.

10:17 - *“But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues.”* The Lord did not put His trust in man, for He knew what was in man (Jn. 2:25). Neither should we put our trust in man. Remember, man is filled with the Adamic nature, which is not prone to faithfulness but looks after its own interests, not the welfare of others.

10:18 - *“And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.”* As Jesus testified before Pilate with a good confession (1 Tim. 6:13), so did the apostles and the martyrs of the Early Church testify before the rulers of their day.

10:19-20 - *“But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”* By the grace of God, we must be so filled with the Holy Spirit that He shall speak clearly through us for His honor and glory. How wonderful it is to know that we are never alone.

The Persecutions of Discipleship

10:21-42

10:21 - *“And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.”* There will be great betrayal. Brothers will kill each other; parents will kill their children and children will kill their parents. This was manifestly the case in the time of Nazi Germany as well as in Communist Russia. It will most assuredly be repeated at the time of the Antichrist.

10:22 - *“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end*

shall be saved.” Christianity is not popular with the men of this world because it reveals their sin, which they love. Consequently, they hate those who bring forth light into their darkness. The tavern dweller does not like to be reminded of his sinful condition. Even if he should agree that he is wrong, he will not let go of his sin because he loves it.

10:23 - *“But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.”* The Lord specifically warned that the greatest persecution would arise from the religious leaders, even until the time of His Second Coming.

10:24-25 - *“The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?”* Let us never think that our message will be more palatable and more easily received than our Lord’s. The common people may well hear us with joy, but Jesus warned, “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” The Lord manifested the power, wisdom, and authority of the Kingdom, yet they said He belonged to Satan. How much more shall we be reviled!

10:26 - *“Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.”* In spite of persecutions, we should not be afraid of wicked men, for “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 Jn. 4:4).

10:27 - *“What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.”* Here the Lord speaks of the necessity of our devotional life. We receive a message from the Lord in the quietness of our prayer closet. We should proclaim openly what the Lord speaks to us during our times of prayer with Him. So often it is in the night hours that we hear God most clearly. Even while we sleep may our heart be awake (Song. 5:2).

10:28 - *“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”* In the time of Joseph Stalin, the dictator had forbidden the clergy to put on their robes in public. When a certain bishop who knew him well was summoned into the presence of the dictator, he wrestled much with how he should dress. Eventually, he decided not to wear his robes. When he entered Joseph Stalin’s study, the dictator said with some disdain, “I see you fear me more than God!” May God grant

that this can never be said of us. Let us have the fear of God in our lives.

10:29 - *“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.”* Jesus desires that we know the Father’s care for His children. There are literally billions of creatures in the universe, yet the Heavenly Father has knowledge of everything that is happening to each one at all times. His knowledge and ability is awe-inspiring to our earthly minds. The Lord Jesus wants us to understand how mindful He is of us at all times.

10:30 - *“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”* We have no idea of the precise number of our hairs, but the fact that our hairs actually have a number is amazing. King David said, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Psa. 139:6). Jesus tells us these things in order that we may overcome fear, as we see from the next verse.

10:31 - *“Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”* The Father in Heaven takes note of all these details concerning us and declares that we are of more value to Him than all those sparrows. Certainly, He will watch over us and our needs with infinite care!

10:32 - *“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.”* Let us never be ashamed of Jesus! Some people battle constantly with the shame of Christian confession. There are definite spirits of shame from hell that seek to overwhelm our hearts and minds so that we will not confess our belief in Jesus as our Savior. Therefore, let us seek to be free of these demons so that at all times we might be free in confessing that Name which is above every name.

10:33 - *“But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”* The Apostle Paul in his last letter to Timothy reminded his spiritual son, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12). Let us declare by His grace with great boldness as did the Apostle Paul: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16).

10:34 - *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.”* More than anything in this life, we poor humans desire to be at peace. Our concept of peace is the absence of war, arguments, and fights, and to be at one with our families and neighbors. However, Jesus brings a sword that separates.

10:35 - *“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.”* There is almost nothing, with the exception of money, that causes divisions in families more than religion.

10:36 - *“And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.”* This is a quotation from Micah 7:5-6, which says: “Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.” In such circumstances, what should we do when our own family is against us? We should do as the prophet Micah did. We read Micah’s response in Micah 7:7, “Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.” God will give abundant grace in *all* situations to enable us to triumph (cf. Heb. 4:16).

10:37 - *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”* Many people have sacrificed their eternal salvation by no longer following Jesus so that they may have peace at home.

10:38 - *“And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”* Crosses come in all shapes, sizes, and disguises. It can be in the family or at work that we are shunned, hated, and mocked. In whatever form our cross comes, there is the same shape or size of grace that will enable us to carry it.

10:39 - *“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”* Mankind seeks comfort and security, especially for their old age. Yet in so doing, somehow they are blinded from looking further into the future to be concerned about their eternal welfare. Their temporal life is of far greater concern than their life in the hereafter. Those who neglect their eternal well-being will lose their life, but those who are willing to sacrifice life’s comforts for their eternal reward will gain everything.

10:40 - *“He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.”* The Lord reminds us here that people will be judged by the way they treat us, for we are the Lord’s messengers. Let us also apply this truth to ourselves. We ourselves must treat other ministers of God with respect.

10:41 - *“He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward;*

and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." As we receive and care for the ministers of the Lord, to that proportion our rewards will be measured back to us.

10:42 - *"And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."* The Lord is so particular concerning our treatment of His ministers that if we just give someone a drink for His name's sake, we shall not lose our recompense. We forget many of the things we do, but be assured that heaven remembers. Therefore, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of God (Gal. 6:10). May we abound in good works for His honor and glory! Let the goodness of Jesus flow from us.

Chapter 11

About His Father's Business

11:1

11:1 - *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.”* Having sent the disciples away, Jesus then continues with His own ministry. He would not rest, even for a moment, on past good works or on the ministry of others that He has raised up. May we be equally diligent!

The Exaltation of John the Baptist by Jesus

11:2-15

11:2-3 - *“Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples. And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”* The account of John's imprisonment is given in retrospect in Matthew 14:3-12. He was placed there by Herod Antipas because he had told the king that it was unlawful to have his brother's wife. In any prison, and especially the dungeons of the fortress of Machaerus, which were in the mountains at the east of the Dead Sea, a prisoner would have been tormented with doubts.

John had a divine revelation that Jesus was the Lamb of God. Yet solitary confinement, in addition to the fact that he would have been a prime target of Satan's hordes seeking to derange his mind, would cause any man to doubt. At this time, he simply sought confirmation from the lips of Jesus through his own disciples. In effect, John sought reassurance that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah.

11:4-5 - *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.”* Rather than simply saying, “Yes, I am the Messiah!” Jesus sought to provoke the disciples of John to believe in Him. Evidently, the disciples had already reported to John on a previous occasion the miracles that Jesus had performed. This is why Jesus said to tell John *again* of what they were now seeing.

We all need reassurance and repetition of truth, so please let us not criticize John or his dis-

ciples. Jesus then enumerates the miracles. All these miracles one can see in Matthew's account in chapters 8 and 9.

11:6 - *“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”* The Lord had already instructed His own disciples on the eternal danger of denying Him, and now He gives this same warning to John's disciples too.

11:7 - *“And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?”* Certainly, Jesus could have been disappointed in John. It obviously was a blow to Him. He must have felt so alone in His mission. John had been prepared as the forerunner to know and understand that mission, and now Jesus' forerunner himself was plagued with doubt. Jesus had to walk alone. There is no bitterness or self-pity, not even criticism in Jesus' remarks concerning John. Jesus' comments are those that we would expect from the matchless Son of God. Rather than belittle John in any way, instead Jesus lauded him.

11:8-10 - *“But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.”* Here Jesus declares that John is indeed a prophet with a singular ministry.

Jesus identified John as the fulfillment of 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.”* While identifying John as the messenger promised in Malachi, Jesus also identified Himself as the Messenger of the Covenant, the Lord of glory.

11:11 - *“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”* Jesus now raises John to a very great spiritual height, declaring that there is no man greater than John. He then states that those who have entered into the Kingdom are greater (or enjoy greater benefits) than John. John lived during the Age of the Law. He did not know the Age of Grace and the love of God as we do. The Church Age is far superior to the Age of the Law.

11:12 - “*And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*” We do not just stumble by chance into the Kingdom of God. We must wrestle and fight for Gospel truths and spiritual blessings.

11:13 - “*For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.*” Jesus makes it clear that He is ushering in a new dispensation and that the Old Testament and the Age of the Law has now come to an end. Then He confirms what the father of John had prophesied at his birth—that John came with the same power that Elijah had (Lk. 1:17).

11:14-15 - “*And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*” John came in the spirit and power of Elijah. In other words, he had the same anointing and ministry. In this sense, he came to prepare the way for Jesus, just as Elijah will before the Lord’s Second Coming. However, we must be careful to compare Scripture with Scripture, for Jesus confirmed on the Mount of Transfiguration that Elijah himself would also come in person.

We read in Matthew 17:10-13, “*And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.*”

Elijah truly shall come first before the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5-6). This is a reference to Elijah’s coming before Christ’s Second Coming. The great and dreadful day of the Lord refers to the Second Coming, not His First Coming. Christ said that Elijah has already come, a reference to John, who had come in the spirit and power of Elijah. As Paul said, let us rightly divide the Word of God. Elijah is one of the two witnesses who will come in the last days (see Rev. 11).

The Justification of Wisdom

11:16-19

11:16-17 - “*But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.*” This “generation” can refer to

the whole of the Church Age, in a sense, because people are no different today than they were at the time of Jesus. Yet, of course, the illustrations that Jesus is giving are applicable to John and Himself. There were vain fellows who spent their time sitting around in the market place with nothing better to do than indulge in idle talk. They were upset because people did not dance to their tune.

11:18-19 - *“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.”* Those aimless people who accomplish nothing in life also detract from the lives of those who are pursuing notable goals and seeking to better the lives of their fellow man.

When I worked for a time in a research laboratory, I was told this story. There was a group of young men of equal intelligence, most of whom spent their time after work in taverns and dance halls. However, one of their number chose to spend that time furthering his studies. The others sought to deter him and encourage him to have a good time as they were doing. His answer was that in time they would see what they had missed. A few years later he was their overseer, enjoying many advancements, pay raises, and privileges that they would never have because they had wasted years in riotous living. In much the same way, these market place wastrels labeled John, Christ’s forerunner, as a man who had a demon. When the Son of man came eating and drinking, they said, “Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” Although Jesus led a life so contrary to John’s, they still found fault with Him and said that the Son of God was a drunkard, probably like themselves. Friends, let us learn from these few verses to be diligent and never expect the acclaim of this world.

The Eternal Judgment Upon the Cities of His Day

11:20-24

11:20 - *“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.”* Our judgment will be determined by the opportunities that we receive in this life. The cities at the time of Christ had unique opportunities that were not given to other cities throughout time.

11:21-22 - *“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in*

sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.” Let us examine this teaching on eternal judgment. Judgment is determined by how much light a person receives on earth. Some do not have as much light as others, as in the case of Tyre and Sidon. If they had been given the light that Chorazin and Bethsaida had, they would have repented. Although they would have repented, they still are in hell because they did not live up to the light that they had been given, although it was but a glimmer compared to the radiant glory that those cities had at the time of Jesus. Although the Gentile inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon are in hell, their judgment will not be as bad as that of the cities in which Jesus did His great miracles.

There is an error in the Church today that I wish to address, and that is the tendency to want to *wait for the end time revival* to become pure and holy. This is absolute folly! None of us know if we will even live to see the revival! We must live up to the light we have now and seek the presence of God now. We must ask Him to create in us a clean heart *now*. Let us live in present truth (2 Pet. 1:12). Let us live a godly life *now*!

11:23 - *“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.”* Just think, the homosexuals of Abraham’s day would have repented if they had seen the miracles Jesus performed. However, they were only given the testimony of Lot, a righteous man. Jesus concluded that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum.

11:24 - *“But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.”* Sodom is in hell. Their place in hell is not as horrible as the torment Capernaum will have, but nevertheless it is in hell. I cannot describe to you how absolutely horrifying it is to miss eternal life and find yourself in hell. It does not matter whether one’s judgment in hell is deep or not as deep. Who would want to be there at all, forever? Please, let us use every opportunity the Lord Jesus gives us and live a godly life that is well pleasing in His sight.

Rest for Our Soul

11:25-30

11:25-26 - *“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and*

earth, because 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.” Life’s great secrets are not given to the rich or to those who are filled with the wisdom of this world, which produces arrogance. Instead, it is given to the poor in spirit and those who are small in their own sight. Here, the Lord Jesus applauds this decision of the Heavenly Father. Likewise, let us also worship the Father by praising His will and His ways.

11:27 - *“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”* It is only the sovereign grace of God that shows us that Jesus is indeed the Savior of the world and that there is no other name under heaven whereby one may be saved. Let us appreciate this fact and be truly grateful that God has chosen to reveal His Son to us. Let us live worthy of this great grace! Now comes another very precious invitation that we should not take lightly either.

11:28 - *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* This is not an invitation for salvation, but rather a further grace that the Lord has reserved for His own. It is the rest of God. The rest of God is a spiritual state of mind. When we have been brought into God’s rest, we are able to cease from our own works, thoughts, motives, ambitions, and strivings, and God is able to work through us to accomplish His perfect will in and through our lives. In the next passage the Lord shows us the way into this wondrous blessing.

11:29-30 - *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* The picture here is of a strong, mature ox carrying a heavy yoke while the other part of the yoke, being smaller and lighter, is placed over the neck of the younger and smaller ox. Thus, the smaller ox is guided by the older mature ox, who carries most of the burden.

As we allow the Lord to place that small part of the yoke of life’s burdens upon us, He guides and directs us as well as carrying most of the burden. However, it is essential to be His yoke-fellow and not to try to do our own thing in life. Otherwise, we will be carrying a burden that we were not intended to carry. That burden will break us because we are carrying it alone without God’s grace. In taking His yoke we will know the wondrous rest of God. Hallelujah!

Chapter 12

The Lord of the Sabbath

12:1-8

12:1-2 - *“At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.”*

Legally, the disciples were within the bounds of the Law, according to the provision made in 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.”

The Scribes and Pharisees were charging Jesus with permitting or encouraging His disciples to break the Sabbath. In the opinion of those religious leaders, the disciples were working on the Sabbath by picking several ears of corn. It was not the Law of God, but the *traditions of men* that the disciples were accused of breaking, for they interpreted the act of taking the corn as work. Jesus responded with four arguments:

1. David and his men were given bread that was only allowed for the priests (1 Sam. 21:1-6). This was also contrary to the Law. However, the High Priest gave David bread at God’s direction, and David was a type of Christ.
2. The priests had to work on the Sabbath in order to carry out the work of the Temple (cf. Num. 28:9). His disciples were also carrying out the work of God on the Sabbath.
3. Jesus Himself was greater than the temple. Therefore, He had a right to instruct the disciples to partake of food to meet their needs. He was also exercising a higher law—the law of mercy (and the law of practicality).
4. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, and as the Lord of the Sabbath He reserves the right to meet the needs of mankind on the Sabbath. This ministry transcends all other kinds of service.

12:3-4 - *“But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred,*

and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?” Here Jesus is quoting from 1 Samuel 21:1-6.

The law that Jesus is making reference to is found 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.” Thus, this bread was only for Aaron and his sons.

However, David and his men were hungry and the High Priest Ahimelech gave David the bread that had been taken from the altar to make way for the freshly baked bread of that day. David’s need took precedence over the ritualistic law.

12:5 - *“Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?”* The ritual of the Temple involved work on the Sabbath—the slaying of animals for sacrifice, their preparation, the kindling of fire, and other work associated with the Temple. All this manual work was forbidden to ordinary Israelites, but it was required of the priests.

12:6-7 - *“But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.”* Then Jesus made it clear He was far greater than the Temple, which was dedicated to Him.

In a very real sense, Jesus is saying that His disciples were guiltless for eating the corn to meet their bodily needs, but that the Pharisees were wrong in condemning them in that they did not show mercy. Mercy is the highest quality of service since the Mercy Seat is the *seventh* piece of furniture in the Tabernacle of Moses. The Mercy Seat is the place where God dwells and speaks to man.

12:8 - *“For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.”* In saying this, Jesus is signifying that showing mercy and meeting the needs of mankind transcends other kinds of service. Jesus gave a higher law than the ritualistic Law.

Healing on the Sabbath

12:9-13

12:9 - *“And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue.”* The Lord was careful at all times to attend synagogue services. This is important for us, since there is a tendency to stay away from the house of God and substitute church with Christian television.

Paul warns in 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.” Let us be sure that we are faithful in church attendance.

12:10 - *“And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.”* The wickedness of the religious leaders was plain and clear for all who wished to see. They were intent upon destroying the reputation of Jesus. They were not at all moved by the sufferings of the sick and afflicted.

12:11 - *“And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?”* Now the Lord exposes their hypocrisy, for they themselves will go to the aid of a dumb animal on the Sabbath day and not consider it a violation of the law.

12:12-13 - *“How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.”*

Elsewhere Jesus stresses that the Sabbath was given to bless man. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for our blessing, not to bring us into bondage. To confirm His teaching, Jesus healed the sick man on the Sabbath.

A Council Convened to Plot the Destruction of Jesus ***12:14-21***

12:14 - *“Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.”* The seriousness with which the Jews took the Sabbath day caused them to lose Jerusalem to Ptolemy Lagos, one of Alexander the Great’s generals who founded the Egyptian Dynasty. The Greek historian Agatharchides of Cnidus wrote a work called the *Acts of Alexander’s Successors*, which is quoted by Josephus (Book XII. I. I).

In this historical account, Ptolemy was able to capture Jerusalem even though it was heavily fortified because the Jews refused to take up arms in its defense on the Sabbath day. They preferred hard servitude and Egyptian exile to taking up arms on the Sabbath. This was the reason for the tremendous hatred the Pharisees had for Jesus. Their hatred for Jesus blinded them to the good that Jesus did by healing the afflicted person. The Pharisees’ hatred for Jesus was caused by bigotry and a misunderstanding of the purpose of the Law.

We should pause here to receive instruction from this portion of Scripture. Doctrinal error produces rigidity, spiritual inflexibility, pride, and a zeal to promote that error to the exclusion of all other truth. It causes people to be cliquish and critical of anyone else who does not espouse their error. This is more than a wrong idea or concept—it is an evil spirit. In plain terms, these are doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1).

Naturally, demons want their doctrines to ensnare many by their error, causing them to leave the pathway of righteousness. Paul spoke of this false zeal in Romans 10:2-3: “I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 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.”

12:15-16 - *“But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; And charged them that they should not make him known.”* Jesus did not want to have an open confrontation with the Pharisees, for His hour had not yet come. Therefore, Jesus sought to hide from the rage of the religious leaders.

12:17-19 - *“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by [Isaiah] the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my*

spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.”

Jesus did not strive, or cry, or demand justice for Himself. Instead, He committed Himself to His Father. Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 30:15, which says, “For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.”

“He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.” This verse was quickened to me a number of years ago when I was invited to take part in street demonstrations and walks for righteousness in Washington. The Holy Spirit gave me this passage to show me that Jesus never lifted up His voice in demonstrations or acts of rebellion against authorities. Neither should any of us.

Paul said in Romans 13:1-2: “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. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”

12:20 - *“A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.”* In this verse we see the gentleness of Jesus in His dealings in our lives. My dear wife, who suffered from many physical problems for many years, felt like she would not be able to bear the pain. Once, she frankly asked the Lord if He was going to break her.

The Lord gently responded by quoting verse 20: “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.” God promised my wife that He would not stamp out that flicker of life that was still within her soul but would make her triumphant in her trial, which He did. Praise the Lord!

12:21 - *“And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.”* Matthew develops the thought that since Jesus was rejected by the Jews, His ultimate ministry would be to be “a Light to the Gentiles.” This calling was fulfilled after His death and resurrection, when He sent His apostles to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The Blasphemy of the Pharisees

12:22-30

12:22 - *“Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.”* The power of God that was upon Jesus was so great that no disease or devil could withstand Him. In these last days, that same power will flow through the servants of the Lord and absolutely nothing shall be able to stand before them.

12:23-24 - *“And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? And when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.”* The people again wondered if Jesus was King David’s greater Son, the promised Messiah. Messiah means “the Anointed One,” and certainly they recognized the extraordinary anointing of God that was upon Jesus.

How different their attitude was from that of the Pharisees. When the Pharisees heard about it, they said that Jesus was casting out demons through the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. The Jews used “Beelzebub,” who was the Philistine god of the flies, to denote the devil. The irritant flies were symbolic of devils, which torment and make life unpleasant for mankind.

12:25 - *“And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.”* Here the Lord responds with three arguments:

1. If Satan were to cast himself out, he would bring his kingdom to nothing.
2. He was casting out demons through prayer—the same method the Pharisees’ disciples used.
3. The casting out of demons brought *freedom* and *deliverance*.

12:26 - *“And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?”* It is inconceivable that Satan would permit mutiny in his kingdom and permit demons to cast out other demons. This was a ridiculous accusation by the Pharisees.

12:27 - *“And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.”* Then Jesus asks, “By whom do your children cast out de-

mons?” In the time of the Old Testament, there were others who cast out demons. We see from this verse that the children of the Pharisees were casting out demons by prayer. Undoubtedly, some of their prayers were answered. Therefore, the children of the Pharisees would have recognized that Jesus had cast out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus said the children would judge the Pharisees. This condemned the jealousy of the Pharisees, as none could deny the miracle of deliverance.

12:28 - *“But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.”* Jesus now presents a third argument. Attributing all power to the Holy Spirit, Jesus made it very clear that it was by the anointing of the Spirit of God that He became the vehicle by which the Kingdom of Heaven was being demonstrated to them.

12:29 - *“Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.”* In order to achieve deliverance, we must first bind the key demon or the strongest demon in a person.

12:30 - *“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”* Those who do not walk with the Lord are actually in opposition to Him. There must be unity in the Body of Christ. Without unity there is a wasteful scattering of people and resources. So many Christians and organizations tend to have their own agenda and build their own kingdom, hindering the harvest for others.

The Unforgivable Sin **12:31-37**

12:31 - *“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.”* One of the most gracious attributes of the Father and the Son is that they freely forgive. That is why continuously in His teachings the Lord stresses the necessity of forgiving one another. We can only receive to the degree that we give, whether it be financially or in the realm of truth.

To the degree that we seek for truth, to that degree we shall receive fresh truth. This also applies in the realm of forgiveness. As we freely forgive others, the Lord will forgive us to that same degree. However, there is no forgiveness if we blaspheme the Holy Ghost. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is to knowingly attribute the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan.

12:32 - *“And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”* In His kindness, the Lord Jesus will forgive us if we speak against Him, if we truly repent. However, there is no forgiveness or pardon for speaking against the Holy Spirit. There is a special tenderness on the part of the Father and the Son for the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has so willingly taken a self-effacing role in the matters of creation and redemption. He is the One who is not seen and is not manifested in bodily form, although He has a form similar to that of mankind. He seeks only the glory of the Son and of the Father. Therefore, they are very protective of the Spirit’s honor. This is the reason, in part, for the unforgivable sin. What a great insult it is for His works to be identified with Satan’s, especially when men know otherwise!

12:33 - *“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.”* The Lord, who loves righteousness, has a special hatred for hypocrisy. “Either be one thing or the other,” He pleads. Do not try to pretend to be righteous when you are not, or as we would say, “Be one thing or the other, but do not be a mixture.” Be either hot or cold (Rev. 3:15-16), but do not be lukewarm for the Lord!

12:34 - *“O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”* The Lord calls the Pharisees “snakes” because He wants us to realize that a slithering, crooked creature cannot speak good things! It is a sham for the wicked to appear righteous by using the vocabulary of good people. One speaks from the heart; and their hearts were venomous.

12:35 - *“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.”* Our hearts are a garden; and as our hearts are, so will our fruit be. Therefore, let us guard our hearts with all diligence, for out of the heart are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). Our prayer should constantly be, “Create in me a pure heart, O Lord.”

12:36 - *“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”* Perfection and holiness lie in the control of the tongue. James 3:2 clearly confirms this truth: “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and

able also to bridle the whole body.”

12:37 - *“For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”* King David prayed, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psa. 103:3). Let us ask the Lord to help us not to speak unadvisedly with our lips, as did Moses, who lost his inheritance because of it (cf. Psa. 106:32-33).

The Pharisees Request a Sign

12:38-45

12:38 - *“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.”* Why did the religious leaders seek a sign? The nation had been brought up on signs. From the time of Moses, many signs had been given by God to substantiate the words of the prophets. This request, however, was given in a mocking way.

12:39 - *“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.”* The miracles that Jesus had performed provided sufficient evidence that God was with Him. The Scribes and Pharisees were again seeking a means of disputing the fact that He was the promised Messiah. They were insincere.

12:40 - *“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.”* Jesus is speaking of His death and resurrection. The fact that He stresses “three days and three nights in the earth” helps us establish that He was crucified on a Wednesday and not on Friday as is commonly supposed. We will discuss this more in the chapters dealing with His crucifixion.

12:41 - *“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.”* Now the Lord returns to the subject of eternal judgment. Jesus repeatedly emphasizes that our conduct and response to the Gospel are going to determine not only our eternal destination, but also our position in heaven or in hell.

The Pharisees of Jesus’ day would receive the greater condemnation because although others in bygone ages heard the prophets, here was the very Son of God Himself speaking to them, and

they rejected Him. What greater privilege could any man ever have than to see and hear God in the flesh.

12:42 - *“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”* Then in true Hebraic fashion of teaching, the Lord repeats this truth by another example in verse 42. In these passages, the Lord is speaking of the visit of the Queen of Sheba, who marveled at the wisdom of Solomon. She testified, “I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard” (1 Kgs. 10:7).

The queen came to verify Solomon’s wisdom and then believed. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were constant witnesses of the power of God manifested through Jesus, but they would not believe. Therefore, Jesus again warned that their condemnation would be greater. We will be judged according to the opportunities we receive in this life. May we make the most of everything the Lord graciously gives us.

12:43 - *“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.”* Now the Lord reverts to the subject of demons, which contains very important lessons for us. A demon seeks a place to inhabit so that he can be at rest. He searches high and low for an entrance, preferably into a person. This particular demon, after being cast out, then returned to the man from whom he had been cast out.

12:44 - *“Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.”* Herein lies another lesson. We must not be content only to cast an evil spirit out of a person. We must ensure that the person receives Christ, and if possible, pray that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in other tongues.

12:45 - *“Then goeth he, and taketh with himself 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. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”* A vacated house must be filled with something else; so it is with people. After people have been delivered from demons, if they are not filled with the Lord, the demons will return and in even greater numbers. Demons are gregarious; they love the company of other demons. If a person’s void is not filled with God, the demon who was cast out will come back and bring other demons with him.

The danger with deliverance is that after we cast out one demon, others can enter in again if we do not ensure that the person is born again and filled with the Holy Spirit. Also, the delivered man or woman must *close the door* to evil. He needs a holy hatred for evil.

The Mother and Brethren of Jesus

12:46-50

12:46-47 - *“While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.”* You will notice in this episode the humility and meekness of Jesus’ family. They did not presume to intrude because of their relationship with Jesus. Actually, another person spoke for them as we read in verse 47. Jesus took this opportunity to develop a very important lesson that we wish millions around the world would hear.

12:48-49 - *“But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!”* He then asked those around Him, “Who is my mother?” With this response, Jesus brought Mary down to the level of any other believer, having no special privileges or rights. If this be so on earth, how can it be that in heaven she would be different from other saints? How can we pray to her and expect her to be able to petition her Son, when on earth He expressly placed her on the same level as other believers?

God directed a priest to this passage of Scripture after he had preached very eloquently to a tearful congregation on the relationship between Jesus and His mother. Essentially, the priest had said something to this effect: “Whatever sins we have committed against the Lord, though He be greatly offended, if we will petition His mother, He will be moved by His mother’s tears on our behalf and pardon us.” Naturally, the congregation was very moved with this reasoning.

However, that night the Lord spoke in an audible voice to the priest saying, “You are a liar!” Then He directed the priest to read this passage in Matthew 12:48-49. The Lord admonished the priest that Jesus, not having given special place to His mother on earth would certainly not give her those privileges in heaven. Therefore, all prayers directed to Mary are in vain and useless.

The Beloved Apostle John, into whose care Jesus entrusted His mother while upon the cross, said in 1 John 1:7,9: “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 cleanseth us from all sin. ... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

12:50 - *“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”* We are in the family of God. He whom our soul loves is our Elder Brother, and God is our Heavenly Father. Praise the Lord!

Chapter 13

The Parables of the Kingdom

13:1-50

There are over thirty parables attributed to Jesus in the Gospels. A parable, by definition from the Greek, means “to compare together.” A parable can be defined as “a natural story that illustrates a heavenly or spiritual truth.” Most of us have difficulty understanding abstract truth, but an illustration makes truth much clearer.

It must be understood that these parables were *spoken*. Therefore, they were meant to be easily and quickly comprehended by the hearers. They were essentially spoken to the people of Jesus’ day. Jesus drew His illustrations from the daily life and experience of the common people so that everyone could understand and grasp what He was trying to say. In order for us to grasp the meaning of the parables, it is sometimes necessary to understand life in Palestine as it was in Jesus’ day. For the most part, each parable illustrates one primary truth. For that reason, the details are not necessarily important.

13:1 - *“The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.”* In the synagogues, the Lord Jesus had to confront the hostility of the Pharisees, Scribes, and rulers of the people. They were intent on seeking to accuse Him through His words. Outside the synagogues, the common people heard Him gladly. So on this day Jesus sat by the seaside and taught the people through the means of parables.

13:2 - *“And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.”* This was a beautiful scene. The words of Jesus, carried by the breezes blowing in from the waters, were heard clearly and distinctly by all those standing on the seashore.

This was the method of John Wesley and other evangelists who were used of God during the revivals of the 18th century. When they spoke to crowds of tens of thousands in the open air, multitudes were converted through their words as the presence of the Lord convicted them of sin. By this manner, conversion reached even the outskirts where they would have had difficulty hearing all the words spoken. Such was the power of the Holy Spirit that enveloped the gathered masses.

13:3 - *“And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.”* This constitutes the beginning of what is termed, “The Seven Parables of the Kingdom.” These parables, apart from portraying seven specific truths, are linked to other sets of “sevens” in the Scriptures. For example, there are the seven churches of the Book of Revelation, as well as the seven feasts of the Lord in Leviticus. A comparative table is given in Appendix B to help the reader appreciate their relationship.

13:4 - *“And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up.”* Immediately we associate the sower with the Lord and His ministers, which is a correct deduction. However, we should not assume that the seed, which is the Word of God, is going to be sown uniquely from the pulpit or that it is only coming from the lips of godly messengers. God has spoken to me on many occasions when I really needed to hear from Him through people who were not even saved, through a newspaper article, or by some other means. However, I had to be sensitive and attentive to realize that God was speaking to me. It was as though I was walking along the wayside and I heard the word that I needed to hear.

13:5 - *“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.”* Stony places are desolate places. We may not be in a place filled with the presence of the Lord when He speaks to us. On the contrary, we might be in a church void of the anointing, or in a congregation where the people are living in rebellion. Yet it is in places like this that God can speak to us, so we must have a listening ear.

13:6 - *“And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.”* Some of the people that we have walked with have never appreciated or treasured the Word of God. Thus, the Word takes no root in them and they wither and die when difficulties come. I can remember being in the company of such people in spiritual deserts, and, oh, how God has met me and spoken to me.

13:7 - *“And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.”* The thorns represent those who are worldly. There have been times when worldly Christians have been given very precious truths by God. However, they did not walk in the reality of those truths, and eventually they backslid. Even so, while sitting among them we can glean special truths that will benefit us enormously if we have a listening ear. Sometimes God uses very unspiritual people to give us a prophetic word. Let us remember that God used ravens to feed the prophet Elijah.

13:8 - *“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”* It is among the congregations of the righteous where we hear the deepest truths that will enrich our lives the most. Let us ensure that the word of the Lord brings forth an abundance of fruit in our own lives.

13:9 - *“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”* May God grant that we have listening ears to hear Him speak to us, irrespective of where we are or whom we are with.

13:10 - *“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?”* The disciples now ask a question that reveals the attitude of the Godhead toward mankind. We should meditate much upon our Savior’s answer, for it will be an ongoing lesson for us throughout life.

13:11 - *“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”* To understand what Christ is teaching here, we must compare Scripture with Scripture. We are told in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God the Father would “have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” Unfortunately, not all men will accept this gracious offer of salvation through Christ. Not everyone wants a life of holiness and godliness. Therefore, God will not cast His pearls of truth before swine—those who disdain the message of the kingdom. Truth is purposely concealed from some, while it is made clear to others. *Understanding* is God’s sovereign gift to the righteous; it is not given to everyone.

13:12 - *“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”* This principle, which the Lord repeats in His parables of the Pounds and the Talents, is not only a spiritual fact, but it is also a creative truth. The more one has the more one gets. The more that one sows, the more one reaps. This principle is the key to any successful business. The owner must invest in properties that produce the most revenue. God, likewise, invests in those of His people who are the most fruitful. This thought is confirmed in Daniel 2:21: “He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.”

13:13-14 - *“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not*

perceive.” Jesus is now speaking of the spiritual condition of the religious leaders. Although they heard the Word of God preached, they could not understand it because of their heart condition.

13:15 - *“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”*

The ability to understand doctrine lies within man’s will. The Lord said in John 7:17, “If any man will [or is willing to] do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” If we desire to do God’s will with all our hearts, then we will understand truth. It does not depend upon our intellect; it depends upon grace. If God does not give us grace, we cannot see. It’s just that simple.

Now, turning to His own disciples, Jesus says in verses 16-17:

13:16-17 - *“But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men 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.”* Friends, we want to be among those who are able to see and hear divine truths, even as the eleven disciples understood the truth.

“Many prophets and righteous men 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.” Solomon said there is a time and place for all things under the sun (Eccl. 3.1). The apostles and their generation heard and saw mighty works which other generations had not been privileged to witness. God has His divine timetable.

The number of mighty miracles people see depends on the generation in which they are living. Those who were living in the Old Testament dispensation obviously did not see the mighty acts of God manifested through His blessed Son. Those who have lived throughout the countless centuries of the Church Age have not seen the glory that will be manifested in and through the Last Day Church.

Notwithstanding, we must live according to the light that we have been privileged and found

worthy to receive. We cannot live speculatively in an era other than the one that has been appointed to us in God's sovereign wisdom.

13:18 - *"Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower."* The Lord now interprets for us the parable of the Sower. He is speaking of four conditions of the human heart.

13:19 - *"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side."* The wayside was a beaten path that was trampled over by the feet of many. It was hard and packed down. Seed that falls on such ground cannot germinate and grow.

King Rehoboam had a heart like that. It was not prepared to receive the Word of God (2 Chron. 12:14). We need to break up our fallow ground so that the seed of the Word will fall upon a soft and tender heart that is capable of understanding that which is spoken (see Hosea 10:12).

13:20-21 - *"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and [immediately] with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."* Those who shout the loudest at the beginning are not necessarily those who finish the race. Often, the emotional ones have many areas of rebellion in their lives that they refuse to surrender to God. Consequently, sooner or later these people become offended by one thing or another and they leave the church.

13:22 - *"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."* Thorns are described as the worries of this world. We should not worry about the cares of this life. Paul said in Philippians 4:6-7: "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."

Thorns are also interpreted as "the deceitfulness of riches." Let us be cleansed from the love of money, and as Luke 8:14 adds, from the pleasures of this world. A little while ago I was contemplating the possibility of ministering in a certain church, but the Lord said to me, "Do not sow among thorns." It was a somber thought to realize that the Lord was refusing fresh truth to these people because of their careless lifestyle of pleasure. God knew they would not bring forth the

fruit of those truths in their lives. Friends, let us be found in the category of those whose hearts are termed “good ground” in the following verse.

13:23 - *“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”* We do not want to be content to just bring forth thirty percent or sixty percent. Instead, let us be like Isaac of old who brought forth a hundredfold fruit (Gen. 26:12).

13:24-25 - *“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.”* This is one of the most heartbreaking facts of life in the ministry. A good pastor will always seek to sow the good seed of the Word of God in the gardens of the hearts of his congregation, but so often the sad scenario recounted by Jesus in verse 25 takes place. The enemy appears as a messenger of light, as a person who is very righteous. He wins the people with his charm and flattery. He sows false teachings in their hearts and eventually they leave the church.

13:26 - *“But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.”* It is a fact of nature and also of spiritual life that when the rains come, that which is sown comes to maturity. The good and the evil rise together. When this happens, the pastor finds to his horror that he has a mixture growing together in his church.

13:27-28 - *“So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?”* One can well imagine the consternation of the church elders when they see the wicked. The initial reaction of the board of any church is usually—“Let’s deal with the matter right now.” But the pastor is more cautious and patient.

13:29 - *“But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.”* So often the wicked curl themselves around the just so that the just cannot discern the difference between the good and the bad. Good people will often even defend the wicked. Thus the prudent pastor will not permit them to be touched until it is the Lord’s time to deal with them.

13:30 - *“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”* We should notice that in the time of harvest, the wicked are removed first. They are not allowed to remain when revival comes.

13:31 - *“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field.”* A grain of mustard seed is very small. In the Middle East, it is often used in proverbial tales. Anything very small is referred to as being like a grain of mustard seed. Thus the audience was familiar with this analogy.

13:32 - *“Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”* The mustard seed grows to reasonably great heights so that the birds of the air lodge in it. The truth that the Lord was seeking to illustrate here was that the work of God starts small. I believe this is true in the personal life of each believer, even as Bildad said to Job: “Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase” (Job 8:7). May God grant that we will have the grace and patience to wait for the growth of the Kingdom within us. It will come about in due time.

13:33 - *“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”* Although leaven in Jewish and Scriptural teachings is always associated with evil, it is the transforming power of leaven that Jesus focuses our attention upon in this passage. Leaven has the characteristic of permeating everything into which it is placed.

In this case, it was placed into three measures of meal. If we take this a little further, we can say that those three measures permeated by leaven represent the Kingdom life permeating and transforming a person’s spirit, soul, and body. May the leavening effect of the Word of God totally transform us into the image of our blessed Lord.

13:34 - *“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them.”* Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables so that only those that were found worthy would understand, while the others would be excluded from the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

13:35 - *“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.”* This was prophesied by David in Psalm 78:2. In the wisdom of God, Christ spoke to the multitudes in parables. God knew beforehand how the religious leaders of Christ’s day would react. He knew that their hearts were evil and that they had no desire to know the truth.

Therefore, God spoke to them in parables so that they could not comprehend what He was saying. Thus they were not able to seize the truth that could have set them free. Let us beware that we do not have an evil heart of unbelief and miss the finest truths of God’s precious Word.

13:36 - *“Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.”* It was in secret that the truths of this parable were revealed. This suggests that there are few who will actually understand the truth in every generation.

13:37-39 - *“He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.”* The Lord makes it very clear indeed that the application is to people—the children of the kingdom and the children of the devil. There are only two categories of mankind in the world today: the redeemed and the unredeemed. The devil is the father of the wicked, and the Lord is the father of all those who are born again.

We must also remember that “the wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psa. 58:3). Both good and bad children are born. When God opens your eyes, you can look at children and discern whether they are good or bad.

13:40-41 - *“As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this [age]. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;”* The Second Coming of the Lord will be the time of final judgment, as we see in verse 41. This truth will be repeated in the seventh parable of the kingdom, which concerns a separation of the good and evil at the time of His appearance.

13:42-43 - *“And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of*

teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” The ultimate destination of the wicked is the Lake of Fire, which burns forever. We must remember that if there is eternal life, there must also be eternal judgment! The redeemed, in contrast to the wicked, will be filled with the light and glory of the Father and enjoy pleasures at His right hand forever.

13:44 - “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” This is the seventh parable of the Kingdom of God in Matthew chapter 13. The first four parables were spoken to the multitudes, but Jesus shared the last three parables with His disciples in private, suggesting that they are principally for His inner circle. We will see this in our chart in Appendix B at the end of this book.

The first four parables coincide with the elementary doctrines of Christ listed in Hebrews 6:1-2a, as well as the *first four* feasts of the Lord in Leviticus chapter 23. The first four parables correspond to the following spiritual experiences in a believer’s life:

1. Salvation - repentance from dead works - Feast of Passover
2. Reading the Word of God - faith toward God - Feast of Unleavened Bread
3. Water Baptism - doctrine of baptisms (water baptism) - Feast of the Firstfruits
4. Baptism of the Holy Spirit - doctrine of baptisms (baptism of the Holy Spirit) - Feast of Pentecost

The Lord reveals these *last three* parables to those who want to go on from the elementary principles of Christ.

5. Call to move on - laying on of hands, prophetic direction - Feast of Trumpets
6. Affliction and cleansing - resurrection life from dying to self - Day of Atonement
7. Glory, power, revival, and separation – the message of eternal judgment - Feast of Tabernacles

The parable of the hidden treasure was easily understood by the disciples. In those times, if there was a threat of invasion by hostile forces, the rich would seek to flee. They would bury part of their goods and take valuables with them that were more easily transportable. Their hope was to return when war had subsided and reclaim their treasure. However, some never returned.

Thus, when people were digging, they could quite often find hidden treasures. They would then buy the field and claim the treasure as their own.

This illustrates the truth that as we dig deeper into the Word, we can find fresh truths beyond the elementary principles of Christ. Therefore, this fifth parable corresponds to the fifth feast called the Feast of Trumpets, which called the people of God to march forward in the wilderness journey. Have you heard the call of God to come higher, dear friend?

13:45 - *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls.”* Pearls are the product of suffering. A marine biologist once explained to me the reason that some oysters produce pearls and others do not. The more aggressive oysters that seek to move on in the seabed stir up the sand as they are moving. These are the ones who receive a grit of sand, which irritates the stomach walls. That causes a secretion to form around the grain, which eventually becomes a beautiful pearl.

The gates of the heavenly city are made of pearls. This substantiates what Paul said in Acts 14:22: “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Therefore, friends, it is those who seek to deepen their relationship with the Lord who are going to find the pearl of great price.

This parable corresponds to the sixth feast, the Day of Atonement, which was the time of affliction for their souls. Also, it corresponds to the laying on of hands in Hebrews 6:1-3, for on the Day of Atonement the High Priest would place his hands upon the goat that was to bear the sins of Israel. We, too, must know what it is to suffer vicariously for others.

13:46 - *“Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”* The pearl of great price corresponds to the cry of Paul: “That I may win Christ” in Philippians 3:8. The greatest treasure of all is the Lord Himself. See Genesis 15:1.

13:47 - *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind.”* This parable speaks of the end-time revival. The Spirit of God will be cast as a net over whole villages, towns, cities, and nations. All kinds of people will respond, but as the parable continues we find that there also has to be a great sorting out of the good and bad fish.

13:48 - *“Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.”* I have been in past revivals and have seen all kinds of people respond to the drawing of the Spirit. I have seen many who were saved, water baptized, and even baptized in the Spirit. Unfortunately, after a time they did not walk uprightly, and as a consequence, they returned to their former life of sin.

13:49-50 - *“So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”* Beloved, there is going to be a great separation, even in the time of the latter day outpouring that corresponds to the seventh feast, the Feast of Tabernacles. This was a harvest feast which is the time of separating the wheat from the tares. Oh, beloved, let us walk uprightly before our God that we may escape the wrath to come, for the screams of the lost will be appalling as they fall headlong into the lake of fire.

The Parable of the Householder **13:51-53**

13:51 - *“Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.”* We should pray for the Spirit of understanding so that we can comprehend these parables, as did the disciples.

13:52 - *“Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.”* Here we have the key to being a teacher of righteousness in the Kingdom of God. We must bring forth truths that are the elementary principles of Christ, for we must feed the babes on the sincere milk of the Word. We must also present the meat of the Word for the more mature Christians.

In order to be a good teacher, we must constantly be seeking the Lord for greater truths. One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to show us new things. There is so much more of God to be known. We can never exhaust the knowledge of God in these few years upon earth.

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him: But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ... Now we have

received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Cor. 2:9-10,12). Let us constantly be stocking our cupboards with fresh experiences and truths from the Word of God.

13:53 - *“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.”* After discharging His soul with respect to these teachings, the Lord did not remain there. He moved speedily on to His next assignment. Let us also be those who are moving on all the time so that we may fulfill all that God has purposed for our lives.

Rejected at Nazareth

13:54-58

13:54-56 - *“And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?”*

Now Jesus returns to Nazareth and to the synagogue which He had known all His life. They were amazed at His wisdom and the miracles He performed, but they were offended because in their eyes He was only the son of a carpenter. They had grown up with Jesus, and some had known Him as a boy. He had no university education, nor had He sat at the feet of any notable rabbi. Jesus came from a very poor family and none of His brothers had distinguished themselves. As a result, they were offended at Him.

13:57 - *“And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.”* This reminds us of what the Lord said to the prophet Ezekiel: “And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For 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 3:4-6).

It is a human tendency to accept far more easily the message of the Lord from a stranger than from one of our own congregation. The reason for this, as with Israel of old, is that Christians

tend to let their hearts become hard so that they cannot accept what God is doing and saying to them. This is why God sends missionaries to other fields where people receive them more openly. Because the people of Nazareth could not receive Jesus, they died from the hardness of their hearts.

13:58 - *“And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”* The lack of faith in the hearts of the congregation can limit God and also affect our own ministry. Therefore, let us have faith and believe in the Lord so that we might see Him do mighty works in and through our lives.

Chapter 14

The Death of John the Baptist

14:1-12

14:1 - *“At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus.”* The Herod referred to here is Herod Antipas, who ruled over Galilee and Perea. His father was Herod the Great, who ruled at the time of the birth of Jesus. The word “tetrarch” means “ruler of a fourth part.” It came to be used as a title for a subordinate ruler over part of the country. At this time, news came to Herod concerning the miracles and wonders that Jesus was performing. Having a guilty conscience for executing John the Baptist, Herod thought that John had risen from the dead.

14:2 - *“And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.”* There could have been consternation in the court at this time. We are told by Origen, one of the Early Church fathers, that according to tradition there was a close resemblance between John and Jesus since they were blood cousins. Herod knew that he had put John to death unjustly as we now see in the succeeding verses.

14:3 - *“For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife.”* Herod Antipas had originally married the daughter of Aretas, King of Petraea, but on a trip to Rome he met Herodias, his brother Herod Philip’s wife, with whom he fell in love. He persuaded her to leave his brother and marry him. In return, he agreed to put away his wife.

14:4 - *“For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.”* Herod had broken two laws. Herod was living in adultery, but also he broke another law, which states, “Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother’s wife: it is thy brother’s nakedness” (Lev. 18:16). With prophetic boldness, John denounced Herod’s immoral conduct.

14:5 - *“And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.”* There is another aspect that the historian Josephus presents concerning Herod’s attitude. Herod feared John’s hold over the multitudes and he was concerned that they would revolt against his authority. For this reason also Herod desired to put John to death. However, he did not want to incite the people either.

14:6 - *“But when Herod’s birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.”* This was an appalling act of sensuality on the part of a teenage princess in the presence of all those army captains who would have been very coarse (Mark 6:21-29). Women in those days were kept in a special part of the house called the harem. When they appeared in public, they were veiled. Salome, daughter of Herodias by Herod Philip, obviously had the immoral dissolute principles of her mother.

14:7 - *“Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.”* This is an act of a very weak, immoral, and probably drunken man. No man of stature would make such a promise to a dissolute, sensuous teenage girl. Her mother obviously had been nurturing her.

14:8 - *“And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist’s head in a charger.”* It is clear that Herodias was incensed at the charges of John that she was not lawfully married to Herod Antipas. Therefore, she had planned this dance anticipating the offer of Herod.

14:9 - *“And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath’s sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.”* Herod’s attitude wavered, as Mark 6:20 records: “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.” So in one sense he wanted him dead, but in another sense he wanted to hear him. Such is the vacillating character of a weak and immoral man who had been “brought to a piece of bread” by an immoral and manipulating woman (cf. Prov. 6:26).

14:10-11 - *“And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.”* It was the fear of man that caused Herod to give the order for John’s execution (Prov. 29:25). But what were the consequences of this wickedness? The father of Herod’s former wife, King Aretas, was resentful of his daughter’s treatment. Therefore, he raised up an army against Herod Antipas and defeated him. The Jews took this as a sign of God’s judgment.

Then Herod Philip, Herodias’ first husband, died. The Roman Emperor Caligula gave Philip’s territory to Herod Agrippa with the title of King. Herodias was envious and encouraged her husband Antipas to go to Rome to ask for a similar title. But Herod Agrippa sent messengers to warn the emperor that Herod Antipas sought rebellion against Rome. The emperor believed

him, stripped Herod Antipas of all his possessions and wealth, and banished him to France. Thus, Herodias ruined Herod Antipas completely. The wheels of God's justice might turn slowly, but they turn surely.

14:12 - *“And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.”* John was buried by his loved ones, and Jesus, in being told, knew the end that awaited Him.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

14:13-21

14:13 - *“When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.”* Jesus went to a place of safety on the eastern side of the sea of Galilee. Luke 9:10 tells us it was called Bethsaida. The country in that area was very rough and was used for the pasturing of sheep.

14:14 - *“And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.”* The multitude had indeed outrun the ship and they were waiting for Him. Please notice that it was the *compassion* of Jesus that motivated the miracles. We need to be filled with the compassion of God so that there is a constant flow of God's provision to those in need.

14:15 - *“And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.”* Many times we are so like the disciples and we sum up a situation with our natural minds. I fear that so often we make mistakes and miss God because we do not ask the Lord what we should do in each given circumstance. Fortunately, Jesus was there and He gave commands concerning His will in the matter.

14:16 - *“But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.”* Jesus nearly always uses human channels for His blessings, and for this reason He spoke to His disciples to meet the needs of the people.

14:17 - *“And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.”* Their response was that they only had *five* loaves, which if one is interested in biblical numerics, is the number of grace. There were two fish, two being the number of testimony and witness. On this occasion

there was going to be a miracle that was to be a testimony of God's grace.

14:18 - *"He said, Bring them hither to me."* When we put matters into God's hands, how different things become. It allows God to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we might ask or think.

14:19 - *"And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude."* Here was the multitude sitting down on this rough grass waiting to receive bread and fish that was blessed. It is remarkable what a blessing will do. I have known of situations where unexpected guests have arrived and there was not sufficient food. After the prayer of blessing, to the amazement of the hostess at the end of the meal all the guests had been well fed and there were leftovers besides. I earnestly recommend that all work should first be blessed. You will then be surprised at what the Lord will do. His blessing makes rich and He adds no sorrow with it (Prov. 10:22).

14:20 - *"And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full."* Here we have the blessed "leftovers." There were twelve baskets full, twelve being the number of government. In this episode we have another sign that Jehovah-Jireh, the Governor of the universe is providing for His loved ones.

14:21 - *"And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."* We are told by the Gospels of Mark and Luke that they sat in companies by hundreds and fifties. These were measurements of the tabernacle of Moses. Here we have a picture of One in their midst whom the tabernacle glorifies—the divine Lawgiver Himself. The effect of the miracle was so great upon the multitude that they said, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world" (Jn. 6:14-15; cf. Deut. 18:18). They were going to take Him by force to make Him King.

The Miracle of Walking Upon the Water

14:22-33

14:22 - *"And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away."* One of the remarkable features of the life of Jesus is His consciousness of the economy of time. Having fulfilled this extraordi-

nary miracle of feeding the five thousand, most men would have wanted to rest. Instead, Jesus is preparing for another miracle. Perhaps we would see more of the graciousness of God if we employed our time more meaningfully. It is as though He was always moving, yet with order and with purpose.

14:23 - *“And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.”* Once again no time is lost and He gives Himself to prayer to receive strength and direction for this next miracle.

14:24 - *“But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.”* The Sea of Galilee can be very tempestuous and dangerous, especially for the boats at the time of Jesus. John 6:19 tells us that they had rowed all night and gained just over three miles. Since the Sea of Galilee is not very wide at that point, they could very well have been in mid-sea.

14:25 - *“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.”* The Lord had spent most of the night in prayer, and early in the morning He approaches the disciples. The Romans divided the night into four watches. Each one had three hours duration:

- The First watch is from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.
- The Second Watch is from 9:00 p.m. until 12:00 midnight.
- The Third watch is from 12:00 midnight until 3:00 a.m.
- The Fourth watch is from 3:00 a.m. until 6:00 a.m.

14:26 - *“And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.”* The Jews were highly superstitious and were very afraid of manifestations of spirits.

14:27 - *“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”* It is so characteristic of the Lord that throughout His life and ministry He was so very cheerful. He also sought to communicate that cheer to others. I believe it is glorifying and pleasing to the Lord to have a cheerful and joyous disposition at all times. Joy begets joy, and people love to be with those who are cheerful. Joy gives us strength.

14:28 - *“And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the*

water.” Peter now manifests his usual bubbling disposition by seeking also to walk upon the water. He was always in the forefront of things. It is so good to have this kind of people with you in times of trial, for their leap of faith and buoyant spirit is infectious.

14:29 - *“And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.”* Bearing in mind that the sea was very rough and that it was between three and six in the morning and still dark, this was a very courageous act.

14:30 - *“But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”* Then Peter, looking at the waves, became afraid and fear replaced faith so that he started to sink. I have heard so many ministers criticize Peter at this point, but may I ask, “How many beside Peter have had the faith and courage to step out on a raging sea at the Word of the Lord?” Do not forget that this was not an act of presumption, but an act of obedience to the spoken invitation of the Lord to “come.”

14:31 - *“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”* The Lord gently chided Peter. After all, his faith must have given sufficient pleasure to the Lord to have it included in Holy Scripture.

14:32 - *“And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.”* Hand in hand they walked back into the boat and the wind ceased. However, John’s Gospel gives us another important insight. “Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went” (Jn. 6:21). After being in the middle of the sea, suddenly and instantly they were ashore! This is remarkable. There were actually several miracles that night:

- Jesus walked upon the water.
- Peter walked upon the water at the invitation of the Lord.
- The wind ceased when they both got into the boat.
- The ship was immediately on the other side.

14:33 - *“Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”* After those miracles, the disciples were really convinced that He was the Son of God for He had met them on their own territory—the sea. They knew the Sea of Galilee and they could appreciate, as few others, the greatness of those miracles. The Lord wants to perform special miracles in your own life right where you live so you may know His greatness.

The Healing of Many in the Land of Gennesaret
14:34-36

14:34 - *“And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.”* Gennesaret is the name of a lovely plain on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. It was extremely fertile, and the Jews sometimes referred to it as a garden of princes. It has an almost tropical climate and is a very pleasant plain. See our map for the location of the plain of Gennesaret.

14:35 - *“And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;”* Here in these beautiful surroundings the One who personified the perfection of beauty, the Prince of princes Himself, manifested the graciousness of God as He restored human bodies to that goodness for which they were originally intended.

14:36 - *“And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.”* Just one touch and they were made whole. Just one touch of the Master and we likewise shall be made whole. By faith, reach out and touch Him now!

Chapter 15

The Traditions of the Elders

15:1-20

15:1 - *“Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,”* The concern of the religious leaders about the teachings of Jesus prompted them to send a delegation of their number to meet with Him and question Him concerning His orthodoxy.

15:2 - *“Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.”* There were basically two laws that the orthodox Jew had to follow:

1. The written law, which was given in the Scriptures.
2. The oral law that had been devised by the elders (their traditions).

They are quoting from the traditions of the elders, who laid down an intricate system of washing one’s hands before eating in order to purify a person from all defilement. Jesus does not directly answer their question, but instead responds by a question of His own.

15:3 - *“But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”* Jesus is citing a higher commandment—the fifth of the Ten Commandments delivered to Moses on the two tables of stone in God’s own handwriting. The Ten Commandments must exceed all others in importance. While the ceremonial laws are no longer required to be kept, the Ten Commandments form the basis of the New Testament, which prescribes that they be written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts (Heb. 8:10).

15:4 - *“For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.”* Here the Lord is combining two Scriptures—Exodus 20:12 (the fifth commandment) with Exodus 21:17, which ordains the punishment for those who curse their parents. Then Jesus confronts the religious leaders.

15:5-6 - *“But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”*

This teaching of the Pharisees needs to be understood in order to know how grievously they had changed the fifth commandment from God's original intention. Mark's Gospel also records this account. "But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free" (Mk. 7:11). This meant that a Jew could be excused from helping his aging parents simply by saying that he was a gift, meaning that he had offered himself to God and therefore belonged to God and was not responsible to aid them. This was a typical piece of Jewish legality in order to avoid the obligations of the fifth commandment. Thus, Jesus said that the Pharisees were hypocritical.

15:7-8 - *"Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."* Here Jesus is quoting verbatim from Isaiah 29:13. In the outward ritualistic ordinances these Jews excelled, yet Jesus said that their worship was meaningless.

15:9 - *"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* These teachings of Jesus we need to take to heart. What is true religion and how do we define it? One of the finest definitions that I have heard was given by William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury. He said, "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, and to devote the will to the purpose of God."

The Apostle James, our Lord's younger brother wrote in James 1:27: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." In other words, we are to keep the fifth commandment and enlarge it to include everyone, and also we are to have personal holiness.

15:10 - *"And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:"* When our Lord says "Hear and understand" it is because that which follows is vital to our spiritual life. This particular teaching is so important to our understanding of true holiness.

15:11 - *"Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."* It is our mouth that defiles us! From the mouth proceeds all uncleanness, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. All of the works of the flesh are released by the mouth—adultery, fornication, anger, and wrath. Virtually every sin is released and set into motion by the tongue, but those sins come from the heart. Therefore, let us

cry out to God, "Create in me a pure heart."

15:12 - "*Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?*" The teachings of Jesus and the teachings of the Pharisees were in direct conflict with one another. Jesus said that a man is holy if his heart is holy. They were saying that if a man accomplishes certain outward observances these make him holy. There could never be two teachings so opposed to one other. Let us learn the true ways of holiness so that we do not err as did the religious leaders who served God in vain with useless, man-made ideas.

15:13 - "*But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.*" It is a solemn thought that these leaders were not God-appointed. They were self-appointed and only recognized by man. They were not planted by God and would be rooted up. In time they would be removed by God, and certainly they could not enter His everlasting kingdom.

15:14 - "*Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*" In effect, the Lord was saying, "Don't waste your time fighting them." It is good sense not to use our time refuting the arguments of the religious leaders of our day. It is best to leave them alone and just preach the sincere milk and meat of the Word to the saved.

15:15 - "*Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.*" The disciples wanted to be sure that they had really understood this parable. It is a good thing when we are studying doctrine to ask God to make things very clear to our own hearts so that we will be able to correctly teach and guide others in the pathways of the just.

15:16 - "*And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?*" Jesus was amazed that they were so slow to understand. Nonetheless, He most graciously went through the truth again with them. This is a good lesson for us because usually our listeners are slow learners and we have to repeat the teachings over and over again. Whether it be Bible classes, seminars, or teaching from the pulpit, we must repeat and then repeat again. We need to develop and present the same truth from many different angles so that we are sure that all who hear us understand and it becomes real to them.

15:17 - "*Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly,*

and is cast out into the draught?” What we eat passes through our bodies and therefore cannot defile us, for it does not affect our hearts.

15:18 - *“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.”* Our lips defile our whole being when we speak those things that are sinful.

15:19 - *“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:”* So again may our cry to God continually be, “Lord, please create in me a pure heart.” Also, the Apostle 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).

15:20 - *“These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”* Friends, let us not rely on outward observances which can never make us holy. Let us ask God to work within our hearts and deal with the real issues. This is where holiness begins.

The Healing of the Syro-Phoenician Woman’s Daughter

15:21-28

15:21 - *“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.”* Historically these areas just north of Israel had been the territory of Hiram, King of Tyre, who was a great admirer of King David. It was Hiram who helped supply some of the material for the building of Solomon’s temple; thus, these people were not necessarily antagonistic to the nation of Israel. In fact, Israel traded often at the fairs of Tyre. However, they were essentially a heathen nation and their king at the time of the Babylonians was likened to Satan (cf. Ezek. 27-28).

15:22 - *“And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”* This heathen woman had sufficient knowledge of the ways of God to recognize the Lord as David’s greater Son.

15:23 - *“But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.”* You will notice in this passage the desperation and persistence of a mother’s love. Nearly all the miracles in the Gospels are released through love and compassion. It is compassion that releases the Spirit to heal and bless. Let us ask the Lord to deepen our love so that we are “rooted and grounded in love” as Paul says (Eph. 3:17). As we

grow in love and compassion we shall without doubt see more of the miracle working power of God flow in and through our lives to others.

15:24 - *“But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* Here again we see love and faith being put to the test. It was the same in the case of Elijah and Elisha when Elijah was going to be taken up into heaven. Elijah was consistently seeking to discourage Elisha from following him to the end, but it was a test. Elisha was tenacious and held on to Elijah to receive the double portion. Truths and miracles are obtained only by those who truly appreciate them.

15:25-26 - *“Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs.”* The importunity of this woman was phenomenal. She was not taking “no” for an answer. There could be few slights so great as to call a woman a dog. It was a term of utmost contempt and degradation. Any normal person would have been offended and left immediately, but this woman hung on. No doubt the torments and cries of her daughter caused her to keep pressing in for an answer to her desperate need. One has to go through similar experiences with loved ones who are suffering to really appreciate the desperation of this woman.

15:27 - *“And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”* Again she will not be denied. Nothing mattered but that her daughter be delivered from this continual torment day after day, and night after night. The mother probably was wakened many times during the night by the penetrating screams of her child.

15:28 - *“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”* At last her importunity and persistence has broken through. Her continual crying and refusal to be denied is answered by the commendation of our Savior, “Great is thy faith.” May we, too, have that holy determination that will not be denied.

Healing of the Multitudes **15:29-31**

15:29 - *“And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.”* Jesus returned to Galilee, the place where approximately

seventy percent of all His miracles were performed. We have the feeling that the Lord's brief entry into Tyre was uniquely for the benefit of that Gentile lady, but in addition to this, this episode was also for the purpose of teaching future generations the lesson of persistence. It is noteworthy that the people who received the commendation "Great is thy faith" were Gentiles. These were the Roman centurion and this Syro-Phoenician woman. Even today we often find greater faith outside the Church than inside. May we be the exceptions.

15:30 - *"And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:"* In Scripture, there are many glorious mountain-top experiences where God meets His people. Perhaps this mountain-top experience could be called "the Mount of Healing." God is so often associated with mountains:

- Mount Sinai - where the Law was given
- Mount of Transfiguration - where He met Moses and Elijah
- Mount Hebron - the place of the second and third anointings of David
- Mount Zion - the mountain of rest and glory
- Mount of the Beatitudes
- Mount of Healing

Isaiah 2:3 tells us that in the last days, "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."

15:31 - *"Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel."* Upon this mountain God was glorified in the sight of His people through healing.

The Feeding of the Four Thousand

15:32-39

15:32 - *"Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."* This mountain-top experience where Jesus

was healing the sick did not last just for a few hours. They were together on that mountain top for three days. They slept on the ground without bed rolls or any other conveniences. The power of God must have been so great that all that mattered to the people was to be with Jesus.

15:33 - *“And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?”* Just a little time before the disciples had witnessed the feeding of the five thousand, but now their hearts were so hardened that they applied reasoning again to the problem.

15:34-35 - *“And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.”* Applying the law of numerics, we know that the number *seven* is the number of perfection or completeness. Here again is the thought of *order* in His kingdom.

15:36 - *“And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.”* It is in the prayer of blessing and giving of thanks that provision for all our needs is met. Let us continually be a thankful people and we shall see God meet all our needs.

15:37 - *“And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.”* They started with seven loaves, but now they have seven baskets left over. The fact that they started and ended with seven is an expression of the Scripture—“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). God always finishes what He starts. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. He does all things well, so let us not have anxiety over anything.

15:38 - *“And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.”* Four is the symbol of universality—north, south, east, and west. One thousand is the number of abundance. Here we have the sign of our God who is the God of Abundance. In this miracle we see the fulfillment of the scriptural promise, “I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread” (Psa. 132:15). What He did for the multitude, He will do for you also if you will only believe in Him.

15:39 - *“And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.”* In these Gospel accounts of His life and ministry, there is ever the sense of movement. Jesus is

moving on now to another stage in His ministry, this time to Magdala. Mark 8:10 calls it Dalmanutha, a town situated on the west coast of the sea of Galilee between the villages of Gennesaret to the north and Tiberias to the south. It was the place of Mary, out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils (Mark 16:9).

Chapter 16

Again a Desire for a Sign

16:1-4

16:1 - *“The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.”* The Pharisees and Sadducees were two groups who were diametrically opposed to one another. The Pharisees were the strict keepers and guardians of the law; they were the conservatives. The Sadducees were the liberals who did not even believe in the resurrection. Although these two parties did not like each other, they were happy to join forces for the sole purpose of destroying Jesus. Thus, they came tempting Him. It is strange but true that workers of iniquity who hate each other can unite when there is a common enemy. We shall later see this at the time of the crucifixion when Herod and Pilate became friends.

16:2-3 - *“He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?”* Since they were a nation of farmers, the weather was a topic of major discussion among the Israelites. It was commonly said that the weather would be good when there was a red sky in the evening. When the sky was red in the morning they would expect bad weather to soon spring up during that day. Therefore, they would readily identify with this saying.

The reasoning of the Lord was simply that they were able to discern the signs in the sky, but were unable to understand the times in which they were living. They did not understand that they were living in the time of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy: “And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (Isa. 40:5).

16:4 - *“A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.”* The Lord was repeatedly calling His generation “adulterous.” Adultery seems to have been the prime sin of Israel. The prophets of old denounced them for this as we read in Isaiah 57:3: “But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore.”

It is alarming that in these last days adultery is no longer considered to be wrong but is accepted

by the government and society alike. Adultery warps one's standards and provokes a desire for the spectacular. However, the Lord reiterates that no sign will be given but that of Jonah the prophet, whose stay three days and nights in the belly of the fish was a type of His death and resurrection.

The Leaven of the Scribes and the Pharisees

16:5-12

16:5 - *“And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.”*

We shall see in this passage the all-too-common trait of man to rationalize spiritual things. The disciples had forgotten to bring bread and assumed that Jesus was speaking about natural things. By this assumption they totally missed the point, for He was concerned with a spiritual lesson. Let us never assume when He is speaking that we have the interpretation; but instead, let us ask Him to make it clear. I have known many who made shipwreck of their lives because of the inclination to interpret dreams, prophecies, or Scriptural passages with their natural minds.

16:6-7 - *“Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.”* It is obvious that Jesus was not speaking about natural bread, but it is our human mind that is the problem, as Paul states:

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). Therefore, let us not seek to discern spiritual things with our natural mind. The natural human mind is one of the greatest problems of man. Even the twelve apostles had a major blockage in their spiritual lives because of their natural minds.

16:8-10 - *“Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?”* The Lord questions their faith and redirects their thoughts to His bountiful provision by reminding them of the past miracles. Certainly, He was not looking to the disciples to provide bread. The Lord is the provider.

16:11-12 - *“How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”* The Lord must have long patience dealing with us His fallen creatures with all of our stupidity and lack of spiritual awareness and perception.

Now on this subject of the doctrine of error, we do need to meditate. The Lord likens false doctrine to leaven which permeates a whole lump of flour into which it is placed. False doctrine, when permitted to enter into the teachings of a congregation, will affect every part of the life of the church and every individual believer. Jesus said that we would know the truth and the truth would set us free. Therefore, let us beware of the leaven of false doctrine and not allow the spirit of error to corrupt our churches. May we be good shepherds of the flock and faithfully feed our people with the finest of the wheat.

The Revelation that Jesus is the Christ **16:13-20**

16:13 - *“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”* This town was filled with pagan temples. It was originally named after the Greek god Pan, but was renamed Caesarea (Town of Caesar) by Herod Philip. Then he added Philippi to distinguish it from the town of Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast. Time was now short for the Lord because it was just before the feast of tabernacles which was celebrated in October. This would have been a little more than six months before His crucifixion in April. His purpose in asking the question “Whom do men say that I am?” is to fix within the mind and spirit of the disciples His deity.

16:14 - *“And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.”* It is clear that the population esteemed Jesus as a mighty prophet, but who He really was they did not know. Then Jesus pressed the issue.

16:15 - *“He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?”* This was the all-important thing. Did His disciples indeed know who He was? It is a question that all must answer. To say that Jesus was a good man or even a great prophet is not sufficient for our salvation.

16:16 - *“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

This is the same declaration of faith that we must have, for there is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:9-10).

16:17 - *“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”* These words of Jesus are very important. He is saying that no one can know that He is the Son of God but by the sovereign grace of God. No human intellect can fathom this mystery; it requires a revelation from the Heavenly Father.

16:18 - *“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* He is saying to Peter that upon this declaration He is building His Church, and that He (Jesus) is the Son of God. His Church is certainly not built upon Peter.

16:19 - *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* This promise is not just for Peter, but it is for the Church universal. God gives us the power to bind the forces of the evil one upon earth.

16:20 - *“Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.”* The purpose of this confession of faith was to instill into the hearts of His disciples the fact that He was indeed the Messiah. This was not to be generally known, otherwise how would Israel crucify their Messiah. The Apostle Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 2:8, saying: “None of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Ignorance was a factor in the crucifixion, yet it was willful ignorance that resulted from hearts made hard by sin.

Jesus Reveals His Mission to go to the Cross

16:21-26

16:21 - *“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”* The Lord now reveals to the disciples that His mission is to die at Jerusalem at the hands of the religious leaders. This was something that Israel could not

understand. It was inconceivable that their Messiah, whom they thought of as a military leader could possibly die.

16:22 - *“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”* Peter was only echoing the sentiments of any orthodox Israelite.

16:23 - *“But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”* In reality, Satan at that moment was using Peter as a channel to seek to turn Jesus from the cross. Satan knew that the cross would destroy him. So here we see one of the great dangers in life. At one moment Peter was used of God to receive a marvellous revelation, but now in an unguarded moment he became a channel for Satan. Let us take heed to ourselves that this does not happen to us.

16:24 - *“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”* The cross is central in the Christian life. We receive life through the cross of Christ. However, we must also take up another cross—that special cross of His choice for our lives. Every one of us will have our own cross.

16:25 - *“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”* We must be ready to lay down our lives day by day. Paul said to the Corinthians, “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31).

16:26 - *“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”* This verse should be our constant meditation. What are we working for and passing our allotted days upon this earth for? It is for that which profits nothing or for eternal rewards?

His Second Coming

16:27-28

16:27 - *“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”* We must never forget that our eternal status and rewards will be according to the way we lived our lives here upon earth. Let us continually live with that in mind.

16:28 - *“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”* This saying of Jesus refers to that which follows very quickly now in the next chapter—the glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. This glory, seen six days later, prefigures the glory that will be seen when Christ returns.

Chapter 17

The Transfiguration

17:1-13

17:1 - *“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves” (NIV).* Here we have the inner circle of believers who are going to experience the fulfillment of Matthew 16:28. These would see the glory of God manifested through Jesus. This glory was only seen by the inner circle. So often we have this in life and also in Scripture. There are only the privileged few who are permitted to have glimpses of God’s glories. Others are not allowed to see them.

17:2 - *“There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light” (NIV).* This glory came six days after Jesus foretold its coming. Six days has a prophetic connotation. It is a reference to the end of the Church Age and the beginning of the Millennial reign of Christ upon earth. In both cases the glory of God shall be manifested through His people. Isaiah also confirms this clearly:

“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” (Isa. 60:1-2).

This thought of the glory of God being manifested in His people definitely refers to the last days of the Church Age when all the forces of darkness will be unleashed upon the earth. Then God’s people will shine like the stars that appear at night. The greater the darkness, the brighter they will shine. Christ is the source of all glory. Yet His glory will also be seen in those who are with Him when He comes, as we read in 2 Thessalonians 1:10: “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day.”

17:3 - *“And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.”* Moses and Elijah are the two prophets mentioned in Revelation 11. They are “the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth” (Rev. 11:4). We are told by Luke only that they were talking to Him about His decease (Lk. 9:31). Therefore, we can conclude that these two great prophets of the past were strengthening Jesus for the trials that lay ahead.

17:4 - *“Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”* The fact that Peter suggested that three tabernacles be built connects this manifestation of God’s glory with the Feast of Tabernacles. We know that on the celebration of that feast at the dedication of the Temple of Solomon, the glory of God filled the temple.

17:5 - *“While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”* This is the second of three times it is recorded that the Father spoke to the Lord with an audible voice in the presence of others. He first spoke to Him in the Jordan at His baptism (Mt. 3:17), now on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the third time at Jerusalem (Jn. 12:21). Here on the Mount we see that the Father adds a command to the disciples—the disciples are commanded to hear His Son.

17:6 - *“And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.”* Hearing the voice of the Father, they trembled with fear. It is that same fear that the prophet Daniel experienced: “Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength” (Dan. 10:8).

17:7 - *“And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.”* The same thing happened to Daniel. “And behold a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands” (Dan. 10:10). In the presence of such a manifestation of God’s power, none can stand.

17:8 - *“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.”* Here, although taken out of context, is the cry of our life, that we would see Christ and Him alone.

17:9 - *“And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.”* Peter waited until he wrote his last epistle, just prior to his death, to tell about his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus.

Peter said in 2 Peter 1:16-18: “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of

his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor 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.”

17:10 - *“And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?”* The reason for this teaching on Elijah’s coming was the prophecy given by Malachi: *“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”* (Mal. 4:5-6).

17:11 - *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.”* Jesus confirmed that Elijah must come, saying, *“Elijah truly shall first come and restore all things.”* This has not happened yet. Jesus was saying that Elijah will come. This is made clear also in Revelation 11:4, since Elijah is one of the two witnesses. However, the prophecy of Malachi 4:5 had already been *partially* fulfilled by John the Baptist who came with the same anointing and power of Elijah. In that sense, John was Elijah, but Elijah himself will come *“before the great and dreadful day of the Lord”* which is the second coming of Christ.

17:12-13 - *“But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.”* This fulfills the prophecy of Gabriel to Zacharias the father of John: Luke 1:17 - *“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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.”*

The Casting Out of the Spirit of a Lunatic

17:14-21

17:14-15 - *“And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.”* It is so pleasing to God when we truly take the lowly place in our supplications toward Him as did this man. Humility precedes blessing. His appeal is to the Lord’s mercy. This holy acknowledgment of our dependence upon Him is not only right but pleasing to our God. It was a very severe case of demon possession.

17:16 - *“And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.”* There are degrees of power in the Kingdom and we have to realize that we need to cry out as the disciples of old, “Lord increase our faith.”

17:17 - *“Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.”* The Lord sighed in agony of spirit. The way of faith had been a way of life that He had sought to impart to His disciples, but they were coming short of His expectations. Let us not disappoint Him by coming short in His expectation of us.

17:18 - *“And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.”* We are surely going to see tremendous and instantaneous cures in these last days. Diseases that the medical profession thought were impossible will be cured by the power of our God through His people.

17:19 - *“Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?”* We also need to enquire of the Lord and ask Him the same question in private if we are praying for others and they are not cured. “Lord, why weren’t they healed? Is it my fault? Is it my lack of faith, or theirs?”

17:20-21 - *“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”* The Lord puts before them the fact that faith has no boundaries, yet at the same time He acknowledges that this had been a very strong and fierce demon. Some demons can only be cast out through prayer and fasting.

He Speaks Again Concerning His Death

17:22-23

17:22 - *“And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men.”* The all-prevailing thought of Jesus is His death and His desire to prepare His disciples. But we also see here that He is speaking now for the first time of betrayal, for Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him.

17:23 - *“And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.”* To encourage them, He spoke also of His resurrection, having that inner peace and assurance that He would hit the mark and please the Father who would resurrect Him. It was the same assurance that Paul had when he could say in his last prison experience that he had finished his course and that henceforth there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

The Tribute Money

17:24-27

17:24 - *“And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?”* This was the tax imposed upon all Israelites for the upkeep of the temple and the sacrifices that had to be offered according to the law.

Exodus 30:13 says, *“This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: a shekel is twenty gerahs: an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD.”* This was approximately two days wages. In answer to the question, *“Does your master pay tribute?”* Peter replied, *“Yes.”*

17:25-26 - *“He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.”* The Lord by this question was simply saying that He, as the Son of God, was, in reality, free of tax.

17:27 - *“Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.”* The great concern here was not that they be insulted, but rather that there would be a stumbling-block put in their way and they would be turned out of the way of righteousness. Jesus was saying that in some cases when we are legitimately free from certain forms of service, we should comply anyway so that we are not a stumbling-block to others.

Chapter 18

Teaching on Humility

18:1-10

18:1 - *“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”* The disciples, being so human, were often discussing among themselves their merits. Strife would break out among them as they argued who would have the best positions. This was the subject of their conversation, even during the Last Supper (Lk. 22:24). In response to this, Jesus called a little child to Himself.

18:2-3 - *“Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* We must ever be child-like, but never childish. In order to enter the Kingdom, we must be born again. However, we also need to become poor in spirit, having a holy dependence upon the Lord.

18:4 - *“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”* It is this attitude of knowing from the heart that we are truly nothing (and less than nothing) that opens to us the riches of the Kingdom. Remember, it was through pride that Satan rebelled and lost his heavenly position, and it is through humility that the sons of Adam can gain entrance into that which he forfeited.

18:5-6 - *“And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”* Likewise, we must humble ourselves and be open to receive the little ones as though we were receiving Jesus. Let us be careful that our words and actions do not become a stumbling-block to a child’s faith in Christ.

18:7 - *“Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”* People are always going to be offended, but let us pray that those offences do not come through us.

18:8 - *“Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is*

better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.” So serious is the issue of life eternal that the Lord is literally saying if one of our members causes us to miss heaven, it is better to cut it off than to risk going to hell because of it.

18:9 - *“And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.”* In the manner of a true Hebraic teacher, He repeats this illustration and truth.

18:10 - *“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”* Then this passage ends with a reminder that we, with all diligence, should make sure that we are not the cause of any of these little ones missing heaven.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

18:11-14

18:11 - *“For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.”* The whole theme of the Gospel story is to save lost sinners. The word “religion” means to bind together again that which was once bound. Thus, man who was once in communion with God became separated from God because of sin. But through the death of Christ man can again come back into the presence of God. Now the Lord wants to remind us of His purpose in coming into the world.

18:12 - *“How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?”* Christ the Good Shepherd watches over His flock with tender loving care, counting them one by one to see that all are safely in the fold. But if one is missing, He goes searching for that little lost lamb. Likewise, the shepherds of the congregations must seek those who are missing from church without good reason.

18:13-14 - *“And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”* Surely, those that are restored are highly prized among the flock.

The Sinning Brother

18:15-20

18:15 - *“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”* There are occasions when another member of the church has offended you. The first step is to go to them and seek reconciliation. However, if that person will not listen, there are several steps we should take to resolve the problem.

18:16 - *“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”* Every effort should be expended to make sure that the facts are clearly understood.

18:17 - *“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.”* It is regrettable that so many have opportunities given to them to know the way of salvation and to become church members, even for years. Yet, because they will not deal with issues in their lives that God is confronting them with, there comes a time when those things will be revealed. The result is that they harden their hearts and cause difficulties in the church, and then they criticize other members. Eventually, they leave the church and are lost.

18:18 - *“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* It is no coincidence that these verses should follow the subject of church members rising up against others. Those that leave because of offences so often will talk against the church, and their mouths need to be stopped.

Titus 1:11 says, “Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” We need to bind in the Spirit those who cause trouble and then pray for a release of the Spirit of God to pour out His blessings upon us.

18:19 - *“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”* The Lord repeats Himself by assuring us that we are given the power to bind the wicked to preserve the righteous.

18:20 - *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of*

them.” The Lord will confirm this action of binding the wicked by coming personally. These are the instructions which were given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:4-5: “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Teaching on Forgiveness **18:21-35**

18:21 - “*Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*” In our thinking, everything must have an end. But God who dwells in eternity has no such boundaries.

18:22 - “*Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*” While we do not wish to push numerics too far, there is an interesting thought here. Seven times seventy is 490. 490 years was the time period set by God for Israel’s restoration, as we read in Daniel 9:24: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy [place].”

To say we must forgive “seventy times seven” simply means that we should not keep count of offenses. The number 490 (70 times 7) is also the number of forgiveness for Israel. To illustrate forgiveness, the Lord now gives this parable.

18:23-24 - “*Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.*” This sum would be equivalent to ten million dollars in today’s economy. It is a very large sum by any standard.

18:25 - “*But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.*” Naturally, the king was going to ensure that he had some return for his money, so he followed the custom of those days and was going to sell his servant and his family.

18:26 - *“The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.”* The servant now appealed to the king for mercy and time to repay that which he owed.

18:27 - *“Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.”* The king, however, went much further than the servant would have dreamed possible, for he totally freed him of his debt. This was an extraordinary act of mercy.

18:28 - *“But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.”* The fellow servant owed but the equivalent of a dollar, an amount insignificant in any person’s eyes. But the love of money and a covetous spirit would not let him forgive this man.

18:29-30 - *“And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.”* In spite of the same entreaties that he had made to the king (when he was so freely forgiven), he hardened his heart and refused to forgive this insignificant amount of money. To throw the man into a debtors prison for this amount is inconceivable.

18:31 - *“So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.”* It is so sad that someone who had been given such an opportunity in life to make a fresh start failed again so miserably.

18:32 - *“Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:”* The Lord rightly discerned the heart condition of his servant that it was indeed wicked and evil. The prophet well said, “Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD” (Isa. 26:10).

18:33 - *“Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?”* One cannot change the heart of the wicked by kindnesses; they will turn against the righteous because their heart is fully intent to walk in the ways of evil (Eccl. 8:11).

18:34 - *“And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that*

was due unto him.” Of course, evil workers are rewarded; thus, this man was given over to the very tormentors that he would have used to torment his fellow servant. The divine rule of judgment always applies—the same judgment that we would mete out to others is meted out to us. We will be judged by the same measuring rod that we use on others (Mt. 7:1-5).

18:35 - *“So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”* Is this not a lesson to take to heart? We are going to be treated by God in the same way we treat others. Let us major on the spirit of forgiveness and pray that this will flow like a mighty stream from our hearts to others. Then in like manner shall a stream flow down from heaven above to us. Praise the Lord!

Chapter 19

Teaching on Divorce

19:1-15

19:1 - *“And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan.”* The narrative refers to Christ’s last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem to be there for the last Passover, at which He would be crucified. The other Gospel writers, Luke and John, record many events not mentioned by Matthew. Mark and Matthew now take up the narrative again by relating that after Jesus had left Galilee he approached Jerusalem by passing through Perea, which was next to Judea on the east banks of the Jordan.

19:2 - *“And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.”* There must have been a sizeable crowd that followed Him on this last journey. Obviously, this must have been a very impressive demonstration of His acceptance by the common folk.

19:3 - *“The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”* It is essential to understand the question of the Pharisees. It is important that we know what the general teaching in Israel was at that time concerning divorce. There were two great teachers, Shammai and Hillel, who presented the conservative and the liberal interpretations of the Scriptures. The Pharisees were seeking to make Jesus decide for one or the other. However, His answer took them by surprise.

19:4 - *“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,”* The Lord bypasses all the reasonings of the day and goes back to the law of first mention with respect to marriage, starting with Genesis 5:2. Then He quotes Genesis 2:24:

19:5 - *“And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”* The strength of His statement is such that literally in marriage two people become one person. In Genesis 5:2, God called their name Adam.

19:6 - *“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* Jesus is stating that marriage is an act of God, for it is God

who joins a man and woman. Therefore, one must not touch the handiwork of God.

19:7 - *“They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?”* The Pharisees are quoting Deuteronomy 24:1-2: “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife.”

19:8 - *“He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.”* Jesus is correcting their statement. Moses never “commanded” a writing of divorce. He said that Moses permitted divorce only because of their heart condition. “For the hardness of your hearts he allowed you to put away your wives.” Therefore, we see that divorce springs from a heart that has grown hard, cold, and indifferent. It is a heart that is no longer filled with tenderness and love for the other. The whole message of the new covenant is a new heart of flesh.

19:9 - *“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”* Jesus makes it clear that the heart of God hates divorce.

God said in Malachi 2:14-16: “The LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? ... Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.” Marriage is a covenant; and God hates divorce, which is a broken covenant. God does not bless broken covenants.

Now we have what is termed the exception clause: “except for fornication.” *Whosoever shall put away his wife, [except it be for fornication,] and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.* This exception does not occur in Mark or Luke, or anywhere else. Matthew alone records this because he is writing to the Jewish world who had unique marriage customs, as we have already mentioned in Matthew chapters one and five.

In the Jewish community, couples were engaged for about one year, during which time they were called husband and wife. Christ taught the Jewish world that if there had been “fornication” (not adultery) during the engagement period, one could put away his engaged wife. Mark wrote his Gospel to the Romans. In the Roman world, there was no such custom. Therefore, Mark did not include this. In the Jewish society, only men could put away their wives. Wives could not put away their husbands. In the Roman community, wives could put away their husbands. Therefore Mark includes Christ’s teaching on wives not putting away their husbands.

We read in Mark 10:11-12: “And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.” Jesus said in Luke 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.”

This is repeated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 7:2-3: “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”

The overall teaching of Jesus is against divorce. This was the view held by the school of Shammai, while the liberal school of Hillel made a mockery of Deuteronomy 24:1. They exaggerated “and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes” by saying that *anything* a wife did that was not pleasing to her husband was grounds for divorce. Whereas Moses specified “because he hath found some uncleanness in her.” This would appear to relate to a sexual disease that had been induced prior to marriage.

While this is hotly debated by the liberals of all time, it is clear that divorce is against the teachings of the prophets and certainly of Jesus. In fact, the compassion of God for an erring wife may be seen in the Old Testament by God’s command to Hosea to take back his wife who had committed adultery.

19:10 - “His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.” It is evident by the response of the disciples that they fully understood from the words of Jesus that marriage is permanent and binding. In effect, they were saying, “The standards are

so high, it is better not to risk getting married.”

19:11-12 - *“But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.”* The Lord then speaks on celibacy by saying that only those who have been given a special God-given gift can avoid marriage. Paul mentioned this in his writings to the Corinthians.

“For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn [with passion]” (1 Cor. 7:7-9).

We may conclude this section by saying that marriage is honorable and holy and not to be entered into lightly, for it is lifelong union between man and wife. Whom God has joined together let no man break asunder.

The Blessing of the Little Children ***19:13-15***

19:13-15 - *“Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.”*

It is only fitting that this section should follow the marriage teaching, seeing that children are the consequence of the union and communion between a man and a woman. They are the fruit of marriage and a sign of the blessing of God upon a marriage. Children are, however, a responsibility. They must be guided, as Proverbs 22:6 commands: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

A child is an eternal responsibility. One must give an account to God for their welfare and also for their spiritual life. Therefore, they are an investment that should not be treated lightly. One must seek the Lord before bringing a new life into this world to be sure that it is the will of God.

I would like to apply John 1:13 to this subject: “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Let us pray that all our children be born of the will of God.

The Rich Young Ruler **19:16-26**

In a sense, this story of the rich young ruler follows in sequence. First came the teaching of marriage, then of children, now one who is a young man. We need to realize that how we raise our children will determine their character and destiny in later years. So let us now look carefully at this one who has arrived at manhood.

19:16 - *“And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”* What a wonderful quest—eternal life! But why did he not know the answer if he had been raised in a godly home?

19:17 - *“And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”* The Lord carefully refutes the title of Good Master and attributes all to the Father. It is important that we take no credit whatsoever for any graces that others may see in us. After all, what do we have that has not been given to us?

19:18-19 - *“He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”* The Lord is ever the consummate soul winner. He is desirous that we shall not only be saved but that we might attain unto all that heaven’s glory has for us. Therefore, Jesus cites first the laws which He knows this young man practices. And when we consider the laws that the Lord quotes, we realize that this young man was of exemplary character. Not only was he sexually pure and scrupulously honest, love must also have flowed down from his heart to others. Mark 10:21 tells us that Jesus loved him as He looked upon him.

19:20-21 - *“The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.”* Jesus conceded

that the young man had indeed kept the commandments He had mentioned, which was indeed a wonderful testimony. However, the love of money, the root of all evil, was in his heart.

“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 6:10). This is similar to the tenth commandment—“Thou shalt not covet.”

19:22-23 - *“But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* Money can have such a hold upon one’s heart and life. Why do people love money? It is not just for what money can provide for there are many rich people who do not avail themselves of the pleasure that money can buy.

In some cases, people do not even eat the proper food in order to keep their money. Others deprive themselves of this world’s goods in order to enhance their bank balance. Money itself is their god. It is worshipped and adored while in reality it has of itself no value. Today it is only paper. Lust for money is one of the most powerful of all spirits. To love money is actually to love the devil.

19:24 - *“And again I say unto you, 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.”* The eye of the needle was an expression used for the little door in the large city gate that was opened to permit men to enter when the large gates were shut. It would have been impossible for a camel to have entered. This was the Lord’s way of saying that rich men who were so attached to their riches could not get into the gates of heaven. They could not exchange their riches for heaven’s glories.

19:25 - *“When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?”* So adamant was Jesus that the riches of this world can hinder men from entering heaven that the disciples cried out again as with his teaching on divorce: “Who then can be saved?” It was as though in both cases Jesus was giving a standard so high that His followers were saying, “Absolutely no one can attain unto that standard.”

19:26 - *“But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”* Therefore, friends, again we come to the grace of God that enables us to meet the standard. We must never forget Philippians 2:13: “For it is God which worketh in

you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” God is able to work mightily in our hearts and change our mind and our will. I commend this promise to you.

Paul also encourages us in 2 Corinthians 9:8, saying, “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” Therefore, let us not faint at the standards of Christ. Rather let us look unto the all sufficiency of the grace of God, who first is able to make us willing, and then gives strength to enable us to have that standard worked out in our hearts and lives.

The Apostles’ Reward

19:27-30

19:27 - *“Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?”* This account follows sequentially the tale of the rich young ruler who lost all because he would not give all. But if we have brought up our children to give their all to follow Jesus, what will their rewards be?

19:28 - *“And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* The twelve apostles who had followed Jesus in the bringing in of the new order (the New Testament) would be accorded the singular honor of judging the twelve tribes of Israel. But for those who have given their all to follow Jesus, there is the honor of becoming kings and priests and reigning upon a throne forever and forever (Rev. 1:6, 5:9-10, 20:6). This is the eternal aspect of the reward.

19:29 - *“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”* This is the reward given to us here while we are on this earth, and we should not overlook it. Whatever we have sacrificed here for the sake of Jesus, we are going to receive a hundredfold in this life. When we have to forsake companionships, family and friends, we shall receive a family that is extended wherever we go upon this earth.

It is wonderful to be a part of the family of God. We experience joys and privileges the world can never know, all because we are in Christ. All over the world we have brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers in Christ in every place we set our feet. Praise His wonderful Name!

19:30 - *“But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.”* It is one of the strange facts of life that many who are *first* given an opportunity by God to enter His ministry or accomplish a certain work for Him, fail or turn back, or are not willing to be wholehearted. Such a person was Vashti, but Esther came later and took her crown. People of this category are what one might term “scaffolding.” They are used by God for a time to help others build up a work. Later they are discarded by the Holy Spirit because their lives would not conform to His standards. Let us be true living stones that make up God’s house that lasts and abides for His glory.

Chapter 20

The Parable of the Laborers

20:1-16

20:1-2 - *“For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.”* The theme of this parable is the question of wages or rewards that will be given to those who work for a king in his kingdom upon earth.

The first group represents those who are called at an early age and enter His service. Perhaps they were saved when they were young children and have all their lives witnessed for the Master. They may also represent those who go to the mission field in their early twenties and spend all their lives working for the Lord in some foreign country, even perhaps dying in the land of their adoption.

20:3-4 - *“And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.”* One of the lessons often repeated in this parable was the fact that there were those who were willing to work and yet were not hired. This is a fact that is stressed in the Old and New Testament alike. Paul says in Romans 10:15, “How shall they preach except they be sent?” God has His sovereign time for our call to be realized and we have to humbly wait for Him.

We must learn a lesson from the life of Moses who was called at an early age but presumed to fulfill the call of God prematurely by killing the Egyptian. “For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not” (Acts 7:25). Moses had to spend forty years in the wilderness; and then it was only at the burning bush that he was commissioned and began his active ministry in the Lord’s vineyard.

20:5-7 - *“Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.”*

If the time of day could represent the lifetime of a servant of God, we see that some had to wait until a ripe old age before they were used of God. I have known many choice servants of God who have been commissioned in their forties, fifties, sixties, and even their seventies. And it is often those who are called later in life who are more faithful and appreciative of the ministry than those who enter at an early age.

20:8-12 - *“So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.”*

The natural man thinks that those who have worked longest should be paid more than those who have worked but a fraction of their life. However, the judgment of God is according to knowledge. The Lord knows that if given the opportunity, those who were sent last would have cheerfully worked the whole day (i.e. their whole lifetime). It seems that God has His appointed time when He needs us, but if it is late in life, that will not preclude us from the same reward of those who were privileged to have been called early. Therefore, Jesus pleads in protest with the murmurers:

20:13-15 - *“But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?”* The justness of the judgment of God has been proven when we consider that all would have been willing but they lacked opportunity for it was not God’s time for them to be used. The Apostle Paul describes it like this: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33).

20:16 - *“So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.”* The ones who had worked all day in the fields in effect disqualified themselves by their complaining. We need to give heed to the exhortation of Paul: “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil.

2:14-15). May the light of a thankful countenance shine out to the world. May we be truly grateful for all that the Lord most graciously gives to us—His very unprofitable servants.

Further Teaching With Respect to His Death **20:17-19**

20:17-19 - *“And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.”*

This is the third time Jesus warned the disciples that He is on His way to the cross (16:21; 17:22-23). At this time there are crowds with Him but there is an urgency in the way He talks to the twelve. He brings them aside and seeks to make them understand the purpose of His life, which is to go to the cross. He knew well what awaited Him in Jerusalem. All the indignities and cruelties had not been hidden from Him by His ever loving Heavenly Father. Yet, in obedience to the Father, He was going to suffer the shame and pain so that we might be redeemed. Then He adds a more cheerful note—that He will be resurrected after three days.

The Lessons on Humility **20:20-28**

20:20-21 - *“Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.”* It is so evident that mothers like to live their lives through their children. The success of their children means everything to them. Thus, the mother of James and John was not thinking just of this life, but of eternity in heaven. She also had an understanding that in heaven there are differing degrees of glory. There are different ranks. Paul states that as every star differeth in glory, so too shall we be in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:41-42).

In effect, she was asking for the two top places in heaven for her sons, which was hardly a sign of humility. In this same incident, Mark’s Gospel records that it was James and John who asked Jesus for this exalted position.

When we study the women who were at the scene of the cross, we see that the mother of James and John was there. Matthew 27:56: “Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, *and the mother of Zebedee’s children.*” Although Matthew does not disclose her name, Mark’s Gospel does. Her name is Salome. We read in Mark 15:40, “There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, *and Salome.*” John 19:25 says, “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, *and his mother’s sister*; [Salome] Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.”

Matthew says “the mother of Zebedee’s children.” Mark says “Salome.” John says “his mother’s sister” (i.e. the sister of Mary, Jesus’ mother). Therefore, the mother of James and John must have been named *Salome*, and she would have been the sister of Mary, mother of Jesus. John and James would have been the full blood cousins of Jesus. For that reason they may well have thought that they had a right by family relationship to those positions. Now Jesus answers their request.

20:22 - “*But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.*” There are four baptisms in the Scriptures relating to the life of the believer:

1. Water baptism
2. Baptism in the Holy Spirit
3. Baptism of fire
4. Baptism of suffering

It is this last baptism to which Jesus is referring here. Paul speaks of it as the “fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death” (Phil. 3:10).

20:23 - “*And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*”

This cup is the cup of sorrows that we must of necessity drink as Christians. It is filled with betrayals of close friends and companions who have walked with us perhaps for years. It includes disappointments in projects, churches, and people. But never is Christ a disappointment.

As our eyes are at all times fixed upon Him, we are sustained by His love and grace. The end result of all this is that we come to know Him in a more intimate way.

Baptism means to be immersed. At times we seem literally to be inundated with sorrows, trials and sufferings. They come in the realms of finances, false accusations, and physical sufferings as was the case in the trial of Job. However, it is a loving heavenly Father who is orchestrating all things for His good pleasure; and when we come forth we will be pure gold, fit for the Master's use.

20:24 - *“And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.”* The others were by no means willing to give up the best positions to James and John, and apparently they thought that they had equal qualifications. It is a sad commentary of us Christians that we are so filled with jealousy and envy against fellow Christians and ministers of the Gospel. Satan thrives on church fights and splits. If our motives are pure, there will be no jealousy or envy. We will not compare ourselves with others. When our motives are pure, we only want to bring glory to God, not to ourselves. Are you trying to exalt the Lord or yourself?

20:25-26 - *“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.”* Those of this world seek for honors, titles, and positions in order to elevate themselves above their fellows. Even the religious leaders of Christ's day loved to be called “Rabbi.” But the Christian should be satisfied with the title of Brother or Sister in Christ. The key word with respect to Christian service is “servant” or slave of Christ. We should seek to minister to one another and remember that it is the degree that we *serve* that determines the degree to which we will *reign*.

20:27 - *“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”* Our motives for doing things for others should also be pure. From a clean heart we should serve others with no thought of reward. We should do everything out of love for one another. Then our ministry will ascend as a sweet savor unto the Lord.

20:28 - *“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”* In all things the Lord should be our role model; and He is a servant to all. From His life flows love and service to us. Our fervent desire should be to serve and take the lowest position of all. In so doing we shall be the most effective.

While we have many people who work with us, we find that all are not equally productive. Those we love to have are the ones who are willing to do anything that they are asked to do. They are just a joy to work with and the jobs are done in record time. Let us be a willing, joyful worker in his Kingdom. Anything that we accomplish will be by His grace and grace alone.

The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus

20:29-34

20:29-34 - *“And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.”*

In this well-known account of the last journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, we find Him leaving Jericho, which was a distance of some seventeen miles from Jerusalem. There was a great multitude who, no doubt, was jostling Him, trying to gain access to ask Him questions or just to hang onto every Word that fell from His lips. In this bustle of activity, the cries of the blind were heard by those in the crowd. The multitude did not want the Master diverted or interrupted; so some (undoubtedly in a very rude and abrupt fashion) bade the blind men to keep quiet. This now becomes a lesson for us all.

Were the blind going to be turned aside by men with selfish interests, or were they going to persevere and touch Jesus? Fortunately for them, they would not be denied. Above the shouts of the crowd their cry was heard by the Master. In life we will often be tested in like manner. Do not let anyone or any circumstance prevent you from meeting the Lord. We see another lesson in their response to Jesus when He asked what He should do for them.

Immediately they responded, “That our eyes may be opened.” When we come to Him we must be very clear in our requests. I well remember when I was young that I tremendously desired to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. When I simply asked that He might bless me, the heavens remained like brass. But when I became *specific*, then He baptized me with the Holy Spirit.

When Christ meets our need we then should be like the blind men and follow Him with all of our hearts. So many, after receiving their desired request, leave Him and walk in their own ways. Let us be of nobler mind, heart, and character. May we return and render unto the Lord thanks for all His kindness to us. Let us enquire of Him and then do His will for our lives.

Chapter 21

The Triumphal Entry into the Holy City

21:1-11

21:1 - *“And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,”* Bethphage was a small village at the foot of the Mount of Olives on the western side just before crossing the Kidron and entering Jerusalem.

21:2-5 - *“Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.”*

There are two official comings of Jesus to His capital city as King. Here He comes seated upon a colt the foal of an ass. This scene is symbolic of meekness, humility, and servitude. However, at His Second Coming, He will be riding upon a white horse: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war” (Rev. 19:11).

As He enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He comes as Savior, but at His Second Coming, He will come to tread down His enemies as the Judge of the whole earth. Friends, may we meet Him as our Savior, not as our Judge.

“His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev. 19:12-15).

21:6-8 - *“And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude*

spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.” This day is celebrated as Palm Sunday because they cut down the branches of palm trees, which represent righteousness (Jn. 12:13; Psa. 92:12). Christ is Jehovah Tsidkenu—the Lord our Righteousness.

21:9 - *“And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.”* This is a fulfillment of Psalm 118:26, which says, “Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.” One of the outstanding features of the life of Jesus was that it was a continual fulfillment of prophecy. In fact, it is difficult to find anything in His life and ministry that is not to one degree or another covered by prophecy. This in itself is explained in Revelation 19:10, which says that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

21:10-11 - *“And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”* To fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9, the Lord came riding into Jerusalem to the acclamations of the crowd who had heard also that He had raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 12:12-18). He was recognized by one and all as a prophet. Nonetheless, in just a few days He would be crucified. Yet it was for this reason that He had come to His city and for this reason that He had come into the world.

However, there is a truth here that we should all learn—mankind is very fickle. One day people can be cheering and the next day they can be seeking your life. We should expect this same treatment from people at times, but in order that they might not triumph over us, let our eyes always be upon Jesus. May the sweetness of Jesus always flow into us and out of us to our opponents. Never let there be a harsh thought, word, or action. Nothing but His goodness must flow from our hearts to others.

The Cleansing of the Temple

21:12-17

21:12-13 - *“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.”*

This is the second cleansing of the temple, the first being at the first Passover of His ministry as recorded in John 2:13-17. Herein lies another prophetic truth. The early Church experienced cleansing, and the latter-day Church must also experience that same deep cleansing so that we may have the double portion of His power in these last days. Thus we see that there was a cleansing of God's house at the beginning and ending of Christ's ministry.

21:14 - *“And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.”* After the cleansing, then came the manifestation of God's great power. Let us read carefully the sequential flow of Scripture, for all things are written with mathematical exactitude that we may be instructed in the ways of God.

21:15 - *“And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,”* After the cleansing came the manifestation of the power of God. Then came the opposition. Believe me, the devil will not permit the work of God to prosper without raising up the adversaries who will seek under his guidance to do everything they can to discredit the move of God in one way or another. The root problem with the religious leaders was *jealousy and envy*, for they could see that Jesus had a greater following than they. Thus, they complained to Jesus:

21:16 - *“And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”* The Lord's reply is very interesting from several points of view. In the first instance He is quoting Psalm 8:2: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.”

Jesus quoted this psalm with a distinct difference from the way it is written in the Old Testament. The psalm uses the word “strength” but Jesus uses the word *praise*. Therefore, we may deduce from this that to praise the Lord gives us strength and also protects us from the enemy. Let us praise Him continuously so that we are endued with His strength. Those praises break the power of the enemy so that they have to remain silent and stop advancing upon us.

Finally, these praises do not come from mature Christians, but from newborn spiritual babies. We see, therefore, the demonstration of the power of praise—that even those who are young in the faith may well overcome the enemy by being steadfast in praise.

21:17 - *“And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.”* The house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus at Bethany was His resting place for those last few days of His life. Each day He descended to the temple from here.

The Cursing of the Fig Tree

21:18-22

21:18-20 - *“Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!”*

The fig tree in Scripture is a type of the nation of Israel. It also is a type of the virtue or fruit of sweetness (Judg. 9:11). Thus, as Jesus approached the fig tree, we may look at this event as His coming to Israel to receive the fruits of the Spirit and the fruits of righteousness from His own people.

Instead, the nation was spewing forth iniquity after iniquity in the form of adultery and theft, and teaching the traditions of men instead of the law of God. They were the blind leading the blind. As Isaiah states, it was a dry, spiritually barren ground (Isa. 53:2). The Lord was cursing the nation when He cursed the barren fig tree. Israel would no longer be the dispenser of truth, and men would no longer feed spiritually from it. We must take heed that our churches do not become like Israel, the fig tree.

21:21 - *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.”* Turning to the natural miracle of the dried fig tree, the Lord says that whatsoever we say in faith can also be done if we will but believe.

21:22 - *“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”* Throughout His teaching, the Lord emphasizes the power of believing prayer; and it is wise for Christians and whole congregations to reflect upon the fact that prayer changes things. If we gave ourselves to prayer, how different our circumstances would be. We can turn back the enemy through all-prevailing prayer and stop his voice of criticism.

The Authority of Jesus challenged

21:23-27

21:23 - *“And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?”* The temple was under the jurisdiction of the priests; therefore, in a certain sense they had the right to challenge Jesus as He taught there. However, the Lord answered their question by asking them a question and caught them in their hypocrisy.

21:24-26 - *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.”*

As we consider this question with which the Lord confronted the religious leaders, we realize that in reality He was asking them to decide for or against not just the person of John the Baptist, but God Himself. John was none other than the messenger of the Lord prophesied of by Malachi (Mal. 3:1). Therefore, to refuse John was to refuse or reject God Himself.

The opponents of Jesus therefore were caught because they had not obeyed John. To excuse themselves they were desirous of denying his prophetic office. However, the common people believed that John was a prophet. Like all tyrants, the leaders feared the people; so they reverted very lamely to a lie. Was John’s baptism from God, or man? Their answer - “I don’t know.” This was Cain’s answer when God asked him of the whereabouts of his brother Abel. “I don’t know” is the defense mechanism of the guilty.

21:27 - *“And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.”* One of the lessons that we learn from this discourse is Proverbs 28:1: “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.”

If we do what is right in life, we need not fear anyone. But when our eyes are not on the Lord Jesus, then we fear man. “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Prov. 29:25). May we ever walk uprightly in all our dealings and have the boldness of the righteous.

The Parable of the Two Sons **21:28-32**

21:28-30 - *“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.”*

This parable depicts a scenario that is often repeated in life. Many have the tendency of responding quickly to the call of the Master and promising to serve Him and follow Him wherever He would send them. Then as the years go on and they feel the Holy Spirit prompting them to leave all and go to Bible School or the mission field or into the ministry, they hold back and return to secular employment and settle down to business as usual and the call is forgotten.

Then there are the others who at first disdain the call but after a time in the secular field they realize that life is so empty, especially for those whom God has given a higher calling. So later on they turn back to God and pick up the call and become very fulfilled. We are only at true rest when we are in the calling and place of His choice for us.

21:31-32 - *“Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.”*

In His application of this parable, the Lord compares the Pharisees and religious leaders with the publicans and harlots. Many who took up the calling of a religious life refused John the Baptist and his new message. The sinners and the harlots, who at first refused to walk in righteousness, turned and repented at the teachings of John.

In times of revival, which, in essence, was what Israel was experiencing through John and then Jesus, it was the sinners who were responding. Having been privileged to live through a number of revivals, I must say that so often church people refuse a fresh move of God while sinners respond.

The Parable of the Vineyard **21:33-46**

21:33 - *“Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.”*

This same illustration is used of the nation of Israel in Isaiah 5:1-7: “Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? ... For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.” We may rightly conclude that Christ’s parable speaks of the nation of Israel.

21:34-36 - *“And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.”* In this parable, we must interpret the servants the way they are described by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 23:34-35. They were prophets and wise men sent by the Father to His vineyard, Israel.

They were looking for the fruits of righteousness in God’s people, but they found little or none. Israel mistreated and killed the prophets. In fact, even the blood of Abel is linked to Israel and its bloodguiltiness. Finally, God sent His only Son to the vineyard—to Israel. They treated Him just as they did all the prophets and righteous men of the past.

21:37-39 - *“But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.”*

Jesus is clearly foretelling His own death at the hands of the religious leaders. One of the most meaningful truths of His teaching was the fact that He knew He had come into this world to die by crucifixion. Everything had been foreordained and prophesied in holy Scripture concerning His life, and He was fulfilling those declarations to the minutest degree.

21:40-41 - *“When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.”*

Jesus asked the religious leaders a question: “What will the Lord of the vineyard do when he comes?” The answer the religious leaders gave was profoundly prophetic of the events that were going to happen soon to themselves and their city. The Lord of the vineyard would miserably destroy those wicked men, and give the vineyard unto other husbandmen who would bear fruit. This literally happened in their time. Jerusalem was entirely destroyed in 70 A.D. at the hands of the Romans under the general Titus. Then the kingdom was given to the Church. Ever since that time it has been the Church who has the spiritual authority.

21:42 - *“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?”* Jesus quoted Psalm 118:22, which says, “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.”

Throughout Scripture, Jesus is referred to as the Cornerstone and the Headstone of the Temple, which is the Church. “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:20-21).

The corner stone is the stone from which all measurements in a building are taken. Christ is our standard. We must line up with Him. Spiritually, we take all guidance from Jesus for our lives. The Head Stone is that which completes the building because He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending of our faith. “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

21:43 - *“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”* In God’s estimation, not only the religious leaders but

all of the nation of Israel had been found unworthy of propagating the Gospel and the truths of God. Some of their forfeited privileges are enumerated by Paul in Romans 9:4-5: "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

These blessings have now been bestowed upon the Church. This was even prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy 32:21: "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation."

We, the Church, are that foolish nation. We are composed of many nations under the sun, and really we are not as bright as the people of Israel nor as devoted to God as they were. It is just the mercy of God that we wild olive branches have been grafted into the holy olive tree, Israel, even as Paul says in Romans 11:24, "For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"

We must remember that Israel will return to God at Christ's Second Coming. "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11:25). So let us be deeply grateful to God for His unspeakable kindness toward us undeserving Gentiles.

21:44 - "*And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*" Returning now to the theme of Christ the Cornerstone, the Lord says that if we will humble ourselves and fall upon Him and let Him break our pride, rebellion, and selfishness, we will then be received of Him. But if we refuse to fall upon Him and be broken, He will fall upon us in judgment. Then we shall become as chaff that is blown away and consumed by the flames of the eternal fire of hell.

21:45 - "*And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.*" It did not take much discernment to realize that this parable which was spoken in their presence was a condemnation of those leaders. Fully knowing this, they had neither the desire nor the grace to repent of their wicked ways.

21:46 - *“But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.”* Once again the fear of man, which is a snare, restrained them. They sought the popularity of man and not the honor that comes from God. It is amazing that the congregations of Israel as a whole accepted the Lord, but the rulers rejected the Messiah of whom they preached. May God grant us a heart that only seeks to please God. Then we will have the ability to accept and recognize those things that are of Him.

Chapter 22

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

22:1-10

22:1-2 - *“And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.”* Jesus had only two days before His trials and crucifixion. This is a fact we should not miss. Some of the most profound truths are given at this time, and many are directed toward the coming judgment upon Israel as a nation. The parable of the wedding feast is one of those indictments.

In studying this parable we should know and understand a little about the customs of those times. The guests would have received their invitation to the marriage feast some time in advance. However, no precise time would have been given. When the time was at hand, then the news would be given. In this case, because it was a king announcing the marriage of his son, the news was given by his servants.

22:3 - *“And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.”* Of course, this was an unthinkable situation. Obviously, the invitations would have been accepted, but for anyone to refuse to come to the wedding feast of the king’s son defies imagination. It was, in fact, the main event of the king’s reign, and most certainly that of the son who would have been the future king. In those days it would have been tantamount to rebellion against the king’s rule.

22:4 - *“Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.”* The fact that the king would give a second invitation speaks very highly of His graciousness and mercy. Realizing that the King in this case would refer only to God the Father, we have a glimpse of His loving kindness not only to Israel but to us poor Gentiles. Truly, He is the God of the second chance!

22:5 - *“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.”* Mocking a king is bad enough, but mocking God, the Creator of the whole universe and of mankind, is unimaginable. But added to this, they slew those who brought the kind invitation.

22:6 - *“And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.”* This speaks of Israel who slew the prophets and many righteous men. The Catholic Church also killed many during the Inquisition and in the time of the Reformation.

22:7 - *“But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”* Here the Lord is again making reference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

22:8-10 - *“Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.”*

In these concluding verses we see once again the rejection of the nation of Israel who was first given the privilege of serving God and being invited as a nation to the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb. (Rev. 19:9). Also, we see the Gospel going to the Gentiles. These parables interface one with another and they tend to interpret one another. For example, consider the little phrase *“those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good.”*

The “good and bad” is amplified even more in Matthew 13:47-50: *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”* This is further explained in the following parable.

The Man Without a Wedding Garment

22:11-14

22:11 - *“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment.”* The literal meaning of this parable is simple. When someone was invited to a wedding in those days, they were issued a garment by a king or a prince which was generally a long flowing robe for the occasion. This they wore when they were told that all was ready for the feast. To appear without the proper wedding garment would be an insult to the king.

22:12 - *“And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.”* To be without the robe that the king had provided would have been the height of insult to the king. However, in this parable the robe has a profound meaning since it is issued by the King of kings Himself, and His feast is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

This is mentioned clearly in Isaiah 61:10: *“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”* Thus, not being clothed with the garments of salvation and the robe of His righteousness would immediately disqualify us.

22:13 - *“Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* To be without the covering of His great salvation means that we are lost and will be cast into the lake of fire forever.

22:14 - *“For many are called, but few are chosen.”* This verse applies not just to the man who has no wedding garment but also to the parable as a whole. So many people world wide have the opportunity to embrace the message of salvation and to be clothed with the robe of righteousness, but so few qualify in the end, for when they are tried in the furnace of affliction, they turn away and do not endure to the end.

Tribute To Caesar

22:15-22

22:15 - *“Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.”* It is an astonishing fact that the Pharisees who prided themselves in righteousness could be so deceitful and wicked in their dealings with Jesus. They were hypocritical. Their mouth said one thing while their heart was saying something else. Look at how they approached Jesus with the intent to destroy Him.

22:16 - *“And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.”*

The fact that the disciples of the Pharisees went with the Herodians was extraordinary. The Pharisees were the ultra religious orthodox party who bitterly resented the Roman occupation. The Herodians were the political party of the Herods, who owed their position to their alliance with the Romans. These two groups were diametrically opposed to each other. Yet they were united in their opposition to Jesus, for they saw Him as a religious leader who could not only turn the people against the religious leaders, but also as one who could easily be made king by the common folk and rebel against the Roman emperor.

22:17 - *“Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?”*

The tribute money was required of every male between the ages of fourteen and sixty-five and of every female between the ages of twelve and sixty-five. The tribute money was a little over a day’s wage of a working man. The tax was resented, especially by the common people. Therefore, if Jesus approved it, the Pharisees thought that the common people would turn against Him. If He said it was unlawful on religious grounds to pay taxes to the secular authority, then He could be reported by the Herodians to the Roman government.

22:18 - *“But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?”*

Their hypocrisy was blatant. They well knew that the sole purpose for asking the question was to trap Him and discredit Him before either the people or the government. It was not done to draw out the truth. They were thoroughly insincere. However, Jesus was equal to the situation.

22:19-21 - *“Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.”* This instruction is not only for the Pharisees, but for us as well. We, too, should pay our taxes to the secular authorities, for in doing so, truly we are rendering to Caesar what belongs to him of the goods of this world. Also, we are to concentrate on giving to God our tithes. But above all, we are to give Him our hearts. In Proverbs 23:26 he said: “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.”

22:22 - *“When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.”*

It is amazing how the wisdom of God can confound the wiles of the wicked ones. The promise of having wisdom is given in James 1:5: “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.” Therefore, at all times let us ask for His wisdom as we confront the wickedness of the sinful men and women.

The Question of The Sadducees

22:23-33

22:23-24 - *“The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.”* The Sadducees had their origin in the teachings of Sadok, a pupil of Antigonus Sochaeus, who was president of the Sanhedrin about two hundred and fifty years before Christ. He had taught that one should serve God without thought of reward or fear of punishment.

Evidently, Sadok, not fully understanding the doctrines of his master, corrupted them into teachings that said there was no resurrection, no angels, nor spirits. Furthermore, they rejected all traditions and held solely to the books of the Old Testament. It is upon this serious error of “no resurrection” that they were seeking to determine the views of Jesus.

“Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.” Here they are quoting Deuteronomy 25:5-6: “If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband’s brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband’s brother unto her. And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.” The purpose of this law was to keep the families and tribes of Israel separated and distinct. The children born were then reckoned in the genealogy of the deceased brother.

22:25-28 - *“Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.”* Their example suggests that the Sadducees were quoting an actual situation that had arisen among their sect. Holding strictly to the law, they had demanded that the woman be given succeedingly to each brother. Their query was that if there was a resurrection, to which brother would she belong, since she been married all seven.

22:29-30 - *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.”* They did not know the power of God or believe in it. The

Sadducees assumed that if there is a resurrection, we will be as we are here, needing marriage relationships. The Lord counters this with the fact that God's power enables people to remain single.

22:31-32 - "*But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*" The Lord is here quoting Exodus 3:6: "Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

We read in Exodus 3:15, "And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not go into oblivion when they died. At death they simply put off their bodies and their spirits went into a resting place. Their spirits were very much alive and conscious. See the story of the rich man and Lazarus where Abraham is conversing with others (Luke 16:19-31). God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

We should ever remember that death is but a *separation* from our body and that we will live on forever and forever. *Where* we live in the after life is a question that is settled here during this life. If we have lived for the Lord here, then we shall inhabit that place in heaven that He has chosen for us before the foundation of the world. If we live for self, we shall inhabit hell, the place made for the devil and his angels, and all those who follow him. Whether it be heaven or hell, we shall be with those with whom we lived in this life.

22:33 - "*And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.*" We would note again that the wisdom of God prevailed when confronted by the adversaries. May we hearken to the admonition of King David to his beloved son Solomon who said: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7).

The Two Great Commandments

22:34-40

22:34 - "*But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.*" Here in a sense was the third distinct sect in Israel, and the largest, now

confronting Jesus after He had manifestly defeated the Herodians and the Sadducees.

22:35-37 - *“Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”* The ultimate desire of God, as of any father, is that His children love Him from the depths of their hearts. This, however, takes a sovereign work of God’s grace in our lives, even as Deuteronomy 30:6 says: *“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.”*

Hardness, selfishness, jealousy, and all the other works of the flesh, which we as sons of Adam have inherited at birth, have to be cut away from our spiritual hearts. This alone can be done by the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s working in our lives if we are going to be able to love God with all our hearts.

22:38-39 - *“This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”* This is a direct quotation from Leviticus 19:18: *“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.”*

Our treatment of others has been stressed continuously by the Lord in His teaching. We will now quote the golden rule of Matthew 7:12: *“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.”*

I want to emphasize this truth by using the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And 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.”* Paul stresses this also in Galatians 5:14: *“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”* (cf. Rom. 12:8-10).

22:40 - *“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”* I would like to give a little illustration that has meant so much to me over the years. A certain Christian leader was

driving with his wife, who was trying to express her concerns about their daughter. He, however, could only talk about looking for a new building for the ministry in which he was engaged. His wife became desperate because their daughter was contemplating a wrong marriage. The young man was not a Christian.

However, the leader was not interested and would not even consider the problem. His sole concern was for his ministry. Since that time the daughter has become a spiritual wreck, but the leader, instead of exuding the love of God, is consumed with anger. Why? Because his goals were selfish instead of being orientated toward the love of God for his daughter's soul. Let us beware and be sure that we are "rooted and grounded in love." Otherwise, we will suffer the judgment of being filled with another spirit, such as that terrible spirit of jealousy that possessed King Saul.

A Discourse on the Son of David

22:41-46

22:41-42 - *"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David."* Jesus is asking the Pharisees about the genealogy of Christ. They made it very clear that they believed, and rightly so, that Christ would be a descendant of David.

This fact was well known by the Jews from the prophecy of Jeremiah: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23:5-6).

Messiah (or Christ) means "the Anointed One." Psalm 132:10-11,17 foretells the coming of David's greatest Son: "For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed. The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. ... There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed."

22:43-44 - *"He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?"* Jesus is

quoting from Psalm 110:1, where David describes the Father and Son. “The LORD [Jehovah - God the Father] said unto my Lord [Christ], Sit thou at my right hand.”

This vision of the Father giving all authority unto the Son is identical to what Daniel saw. “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. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13-14).

22:45 - *“If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?”* The virgin Mary was a descendant of David, and Christ descended through Mary. Christ, therefore, was the son of David after the flesh (Rom. 1:3). He received His physical body from Mary by the miracle of the virgin birth, but in reality He was the eternal Son of God; therefore, to Him David would bow. Christ was not only David’s Son, but his Lord.

22:46 - *“And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.”* Christ again manifested the supreme wisdom of God, for Jesus Himself is “Wisdom” as Proverbs 8:12 says, “I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.” We read in Proverbs 8:30-31: “Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.”

Jesus is the personification of wisdom. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:30 that Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. May we come to know Him as such. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him (Col. 2:3). If you want to be wise, know Christ intimately.

Chapter 23

The Legalism of the Pharisees Condemned

23:1-12

23:1-2 - *“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.”* The Lord at this time was surrounded by crowds of people. He upholds the authority of the Pharisees, for they were indeed the custodians of the law. They “sat in Moses’ seat.” He is exhorting the people to honor their position but not their personal lives. They taught the Scriptures, but also inserted traditions of men which had no spiritual profit for a man’s soul. In fact, they placed their traditions on a higher level than the Word of God.

23:3 - *“All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”* As with so many ministers today, the Pharisees taught men to live a life of holiness and uprightness, but they did not live it themselves. Moreover, instead of teaching a life of holiness attained only by God’s grace, they taught that it was to be attained by the outward observances of man’s traditions.

The Apostle Paul warns against this in Colossians 2:18-23: “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.”

23:4 - *“For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.”* The Pharisees prescribed all kinds of external acts that men should perform. These imposed traditions were very hard to do. They were heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne. Yet the teachers themselves did not do them, thus declaring and openly manifesting their hypocrisy. Added to this, they wanted to advertise their religiosity.

23:5 - “But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.” These men had a burning desire to be thought holy and religious by man. Therefore, they advertised their so-called life of piety by decorating their garments with excessive religious symbols of that day.

In the Old Testament the Lord commanded His people to wear “frontlets” upon their hands and between their eyes. These frontlets contained four pieces of parchment upon which were inscribed certain portions of Scripture to remind Israel of their deliverance from Egypt. It also served as a reminder to keep the law of the Lord. These pieces of parchment were placed in a piece of tough skin that was formed into a square. They were bound around their foreheads and their hands with a thong or a ribbon and were worn when the Jew was going to the synagogue. These were also called *phylacteries* or frontlets.

Exodus 13:9 says, “And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.” These four pieces of parchment contained four portions of Scripture as follows: Exodus 12:2-10; Exodus 13:11-21; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; and Deuteronomy 11:18-21.

First

We read in Exodus 12:2-10: “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.”

Second

Exodus 13:11-21 says: “And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD’S. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem. And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem. And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.”

Third

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 says: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.”

Fourth

We read in Deuteronomy 11:18-21: “Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.”

As we have said, these phylacteries were bound round their foreheads and their hand with a thong or a ribbon and worn when the Jew was going to the synagogue. However, the Pharisees greatly enlarged these phylacteries and wore them constantly as an outward sign of their piety.

They did the same to the borders of their garments, overexaggerating the commandment of God given in Numbers 15:38-40: “Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.”

The Pharisees had excessively long fringes or ribbons to display their outward piety and gain the praise of man. Now the Lord continues His indictments of the Pharisees.

23:6 - *“And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,”* The seating at feast days was very scrupulously adhered to with the guests being seated according to their rank. The most distinguished guest was seated at the right of the governor or host, then the next at his left. The lower the rank, the farther away they were seated. Since at some feasts there were many people, the tables were placed in many rooms, but the upper rooms were the rooms where the most distinguished ones sat. These places of honor the Pharisees coveted, as well as the front seats in the synagogues which were occupied by the elders who faced the congregation. They yearned for illustrious titles in order to lift themselves up above others.

23:7 - *“And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.”* Rabbi literally

means “great.” This title was given to eminent teachers, and when they were addressed like this, they were deemed superior to others. It would be equivalent in the Middle Ages of the title of “Master” which was given to teachers of renown.

23:8 - *“But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.”* In heaven we are all children of the living God and He desires that we look upon ourselves as brothers and sisters. In any earthly family, the members have different ranks according to their vocation or prowess. In spite of this, when addressing one another we are not inhibited by our brother’s or sister’s accomplishments, and we have easy relationships one with another.

23:9-10 - *“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.”* Obviously, brothers do not call one of their brothers their father because they have only one father. It is the same in the family of God. There is only one Father, our heavenly Father. There is only one Lord, and that is our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

23:11-12 - *“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”* Although we do differ one from another, it is the greater who serve the younger. We must ask the Lord to work in us His humility for He said in Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The Character of the Pharisees Condemned **23:13-36**

It may be helpful at this stage to consider the seven categories into which the Talmud placed the Pharisees. We may learn much from them so that we may avoid the false and cling to the true.

1. The Shoulder Pharisee. He obeyed the law strictly but he bore his good deeds upon his shoulder to be seen of men. It may well be that he hears the words of Jesus, saying: “Verily I say to you, you have received your reward.” Let us have that inner purity and goodness so that the Father who sees in secret may reward or acknowledge us on that day of reckoning.

2. The Procrastinating Pharisee. He always professed to follow the doctrines of the Pharisees but always found a valid excuse for putting off a good deed. He preached but did not practice.

3. The Self-Afflicting Pharisee. The Talmud called the obnoxious actions of these Pharisees “a plague” since they would not allow themselves to look at a woman but shut their eyes when in public. As a consequence they would bruise themselves bumping into obstacles and buildings. They gained a special reputation for piety because of their bleeding wounds.

4. The Hunch-Backed Pharisee. These wanted to profess humility publicly; so they walked with their eyes continually fixed upon the ground. Consequently, their bodies were bent in the manner of a hunchback. Unfortunately, they were only advertising their humility to be seen of men.

5. The Reckoning Pharisee. He persistently kept a record of all his good deeds, thinking that in so doing he was making God a debtor to him. It was as though he was compiling an accounting sheet tallying his good works. He forgot that all our righteousness is like filthy rags (see Isa. 64:6).

6. The Fearful Pharisee. This one was always in fear of divine punishment and therefore was always practicing outward observances of holiness such as cleaning the cups and plates in a ceremonial fashion. He did not realize the truth of Revelation 21:8: “The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” In this passage in Revelation we should note that the “fearful” are linked with the unbelievers and the unclean. We should remember that perfect love casts out fear (1 Jn. 4:18). These were not dwelling in the first and second commandments of loving God and their neighbor.

7. The God-Fearing Pharisee. Here the Talmud recognized that there were indeed Pharisees who truly loved God. We may say that they dwelt in the reality of Psalm 1:1-3: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

May we meditate upon these classifications so that we may fall into category seven, being among those who fear God.

The Eight Woes Pronounced Upon the Pharisees

This last of our Lord's public discourses was the pronouncement of judgment upon the Pharisees delivered in the temple. It was a penetrating foretaste of the judgment that is reserved for the day of the Lord. Christ, however, was already judging them. His Word "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). In this discourse Christ reveals the duplicity and hypocrisy of His foes, who will in a matter of hours haul Him before Pilate to be crucified.

This chapter has been called, "The Rolling Thunder of the Wrath of God." Each denunciation is prefaced by the word "woe." *Woe* is a word that is not easy to translate because it implies anger, despair, and wrath, yet it also carries with it a sense of sorrow that the one to whom it is applied will suffer. There is a sympathy aroused here. Perhaps the best I can do is offer this phrase "the anger of sorrow" that one has been so blind that they must suffer these eternal torments.

The key word used by Jesus in these denunciations is *hypocrite*, which signifies pretense. A hypocrite is a pretender, masking his true feelings and putting on an act, thereby giving the appearance of being someone else. This word came to describe *an actor* who sought to appear to be someone that he manifestly was not. He played a role. This indeed described these Pharisees, but what dire consequences they reaped, not only for themselves but for all who followed them.

23:13 - "*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*" In this first denunciation, Jesus charged them with closing heaven's door. This they did by their traditions because they taught things that were contrary to Scripture. Instead of leading men to Christ, they rejected Him and turned others away from Him.

23:14 - "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.*" This is the most despicable thing that a man can do, for he is supposed to be the protector of women. True spirituality involves taking care of widows. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). In this matter the Pharisees failed. Their covetousness impover-

ished and ruined those whom they were to help. It is almost inconceivable that anyone could do such things, yet I suppose many lawyers do it every day in our society.

23:15 - *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”* Wicked people always try to gain adherents to their cause. This is the stratagem of hell. Those who are divorced and remarried seek to lead others into that way of damnation; those who are drunkards seek to get others to drink, and smokers likewise. This is especially true with religious doctrinal errors, which, in actuality, are doctrines of devils. Through these Pharisees, evil spirits brought many souls deeper down into hell because they were embracing greater error.

23:16-22 - *“Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.”*

These religious leaders who should have been leading the people into the paths of righteousness had entangled them in meaningless jargon or talk. In actuality, they were the masters of evasion. The standard of God is clear from Psalm 15:4. Our word must be our bond. When we give our word, we must not go against it. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were teaching the people how to evade responsibility and how to get around oaths.

The Christian standard is found in Matthew 5:37: “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” When you say yes, mean yes. And when you say no, mean no. Oh, let us cry to God that He will cleanse us from all duplicity.

23:23-24 - *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.”* The Pharisees majored in the minors and minored in the majors.

They were experts at doing it too. King David discerned what was precious and important to God. He understood the heart of God and he majored on what was important to Him.

David's heart is seen in Psalm 40:6-8, where he said: "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." It was not sacrifice that God wanted, but a responsive heart and a listening ear. Let us remember the theme of Christ's teachings—to love the Lord with all of our heart. That is what is pleasing in His sight.

23:25-26 - *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."* Covetousness was one of the serious sins of the Pharisees. Jesus said they were full of extortion. The love of money is the root of every evil. Nearly all other crimes have their source here. The Pharisees would do anything for money and this led to their cruel practices.

23:27-28 - *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."* Jesus said the Pharisees were filled with all uncleanness. Another indictment against the Pharisees was for adultery, which they seemingly practiced without fear of guilt.

These sins and hypocrisies are developed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 2:17-23: "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?"

Regretfully, Romans 2:17-23 has been the case in many churches throughout all generations.

Many hypocrites have occupied the pulpits, but after a time they are unmasked. When they have been exposed and brought down, many have lost their faith in Christ because of them. Paul continues in Romans 2:24: “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles [or unbelievers] through you.”

23:29-35 - *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.”*

One of the truths concerning eternal judgment is this: The children who walk in the ways of their forefathers will suffer the accumulated judgments of their forefathers when the cup of iniquity is full. This has been evidenced since the beginning of time. Consider the judgment that fell upon the generation that crucified Christ. The innocent blood of Abel and other righteous men of previous centuries fell upon that generation as well. “That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias.”

The Apostle Jude warns: “Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core” (Jude 1:11). Cain, Balaam, and Korah had lived many centuries earlier. Nonetheless, the people in Christ’s time were walking in their ways. Therefore, they became partakers of the sins and deeds of their forefathers. The blood of innocent men and women that was shed by their wicked forefathers also became their responsibility.

In another sense, the generation at the time of Christ was more guilty. They had the sacred Scriptures testifying of the deeds of the wicked and their punishment, yet they did not heed them. This generation, knowing the fate of the wicked, killed the Lord of glory. The innocent blood of Abel and other righteous men was going to come upon them.

23:36 - *“Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.”* Of a truth the generation of Christ saw one of the most savage and cruel acts ever perpetrated upon a nation of any time. The Roman army with great hatred literally murdered much of the population, and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple as well. Over a million people died in the siege of A.D. 70.

Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem

23:37-39

23:37 - *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”* The crimes of Jerusalem since the days of old were awesome and innumerable. They had shed the blood of many prophets and righteous men. In the reign of King Manasseh, the streets were said to have literally flowed with blood. Yet, as in the days of Jeremiah, if the population had only repented, the city would have been saved. Unfortunately, their hard, rebellious nature would not yield.

23:38 - *“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”* The thought of the “house” is more than a city or even the temple but the whole priesthood and ministry. It was given to the Church to take up the privileges that had been first given to the nation of Israel. These blessings will not be restored to Israel until Christ comes again and the Millennial age begins (Rom. 11:15-29).

23:39 - *“For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”* This is a reference to the Second Coming of the Lord, which is treated in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 24

The Temple Destruction Prophesied

24:1-2

24:1 - *“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.”* The Temple of Herod was a building of exquisite beauty, built of white marble and plated with gold. The corner stones alone measured twenty to forty feet in length and weighed one hundred tons. There were also magnificent porches named “Solomon” and “Royal.” These were sustained by pillars cut out of solid blocks of marble and were thirty-seven feet high and of large circumference.

24:2 - *“And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”* This literally happened in A.D. 70 when the Roman armies under Titus destroyed not only Jerusalem but also the temple. A short summary of that terrible siege as recorded by the historian Josephus is now given:

“The city of Jerusalem was besieged by Titus the Roman general who afterward became the tenth emperor upon the death of Vespasian. Although Titus gave orders that the whole city be demolished he was desirous of preserving the temple. Maimonides, a Jewish writer, recorded that Terentius Rufus, an officer in the army of Titus, tore up the foundations of the temple with a plowshare, that the prophecy might be fulfilled, “Zion shall be ploughed as a field” (Mic. 3:12).

A Roman soldier, however, without a command, threw a burning firebrand into the golden window and soon the temple was in flames. Titus gave orders to extinguish the flames but in the tumult his orders were not obeyed. The soldiers pressed on to complete the work of destruction through an intense hatred of the Jews.”

Thus the prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled, although the destruction of the temple was a judgment upon the Jews, as we read in Micah 3:10-12: “They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us. 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.”

There is another reason for the destruction of the temple. The temple represented the Age of the Law; thus it had to go to make way for the Age of faith and grace. “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1:17).

The Signs of His Second Coming

24:3

24:3 - “*And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*” The Mount of Olives is very sacred in Jewish history, being intrinsically linked to the Second Coming of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Zechariah 14:4 says: “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.”

All the pious Jews from the time of Zechariah onward were buried on or near the Mount of Olives. They were buried with their feet pointing toward the Mount so that on resurrection morning they would rise to face Him. Today, the tombs of Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi are recognizable on the western slopes. Therefore, it was upon this Mount that He sat when four disciples (Peter, James, John, and Andrew) asked Him the question that burned in the hearts and souls of every devout Jew: “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the [age]?”

The disciples were asking Jesus three basic questions:

1. *When shall these things be?* (Jerusalem’s destruction – 1st century A.D.)
2. *What shall be the sign of thy coming?* (This looks ahead to our time).
3. *And the end of the world [or age]?* (The Church Age ends when Jesus comes.)

Therefore, some things Christ said were fulfilled in the first century. Some things are fulfilled in our time, the time of His coming. Some things could have a fulfillment in *both* the first century and our time. It is important to bear these things in mind as we read this discourse.

The Great Tribulation

24:4-22

24:4 - *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.”* The great theme of events leading up to the Second Coming can be summed up in one word—*deception*. This is understandable, since it will be Satan’s last chance to defeat the people of God and also, in a sense, to defeat Jesus at the last battle. He is the deceiver; therefore, especially with respect to the Second Coming, he will do all he can to mislead the people of God. The unbelievers are his anyway.

24:5 - *“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”* The ultimate deception will be the appearance of the Antichrist. This subject will be treated in more detail when we come to verse 15. There was an erroneous notion or doctrine that the Messiah could appear at anytime. Therefore, even in the days of the first-century historian Josephus, there were many who made false claims to Messiahship. Then between the days of the Emperor Adrian and the year 1682, there were twenty-four false Messiahs recorded.

24:6 - *“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”* If we look at the prophecy of Jesus from the disciples’ viewpoint, violent wars occurred prior to the destruction of Jerusalem due to the fact that four Emperors—Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius—all suffered violent deaths in a period of eighteen months. Parties were formed supporting these emperors. The consequence was that armed conflict and wars resulted. Thus, there were wars and rumors of wars in the first century, even as there will be at the time of Christ’s coming. Many things Christ said had a fulfillment at that time, as well as in our time.

24:7 - *“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”* The Jewish nation rose up against Syria over the slaughter of twenty thousand Jews around Caesarea. The result of this was that many Syrian villages were decimated. There was also a civil war in Italy over the contentions of Otho and Vitellius for the throne.

24:8 - *“All these are the beginning of sorrows.”* Thus, Jesus was indicating that all these troubles would precede the fall of Jerusalem. These troubles will happen in our time too.

24:9 - *“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.”* The persecution of the Christians would follow. Certainly, this was the case in the following reigns referred to as “the ten days of tribulation” mentioned in Revelation 2:10:

1. Nero (A.D. 54-68)
2. Domitian (A.D. 81-96)
3. Trajan (A.D. 98-117)
4. Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180)
5. Severus (A.D. 193-211)
6. Maximinius (A.D. 235-238)
7. Decius (A.D. 249-251)
8. Valerian (A.D. 253-260)
9. Aurelian (A.D. 270-275)
10. Diocletian (A.D. 284-305)

The next Emperor after Diocletian was Constantine, who declared Christianity the state religion after he became converted.

24:10 - *“And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.”* *Betrayal* is another key word for the last days, even as it was in the first century. The depth of betrayal can be seen first in the case of Judas who betrayed the Son of God. There is a warning issued in Micah 7:5-6 that we should not miss: “Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.” In times of persecution even those whom we think are very loyal can indeed turn against us.

24:11 - *“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.”* False prophets abounded in Israel as we see from the Scriptures themselves: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1). This had a fulfillment in the first century, even as it will have its greatest fulfillment in our time. Actually, the first century is a type of the last days. The first century and our time have one thing in common—both are the generations of Christ’s coming.

24:12 - *“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”* One of the facts that is stressed in the Scriptures is that in the last days there will be a great falling away of all moral standards (see 2 Thess. 2:3). At the darkest times, the light shines the brightest. “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” (Isa. 60:1-2). “Gross darkness” speaks of spiritual and moral backsliding.

24:13 - *“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”* Another key word that we must embrace for our days is “endurance.” A definition of this virtue means “to stay under the burden, to abide and to remain.” Regretfully, very few hold steady when the going gets hard.

24:14 - *“And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”* Every nation must hear the Gospel of the kingdom. This is not only the message of “Jesus saves”—it means the entire Gospel. We are to fulfill the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Not only are we to *preach*, we are to *teach* all nations all things Jesus has commanded us.

While carrying out this commission to preach to every nation, the Church is also to spend time seeking to become more and more like her blessed Lord. The latter day outpouring of the Holy Spirit will ripen the harvest. It will also produce the finest fruit of the Spirit. Let us concentrate not only on winning a huge harvest of souls, but on allowing the most excellent fruit of the Spirit to be developed within our lives. May we, the Church, be very desirable for our heavenly Bridegroom.

24:15 - *“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)”* At the beginning of His discourse, the Lord spoke on those things that would come upon that generation—the destruction of the temple and the upheavals that would come at that time. Now He is speaking on the signs leading to His Second Coming. He now focuses uniquely on the last years before His return. Therefore, in verse 14 He begins with the worldwide revival that must first come. He declared that the Gospel of the Kingdom must first be preached in all nations. Now He speaks

of the “abomination of desolation” spoken of in Daniel 12:11: “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.” This is about three-and-a-half years.

In this verse we have two very important truths:

1. The temple that was destroyed must be rebuilt in our times, and the daily sacrifices resumed.
2. Those daily sacrifices must be terminated by the Antichrist and in their place an idol erected, with possibly a sow offered upon the altar. When Jerusalem sees this, they are to flee.

24:16-19 - *“Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!”* Judgment must come in utmost severity to the land of Judah and the city of Jerusalem. Those areas outside of Judah and Jerusalem will obviously be spared. The Lord would not suggest that they flee there for refuge if that were not the case.

24:20 - *“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:”* The suddenness of the judgment will be such that one must flee instantly. The fact that the sabbath day is mentioned makes it clear that He is speaking expressly to the Jews living around Jerusalem and Judah who would be under prohibition to travel on the sabbath day.

24:21 - *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”* The time of the great tribulation is clearly established by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It will immediately follow the erection of the abomination of desolation which will stand in the holy place. There is no other Scriptural place that is designated “holy” except on the mountains of Jerusalem where the temple was and will be built.

24:22 - *“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elects sake those days shall be shortened.”* The great tribulation will start at a given place—Jerusalem. It will then spread to the whole world. It will last for approximately three and a half years, and then the Lord will come. The great tribulation will be extremely severe, even as the book of Revelation confirms.

There will be three tiers of judgments:

- The Seven Seals
- The Seven Trumpets
- The Seven Last Vials

The Second Coming

24:23-31

24:23-26 - *“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.”*

Again Jesus warns of deception, and in particular the deception of the Antichrist and the False Prophet mentioned in Revelation 13. Paul warns of the power of this man to deceive, saying, “Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (2 Thes. 2:9). We are also told very clearly that the Antichrist will ascend from the pit whereas the Lord comes from above. Christ’s coming is not a secret coming. Every eye shall see Him.

24:27 - *“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”* We will develop this later but two facts emerge from this verse concerning His coming. It will be sudden, and the hypocrites will be caught unaware. Everyone will see Him.

24:28 - *“For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”* Another feature of the Lord’s Second Coming is that it will be a time of great judgment and slaughter. The armies of many nations will surround Jerusalem, only to be destroyed by the Lord when He returns. This is seen in Joel 3:2: “I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.”

Once lured there, these nations will be trampled under the feet of the Messiah. “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” (Isa. 63:6).

Revelation 19:17-18 confirms this: “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.” All the flesh eating fowls will come and feast upon the dead carcasses of those who come against Jerusalem in these last days.

24:29 - *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:”* Now the Lord comes back in time to the period just before His Coming. There is a short time span of weeks between the end of the Great Tribulation and His actual Coming when there are signs in the heaven.

These signs are spoken of by Joel in Joel 2:29-30: “And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.” This is also the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: “Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger” (Isa. 13:13).

This is quoted by Paul in Hebrews 12:26-27: “Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” It is after these events that Christ appears.

24:30-31 - *“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. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”* The sequence of events is clear as the Lord expounds them. The rapture (which is the gathering together of the saints) takes place after the Great Tribulation. Thus the rapture takes place at the coming of the Lord which is after the shaking of the heavens.

The Parable of the Fig Tree **24:32-35**

24:32-34 - *“Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.”*

The Lord has made it very clear to His people that certain signs must precede His coming. While we will not include all the signs that are given in the Bible, it is sufficient to say that the most striking sign is that of “the abomination of desolation.” This will be clear to all of God’s people who have been instructed well in the holy Scriptures. When we see the erection of the image of the Antichrist and the offering of the abomination in the rebuilt temple, we know the Great Tribulation will start. This marks the beginning of the end.

24:35 - *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”* The certainty of prophecy is made clear by this statement. All that God has said in His Word will be fulfilled; not one jot or tittle shall fail. Such is the assurance we can have when we study the Bible.

The Days of Noah **24:36-44**

24:36 - *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”* This verse reinforces Acts 1:7 when Jesus told the disciples: “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” It is very clear that absolutely no one except the heavenly Father can possibly know the time of Christ’s coming. Therefore, to try to calculate the date is the sin of presumption. This could cause many to make shipwreck of their faith when the predicted date does not come to pass.

24:37-39 - *“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”*

The Lord is now developing the theme: “Who will be caught unaware at His Coming.” Christ

will come suddenly and without warning, just as the flood came in Noah's time. Noah was one of three most righteous men who ever lived. He was a preacher of righteousness. Therefore, the people at the time of Noah were well aware of the coming flood, for Noah had preached to them.

However, there were three basic responses to the message of the coming flood. There were a few who took the message to heart and lived godly lives. These went into the ark and were saved. There were many who mocked and as a result perished in the flood. But there was another group of whom Peter speaks when he says:

“Christ ... went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Pet. 3:18-20).

Among the multitudes that the flood took away were a number of people who had heard the preaching of Noah and had responded positively. They believed the message. Unfortunately in the end they were not living sufficiently close to God and were not totally obedient to the Word. Peter says they were “sometimes disobedient.” In the flood, they drowned and their spirits went down into the lower parts of the earth. Many years later when Jesus died on the cross, He went down into that region in the earth and preached to them. These were lax believers who missed what God was doing in their generation but whose souls were saved. Today we are repeating the days of Noah. The commitment of many believers is very shallow.

In Ephesians 4:8-10, the Apostle Paul further describes Christ's death and His descent into the lower parts of the earth during those three days and nights. In the times of the Old Testament, when believers died, their spirits went into a resting place in the lower regions of the earth. When Christ died, His Spirit went down to them and opened the door and freed them. He has the keys of hell and death. When Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, He took all these men and women with Him. “He led captivity captive.”

“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descend first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things” (Eph. 4:8-10).

24:40-41 - *“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”* The Lord continues His warning about the suddenness of His coming by showing that there will be a certain normalcy of life at that time. People will be going about their daily occupations and without warning the ones who are ready will be taken to heaven, but the others will be left behind. This emphasizes the fact that no one knows when He will appear; therefore, we should always live in this state of readiness.

24:42-44 - *“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”*

Again and again the Lord reiterates that we must be ready. However, we must balance this truth with the fact that He will not come again until all the signs of His coming have been fulfilled. One of those signs is the coming of the Antichrist. Paul warns in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [Christ’s coming] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”

Therefore, the Antichrist must first come before Jesus comes. But there is yet another truth that we have to consider—we ourselves do not know the day of our death when the Lord will personally come to take us home to glory. Therefore, we should take heed to these warnings and *always* live in a state of readiness, although we know that Christ’s coming will not occur until all the signs are first fulfilled.

The Faithful and Evil Servants

24:45-51

24:45-47 - *“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing: Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.”* Throughout the pages of Scripture we see that God’s servants are divided into two basic categories: those who are faithful and true and those who go astray. It is during times of apostasy that we are really tested. Therefore, the passages in Ezekiel 44 are especially for the last days. In this chapter, the faithful and the unfaithful ministers are compared. In Ezekiel

44:10, we see that the Levites went astray, while in 44:15 the sons of Zadok were faithful in spite of the general apostasy of that time.

Demas left Paul because he loved the world (2 Tim. 4:10). But then in Jeremiah 35, there are the shining examples of the Rechabites who refused to drink wine because of the commandment of their father. Faithfulness is richly rewarded! There is a splendid stream of faithful servants throughout the history of mankind who have glorified God; and He in turn has glorified them. We may cite a few—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Daniel. The New Testament has such luminaries as John the Baptist, and the Apostles of the Lamb, as well as Paul who could say “Henceforth a crown of righteousness is laid up for me.”

24:48-49 - *“But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.”* Regretfully, the attitude and actions of the man in this verse is not an uncommon thing. Perhaps it is not seen to the fullest extent that our Lord describes here, but those who are backslidden in heart do tend to oppress their brethren in Christ. They begin to “smite their fellowservants.”

I also want to draw attention to the fact that the servant who says, “My Lord delayeth His coming,” not only backslides in his heart but in his walk as well. This I have witnessed on more than one occasion. To say, “My Lord delayeth his coming,” means a person has set a date for His coming and that date has come and gone. It is pride that forecasts dates, yet the Word of God clearly states that we cannot know nor are we ordained to know. Those who predict the date of the Second Coming try to adjust the dates over and over again, and then the tendency is to horribly backslide when they are proven wrong.

24:50-51 - *“The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

“Weeping and gnashing of teeth” does not sound like heaven, does it? The judgment of these servants places them in that area of hell wherein the hypocrites are tormented. We should emphasize that even as heaven has many plains of glory, so too has hell many compartments. One of the worst places in hell is reserved for the hypocrites. May God grant that we will guard our hearts with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.

Chapter 25

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

25:1-13

25:1-6 - *“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.”*

In actuality, this is exactly how a Jewish wedding is conducted, even in the twentieth century. A certain clergyman was traveling in a taxi when he saw ten girls gaily dressed, playing instruments. The taxi driver explained to the clergyman that they were on their way to the bride-to-be to keep her company.

No one knows when the bridegroom will come. Sometimes he will come in the middle of the night, and he is required to send a man into the street who shouts, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh.” No one is allowed out in the streets without a lighted lamp. When the bridegroom arrives, then the door is shut and latecomers are not allowed into the ceremony. This simple story is just a recounting of a sight familiar to his Jewish hearers.

25:7-12 - *“Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.”*

This is an awesome and distressing statement by the Son of God. Virgins represent Christians. They are pure because they are blood-washed. In reality, the virgins who had no more oil in their lamps represent believers who once were on fire for the Lord but have now lost their anointing. Oil is a type of the anointing as we see in the tabernacle of Moses.

The candlestick had seven lamps of fire burning brightly. These seven flames represent the

seven spirits of the Lord. In this parable, Christ no longer knows or acknowledges the lukewarm Christians, for they are like those of Laodicea. As He said before, if our light has become darkness, how great is that darkness (Mt. 6:23).

25:13 - *“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”* Yet once more the Lord warns that we must be ready for His coming. It does therefore appear that in the last days there will be a tremendous revival followed by a period of proving before He comes. Many who have once been saved will lose out, for there will be a great falling away, not only of all moral standards, but also of Christians from the pathway of righteousness. They will lose the Light of the world from their hearts.

The Parable of the Talents

25:14-30

25:14 - *“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.”* The key theme here is “profitability,” which is again allied to His teachings on the Second Coming. We are servants, but are we profitable servants? This is the question we must ask ourselves as we study this parable.

25:15 - *“And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.”* There is another parable that Jesus taught when He was on His way to Jerusalem called, “The Parable of the Pounds.” It is recorded in Luke 19:11-27. There are apparent similarities, but it has a significant difference too.

In the parable of the pounds, each servant was given one pound whereby we get the sense of equal opportunities. However, in this parable the talents are distributed according to one’s abilities. Thus we see that we are not all equally endowed by God. God in His infinite wisdom has made us different. Some are very capable in a certain line of work while others excel in a different capacity. Some have many gifts while others of us may only be capable of doing a few things.

Several years ago the Lord visited me personally. He revealed Himself as the very embodiment of wisdom. He showed me that wisdom was necessary so that His kingdom would be well ordered and all the work that had to be accomplished could be done by those who were equipped

for their particular God-given task in life. Therefore, when everyone is in his God-ordained course there is happiness and godly contentment.

25:16-18 - *“Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.”* It is worthy of note here that the one who was given the most talents produced the most. We have a saying in life that goes like this: “If you want something done, give it to a busy man.”

Another truth that must not be overlooked is the fact that God gives his talents to those whom He knows will use them. So many people in life desire to have other spiritual gifts, but they do not use what God has already given to them. God is a good business man. He wants a good return for His investment. For this reason, He gives the most to those who are the producers. Therefore, to please Him we must apply ourselves diligently to the work of the Kingdom of God. This is exactly what the one who received the five talents did.

25:19-21 - *“After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”*

Another truth that should not be forgotten is that these servants produced in proportion to that which they had been given. The one who had received five talents produced another five. In effect, he produced one hundred percent of that which he had received, as did the servant who received two.

25:22-23 - *“He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”* Those who had received five and two, respectively, were both “hundred percenters” producing the maximum of that which they had received. Therefore, it is notable that they were producing according to their personal capabilities.

25:24-27 - *“Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.”*

This servant who had received only one talent was not deemed worthy or capable of having more. Also, he obviously was not a producer, but a fearful and lazy man. In life we need to understand why such men are as they are. After a lifetime in the ministry of the Lord, I have become convinced that we have to watch carefully our virtues, or lack of them. One virtue which is of great price is that of *meekness*. At first this might seem strange to include with respect to the parable of the talents.

However, meekness is seen to be the key to learning in Psalm 25:9. “The meek will He teach His ways.” I have noticed that the proud refuse to learn or advance their skills so that they will not move with the times. Consequently, they limit their usefulness. These people then develop streaks of stubbornness and become critical of others. Although they may be hard workers, it is only in the areas that they enjoy. When given additional responsibilities they will become fearful, for they are moving outside their expertise. They also are resentful of others who have applied themselves.

Three essential truths that we need to know emerge from this parable:

1. That we receive gifts or talents according to our capabilities.
2. That we should use our talents to the utmost and we will be rewarded accordingly.
3. That those who receive only one talent are those who through pride and stubbornness refuse to learn and move on in life. They are inflexible and fearful of God and His ways. Therefore, the love of God has not been perfected in their lives and they remain unprofitable servants.

The judgment of God is now manifested toward the wicked and unprofitable servant.

25:28-30 - *“Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

His judgment is threefold:

1. He loses that which he had.
2. He sees the diligent enriched by that which was once his. This often causes him to be tormented with jealousy and grief as to what his lot could have been if only he had been faithful.
3. He loses an eternity in heaven and is plunged into the blackness of darkness forever.

Let us meditate much upon our responsibilities as Christians. Let us use that which God has given us for the extension of His kingdom, that indeed we may be those who bring forth one hundredfold.

We now continue with the unfolding judgments that occur at the Second Coming of Christ. We saw judgment on the virgins who had no oil, those who neglected their relationship with Christ and became lukewarm. There was judgment on those who were fearful and unteachable and refused to use their talent. Now we are looking at Christ’s judgment of the nations.

The Judgment of the Nations

25:31-46

25:31-40 - *“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him,*

saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

At the Second Coming of the Lord there will be an assessment of each individual person who has ever lived. Not only will there be a judgment of individuals, but also of nations. This may be likened to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. Each church was assessed *corporately* (not as individuals) as to their general conduct. Their behavior was reviewed, commended, corrected, or condemned as it merited. In eternity, New Jerusalem will be upon the new earth (Rev. 21:10-27), and we are told specifically of two things that will enter into her gates:

1. Only the nations who walk in the light of the Lord.
2. Only the undefiled, those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of Life.

“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it” (Rev. 21:24). Therefore, there are certain nations that will qualify to be in the new earth, but they will be composed of those who meet the qualifications of Revelation 21:27: “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” In addition to this, the qualities of Matthew 25:35-40 are essential for entering the new earth. We will now have a look at these.

Jesus is separating the sheep nations from the goat nations. Sheep speak of submission, and goats of rebellion. The nations are assessed to be a sheep or a goat by their treatment of the poor and the afflicted. It is not difficult when traveling around the world to determine which are the sheep and goat nations as one compares them to the qualifications laid out in this portion of Scripture. In reality, the Lord makes it very clear. *How a nation treats those in need will determine its eternal standing.* “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

As individuals we should ensure that our attitude to those who are hungry, thirsty, and in need of clothing and lodging is one of mercy. To care for the sick and those in prison has ever been the cherished concern of the Church from the time of its conception in New Testament days. Paul

expressed this sentiment in Galatians 2:10: “Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.”

Caring for others is the hallmark of the righteous, as we read in Deuteronomy 15:7-8: “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.”

Beloved friends, let us be those of a generous heart and mind, having our eyes open to the needs of others. This is the way to blessing. “He that hath a bountiful eye which shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor” (Prov. 22:9).

We must never forget that when we are serving our fellow man, we are actually serving the Lord. Let us remember one of the favorite Scriptures of Oliver Cromwell, the lord protector of England from 1649-1658, a verse that we, too, should practice: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

Those who do not care for the needs of others are contrasted with those who do in Proverbs 14:21: “He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.” “He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor” (Prov. 14:31).

“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again” (Prov. 19:17). We must realize that the way we treat others, in effect, is the way we treat the Lord Himself. The severity of the judgment upon the wicked is now declared in verses 41-45.

25:41 - *“Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:”* Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, and all the rebellious who follow him. At this time, some of the fallen angels are in everlasting chains under darkness, while others are permitted to wander, in the wisdom of God, to afflict nations and individuals until the judgment of the great day.

Then they will join the Beast and the False Prophet in the lake of fire as recorded in Revelation 20:10: “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” Why are they tormented? Because they did not have any mercy on those in need. The unredeemed are just like the one they are following.

25:42-46 - *“For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”* Another point that we should not miss in this teaching is the remarkable way in which the Lord identifies with His people. This is seen in Isaiah 63:9, “In all their affliction He was afflicted.”

And now we see one of the great divisions in mankind—the wicked who go into the lake of fire, and the righteous who manifest the fruits of their lives in compassion for others and enter into the joy of their Lord.

Chapter 26

Two days before the Passover

26:1-5

26:1-2 - *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.”* Once again we must draw the attention of our readers to the fact that Jesus was fully aware of all the details concerning His betrayal and death, and its exact time. The crucifixion that now lay ahead of Him was ever in His mind. It was for this reason that He had come into the world to be the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

26:3-4 - *“Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him.”* We read in John 11:47-53 that at this time Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.

26:5 - *“But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.”* The religious leaders well knew that the common people were for Jesus, believing Him to be a prophet. They did not want any form of commotion whatsoever. There were between two and three million people in Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of the Passover. Rome tolerated many things such as permitting the Jews to practice many of their religious customs, yet in no part of the Empire could they permit civil disorder.

Caiaphas had been high priest for a long time due to the fact that he had appeased the Romans. A revolt, however, against the seizure of Jesus would have endangered his own position. Therefore, they wanted to use great caution in the manner by which they were to apprehend Jesus.

In the House of Simon

26:6-13

26:6 - *“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper.”* Bethany was the little village on the southeastern slope of the Mount of Olives. It was the village to which Jesus retired during His last days after ministering in Jerusalem during the daytime. It was now the evening of His longest recorded day of ministry. The day had begun with the episode of the

withered fig tree in Matthew 21:19-22, and had been filled with the parables and discourses with the chief priests and elders, finishing with the instructions concerning His Second Coming. Jesus is courteously entertained by Simon the leper, as recorded also in Mark 14:3-9 and John 12:2-8.

Matthew concentrates on the theme of “Anointed for Burial.” Sometimes in our studies of the Gospels we should not necessarily consult the other three Gospels, since in doing so we can miss the all-important truth that one of the writers is seeking to show us. Hence, here we have the theme of “Anointed for Burial” by Matthew.

26:7-12 - *“There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.”*

This raises a point of doctrine that the Apostle Paul develops in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16: “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?” When people receive the knowledge of God, they are being prepared, either for heaven or hell. They are being forged for one place or the other, depending on their response to it.

It seems that there is a *sealing* prior to death of those who have fulfilled their course, as well as a parallel *sealing* of the damned while still alive for those who have refused the Gospel. In this case it is the Lord of Glory who was anointed for eternal life with spikenard, the symbol of peace. This signified that He was now ready to fulfill His mission on the cross as the One who is the Prince of Peace.

We read in Ephesians 2:13-18: “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new

man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

26:13 - “*Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*” It is in the same spirit of generosity that the Lord rewards this woman, who pouring forth her ointment upon Him receives in return an everlasting memorial to her good works. What we expend upon the Lord will always return unto us one hundredfold.

The Betrayer **26:14-16**

26:14-16 - “*Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.*” As we look at events from heaven’s perspective, we realize that all things are preordained of God, especially in the life of Jesus, the Son of God. He is “the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.”

In his introduction to his play, *Henry V*, William Shakespeare writes: “All the world is a stage, and men and women are merely players. They have their entrances and their exits and one man in his time plays many parts.” While this may be disputed in its entirety, Judas played the role of Apostle, thief, and then the part for which he will forever be remembered, that of betrayer.

In a sense, Judas was in the inner circle of those intimates of Christ. Nevertheless, he went to those who had but one desire—to kill the Lamb of God. It was one of the most despicable betrayals of all times. His betrayal fulfilled Scripture: “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psa. 41:9). Also, Psalm 109 is devoted to the life, death, and judgment of Judas.

The Betrayer Revealed **26:17-25**

26:17 - “*Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying*

unto him, *Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?*” At this time we should consider the origin of this Passover feast. It was instituted by God at the time the children of Israel left Egypt under Moses. Let us begin with Exodus 12:3: “Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:”

We read in Exodus 12:6, “And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.” Exodus 12:13 says, “And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.”

We read in Exodus 12:26-27: “And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.”

The spiritual interpretation of this feast is known to us by the writings of Paul who said: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. *For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*” (1 Cor. 5:7). In a matter of hours the Lord would become that Passover Lamb whose blood would be shed not just for Israel, but for the whole world.

26:18 - *“And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.”* Although there is much more detail given by the other Gospel writers concerning the selection of the room, it is important to honor the account of Matthew in his highlighting the truth of the betrayal.

Here we are presented with a truth that John’s Gospel also emphasizes—that of time. John reports the words of Jesus over and over again, “My time is not yet come.” Now, right at the end of the events in the upper room we have this phrase repeated by John: “Before the feast of the passover when Jesus knew that His hour was come” (Jn. 13:1). The time element is also what Matthew emphasizes here.

26:19-21 - *“And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily*

I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.” Jesus had warned His disciples previously (17:22; 20:18) and even that very day (26:2) that He was going to be betrayed. Yet this is the first time that it has really computed in their spirits, and above all, He tells them that it is one of their own company who will be the betrayer.

26:22 - *“And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?”* It is a testimony to the Lord’s remarkable self-control that He treated Judas in the same manner that He treated the other disciples. The Lord Jesus never divulged what He knew. The apostles were completely ignorant of the true nature of Judas. However, as is typical of righteous men, knowing their own weaknesses, each of the other eleven disciples asked, “Lord, is it I?”

26:23 - *“And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.”* This is sometimes called “Love’s Last Appeal,” for Jesus handed a piece of bread dipped in wine to Judas. The giving of bread from one to another is the act of friendship, but Judas ignored the plea.

26:24 - *“The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.”* Judas not only would have great remorse and a suicidal death, but an eternity of torment in unquenchable fire.

26:25 - *“Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.”* Here we see the despicable hypocrisy of Judas. Although he had already received thirty pieces of silver to betray the Lord, he is asking this question of Jesus, knowing that he had put the betrayal into motion. One thing is certain—he had been careful in hiding his moves from the other disciples so that they were completely ignorant of his designs.

The Last Supper and the Warning to Peter

26:26-35

26:26-28 - *“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”*

Here Jesus instituted the New Testament (or the new covenant). The Old Testament was in essence a testament of outward symbolism between God and the nation of Israel. Now Jesus was bringing in the reality of the covenant between God and man. By His blood we have the forgiveness of sins and entrance into the Holy of Holies—into the literal presence of God the Father.

We should always live in an attitude of thankfulness for all that God in Christ has done for us. The holy communion table is to remind us of His supreme sacrifice for us, that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

26:29-30 - *“But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.”* During the celebration of the passover, the Jews would sing what is called the “Hallel” or the psalms of praise (Psalms 113-118). Then they would conclude with the Great Hallel (Psalm 136), which is what they sang here at the conclusion of the feast as they went out to the Mount of Olives.

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.”* Here Jesus is warning them 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.”

It was an added sorrow that Jesus must lose His loved ones at the hour of His greatest need. Yet this was essential for they would have destroyed the fulfillment of the types if they had sought to die with Him. He alone could die at this moment for the sins of the world. The spotless Lamb of God alone was worthy to die on Calvary’s tree.

26:32 - *“But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.”* Jesus was ever looking ahead, even as Paul mentioned in Hebrews 12:2: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, [scoffing at] the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” It was the ability of the Saviour to look beyond the cross to the eternal joys that awaited Him in heaven that caused Him to approach the cross with such purpose and joyful serenity. In promising the disciples that He would see them afterwards in Galilee, Jesus was seeking to give them hope and assurance as well.

26:33-34 - *“Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”* Peter’s denial cost him dearly, for he is ever known for his denial of Jesus. Peter did not have the humility to accept the fact that he would be involved in the fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy. He also did not realize at this time that we can only endure pressure as grace is given to us. Let us seek to walk humbly with our Lord, always depending upon His grace to walk in a manner pleasing to Him. Our own strength will *always* fail.

26:35 - *“Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.”* Still Peter refused to accept the words of the Lord and the others were not far behind. To Peter’s shame, that which the Lord said came to pass only a few hours later.

Gethsemane and the Cup

26:36-46

26:36 - *“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.”* Prophets are also signs. Where a prophet is when he speaks has significance. This often helps us understand more poignantly some of the truths that he expresses in his words or actions. Certainly this was true concerning this episode in the life of our Lord.

Gethsemane means, “the place of the olive press.” Olive trees dating from before the time of Christ are still growing in this garden. It was here in the garden that the Olive Tree of God (Jesus Christ) was pressed by all the powers of Satan to try to break His resolve and will. Thanks be to God they were all without success.

26:37 - *“And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.”* In times of great spiritual manifestations such as the Mount of Transfiguration and now in the hour of his greatest need, it was the beloved “inner circle” of Peter, James, and John who were drawn aside from the others to be near Him.

Being with Him, they partook of the heights and depths of His spiritual experiences. Christ gave them these experiences so that they could be eyewitnesses for the generations that were to

follow, and also understand something of the trials and temptations He had to undergo in order to become the Savior of the world.

26:38 - *“Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.”* The Lord Jesus not only suffered greatly in body, but also in spirit. Sorrow was very much a part of the suffering He underwent for us as He endured the supreme assault of the wicked one. These sufferings and sorrows are also seen in the lives of the prophets.

In Isaiah 16:9,11, Isaiah prophesied over Moab: “Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen. ... Wherefore my bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kirharesh.”

There is often in our own lives that terrible sorrow and heaviness that comes from having to participate in the sorrows of the Godhead as They mourn over the tragedies and judgments that must befall those who leave the paths of righteousness. Even as I am writing this, I am passing through great sorrow for some who are very dear to me who have made wrong choices. Regretfully, they will suffer the consequences of those decisions. They are like Demas of Paul’s generation.

26:39 - *“And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”* Our Lord had to take the cup that was filled with the sins of this world. In taking this cup, Christ became sin. “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).

The battle to take that cup was great. It was the supreme test for the Holy One of God. He was so pure and lovely and had overcome every temptation to keep Himself unspotted from the world, the flesh and the devil. Now He was required in the sovereign will of the Holy Father to become sin. Thus the battle continued in prayer that He might have the grace to become willing to take this cup.

26:40-41 - *“And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:*

the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The disciples unto whom He was looking to sustain Him in prayer had been overcome by sleep. One of the great weapons that the adversary uses against us in prayer is drowsiness. However, we must remember that the disciples had experienced a very full day and they had just heartily eaten that Passover lamb which is not at all conducive to staying wide awake afterwards.

26:42 - *“He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”* Overcoming our will is always a struggle. So often we are required to give up some earthly thing that is not good for us. In this case, the Holy One of God was required to do something opposite. He had to become filled with the corruption and loathsomeness of sin.

26:43 - *“And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.”* The disciples had been overcome with the weariness that the late hour produces. How many times have we also experienced that extreme drowsiness as we have sought to pray into the night after a long day’s work.

26:44 - *“And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.”* Finally He willingly takes the cup. This was a necessity, for without becoming sin He could not die. Death only has power where there is sin. Christ also had to fulfill the type of being a scapegoat that must vicariously bear the sins of God’s people (Lev. 16:7-10).

26:45 - *“Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”* The Lord had allowed them to sleep so that they might have the resources to meet the new challenges ahead of them. However, He wakes them at the appointed time when He knows the betrayer Judas is near.

26:46 - *“Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.”* We see that Christ is always on time and is never caught unaware of the events that are to be fulfilled in His life. This was especially so as time winds its way inexorably down to His final hours. Jesus is always the Master of the situation; He is never at the mercy of events but controls them. This is also the Lord’s will for us. As we walk in the Spirit, we shall be in Him the master of the situations in our own lives as well.

The Betrayal

26:47-56

26:47 - *“And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.”* The armed forces were totally out of proportion to their task. Perhaps it was a tribute to the Lord’s power that they thought they needed such a large number.

26:48 - *“Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.”* This is another one of his most despicable acts, for a kiss is the sign of affection as well as intimacy. Judas was saying by the kiss that he loved the Lord and also that he was one of the privileged ones who knew Him well enough to so greet Him.

26:49-50 - *“And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.”* This was an act of such hypocrisy when all should have rallied to his defense. Judas betrayed him because of the love of money in his heart. But observe how Jesus responds in terms that are so gracious, calling him, “Friend.”

26:51-54 - *“And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest’s, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”*

In this account Matthew stresses the truth that all these things must happen in order for the Scriptures to be fulfilled. Christ came into this world to die. Therefore, He could not permit any resistance that would free Him from the grasp of the authorities. He did not need human help. All the angelic armies were at His disposal if He had so desired. He laid down His life as a voluntary offering for you and me, and without His death upon Calvary, we would all be in hell.

26:55 - *“In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.”* Here Jesus reproves the multitudes of soldiers and palace guards, showing them

their hypocrisy. If their case against Him had been just they should have openly arrested Him before the crowds in the temple and not at night in such a clandestine manner.

26:56 - *“But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.”* All of this was necessary to fulfill Scripture, which the heavenly Father had foreordained to fulfill His will and to show forth His wisdom. To complete the scenario all the disciples fled in fear to fulfill Zechariah 13:7.

The Trial Before the High Priest Caiaphas **26:57-68**

26:57 - *“And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.”* The high priest originally was of descent from Aaron. It was a lifetime appointment. But now that Romans ruled the world, their officials had filled the position as it suited them. Therefore, Caiaphas must have been particularly compliant to their demands, as he held that post for a very long time (A.D. 18-36). Afterward, twenty-eight high priests were appointed from A.D. 37-68. In A.D. 70, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and the line of high priests ceased.

26:58 - *“But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest’s palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.”* Here we see the love Peter had for the Lord Jesus Christ. Though he had initially fled to fulfill Scripture, yet he turned and sought to be near Him. This would have put Peter’s life in jeopardy, for he also could have been arraigned as one of the perpetrators of what the Sanhedrin probably termed “a false cult.”

26:59 - *“Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death.”* It is evident that the Sanhedrin were sitting in an extraordinary session. However, it was not legal or according to their rules to convene anywhere but in the temple precincts, nor at any time other than during the day. Both rules were breached at this time. Also, they who esteemed the law so highly were hardly sitting with the open mind of a true judge for they had come already with a fixed verdict in mind.

26:60 - *“But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses.”* Their hypocritical desire to defend and achieve their cause to crucify Jesus required two witnesses to fulfill the law. Deuteronomy 17:6 demanded: “At the

mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.”

26:61 - *“And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.”* This accusation was a distortion of what Jesus really had said. Jesus never said He would destroy any temple (Jn. 2:19). He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Jesus was speaking of His own body, not a building.

26:62 - *“And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?”* By law Jesus was perfectly entitled not to speak, because no accused could be made to incriminate himself. However, Jesus did not want to defend Himself. By defending Himself, He would have provided an opening for Satan to enable the Sanhedrin to find Him not guilty. In so doing, He would have defeated God’s plan for Him to have been the supreme sacrifice for our sins.

26:63 - *“But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.”* The high priest, realizing that their evidence to convict was weak, tried to cause Jesus to incriminate Himself by declaring in effect His true identity. Are you the Son of God?

26:64 - *“Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”* Jesus now provides the Sanhedrin with their needed evidence. He could have again remained silent but in so doing He would not have been crucified. Again we see that He is a voluntary offering.

He responds by quoting Daniel 7:13, which says, “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.” He identified Himself as the One who would come to judge the world and receive all the kingdoms of the world. This was too much for the high priest.

26:65-68 - *“Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who*

is he that smote thee?" The Sanhedrin had established His guilt in their own eyes and they proceeded to mock Him to fulfill the Lord's prophecy that they would treat Him thusly (Mt. 20:18-19).

The Denials of Peter **26:69-75**

In considering the denials of Peter, we should charitably remember certain facts. It was well past midnight when the first of these challenges took place. Peter had in fact hazarded his safety in coming to the high priest's house. The only other disciple in the vicinity was John. Peter had been deliberately singled out by Satan to be tested. But here, surrounded by the enemy, his former bravado (asserting that he would die with the Lord) had left him. Moreover, as we shall see, Peter was challenged by two maidens, whose comments were easily overheard by the soldiers who were nearby.

26:69 - *"Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee."* The first challenge came in the courtyard of the palace from one of the maids who waited upon the high priest and who obviously had heard Jesus minister and possibly had seen His miracles. She readily identified Peter, who would always have been in close proximity to the One whom he loved.

26:70 - *"But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest."* The words of the maid were heard by a large number. Had Peter acknowledged that he was a companion of Jesus, he would have been arrested immediately.

26:71 - *"And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth."* Slipping outside into the porch area to escape further scrutiny from that maidservant, he encountered another who also must have been in the crowds that attended the teachings and miracles of Jesus during those last few days. But again that maid was not alone, and there were a number of soldiers there.

26:72 - *"And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man."* At each challenge Peter seems to have become more afraid and now resorts to an oath to save himself.

26:73 - *"And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also*

art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.” Others now accuse him of being in the party of Jesus, adding that his accent confirmed that he was from Galilee. This is a little later and yet Peter has remained close to Jesus. He could easily have left the palace, yet love caused him to linger still to see what would become of his Master. However, again he denies this further assertion.

26:74 - *“Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.”* Regretfully, Peter at this time needed to be converted (Lk. 22:32). Both in speech and in manner, he was coarse. When we reflect upon those first twelve, Jesus was not surrounded necessarily by the choicest of humanity. Both Judas and Peter were given to cursing, a fact that must have been difficult for the sweet nature of Jesus.

26:75 - *“And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”* Now remorse overcomes Peter, and he finally leaves the crowd in the grounds of the palace of the high priest.

Chapter 27

The Sending of Jesus to Pilate

27:1-2

27:1 - *“When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.”* A fact that we must not overlook is that Jesus had been bound during the evening and had no rest during the whole of the night. Therefore, He was in a very weakened condition at this time.

27:2 - *“And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.”* We have said before that no one Gospel writer gives all the facts, and this is especially true concerning the trials of Jesus. We have decided therefore to follow each Gospel writer in his own form and not seek to give all the details, reserving this for our other books, “The Life of Christ” and “The Cross.”

Judas Commits Suicide

27:3-5

27:3 - *“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.”* It is difficult on this side of eternity to evaluate all the feelings and emotions of Judas. From the wording in this passage, there are some who believe that Judas did not expect Jesus to be condemned.

Therefore, realizing that he had been responsible for His crucifixion, Judas was filled with remorse and therefore his life should be viewed with sympathy and compassion. This, however, is not a tenable theory because it was for greed that He betrayed the Master. The promised Messiah was worth only thirty pieces of silver to Judas. Judas is found in the same position as Esau.

We read in Hebrews 12:16-17: “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

It has to be clearly understood that repentance is a gift from God. “If God peradventure will give them repentance” (2 Tim. 2:25). If the Lord does not give this grace, the heart cannot truly turn back to Him. It should never be assumed that the gift of repentance will be given to just anyone. Both Judas and Esau had great light and blatantly sinned in light.

Therefore, they fall into the category of those spoken of by Paul in Hebrews 6:4-6: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” Thus, Judas, who acknowledged his guilt, was rejected.

27:4 - *“Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.”* Judas’ friends said, “Too bad for you.” One of the judgments upon people like Judas is that the ones who received him so gladly now reject him. There is no honor among the wicked. Moreover, the religious leaders were hardly going to comfort him, since they were committing in effect the same sin as was Judas.

This truth should be examined in more detail because God’s people can fall as low as the Israelites of old did: “Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves” (Isa. 28:15).

These deluded and wicked Israelites thought that in making a covenant with death and hell that they should be spared when the enemies of God came into the land. Many have indeed thought that they could make a covenant with Satan himself and that they would receive a special place in hell, only to find that the fiend and arch-enemy of mankind treats them with scorn and derision, and torments them all the more.

27:5 - *“And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”* Thus, Judas entered promptly into the torments of eternal damnation, known for all eternity as the one who had betrayed the promised Messiah, the Lord of glory.

27:6-7 - *“And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them*

the potter's field, to bury strangers in.” Again we see the height of hypocrisy of the priests, for they themselves were implicated in the scandal. It was they who had given the money and contracted for the betrayal. Yet here they were refusing to receive the money back. There is no hypocrisy like religious hypocrisy.

It is awesome to realize the purpose given for the field. It was for the place of the dead stranger, and Judas was the first to be buried there. Indeed, he was a stranger to the promises of God, having been a major apostle. How the mighty are fallen! Let us make certain that we are always faithful to the Lord, for there is no eternal torment like that of the hypocrite.

27:8 - *“Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.”* The name of the field is in itself an indictment of the religious leaders. It was through their complicity in the betrayal and subsequent death of Jesus that the field was so named. In all probability, their eyes were so blinded that they never saw the irony.

27:9-10 - *“Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.”* This is also mentioned in Zechariah 11:12-13: *“And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”*

“And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.” The Potter's field was indeed the place where broken vessels were thrown away and discarded. What a pitifully fit place for Judas to be buried, a life that could have been so meaningfully useful and yet instead had become perhaps the most despicable of all. He was a broken and rejected vessel fit only for the rubbish heap of humans who had wasted and even despised the opportunities that had been given to them by God. Let us strive by His grace to be a vessel holy and fit for the Master's eternal use.

Jesus Before Pilate

27:11-18

As we have before mentioned, each Gospel writer depicts only parts of the events of Jesus' life.

There were in reality *six* trials in all that Jesus had to undergo—three were religious and three were secular. Matthew rather presents it simply as one trial. But again we are going to look at it from his viewpoint in order to develop the particular aspects that Matthew obviously wishes to highlight.

27:11 - *“And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.”* In this accusation and response of Jesus, we have a straightforward affirmation by the Lord that He indeed is the King of the Jews.

27:12 - *“And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.”* The Lord would not respond to the accusations of the religious leaders because, as we have stated before, He must not give Satan an opportunity to acquit Him and prevent Him from going to the cross.

27:13-14 - *“Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.”* It would be natural for any prisoner to defend himself and seek to escape condemnation, especially that of the cross. Here the Lord shows forth the self-control and meekness of God, willingly accepting the unjust accusations of the priests.

27:15-17 - *“Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?”* Here we have two prisoners presented to the people. Barabbas, a murderer and criminal of the basest kind, and Jesus the innocent Lamb of God. Pilate should have defended Jesus but instead gave the people a choice between the two men. However, this was the fulfillment of Leviticus 16:7-10,20-22,26, where instructions were given to Aaron the high priest to take two goats.

Leviticus 16:8-10 says: “And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.”

We read in Leviticus 16:21: “And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:”

Thus, Barabbas, that awful sinner, was the scapegoat who was released, who in type represented all of us. Whereas Jesus, the innocent One, became the sin offering as we read in Leviticus 16:15-16: “Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.”

By demanding Barabbas be released and Jesus be crucified, the children of Israel were, in reality, assisting in the fulfillment of the Scriptural type of the scapegoat.

27:18 - “*For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.*” It is clear, and will become more abundantly clear as we continue, that Pilate fully believed in the innocency of Jesus. Pilate understood the underlying motive, as any judge should, that the chief priests desired His crucifixion. It was *for envy* that the Jews delivered Jesus to Pilate for crucifixion.

The Choice of the Multitude

27:19-23

27:19 - “*When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.*” The graciousness of the Lord was amazing, affording Pilate every opportunity and even encouragement to release Jesus so that Pilate could never say he was not warned.

At this point we would do well to pause to see why Pilate, obviously desirous of releasing Jesus, would not do so. Pontius Pilate was not a just man who indeed hated the Jews. He must have been a tried and trusted administrator, for one had to be proven in junior posts first before one was appointed as governor.

However, a character study of Pilate by Philo, the scholar of Alexandria, portrays a man who was corrupt, cruel, and known for the murders of many people, tried and untried. Such were the atrocities of this man whom the Jews had threatened to report to the Emperor. Eventually, Pilate went too far after ten years in his post.

In 36 A.D., he was responsible for slaughtering the Samaritans because they had assembled on Mount Gerazim, led by an imposter who had promised to show them the sacred vessels that purportedly Moses had hidden there. The Samaritans reported Pilate to Vitellius, the legate of Syria who was Pilate's superior. He ordered Pilate to see the Emperor Tiberius to render an account of his doings. Meanwhile, Tiberius died and according to history, the new emperor ordered Pilate to commit suicide, which he did.

Thus, at the time of the trial of Jesus, Pilate was already compromised for previous misdeeds, and the rulers were ready to report him to Rome. Let us now return to the narrative.

27:20-23 - *“The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.”*

This could hardly be termed a trial by any means, for the judge was convinced of the innocence of the prisoner but was intent on pleasing the populace. Rome, corrupt as it was, would never have sanctioned such an event. But as we have already said, the religious rulers had Pilate in their power because of his previous misdeeds. Pilate was afraid of them and did not want them to find another occasion whereby he could be summoned to face the Emperor. In effect, he was seeking to appease them and was willing to sacrifice Jesus to keep his position.

The Judgment Upon the Children of Israel

27:24-25

27:24 - *“When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.”* Washing one's hands was a Jewish custom derived from the law. God commanded that if a man was found slain then the elders and judges should measure to see

which city was nearest to that slain man. The elders of that city would then slay a heifer and *wash their hands* over the heifer as we now read in Deuteronomy 21:6-7: “And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it.”

However, Pilate could not escape responsibility by washing his hands, since he was the judge and the one who would give the order for the execution of an innocent man. However, in this tragic situation, it was the people of Israel who took responsibility.

27:25 - “*Then answered all the people , and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.*” Thus the blood of Jesus the Innocent was placed squarely upon the heads of the nation. This fulfills the type of the Passover Lamb, which was killed by the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel.

We read in Exodus 12:5-6: “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: *and the whole assembly* of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.” Thus, it was Israel as a whole who killed their Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The Order for the Crucifixion

27:26-28

27:26 - “*Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*” The sinner Barabbas, who represented us, was freed, and the innocent Lamb of God suffered in our place. May we ever be so grateful for all that He suffered for us. His blood was brought, not to the earthly mercy seat, but unto heaven itself.

We read in Hebrews 9:23-24: “It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:”

Crucifixion amounted to torture and many a man had succumbed to this inhumane treatment.

But our Lord bore those stripes to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 53:5: “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.”

27:27-28 - *“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.”* Now begins the abject mockery of Jesus by this coarse band of Roman soldiers. Jesus, in fact, not only suffered at the hands of the religious leaders, but also at the hands of those representatives of Rome, the fourth kingdom mentioned by Daniel.

Therefore, not only the Jews but the Gentiles were responsible for His death. He died for the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles. After His death and resurrection, Christ was sent to the Gentiles as we see in Isaiah 49:6: “And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

The Mockery of Jesus **27:29-33**

27:29-31 - *“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.”* Mockery has to be endured by us all, in one form or another.

Shame is something we need to understand, for in being humiliated we shall be blessed. Satan fully understood that Jesus was the King of the Jews, and he was the one who was obviously directing this mockery. “Huh, the King of the Jews.” I have noticed in my lifetime that what is said to me to taunt me and mock becomes a clue to what God intends to do for me.

Satan knows what God’s plan is for you, and he mocks it. Joseph was called “the dreamer” by his brethren, but his dreams came to pass. When we are mocked, we have to be like Jesus and not say one word but commit ourselves to the One who judges righteously. At times I have known what God intends to do for me by the way I am mocked and derided by others, and often by those who are nearest to me.

27:32 - *“And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.”* Imposing this task upon Simon was permissible according to the laws of the Roman Empire. A person could simply be tapped on the shoulder by a soldier and he would have to carry the soldiers equipment for one mile. Thus, Simon was ordered to carry the cross of Jesus. For this he seemingly was well rewarded by the heavenly Father for he was the father of two sons, Alexander and Rufus, who were well known leaders of the New Testament Church (Mk. 15:21).

27:33 - *“And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull.”* As the hill was shaped like a skull, it was named Golgotha, meaning skull in Hebrew. In Latin the word is Calvary. Golgotha or Calvary are the names of the hill upon which Christ was crucified.

The Crucifixion

27:34-38

27:34 - *“They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.”* This drink was a mixture of wine and possibly a grain or two of frankincense. It deadened the senses of the condemned. It was provided by the compassionate wealthy women of the city. The Lord Jesus would not drink it, so that He could suffer to the fullest extent possible. This act fulfilled Psalm 69:21: *“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”*

27:35 - *“And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.”* The actual crucifixion was a fulfillment of Psalm 22:16: *“For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.”* In effect, it was the congregation of the evil religious leaders who were responsible for His crucifixion.

The Jews basically wore five garments. The four soldiers who were responsible for the execution were permitted to keep those garments. For the outer garment they cast lots. This fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 22:18: *“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”*

27:36 - *“And sitting down they watched him there.”* Even at the time of His greatest suffering Christ was carefully observed by His enemies, the representatives of Rome. As we shall later see, it turned to a testimony of His greatness.

27:37 - *“And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”* It was the usual practice of the ones being crucified to have placed over their heads the reason for their punishment. In the case of Jesus this was an extraordinary statement, for in effect that was no crime at all. In actual fact, He was and is the coming King.

27:38 - *“Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.”* This also fulfilled another prophecy, found in Isaiah 53:12, where it is written, “He was numbered with the transgressors.”

The Scorn of the Priests

27:39-49

27:39 - *“And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads.”* This is a fulfillment of Psalm 22:7: “All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.”

27:40 - *“And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”* Mockery, when directed by Satan, in actuality often portrays that which God will do for His people. Certainly, this was so for His beloved Son. “You who will destroy the temple and build it again in three days, save yourself!” They were quoting John 2:19-21 - “But he spake of the temple of his body.” They were fulfilling His statement. The priests would destroy his body, but God would raise it up after three days. Be encouraged when Satan mocks you. He is only confirming what God is going to do for you.

27:41-42 - *“Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.”* There are two truths in this passage that we need to understand. Although Jesus could have come down from the cross, in so doing He would have destroyed the very reason for which He had come into the world and that was to fulfill the type of the Passover Lamb.

However, there is something else that we should consider. Jesus Himself said that if people would not believe Moses and the prophets (the Scriptures), they would not believe even if some one were raised from the dead (Lk. 16:31). Therefore, even if Jesus had descended from that cross of reproach, yet they would not have believed.

27:43 - *“He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.”* Again this jibe was a fulfillment of Psalm 22:8: “He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.” To the minutest detail of the cross, all had aforetime been written in the Holy Scriptures. Virtually the whole of Psalm 22 is indeed a picture of the sufferings of Christ upon the cross.

27:44 - *“The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth [or heaped upon him the same insults]”* The agony of the crucifixion of Jesus was compounded in a way that no other would have had to suffer. He was reviled by His enemies and the basest of mankind were screaming and cursing Him, although condemned themselves.

27:45 - *“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.”* Among the spiritual experiences recorded in the Scriptures is the experience of “the horror of great darkness.” We find this in the life of Abraham. A horror of great darkness fell upon Abraham while he was preparing an offering (Gen. 15:12-18). God the Father and God the Son were about to make a covenant with Him to give to him and his seed the land of Israel for an inheritance.

When God wishes to do something of great significance in and through our lives, we first have the experience of “the horror of great darkness.” Those of us who have had this experience know that abject feeling of hopelessness and helplessness. The purpose of such an experience is to make us realize that it is God who accomplishes His will, apart from any efforts of our own. Jesus also experienced this sense of being terribly alone with the powers of darkness making their presence felt in an awesome and terrifying way.

27:46 - *“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* Jesus had to be forsaken of God for a short time, for He had become sin for us and the Holy Father could no longer look upon His Son who bore the sins of the world.

27:47 - *“Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.”*

The onlookers could not understand His words and thought He was calling for Elijah, for Israel looked for Elijah to deliver them from the oppressive yoke of Rome. Malachi 4:5 says, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” Now another fulfillment of Scripture takes place.

27:48 - *“And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.”* This fulfilled Psalm 69:21, which says, “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

27:49 - *“The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.”* There was still a bewilderment and wonderment among the onlookers, for they had seen and certainly heard of all the miracles and wonders that He had done. Everyone knew that He was no ordinary man. Therefore, they could still believe for something to happen, even at this late stage. Of course, nothing did happen as there could be no rescue from heaven, otherwise there would not have been the fulfillment of His blood shed for us.

His Death

27:50-54

27:50-51 - *“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.”* The rent veil is one of the most immediate benefits of the death of Jesus for the believer. The veil, which separated the holy place from the holy of holies in the temple, prevented all from entering into the presence of God. Only the high priest could enter once every year on the Day of Atonement. Now that the veil was rent, the way into God’s presence was opened.

Paul explains it this way in Hebrews 9:7-8: “But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.”

Paul continues his explanation in Hebrews 10:19-20: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated

for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” The veil represents Christ’s body. The literal body of Christ was represented in the Tabernacle of Moses, the Temple of Solomon, the Temple of Zerubbabel, and Herod’s Temple *by the veil* between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The veil represents His flesh. When His flesh died, the way into the Holy of Holies was opened.

For believers, the veil speaks of being crucified with Christ—the experience of Galatians 2:20, where Paul said, “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.” Galatians 2:20 is an experience. When we are crucified with Christ, then we ourselves pass from the holy place into the holy of holies.

27:52-54 - *“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. And when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”* Here we see a foretaste, a partial fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 26:19: “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

In His death there were ample signs of the fact that Jesus was no ordinary man, He was none other than the Son of God, even as we now read in the testimony of the Roman officer who was in charge of the crucifixion.

His Burial

27:55-61

27:55-56 - *“And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children.”* In Scripture, women are mentioned often as being very loyal and devout followers of the Lord Jesus. It has often been said that women have a tendency to be more faithful than men with respect to people. Certainly, they have a tenderness and compassion that few men possess. After all, it was the wife of Pilate who warned her husband not to touch Jesus.

27:57-58 - *“When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph,*

who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered." This was in itself an acknowledgment on the part of Pilate that he thought Jesus innocent. For it was indeed rare that the bodies of the crucified were released, but rather they remained on the cross until the birds of the air consumed their flesh.

27:59-60 - *"And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."* Even the burial of Jesus had been declared beforehand as we now read in Isaiah 53:9: "And 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."

This grave is still with us today and can be seen and visited in the place called "The Garden Tomb" just outside the city walls of Jerusalem. We should not leave this passage without commenting upon the obvious devotion and courage of Joseph of Arimathea. This devout man braved the possible resentment of Pilate and certainly the hatred of his Jewish peers in so clearly identifying himself with a condemned and despised criminal who was deemed an imposter. For this act God has caused Joseph's name to be honored by all the generations of the faithful.

27:61 - *"And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre."* The "other Mary" is identified in Mark 15:47 as the mother of Jesus. Thus, the women were faithful to the end.

The Sealing of the Tomb

27:62-66

27:62-66 - *"Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."*

In the preceding verses, we see how manifestly clear the resurrection of Christ would be at-

tested to. No one could say that it was by the stealing away of His body by the disciples, for the tomb was clearly sealed and guarded. No earthly person would have been capable of removing His body. The resurrection was a divine act of God.

Chapter 28

The Resurrection

28:1-8

28:1 - *“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.”* The rationale for their coming was first—that this was Sunday and the Sabbath was now ended. Second, they wanted to perform the burial arrangements for the body of Jesus because His body had only been wrapped in a *clean linen* cloth, which speaks of His being the Righteous One (cf. Rev. 19:8). Although wrapped in linen, His body was not embalmed. Therefore, they had come to perform these rites.

28:2 - *“And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.”* Earthquakes occurred at the death and resurrection of our Lord, and they will again be a feature of His Second Coming.

We read in Zechariah 14:4-5: “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. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.”

There will be an earthquake at the time of the ascension of Moses and Elijah in Revelation 11:13: “And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

Then there will be the great earthquake associated with the seventh angel pouring forth the last vial in Revelation 16:17-18: “And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.”

Returning now to the text, we see a description of the angel of the resurrection. Irrespective of the fact that the tomb was carefully guarded, none could prevent His resurrection.

28:3-8 - *“His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.”*

As we have said before, the Scriptures are very kind to women; and here we have the greatest story in the whole world told and attested to by women.

The Women Encounter Jesus

28:9-10

28:9 - *“And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.”* Here is a further example of the Lord’s graciousness to women, for they saw Him before His very own disciples. For this reason we should encourage women everywhere to believe for a meeting with the Lord and to be a bearer of good news.

28:10 - *“Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.”* These ladies then became the messengers of Jesus to His disciples. What a privilege! Men should take note of this because the Lord can well use our wives or other women members of our congregations to speak to us rather than always speaking directly to us. Let us not miss the voice of God from whatever means He chooses.

The Duplicity of the Chief Priests and Elders

28:11-15

28:11-12 - *“Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers.”* It is clear that the

religious leaders were not interested in truth but only in protecting their own positions. In spite of all the evidence of their own trusted men, they chose to delude the people again by inventing a lie.

28:13 - "*Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.*" It is also manifestly evident that the religious leaders themselves did not challenge the truth of their own people's witness. They loved not the truth but preferred to lie.

28:14 - "*And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.*" Also, they intended to corrupt Pilate in the matter. So intent were they to destroy the message of Jesus!

28:15 - "*So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*" The soldiers were not reliable either. Because of the love of money they, too, were willing to support their leaders in the lie. Perhaps many would have believed and been saved if the truth had been confirmed.

The Great Commission

28:16-20

28:16-17 - "*Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.*" Jesus chose Galilee instead of Jerusalem for this appointment with His disciples because in Galilee He had been received, whereas in Jerusalem He had been rejected.

28:18 - "*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*" The name of Jesus is higher than any other in heaven or in earth. One truth Christians need to have burning in their spirits is the power of the name of Jesus. Even the devils believe and tremble, as James 2:19 tells us. We need to use that blessed Name when we are sore oppressed by the enemy. He must leave at the mention of that mighty Name which is above all other names in heaven above and earth below (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).

28:19 - "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" This is called, *The Great Commission*. We see that we have a duty to perform toward our fellowmen. We must *preach* the good news that Jesus saves, but

also must *teach* them. The preaching of the Word of God is what leads people to salvation, but it is the teaching of God's Word that will make them strong and establish them in the faith.

28:20 - *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”* We are to make disciples, not just believers. The Lord wants those who will be committed to Him. He desires those who are walking in the Spirit of holiness, those who will die to themselves and live only for Him. This is the whole purpose of redemption! It is not just to make believers who can escape hell in order to go to heaven.

The whole purpose of Christianity is to produce kings and priests unto God (Rev. 5:9-10). He wants a people who grow up into the fullness of His stature, who are compatible with Him. Ultimately, He wants a Bride on His level. Let us not miss the purpose of life.

APPENDIX A

The Genealogies of Christ

Throughout the Scriptures we find many genealogies of the nation of Israel. However, each genealogy does not contain every member of a given family. It appears that they are included in Holy Scripture for the sole purpose of proving a person's descent from the patriarchs. Thus, when we examine the genealogies in chapter one of the Gospel of Matthew we find several omissions. We term this "telescoping a genealogy for the express purpose of illustrating a truth."

The truth that Matthew wishes to show is that the number *sixty-two* is the mystical number of the coming of Christ. The table below, for which we are indebted to that brilliant scholar and minister, Dr. Adam Clark, shows the sixty-two generations from Adam to Christ.

Abraham to David	Solomon to Jehoiakim	Jechoniah to Jesus Christ
1. Abraham	1. Solomon	1. Jechoniah
2. Isaac	2. Rehoboam	2. Salathiel
3. Jacob	3. Abia	3. Zerubbabel
4. Judah	4. Asa	4. Abiud
5. Pharez	5. Jehoshaphat	5. Eliakim
6. Esrom	6. Joram	6. Azor
7. Aram	7. Uzziah	7. Sadoc
8. Aminadab	8. Joatham	8. Achin
9. Naason	9. Ahaz	9. Eliud
10. Salmon	10. Hezekiah	10. Eliazar
11. Boaz	11. Manassah	11. Matthan
12. Obed	12. Amon	12. Jacob
13. Jesse	13. Josiah	13. Joseph
14. David	14. Jehoiakim	14. Jesus Christ

Many manuscripts read, "*Josiah begat Jehoiakim and Jehoiakim begat Jechoniah*" rather than "*Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren*" (Mt. 1:11). Josiah was the immediate father of Jehoiakim and his brethren. Jehoiakim begat Jechoniah about the time of the First Captivity in

607 B.C. Thus, the text flows perfectly with the fourteen generations, as well as the historical facts concerning the kings mentioned here.

Genealogies in Scripture do not always keep their same order. Observe, for example, the lists of the twelve sons of Israel who take on different orders throughout Scripture and do not keep to their order of birth. (See Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33 with respect to their prophecies). The order in which they are mentioned in I Chronicles 2:1-2 does not keep to the order of their births. Revelation chapter 7 also has another order.

Even the Apostle Paul does not quote the Ten Commandments in their original order when writing in Romans 2:21-22. In these passages he puts the eighth before the seventh. In Romans 13:9 he puts the seventh before the sixth. Therefore, we should realize that the orders of genealogies vary in order to emphasize some particular truth but in themselves they do not necessarily adhere to completeness in every occasion.

APPENDIX B

The Seven Parables, Feasts, and Doctrines

As we study God's Word, we discover links to other Scriptures that bring out deeper and richer meanings to the texts we are reading. Such is the case in the seven parables of the kingdom as presented in Matthew chapter 13. To illustrate this point, let us now unite and compare the seven parables of Jesus with the seven feasts of Leviticus 23, and the seven doctrines of Hebrews 6:1-3.

7 Parables of the Kingdom	7 Feasts of the Lord	The 7 Doctrines
<i>Matthew 13</i>	<i>Leviticus 23</i>	<i>Hebrews 6:1-3</i>
1. The Sower	The Feast of Passover	Repentance
2. The Tares	The Feast of Unleavened Bread	Faith
3. The Mustard Seed	The Feast of First Fruits	Water Baptism
4. The Leaven	The Feast of Pentecost	Baptism of the Holy Spirit
5. The Hid Treasure	The Feast of Trumpets	Laying on of Hands
6. The Pearl of Great Price	The Feast of Atonement	Resurrection
7. The Net	The Feast of Tabernacles	Eternal Judgment

Through these comparisons we see the deeper and richer meaning given to the individual truths that each column represents. Each group strengthens and confirms the other groups. Also, we see a progression in each group.

1. *The Sower* is the initial experience of new birth in our Christian life. At salvation, we receive the seed of the Word into our hearts. We are born again of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God. This represents the Feast of Passover, because at salvation we spiritually celebrate the Passover. Jesus is our Passover Lamb, who died to take away our sins.

2. *The Tares* speaks of the devil who has sown evil works in our hearts which destroy our faith. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is fulfilled in our lives by partaking of the pure Word of God which inspires faith, for faith comes by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17). We must read our Bibles so that we are nourished with the unleavened Word of God, which increases our faith.

3. *The Grain of Mustard Seed* illustrates that the Word which we have been feeding upon,

though small at first, will grow and eventually become powerful in our lives making us like the Lord who is called the “firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:20). Although Christ is the firstfruits, Scripture tells us that believers are to be the firstfruits among men. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (Jas. 1:18). The ceremony of water baptism signifies being buried with Christ and rising again to walk in newness of life with Him, as a firstfruits of His new creation.

4. The Leaven - Leaven usually has a negative connotation in Scripture but in this parable it is used in the good sense. The leaven of the Word of God spreads and permeates our entire being—body, soul and spirit. The Feast of Pentecost has its fulfillment (as we see in the column of doctrines) in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, an experience which immerses us—body, soul, and spirit in the glorious third Person of the Trinity.

5. The Hid Treasure in the spiritual sense is a realization that there is more that God has for us as we discover the hidden truths in His blessed Word. This is analogous to the Feast of Trumpets which sounded on the first day of the seventh month as God spoke afresh to His people that they were to journey forward. Joshua received the spirit of wisdom when hands were laid upon him in order to enter into his new responsibilities. This indicates that in the ordinance of the laying on of hands so often there is a fresh vision imparted through prophecy to the one for whom we pray.

6. The Pearl of Great Price speaks of “winning Christ” the spotless Lamb of God, as Paul said in Philippians 3:8. But also the pearl speaks of profound suffering and therefore experiencing the fellowship of His sufferings. This is typified by the Day of Atonement when the Israelite of old afflicted his soul and experienced a deeper cleansing in his soul. As we are deeply cleansed, it brings that sense of new life or the power of His resurrection into our lives.

7. The Net - The seventh and final parable is the parable of the net. The net ministry speaks of the great end time harvest. This is analogous to the message of the Feast of Tabernacles which is the feast of harvest. This likewise speaks (as we see in many of the other parables) of the end time. Eternal judgment will be executed when the wheat is gathered into His barns (or heaven) and the bad fish are separated from the good fish. This is what will take place in the last days.

EPILOGUE

We trust that this little study on the Gospel of Matthew has been a blessing to you. We hope that by God's grace you can use it in your teaching and preaching, and that these few thoughts will deepen through your own inspired study of these truths. God bless you and may the joys of heaven be yours, even as you meditate upon the book of Matthew.